

# Year End Report 2014

## 2014 INSTITUTIONAL FUNDERS

Atkinson Charitable Foundation  
Catherine Donnelly Foundation  
Maytree Foundation  
Salal Foundation

## About AIC

ACORN Institute Canada (AIC) is a charitable organization that uses research and training to address the problems in low-income communities. We believe that the poverty, discrimination, and community deterioration that exists in low-income communities is a result of a lack civic engagement, community leadership and financial literacy.

In 2014 ACORN Institute Canada (AIC) continued to work within low income communities across Canada, addressing community needs in research and leadership development. We continue to expand our reach and took on projects in BC, Ontario, and Nova Scotia this year.



[acorninstitute.ca](http://acorninstitute.ca)





## Community Leadership Development

AIC's near decade of work in low income communities has resulted in an ever-growing supply of knowledge and understanding of leadership development, and how to address and engage communities. We use this experience to develop Leadership Schools. These are full day trainings for community members from low income neighbourhoods - spanning a wide range of ethnicities, ages, cultures and abilities – to gain skills essential to building

local community organizations and to work with their neighbours to create positive change.

As leaders are developed through the Leadership Schools, they take over the facilitation of the program locally, ensuring sustainability and an organic connection to the community.

The Community Leadership School program addresses poverty and inequality at its roots by empowering local community members to take leadership roles,

and acknowledging their position as being best equipped to address the socio-economic challenges that affect them and their neighbours directly. Leadership Schools build on that understanding with practical skills development and knowledge sharing to maximize low income community members' potential for addressing those challenges head on.

## Tenant Working Groups

This program developed organically from our leadership workshops, trainings and meetings. Participants of the Leadership Schools who identified landlord and tenant issues as their primary concern work within our tenant working group model of civic engagement to build working groups with other concerned tenants in the neighbourhood, to focus specifically on these issues and address the root causes.

Within this model, working groups build partnerships with other community stakeholders to bring their concerns to a larger stage. The groups work on local issues specific to their community, as well as joining their efforts with those of other tenant working groups to create structural change on a grander scale.

The tenant working group model allows participants to learn about specific civic processes on multiple levels, and how to successfully engage with government processes to improve conditions in their neighbourhoods.

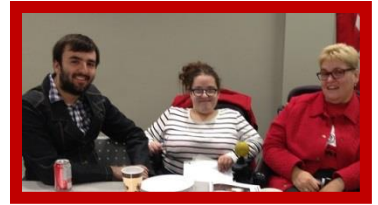


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## Financial Literacy

One of the key areas of leadership development within low income communities is understanding personal finances and how to access and maintain financial resources. AIC partners with banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions – as well as our institutional funders – to undertake a variety of financial literacy programs aimed at low income families.

Through financial literacy classes, we have provided guidance on how to avoid predatory lending practices, understanding tax benefits, and various other concerns as identified by participants. We are continuing to expand our ongoing projects and developing new partnerships in this area to meet the needs of our communities.



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## Highlights from 2014

- From April 10th to 13th, community leaders from our leadership development program from across Canada came together in Ottawa for a national Leadership School. Participants from Vancouver to Halifax came together to share ideas and challenges and to build skills to bring back to their communities.
- Our Financial Literacy program continued to grow in 2014, with the support of our community partners. We were able to help hundreds of low income families to file their taxes in BC, Ontario and Nova Scotia, as well as providing guidance on personal financial management.
- Thanks to continued funding from the Atkinson Foundation, we were able to grow our ongoing leadership development project in Ontario, engaging community members from key low-income neighbourhoods in Toronto and Ottawa to participate in “train the trainer” workshops focused on community-identified issues such as healthy homes and digital access.

