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# Core Justice

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## **A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – CHANTELLE JOHNSON**

As summer winds down, CLASSIC has a pilot project to report on. This summer for the first time ever, CLASSIC housed students in an academic capacity rather than paid summer students. After years of canvassing for this pilot project we were permitted to try it out, thanks to the Dean of the College of Law - Martin Phillipson.

Like any pilot project, there were pros and cons. Two major pros include that:

- 1) CLASSIC did not have to expend huge amounts of money to summer students in order to keep the clinic open over the summer. Anyone who knows about CLASSIC, understands that sustainable revenue has been an ongoing challenge, so any way to address this is a bonus.
- 2) The pilot project gave College of Law students an option they've never had in Saskatchewan – summer programming. CLASSIC had the largest

applicant pool we've ever had to choose from, which resulted in us getting a splendid group of students this summer.

Naturally, there were also cons to this pilot project. Students are now generally more interested in the summer academic semester, as there are no competing mandatory courses, seminars, or any other scheduling conflicts because there are no other law courses offered over summer. This has led to less interest in the regular academic year intensive program, which comes with issues of its own. Further, with the summer academic program, we had one full month less of students available to serve clients. For an agency with a focus of providing client-centred services this clearly impacts our ability to fulfill all our goals.

As always, CLASSIC is strategizing about all of this with the view to a future of sustainability on all fronts. When an agency has a multi-purposed mandate, the balancing act between managing more than one focus is an on-going battle. Strategizing and planning to try to balance all of this takes a lot of work in itself. I would like to extend a huge bravo to CLASSIC's small, but mighty staff – Kim Pidskalny, Joilene Whitehead, Brenda Yuen, Nicholas Blenkinsop and Leif Jensen, along with volunteer Janice Gingell and Professor Sarah Buhler for taking up the challenge to address all of this, thinking head-on through our "Staff Strategic Sessions". This is difficult but necessary work. Over the next few months, CLASSIC will be drilling down and taking a hard look at our internal

capacity. We will look at what we've been doing, what we'd like to do, and what we can actually do. This may mean big changes to our programming and the current way we do things. And it may not; time will tell. What we do know, is we're committed to identifying what we can reasonably do for and with our students and clients, within the means and capacity that we have. Onward and upward!

### **Farewell, Amanda Dodge**

*By Brenda Yuen*

CLASSIC's longest serving employee has resigned from CLASSIC after 9 years. Amanda Dodge has been a Supervising Lawyer, an Executive Director, and most recently the champion for the Systemic Initiatives Program, as its Coordinator.

I first met Amanda when she was my supervising lawyer. I remember thinking that she was incredibly smart. She also practiced with kindness and compassion. As a second-year law student, I had never encountered a lawyer like her before!

From there, and after I graduated, Amanda and I became closer friends. I had the privilege of getting to know her bubbly personality and infectious laughter. Fast forward a few years later, I joined the team at CLASSIC and became Amanda's colleague. I witnessed firsthand her commitment to SIP projects, clients, and to her students.

Above all, Amanda helped many people including students and peers, realize that

they can and should make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate.

CLASSIC will miss her, but we will surely continue working together on some issues as she continues her systemic passion, while employed at the Mennonite Central Committee. Good luck with your future endeavors, Amanda!



Amanda Dodge and Leif Jensen

## **Leif Jensen Profile**

*By Student Catriona Kaiser-Derrick*

CLASSIC welcomes our new supervising lawyer and Systemic Initiatives Program coordinator, Leif Jensen. Leif graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a degree in English and Political Science in 2010. He later earned his JD from the University of Saskatchewan, graduating in 2014. Leif then moved to Regina to complete his articling clerkship at the Provincial Court of Saskatchewan under Judge Toth. After being called to the Saskatchewan bar in 2015, Leif went on to work as an associate at Plaxton Jensen and later W Law Group.

Leif is an alumnus of the very first CLASSIC intensive clinical program and, in a truly full circle moment, he is now the clinical law professor for the inaugural summer intensive clinical program. As professor of the Clinical Law Seminar, Leif has created a non-judgemental and inclusive space for students to learn about and work through some of the philosophical and ethical principles of legal practice. His contribution to CLASSIC has spanned several years and many roles, from volunteer, to student manager, and later, to clinical law professor and supervising lawyer.

Leif enjoys representing people charged with criminal offences and values the part of his job that involves learning about client's backgrounds and their stories. He has been proud of his involvement in a number of complicated files, from tribunals within prison, to the Court of Appeal. Leif's deep commitment to advocating for clients who face systemic barriers is evident in the pro bono work he has brought over to CLASSIC from his previous jobs. In addition to his professional commitment to pro bono work, Leif is one half of one of Saskatoon's access to justice power couples. His partner, Keeley Phillips, is a staff lawyer at Elizabeth Fry Society who previously articulated with Manitoba Legal Aid.

In his free time, Leif enjoys canoeing and kayaking in waterways in Saskatoon and the surrounding areas. He also loves hiking and camping. He is ambivalent about biking. Leif and Keeley's dog Hudson is probably very

cute but we cannot confirm this until Leif brings Hudson to the office for a visit.

We are so fortunate to have someone with Leif's experience, passion for access to justice and deep commitment to the clinical legal education of law students as CLASSIC's newest staff member and we wish him the very best in his new role.

### **Summer Intensive Clinical Program**

*By Student Rob Emes*

In early May, Kim gave me a call to tell me there was a spot available in CLASSIC's summer intensive program and asked me if I wanted to take it. I told her that I'd sleep on it and give her an answer in the morning, but the truth is that I didn't have to think about it for very long. Getting involved with CLASSIC was something that I wanted to do from the very beginning of law school.



After our orientation, I started getting to know the files I'd been assigned. I was surprised at what files I found myself the most interested in. Like what seems like roughly half of first-year law students, I expected that I would be primarily interested in criminal law. I wasn't wrong, but I also found that I particularly enjoyed working on files related to immigration. I ended up registering for a class on refugee law that I likely wouldn't have if it hadn't

been for my experience at CLASSIC over the summer.

I enjoyed getting to know CLASSIC's staff and the other summer students over the course of the term. The staff is great, and the atmosphere in the office is positive. Everybody seems dedicated to what they do and like they enjoy their work. While it's true that CLASSIC students get credit toward their degrees and that obviously plays some role in the decision to register for the program, I see in my peers a real desire to make contributions to the community.

In regard to making a contribution to the community, CLASSIC students had several opportunities during the summer to get involved by volunteering at events around downtown and Riversdale. This typically involved serving food.

I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to get involved with CLASSIC early on. I was offered a spot in the summer program a couple of weeks after writing first year's final exams. During the few months I spent at CLASSIC, I had a chance to see how the concepts I'd just spent eight months learning about were applied in the real world. I had a chance to apply some of what I've learned to a scope of legal matters as broad, if not broader, than the first-year curriculum. I imagine that I'll benefit from the experience for the remaining semesters of law school. I've noticed from recent, file-related research that seeing legal matters play out first-hand

has made reading and understanding written decisions easier.

CLASSIC students also end up working extensively with the *Residential Tenancies and Correctional Services Acts* (and *Regulations*), among other statutes. I can admit that I remember feeling a little daunted when we were introduced to the *Residential Tenancies Act* in first-year property. I didn't find that reading statutes came to me intuitively. But to quote a teacher I had in high-school, who apparently loathed hyperbole, "practice makes proficient". CLASSIC provides students with an opportunity to practice navigating, understanding, and applying statutes (often in conjunction with case law), a skill which, presumably, will only be a benefit in future classes.

I'd recommend the summer program to any law student, but particularly those with an interest in poverty law and issues related access to justice. Even students with only limited interest in social justice-y stuff will learn a set of practical skills including, among other things, client interviewing, file organization, and how to write a letter to serve practically any purpose.

I'd like to thank CLASSIC's staff for inviting me to spend the summer in their office. I admire your dedication, kindness, and the patience you demonstrated with us summer students. I hope I get the chance to stay involved with CLASSIC through the remainder of my time in law school, and beyond.

## **Community Conversation & Strategy**

### **Discussion:**

#### **Racialized Policing in Saskatoon**

*By Student Landon Squires*

The discussion took place at Station 20 West in a packed room. The evening started with a blessing and smudge followed by a hearty meal of soup and bannock. Given the higher than expected numbers, everyone was happy there was enough food to go around.

The night started off with 3 presentations that were to define and start the conversation. The first of the presentations was on police carding. We heard about the systematic and pervasive nature of police carding in



Saskatchewan. Then a gut wrenching story by Ms. Bear, describing the frightening and degrading experience of being carded.

The next presentation concerned the Colten Boushie case. The part of the presentation described how the RCMP and prosecutors had treated the case. Including the botched evidence storage, and how they treated the protesters surrounding the case as a grave threat. Then the conversation expanded to the poor treatment Aboriginal youth by police and security forces everywhere.

The last presentation of the night focused on the recent Human Rights Watch report

on police violence against Indigenous women in Saskatoon. The presentation and report describe the numerous abuses that the provinces female Indigenous community has suffered at the hands of the police. These include invasive and inappropriate strip searches and harassment.

After the presentations, the room broke into smaller groups to discuss the issues. Each group could submit comments to a board dedicated to each subject. In the person group that I was in, the discussion focused on how and why one should work within the legal system or without. At the end of the discussion there were several major themes that emerged. The first was better training for the police, the next following a different tact was that there should be community alternatives to the police. A related point was that there needed to be stronger civilian oversight of the police. There were to many other good suggestions to list in this article. The organizing group should be releasing a summary soon. Overall this event was well attended, well thought out and productive.

### **YXE Connects 2017**

*By Kim Pidskalny*

CLASSIC staff and students set up an information booth at YXE Connects for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row this year. This event was held in mid-May and was a fun kick off to the summer. There were many information booths, free massages, and even a bouncy house for the kids at this event. CLASSIC

spoke with many community members, handed out information pamphlets, and assisted individuals with filling out forms to obtain ID. This event saw a huge turnout of community members and volunteers. It was a fun, informative, and a great way for the community to connect.



### **CUMFI Carnival**

*By Student Bonita Mwuunvaneza*

Each summer, the Central Urban Metis Foundation, Inc. (CUMFI) hosts a community carnival. This year was their fifth annual carnival. It took place on July 13<sup>th</sup> in front of the CUMFI facility. CLASSIC students and staff had the privilege of volunteering at the event. It was a beautiful day filled with sunshine. The staff at CUMFI really outdid themselves by providing toe-tapping music, numerous bouncy castles, a petting zoo, pony rides, a ferris wheel, face painting, sno cones, and plenty of food; all at no charge.

The carnival was an excellent reminder to the community of the essential services CUMFI provides. It was also a great opportunity for the students and staff at CLASSIC to meet people who live in the community where we work. No one organization can meet all the needs of the inner city of Saskatoon, making cooperation

between CLASSIC, CUMFI, and other organizations is one of the keys to a thriving Saskatoon.

## **Rock Your Roots: A Call to Action** **– Day for Reconciliation**

*By Student Davida Bentham*



Saskatoon saw record attendance at the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual “Rock Your Roots” walk that took place on June 21, 2017 which is National Aboriginal Day. As our group of CLASSIC students, staff and lawyers arrived and congregated among the crowd of over 2000 people in Victoria Park, event organizers were happy to give each of us a yellow reconciliation buff. While we waited for the walk to begin, we each fashioned our buff in an attempt to fit in with the youthful crowd. Many elementary and high school students were present to celebrate and recognize the significance of National Aboriginal Day and reconciliation in our province and city. As the walk began, we slowly made our way to Spadina Crescent and onto 19<sup>th</sup> Street. The event is one of the main events in the series of events that the City of Saskatoon, Office of the Treaty Commissioner and 30 plus community organizations put on in the months of May

and June. The events respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action for Reconciliation among cities. For some attendees, the walk was about remembering and addressing the impact Residential School has on their life and family. For others, it is about celebrating and sharing their strong Indigenous culture. For me, and other CLASSIC students, it is about being better informed law students, and future lawyers, to people in Saskatoon. It also strengthens our connection to community and gives hope and encouragement to all.

## **Thank you, Edge Family Law!**

*By Student Justine Shenher*

On August 8, 2017, Edge Family Law hosted a pancake breakfast fundraiser for CLASSIC before the annual Exhibition Kick-off Parade. The weather was dreary but that did not stop many from enjoying our breakfast. Dr. Jacqui Fleury and True Potential Health Saskatoon were on site providing Bulletproof Coffee, a new experience for many. The flavor was “delicious, rich, and creamy” according to Davida Bentham, a CLASSIC clinical law student who stopped by for pancakes on her way to work. The parade route surrounded Edge Family Law’s office, which gave us the opportunity to hand out balloons to families looking for the best seats, serve up some pancakes and sausages, and catch a glimpse of the parade.



CLASSIC's Executive Director, Chantelle Johnson and Events Planner, Terri Sewell

CLASSIC would like to extend a warm thank you to the staff at Edge Family Law for their ongoing support. Edge Family Law was a highlight of our inaugural karaoke fundraiser and we are excited to see what they put together for this year's performance!

### **Donation Thanks**

Thank you to the following individuals and association:

Gavin Donegan, Tan Kok Liang Ary Yuswanto, Bajram Menxhiqi, Gillian Gough, Nicholas Blenkinsop, Amanda Dodge, Julie Knox, Marcus Davies, Michael Derrick, Andrea Abrametz, and the Saskatchewan Administrative Tribunals Association.



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 for have a one half-hour consultation with a practicing lawyer. The Legal Advice Clinic is through **appointment only** on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and evening.

- Family Law
- Criminal Law
- Civil Law

***CLASSIC would like to thank our funders:***

**Affinity Credit Union, City of Saskatoon, College of Law (U of S), Community Initiatives Fund, Law Foundation of Saskatchewan, Ministry of Justice(Saskatchewan), Saskatoon Community Foundation, Law Foundation of Ontario, and United Way of Saskatoon and Area and New Community Credit Union.**