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123 20th Street West
Saskatoon, SK S7M 0W7

Phone: (306) 657-6100
Fax: (306) 384-0520

Email: info@classiclaw.ca
Website: www.classiclaw.ca

A Word from Our Executive Director: Truth and Reconciliation Training for Legal Practitioners **Chantelle Johnson**



I recently attended “Truth and Reconciliation Training for Legal Practitioners” offered by the Law Society of Saskatchewan. The training was both enlightening and affirming. This was hands-down the most engaging and useful training I have ever received as part of “Continuing Professional Development” for the legal profession. Perhaps the fact that it affirmed what we are trying to do at CLASSIC also made me feel positive about the day. CLASSIC is not your traditional law firm – nor do we aim to be. For once training for the legal profession affirmed CLASSIC’s approach and questioned the status quo.

The training was taught by leading academics and Elders. Professor Aimée Craft (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls) and Professor John Burrows (University of Victoria) walked attendees through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action and through the realities of Canada’s colonial history. The second part of the day included Circle Teachings and the Impact of Colonialism, which was led by Maria Campbell (University of Saskatchewan) and Professor Winona Wheeler (University of Saskatchewan). I must admit that the second part of the day had an air of familiarity and more affirmations for CLASSIC attendees as Maria Campbell is our Cultural Advisor and sits on our Board of Directors. We love Maria and her teachings! Often Maria will do circle teachings with our students, as part of their experiential learning. The circular thinking and teachings of Indigenous Canadians are inclusive, collective, and very unlike the linear individualism promoted by the dominant society.

In order to move towards reconciliation we must learn about, and accept the truth about Canada's colonial history and then try to do something about it. The training day was affirming for CLASSIC because this is exactly what we try to do in our practice and with our experiential learning model.

At CLASSIC through our Walk-in-Advocacy Clinic (WAC) we try to weave the threads of our clients' lived experience throughout the fabric of their files and legal argument. Through our Systemic Initiatives Program (SIP) we try to address systemic issues many of which are linked to Canada's colonial history and the current "fall-out" that negatively impacts groups of people, as a result. Now here is the hitch – many of the people we encounter through our work (lawyers, government officials, the judiciary, etc.) do not think like us. Everyone operates within a system and if we do not conform to the system they are comfortable with, we are seen as radical or pesky. We have been told "yeah, yeah, you don't need to talk about Gladue, we know", all the way to "your fluff arguments are not legally sound and are a waste of our time".

The point is – our "fluff legal arguments" and programming around systemic issues intend to address the problems with the status quo. We want to work towards a society of reconciliation for all members and not just one that's good for the "over-privileged" (yes – we talk about over-privilege at CLASSIC, and not just under-privileged folks).

Truth and Reconciliation Training for the Legal Profession confirmed to me that we need to keep doing what we've set out to do at CLASSIC – despite the fact that other members of the legal community may

consider us to be "out there" from time to time. We are "out there" when it comes to the legal system. This is because the legal system does not work for our clients. In fact, most systems have not worked for our clients at all – i.e. the residential school system – not a smashing success. CLASSIC is here to tell our clients' stories, treat them like human beings and to empower clients to make decisions on their own files.

All of us must be committed to the ultimate goal of reconciliation. We may have to do hard things. We may have to question the current way of doing things. At CLASSIC, we ask the other parties to entertain our "fluff approach to law". We are trying to empower our clients, and not just treat them as cogs to be churned through another system that doesn't work for them.

Karaoke & Lip Sync Battle

By Kim Pidskalny



On February 9th, CLASSIC held a FUNdraiser, the first ever CLASSIC Karaoke & Lip Sync Battle!

It was a sold out event with over 200 guests, 17 performances, 3 guest judges, 1 cool host, and an amazing venue. A huge thanks goes out to Capitol Music Club for lending us their venue and to Greggor from 98 Cool FM for hosting the event that was



an enormous success. The grand total raised from the event was \$21,529.00 for CLASSIC!

The night was filled with hoots and hollas, endless laughter, and even a tear jerking proposal. (Congratulations to Jonathan and Marti!) One the most notable performances of the night was put on by Saskatoon's very own musician, Jorgina Sunn, whose spectacular performance won the People's Choice. In addition, there were many fun prizes given out, and items auctioned off. Thank you to the volunteers, all those individuals and businesses who donated prizes and auction items to this unforgettable event! Before the night was over, several guests approached CLASSIC staff and students already buzzing about what they already knew they would



perform next year so keep an eye out and get your tickets early for next year's event which is sure to be another sold out show!



MY EXPERIENCE AT CLASSIC

Tanisi! My name is Lawren Trotchie and I am one of the three student managers for the 2016-2017 year at CLASSIC. The purpose of this piece is to talk about my experience at CLASSIC as my term with this organization shortly comes to an end.

For a bit of background, I am the first person in my family to attend law school and to attend post-secondary for that matter. CLASSIC has become what I call my legal family. CLASSIC has opened their doors to me on a number of occasions, from volunteering with the Legal Advice Clinic (LAC), working with the Walk-in-Advocacy Clinic (WAC), as Student Manager, to my work with their Systemic Initiatives Program (SIP). I have been quite fortunate and blessed for the opportunities that CLASSIC has given me, without this organization I don't know where I would be.

What I learned at CLASSIC has been invaluable. I have learned more in one month at CLASSIC during my summer experience than I did in the entire year of first year law school. I like to say "All that I learned about the law in its practical sense

is from CLASSIC.” That says a lot about what CLASSIC has to offer.

Perhaps the most valuable opportunity that I have had with CLASSIC is to simply be a part of its community. The staff members within the walls of CLASSIC are the real MVP’s. Day after day they come to work to not only teach students like me, but to provide services to those who are the most vulnerable within our society. Poverty law is complex, it is not easily defined and sometimes it means the most important part of your day is just listening even when your day is full. CLASSIC’s community extends beyond their walls. Many volunteer lawyers and students across the city have witnessed firsthand the pertinence of CLASSIC services in our community.

As an Indigenous student, I cannot say enough about how welcome and honoured I am to have been a part of a place where they “just get it.” They get the importance of teaching students, they get the importance of having an elder on staff, they get the importance of engaging with their community, and most importantly, they get the importance of having to go the extra mile sometimes.

CLASSIC is home to me. It’s a place where I have been grounded time and time again.

I would like to thank the Staff, the supervising lawyers, the professors, and Chantelle for what they have given me. No words could ever summarize or thank you all enough for this experience, it has been truly invaluable.

Until next time CLASSIC; you have been good to me.

THOUGHTS AS A STUDENT MANAGER

你好! My name is Taylor-Anne Yee, and I am one of the three student managers for the 2016-2017 year. I have been with CLASSIC since my first year, starting with the Systemic Initiatives Program (SIP). Since then, I have worked at CLASSIC as a summer student, first as a case worker, and then as a student manager the second time around.

What impact has CLASSIC had on me? Like Lawren, I am the first person in my family to



Student Managers at the College Career Forum, 2017 (Taylor-Anne Yee, Lawren Trotchie & Tyler Evans)

attend law school. I was completely new to the legal world, and it was quite overwhelming at first, but CLASSIC quickly became a place in which I could feel at home. As someone who went to law school to work on social and environmental issues, CLASSIC gave me a way to express my values, and kept me grounded during the intense periods of law school. With CLASSIC, I had the opportunity to experience the legal system and how it impacts people in poverty.

What impact has CLASSIC had on other students? CLASSIC shows students the important role they can play in the community as legal advocates. Many students may not have any close experiences with poverty or other social issues, but CLASSIC gives them a chance to learn invaluable lessons about themselves and their city. Students learn how they can empower their own communities, and that social issues affect everyone. Working at CLASSIC is challenging, not just because the work is intellectually demanding, but because of the poor social realities we see many people experience, it can be emotional draining as well. I am always so proud of all the students I see who go through CLASSIC.

What did the student managers do this year? This year, we wanted to have a strong presence on campus in order to connect better with both CLASSIC and non-CLASSIC students. For example, we established office hours for the on-campus CLASSIC office, and had meet-and-greets in the office (with home-made cinnamon buns!) so that students got more familiar with us and our location. We also attended the student career forum to support students during their networking. In addition, we did some community outreach, which included tabling for Welcome to the Gaybourhood during Saskatoon's Pride festival, and doing presentations at Rainbow 50+ and the YWCA.

Saying goodbye for now. We greatly value the positive relationship we have with students and the College, and all of the support we've received, whether through volunteering or financial support. I look forward to seeing this relationship with the

College and its students grow even stronger in the future.

Most of all, I am incredibly thankful to CLASSIC for teaching me practical legal skills and how I can use them in the community, and challenging me to be a stronger advocate. CLASSIC is an amazing organization that not only provides services to community members, but they do the difficult work of trying to address the root causes of social issues. Happy 10th Anniversary, CLASSIC, and thank you!

A STUDENT MANAGER GOODBYE

My name is Tyler Evans and I am one of the three student managers at CLASSIC during the 2016-2017 school year. I'm currently in the third (and final) year of my studies at the University of Saskatchewan College of Law.

My experience at CLASSIC began in my very first year of law school. As someone with no real connections to the legal world I felt that I needed to find a way to connect with the legal profession outside of the College setting in order to get a sense for what the future could hold for me as a lawyer. CLASSIC, by all accounts, provided this experience for me in a way I couldn't have imagined.

In my first year I was active at CLASSIC in the Walk-in Advocacy Clinic. I was involved with completing permanent residency applications, providing assistance in relation to Residential Tenancies matters as well as appearing at Provincial Court. It was, without a doubt, a steep learning curve for a first year law student! However, the steep learning curve provided me with the opportunity to quickly learn about professionalism, legal procedure, client-

lawyer relationships and, of course, the intricacies of the different areas of the law.

My experience in second year went a step further. I took part in the Intensive Clinical Program at CLASSIC. This program allowed me to receive a full term's worth of credits towards my law degree while working at CLASSIC four days a week, participating in a weekly seminar and completing a major paper. This period of study was incredibly rewarding and provided me with a more in-depth experience to the one I received in my first year as a volunteer.

In the summer between second and third year I was hired on as a Student Manager at CLASSIC and was able to dive even deeper into the CLASSIC experience. This position as student manager extended on into my third year of law school. As one of the Student Managers I had to learn quickly about personnel management, as well as the new areas of law I was exposed to as I continued my role as a Case Worker. This was not an easy transition since it went beyond simply working on files. This experience provided me insight into what it is like to work and manage a Law Firm, to work with people who have a common goal and, as a person in leadership, help to shape what the goal looks like. I was able to work closely with Lawren and Taylor as well as Chantelle Johnson, Kim Pidskalny and Joilene Whitehead as they managed the daily challenges of running a legal clinic. It was especially inspiring to help them manage an organization which has a two-fold focus: serving clients and educating students. This focus is unique to CLASSIC in many respects and the challenge of balancing the two objectives is a constant challenge around the office, one which I

enjoyed being a part of and speaking into as a Student Manager.



During my time as a Student Manager and Case Worker I gathered experience and knowledge that I would not have otherwise been able to obtain. One example of this is the intricacies and fluidity of Evidence Law. In the classroom setting I learned about the "rules of evidence". At CLASSIC I learned how the "rules of evidence" should probably more accurately be characterized as the "guidelines of evidence" or "the way some judges like to think about evidence." Working at CLASSIC allowed me to see this early on in my legal career and has already begun to shape how I communicate with clients and craft arguments, whether appearing before an administrative tribunal, provincial court, or otherwise.

I know that as I begin my articles this summer and continue on in my legal career that I will feel the influence CLASSIC's supervising lawyers and staff has had on me. They have helped to shape me into the person I am today and the lawyer I will be in the future. The University of Saskatchewan, College of Law is lucky to have such a robust partnership with CLASSIC and I, along with hundreds of students and thousands of clients, am fortunate to have benefited from that relationship. As an organization who builds its students into fine young lawyers, CLASSIC is, indeed, worth its weight in gold.

CHIEF WEIGHILL VISITS CLASSIC

Saskatoon Chief of Police Clive Weighill visited us as CLASSIC on March 21st. Chief Weighill's visit was an important reminder to us that though we at CLASSIC often see negative interactions between our clients and the police, the institution as a whole is still trying to look out for everyone, including the impoverished. Chief Weighill described Saskatoon as lacking the appropriate infrastructure to provide reasonable treatment for members of our society with substance addictions. He expressed a feeling of "hands being tied" in that the police are willing to use the legislation in place to avoid locking individuals up when there is a better option, but in Saskatoon we don't have any better options. It is refreshing to know that Saskatoon's current Chief of Police has the best interest of Saskatoon citizens in mind when making decisions, and is actively fighting to improve the options available to those who need them. - **James Hataley**

We recently had the opportunity to speak to the Chief of Police, Clive Weighill. Throughout discussions with the Police Chief, I was surprised to learn that his stance on crime prevention is not so different from that of CLASSIC. He touched on the lack of social programming to support individuals in their rehabilitation and he echoed the sentiment that many times intervention for individuals comes too late. Instead of attempting to address the root cause of crime, we are left with over-policing individuals who are embroiled in a cycle of oppression. Often times, the police is seen as the enemy in the over-incarceration of minorities. However, Police Chief Weighill reiterated the need for the community to work together in solving the

problem and his commitment to being an ally. I enjoyed the fact that the forum was more personal, with the students being able to ask the Police Chief questions in a direct manner. I also appreciated how willing the Police Chief was to answer questions on difficult topics. Although there is much work to be done to initiate change, especially in the realm of policy, this sharing of information and exchange of dialogue is important in quelling misconceptions that might act as a hurdle to change. - **Suninder "Soni" Dhaliwal**

In the ongoing struggle to enhance access to justice for marginalized folks in Saskatoon, it is critical to form alliances within the community. This is why CLASSIC relies

heavily on the efforts of other community organizations –

organizations who strive to empower those living in the margins - to fulfill its own mandate of providing legal advice and representation to those who cannot afford it. Sometimes, if invitations are offered, and those invitations are accepted, you find allies in seemingly unlikely spaces. This was the case when Chief of Police, Clive Weighill, came to visit CLASSIC this week on behalf of the Saskatoon Police Service. If you closed your eyes while Chief Weighill was speaking, his crisp police uniform fading away into an abyss of utter reasonableness and justice, then you would find his reflections on crime and poverty in Saskatoon echoed many of the access to justice principles we learn every day from our clients' day-to-day struggles.



Chief Weighill identified that crime in Saskatoon cannot be solved by building more jails or placing more people behind bars. According to Chief Weighill, until we address the social problems that plague Saskatoon, our community will continue upon the perpetual cycles of normalized poverty, addiction, and violence we have come to observe all too regularly. Chief Weighill offered solutions and they nearly all relate to more funding for community organizations. Chief Weighill advocated for adequate funding for alternative measures to incarceration, homeless shelters, addiction counseling, and family services. His rhetoric is an implicit rebuke of a short-sighted political culture that fails to think with long-term perspective. If people want a safer Saskatchewan, then the province must invest in Saskatoon.

Until the province steps up and funds the underlying causes of poverty and crime, these cycles that predominantly affect indigenous peoples, will not improve. Hey politicians! Listen! It's not just community organizations with bleeding hearts that are calling for adequate funding for community initiatives... it is the Chief of Police, for goodness sakes! Perhaps, you should heed Chief Weighill's calls and leadership. Or, if you so choose, we can continue to place the burden upon increasingly underfunded community organizations to make our community safe and hope that it will just work itself out!

Thank you for coming to CLASSIC, Chief Weighill and thank you for your continued efforts at reform. Please continue to try and penetrate the political deafness to stress that societal change is possible if we invest in the well-being of our community. At CLASSIC, we will do what we can do support

these same initiatives (well, until our funding dries up entirely... then you are on your own, Chief Weighill). - **Scott Silver**

THE CLASSIC EXPERIENCE

By Ellen McCarville

I could not have asked for a better experience than the one I had at CLASSIC. I learned so much about myself during the Intensive. It confirmed my resolve to practice criminal law. It made me re-evaluate my preconceived notions about systemic injustice. It forced me to keep perspective about my abilities as an advocate and the realities of practicing law. I learned how to speak to clients, making sure their story was heard. I hope that every student who wants to spend a semester here gets the opportunity to do so. Amanda, Brenda, and Nicholas are amazing mentors. To me, they demonstrate what every day zealous advocacy looks like. Finishing law school at CLASSIC was such a gift and I'm grateful that I was given the chance.



Back L to R: Alexandra Santos, Laura Sayer, Azaad Bharmul, Kelsey Elliott, Nitara Kuzak, Krystin Wang, Kelsey Corrigan, Ahmed Mudathir, and James Hataley. Front L to R: Ellen McCarville, Scott Silver, Annie Quangtakoune, Kelsey Clark, and Soni Dhaliwal.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all our supporters of the many events of CLASSIC. We have had the Karaoke/Lip Sync Battle, Just Rights Runraiser, Just Rights Art Auction, and the Christmas 50/50 draws.

Thanks to the following individual donors:

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Running Room, Odd Couple, Canadian Bar Association, Novus Law Group, The Teachers Trunk Store, McKercher LLP, Saskatchewan Trial Lawyers Association, Law Students Association, JRT Excavating, Concept Saskatchewan, Robert Kennedy Legal Services Prof. Corp., Complete Technologies, Keir Vallance, Kristen Greenough, Indigenous Law Students Association, Peter Thorpe, Sarah Burningham, Lori Johnstone-Clarke Law Office, B.R. Pfefferle Legal Prof. Corp., Peszko & Watson Barristers & Solicitors, Hnatyshyn Gough Barristers & Solicitors, Astro Jump Rentals, NorthStream, Brainsport, Bev and Vic Dubois, Barry Singer, Float YXE, Leyda's, Colours Hair Design & Esthetics, Famoso, Northern Spirit Flute, Sutter Ceramics, The Better Good Store, The Hollows, Starbucks, Picture Perfect, Lofty Ladies, The Roxy Theatre, Frakas, Glittersaurus Jewellery, Hazlewood,

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NorthStream & CJC, Kelsey Elliott, Night Oven, Scarlet Restaurant (Sheraton), C95, Rock 102, 650 CKOM, Capitol Music Club and Greggor with 98 Cool.



CLASSIC's Services
123 20th Street West
306-657-6100

CLASSIC's **WALK-IN ADVOCACY CLINIC** is for people seeking legal information, basic legal services, including representation to come in and do an intake on a **first come, first serve** basis. The Walk-In Advocacy Clinic is Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM.

- Residential Tenancies
 - Social Services
 - Employment Law
- Immigration and Refugee
 - Estate Law
- Guardianship Matters

CLASSIC also administers a **LEGAL ADVICE CLINIC**. This is where clients have the opportunity to have a one half-hour consultation with a practicing lawyer.

The Legal Advice Clinic is through **appointment only** on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and evenings.

- Family Law
- Criminal Law
- Civil Law

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