



# ANNUAL REPORT



FY 2013-2014

*CFI Canada's mission is to provide education and training to the public in the application of skeptical, secular, rational and humanistic inquiry through conferences, symposia, lectures, published works and the maintenance of a library. Charitable Registration Number: 83364 2614 RR0001*

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## National Executive Director's Report

### STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

The period October 2013 to September 2014 was a year of significant change for Centre for Inquiry Canada (CFIC). In many ways it was a period of reflection and renewal on our charitable mandate as well as a period of structural adjustment to fulfill the promises of the CFIC's unique and important vision. Just a few strategic highlights include: recruitment and orientation of a new National Executive Director (yours truly), finalization of new organization bylaws in compliance with the federal legislation, implementation of Conduct and Values documents, relocation of the national headquarters, re-organization of the Board of Directors along program lines (Human Rights, Education and Science), website and social media development, database changes, completion of priority-setting consultations, implementation of new donor database system, and not least – a containment of financial obligations which were not sustainable.

When I arrived in March 2014, I advised the Board and members that the remainder of calendar 2014 would be devoted to addressing challenges and preparing for growth. Strategically, this administrative groundwork was essential for the year we are now undertaking.

### FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Financially, CFIC was troubled by several key challenges; these challenges were analyzed and solutions implemented across the 2014 calendar year (i.e. Reaching into the current fiscal period).

**Memberships:** While CFIC had a database of over 7500 email contacts, only a few hundred were paying for their membership; those that were often subscribed to magazines under a scheme which generated a net loss for the organization. As has been reported to the organization previously, membership continues to increase month-over-month with a target in the current calendar year of surpassing 500 paid members.

**Un-sustainable Financial Commitments:** CFIC had accumulated a variety of un-sustainable financial commitments as well as financial commitments which were not yielding gains for the organization. During the period April through to September 2014, these commitments were cancelled or changed to contain CFIC's monthly expenditures to a level which is financially sustainable. Examples included replacement of a software product costing thousands in Quarterly payments with a simpler to operate package that was paid for with a single payment. Similarly, the CFIC office was relocated to a more professional and useful environment with costs similar to the previous premise.

2013-14 was a year to bring the financial operation of the organization into control.

### OPERATING HIGHLIGHTS

I am particularly proud and pleased of the work done by the branches and the volunteers to advance the operations of the organization. This work began with a renewed focus on our human rights, education and science mandate. CFIC is a "big tent" secular organization and it can be a challenge to address the full-range

# CENTRE FOR INQUIRY CANADA

of interests and concerns that fit in that mandate but I am confident in my assertion that CFIC is Canada's fastest-growing and most progressive secular organization in Canada.

## **CFIC Is Canada's Community for Skepticism and Secularism.**

### LOOKING AHEAD

Given that 2013-2014 was a year of re-organization and renewal, we can expect the current fiscal year (October 2014-September 2015) to be a year of growth and change. I urge the Board and Council to recall that this has been my consistent message throughout my brief tenure as National Executive Director. Already CFIC has assumed a new level of leadership in the Canadian and global secular community. In the first several months of the new fiscal year:

- CFIC invited Humanist Canada to participate in a strategically important meeting with Ambassador Andrew Bennett from Canada's Office of Religious Freedom
- CFIC was the leader of a national strategy to oppose Canada's blasphemous libel law – thousands of Canadians are now aware of Canada's blasphemy law
- CFIC was a founder and leader of the International Coalition Against Blasphemy Laws which has resulted in our partnership in the End Blasphemy Laws website with IHEU
- CFIC proposed a partnership with the Chilliwack School board to circulate a Critical Thinking textbook to Grade 5 students – results of this project have recently been published on our website
- CFIC spoke out to oppose the incursion of pseudo-science and religion in healthcare and education through targeted campaigns
- CFIC launched or continued: Secular Seminar Series, Kids For Inquiry, Living Without Religion and other social support services
- CFIC continued speaking engagements
- CFIC repatriated Canada's largest dedicated secular library to our National office.
- CFIC is in negotiation with a US-based organization to provide the "History of Vaccines" program in Canada
- Canada is in negotiation to offer the Secular Disaster Recovery Campaigns Canada

There is too much to list everything that is happening at CFIC! CFIC is positioned to be Canada's backbone and strategy leader in Canadian skepticism and secularism.

There are also far too many people who deserve my expressed thanks. In the year since I joined CFIC, I have had the privilege to meet approximately 200 of CFIC's volunteers and members. Every volunteer, councilor, board member, donor and member has helped me to understand the organization and its vital task. Each and every person I've spoken to or connected with via email has helped to remind me of the importance of critical thinking and reason and of the very fundamental freedoms and rights that CFI Canada and its volunteers have the rare courage to defend. There are a few people, however, that I feel I must recognize by name as giving me a particularly warm and supportive welcome

# CENTRE FOR INQUIRY CANADA

- Veronica Abbass
- Diane Bruce
- Gary Fitzgibbon
- Kendra Getty
- Suzi Hansen
- Jamie Loo
- Christopher Myrick
- Pat O'Brien
- Zena Ryder
- Greg Stott
- Barbara Trott
- Seanna Watson
- Jeff Ainslie
- Kalen Christensen
- Evan Frank
- Mike Gray
- Rosina Kamis
- Mark Maharaj
- Joanna Nguyen-Truong
- Genessa Radke
- Tim Rose
- Mark Taylor
- Lorne Trottier
- Shawn Wilson
- Joan Bancroft
- Sergio De Lara
- Robert French
- Christopher Hammock
- Yusuf Kidwai
- Wil McDowall
- Constant Ouapo
- Danielle Russell
- Kevin Smith
- Richard Thain

Eric Adriaans  
National Executive Director  
March 28, 2015

## Board Chair Report

At our last AGM, Eric Adriaans had just begun his post as our new NED. Eric has now been NED for one full year. During that time CFIC has witnessed many positive changes. I refer to this past year as a re-building of our foundations. Many of the challenges we were facing are typical of any small organization. Eric has done a tremendous job of repairing them.

It was imperative that we hire someone whose primary experience was in the charitable sector. Obviously, someone who was sympathetic to our mandate was crucial but at that time our organization needed guidance to evolve. And we are fortunate that Eric has also immersed himself in secular and scientific initiatives, having written several articles for our website and Canadian Atheist - and is representing CFIC at the CFI Transnational Conference in Amherst June 2015.

We are now in a good place. The best place we have been since our inception - ready to move to the next level of growth.

There is a new optimism in branches right across the country. We are seeing old volunteers return and new ones join us. What I have always envisioned, and I believe my fellow Board members agree as critical for our growth, was to present ourselves as a professional organization - and appeal not only to those who would naturally be attracted to us (the out of the closet atheists,, humanists, skeptics and secularists) - but millions of Canadians who have previously never heard of us, who wouldn't necessarily label themselves as such, but still consider themselves non-religious or secular (whose numbers are rising at an incredible rate).

Eric sent me an email recently from a person who read something in the media about CFI Canada. He stated that he wouldn't label himself as an atheist but was not religious and appreciated our secular mandate in relation to our human rights initiatives. He is interested in getting involved. This person is a person of considerable position and influence in the community. This type of communication suggests that we are on the right track. We are attracting people who are leaders in our society and as we continue to work on high-level issues we will continue to attract leaders and average Canadians. This is not to suggest that CFIC will turn into an elite organization. We began as a grassroots community of freethinkers and we will always remain as such. Eric can attest to the hundreds of emails from Canadians thanking us for representing their voice.

We are also gaining respect and influence with government agencies such as the Office of Religious Freedom. Eric and I met with Ambassador Andrew Bennet in December 2014. As a result of that cordial yet frank meeting with him, the Ambassador published a media release condemning the flogging of Raif Badawi, the Saudi blogger. During that crucial and sensitive time, CFIC connected Mr. Bennett with Raif's wife - who is living with her children as a refugee in Sherbrooke, Quebec.

On a personal note, I was extremely proud to represent CFI Canada at the MCC Church in Toronto a few weeks ago (MCC is Canada's largest and most influential LGBTQ church) to participate with a Rabbi, an Iman and a Christian pastor, Brent Hawkes, in a multi-faith invocation for the new Toronto Mayor, John Tory, and

city councillors. I was invited by Brent in recognition of the human rights work we have done for LGBTQ people not only in Canada but around the world. It is this kind of recognition that we are starting to witness across the country - be it with our human rights, science or educational mandate.

In closing, I want to thank Mike Gray for his time this past year as a Board member and to Veronica Abbass. Both of them are leaving their roles as Board members. Veronica has been a close colleague of mine on the Board and I look forward to her continuing work on our global blasphemy law initiative.

Kevin Smith, Board Chair

## Program Highlights

### HUMAN RIGHTS (VERONICA ABBASS CHAIR)

- Priority-setting process August-September
- End Blasphemy Laws Campaign
- International Coalition Against Blasphemy Laws
- Secular Seminar Series – Prayers in Public Spaces
- Responses to Member and Community Inquiries
- Responses to Faith-Based Bigotry and Violence
- Office of Religious Freedom: Raif Badawi
- Support of Dying With Dignity
- Boko Haram
- New Canadians & Refugee Project

### EDUCATION ( DOROTHY HAYS AND SEANNA WATSON CHAIRS)

- Priority-setting process August-September
- Living Without Religion – teleconference test
- Addictions and Sobriety Programs
- Speakers
- CFIC Library
- Teaching the Controversy Video Series launched
- Kids for Inquiry

### SCIENCE (MIKE GRAY CHAIR)

- Priority-setting process August-September
- Inquiries into pseudo-science in health and education: CMI, Celsius T42 TCS, University of Toronto
- Relaunch of “Extraordinary Claims” website
- Religion as a Vector for Health Hazards: Catholic School Board, Catholic Church in Africa, Vaccinations
- Launch of Consumer Education and Advocacy Focus



# CENTRE FOR INQUIRY CANADA

## BRANCHES

In 2013-2014 our key accomplishments and programs included:

BRANCH	PROJECTS
<b>Vancouver</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skeptics in the Pub</li> <li>• Meeting of the minds</li> <li>• College of Medical Intuition Inquiry leadership</li> <li>• Chilliwack School District Inquiry</li> </ul>
<b>Okanagan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speakers: Richard Carrier</li> <li>• Local Protests and Activism</li> <li>• Significant increase in the number of people volunteering</li> <li>• Building on relationships with other organizations in the community</li> <li>• Held our first collaborative event with the student group, UBCO Skeptics — an Ask An Atheist event, which had a great turnout.</li> <li>• Collaborated with the local community college to screen the documentary, We Were Children, about the church-run residential schools.</li> <li>• Ongoing collaborative relationship with the Okanagan Jewish Community Centre, where we co-host regular presentations. (Most recently, in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo killings, we held one about freedom of expression and its limits.)</li> <li>• CFI Okanagan continues to support the local SMART Recovery group — an empirically grounded alternative to the higher power approach of AA. A couple of regular attendees have now undertaken training and are starting up their own groups.</li> <li>• Held our annual “Good Without God” winter clothing drive, which was very successful. And our sewing group is currently busy making lots of toys for the children of those who seek help from the Kelowna Women’s Shelter. The toys will be delivered this summer.</li> <li>• Held a potluck and Woo-woo contest, regular educational kids’ events, field trips, a 206th birthday party for Charles Darwin, twice monthly pub nights, and plenty of educational events for adults as well.</li> <li>• Our biggest goal for the coming year is to put in place a steering committee so that we can have more volunteer continuity and commitment, and so that we are better able to make use of all the volunteer time and talent that we have available to us.</li> <li>• Richard Carrier Event (October 2014)</li> <li>• Boko Haram media tracking and leadership</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Saskatoon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speakers: Richard Carrier</li> <li>• Pride Event</li> <li>• Public presentation by Richard Carrier (October 16, 2014)</li> <li>• Annual public Darwin Day celebrations (February 12)</li> </ul>

# CENTRE FOR INQUIRY CANADA

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pride parade walking group and community fair table</li><li>• Monthly discussion meetings with local guest speakers or facilitators</li><li>• Bimonthly banned book club discussions</li><li>• Monthly pub nights</li><li>• Continued partners for life blood donations, Kiva micro-loans funding</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Regina</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speakers: Richard Carrier</li><li>• Pride Event</li><li>• Skeptics In the Pub monthly events</li><li>• Book Exchanges</li><li>• Screening of Letting Go of God by Julia Sweeney</li><li>• Darwin Day, including videos, trivia, interactive games and lots of prizes.</li><li>• Comedy and Magic night featuring magican Trevor Moore and supporting acts by Harris Khan and Adam Lojewsky.</li><li>• Provided \$1,530 to the local radiothon, which supported the Neo-natal intensive care unit, while fundraising in the Comedy and Magic night.</li><li>• Began a \$250 scholarship for the Regina Regional Science Fair.</li><li>• Screened weekly Cosmos nights throughout its entire first season</li><li>• Held a presentation by Dr. William Arnal on Conceiving Jesus.</li><li>• Supported the Queen City Pride Parade, as well as printed banners both for national and local use in parades like this.</li><li>• Secular summer solstice, complete with barbeque, games and more.</li><li>• Movie night (The Giver)</li><li>• A very popular and annual favourite, Festivus.</li></ul>
<b>Calgary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speakers: Richard Carrier, Timothy Caulfield</li></ul>
<b>Sudbury</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Ottawa</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pride Event</li><li>• National Protests and Activism: Raif Badawi and Uganda legislation</li></ul>
<b>Toronto</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speakers: Bob Ripley, Dan Falk, Carolyn Hyppolite</li><li>• Winter Solstice Event</li><li>• December 25 Open House</li><li>• Carl Sagan Day</li><li>• Darwin Day</li><li>• Living Without Religion</li><li>• Café Skeptique</li><li>• Atheists and Friends (Skeptics in the Pub)</li><li>• Monthly Science and Philosophy Book Club</li></ul>

- Eugenie Scott lunch, James Randi dinner, Pierre Desrocher (speaker)
- Friday Afternoon get-together

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## Montreal

- Pride Event
- Skeptics in the Pub

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## Halifax

- Skeptics in the Pub
  - Joggins Exploration Trip
  - Planetarium Visit
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## Donors, Supporters and Members

CFI Canada relies on the support of volunteers, donors and members. CFIC receives no government funding or corporate support. In 2013/2014, generous support has been received from a variety of persons. To respect privacy and confidentiality, we are not publishing names at this time.

### Facts and Figures

- CFI Canada has a supporter base of more than **6000** individual supporters across Canada.
- The subscribing membership base of CFI Canada (Friends of the Centre For Inquiry Canada) has increased from 345 to more than **425** members between Fall 2014 and Spring 2015.
- CFIC's Voting membership has increased from 17 to **21** members; this group presents a gender balance of 11 men and 10 women and includes representation from **6** provinces
- **10** Branches across Canada
- Social Media follower peak of more than 7000 (Facebook) and peak readership of more than 100,000

**CFI Canada is Your Community for Skepticism and Secularism**

**.....In 2015 we are GROWING.**

## Company Information

Centre For Inquiry Canada

55 Eglinton Avenue East – Suite 307, Toronto, ON M4P 1G8

Tel 416-971-5676

[www.centreforinquiry.ca](http://www.centreforinquiry.ca)

