

ACORN Canada's Free Income Tax Site

ACORN Free income tax sites serve as a storefront for ACORN Canada's social and economic justice efforts.

ACORN Canada's free income tax site are a staggering success, ensuring low income Canadians get every penny that is owed to them through the tax refunds, credits, and benefits.

Over 7 years we have returned an estimated \$24 million to the low income neighbourhoods we service.

Location	Returns in 2013	Returns since 2007	Estimated Money Returned into low-to-moderate income communities
Metro Vancouver	3,118	12,072	\$16,986,265
Toronto`	654	1,961	\$2,579,048
Ottawa	816	3,436	\$4,477,707
National Total	4,588	17,469	\$24,043,020

The money alone is only half the story!

The full success come from the deep engagement of the people we serve into our organization and our cutting edge financial justice campaigns.

To illustrate we'd like to introduce you to Pascal Apuwa. Pascal first came as a new refugee into Canada from his home in Kenya. He was referred to the tax site from the Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture. After completing his taxes by one of our volunteers Pascal talked to one of our community organizers to learn more about our organization. Pascal liked what he heard about our successful campaigns and organizational structure, and he decided that he wanted to get involved!



Pascal helped spearhead our historic Living Wage campaign in New Westminster – which led to Canada's first and only municipal Living Wage Policy. Soon after that he took a national leadership role in developing our Remittance Justice Campaign, which seeks to regulate a 5% cap on the same money transfer industry that charges him \$18 to send \$100 back to his family living in the mega-slums outside of Nairobi. During this Pascal has led meetings with top executives

from both the federal Ministry of Finance and Western Union.

Pascal's story of engagement and leadership development is not unique. It has been replicated at our free income tax site time and time again, making this intake, service-based model of community organizing a new way of developing a deep base of progressive leaders in low income communities in Canada.

In 2013 our New Westminster office in Metro Vancouver lead the way doing 3,118 tax returns, returning a whopping \$4.3 million into communities across the lower mainland of BC.

Toronto filed over 650 tax returns, contributing \$800,000 into our communities. Ottawa ACORN did over 800 returns, getting \$1 million back circulating in communities in the nation's capital.

Since 2007, ACORN Canada has filed 17,469 tax returns from across the country, returning over \$24 million to the community.

The key to the success of the tax site is our unique outreach to low income communities. By speaking directly to people we are able to capture people who, against their own financial interests, do not do their taxes on a regular basis. Of the 17,000 tax returns we have done, over 22% of those are for previous years' taxes. ***This is important to note because it clearly shows that ACORN's free tax sites have gotten over 4 million dollars into low income communities that would otherwise go unclaimed.*** This direct financial literacy not only educates people on the benefits of doing taxes, but follows up by getting them the money they are entitled to.

Plans are in the works to open two new tax sites in 2014. One will be a secondary site in south Vancouver to service the overflow from our main ACORN office in New Westminster, which has been running at full capacity 6 days a week during the last two tax seasons. The other will be in Halifax, where our new upstart organization will be offering the service for the first time.

Overall the tax site marries ACORN's effective outreach with direct financial literacy and our unique financial justice campaigns resulting in an energetic hub of benefits and social justice!