



My name is **Ricky Rodrigues** and I am seventeen years old. I was twelve when I first told my mother that I was gay. Two years later I came out to my friends, peers and the rest of my family. I currently volunteer with Planned Parenthood Toronto's T.E.A.C.H (Teens Educating and Confronting Homophobia) program where I facilitate anti-homophobia workshops in schools and other community settings across the city. T.E.A.C.H is one of the best things that has ever happened to me for it has brought so much to my life, including my unforgettable experience at Project Acorn.



Project Acorn is a leadership retreat for youth aged 16-24 from LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirit, queer) communities, including youth from LGBTQ families and/or youth who identify as LGBTQ.

Project Acorn is a program of the Ten Oaks Project.



The most powerful experience for me while at Project Acorn was **Across the Tiles**. During this all-camp activity, different identity descriptions were read and, after each one, those who felt that they could relate to the identity moved towards the center of the circle. With each identity, I was able to see how I was connected to other people and how others were connected to each other. Even though there would only be a few people in the circle at times, their/our solidarity was tremendously powerful.

Project Acorn has had a major impact on my life. Through the numerous activities and workshops I took part in, I have a **better understanding of who I am** and how I am affected by the people and the environments surrounding me. I have also gained great insight into how we are all connected. Knowing this, I feel that I have the ability to continue to lead a happy and healthy life and that I can take part in the collective movement towards a safer and more inclusive and positive world.



[www.tenoaksproject.org](http://www.tenoaksproject.org)