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## 150 Profiles: Chantelle Johnson

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*As we mark the 150th anniversary of confederation, The Philanthropist is profiling Canadians from across the non-profit sector and putting a face to 150 individuals who work or volunteer in Canada's social sector.*

**Name:** Chantelle Johnson

**Current role in the sector:** Executive Director, CLASSIC (Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc.)

**Years working and/or volunteering in the non-profit sector:** 20+. That's a tricky one – I grew up in a small community where volunteerism was in the blood – but I am not sure any of the places I volunteered at in my youth were actual non-profits!

**What was your first job in the sector or a defining moment?**

My defining moment comes from a life experience which ultimately led me to the non-profit sector. I was in a car accident when I was 16 years old. I was with a group of friends – one of my friends died and the rest of us were quite seriously injured. I already had an interest in social justice issues, but from that moment on I decided I had to use this life I had been spared to do something positive and honour my friend who didn't get the chance to be a doctor as he had planned. I knew I had to do work that helped others and wasn't just about earning money for myself.

**Describe your desk/workspace.**

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Organized chaos! I am most pleased with a cinder block wall in my office that was recently painted a dark teal replacing a dark orange/brown colour that just did not suit me. Now I have light brown walls meeting the teal one – it reminds me of sand meeting the water. The remainder of my office is filled with cards, photos, and little gifts from former students (we provide experiential training to law and other inter-disciplinary students at CLASSIC – they help us with individual client files and other social justice programming.) I would be remiss if I did not mention my 8-ball on my desk – it helps me make some of the tough decisions required as an Executive Director. A number of my Executive Director friends have followed-suit by getting their own. It started out as a silly gesture, but it's turned into a comic relief breath of fresh air!

**What are you reading or following that has expanded your understanding of the non-profit sector?**

I really enjoy the blog [Nonprofit with Balls](#).

Besides reading, some of my most profound learning has been 'on the job' and from Elders and cultural advisors and their teachings. I am so fortunate because CLASSIC has Maria Campbell, world-renowned author, poet, playwright and respected Elder in Saskatchewan on our board and as a cultural advisor. Our tea meetings and her wise words and teachings have taught me the most about myself, which has helped me understand the non-profit sector. When Maria relates my questions and observations back to a teaching her grandmother taught her it does so much more than just teach me about the non-profit sector – it teaches me about the world I want. If we could all move away from individualism and think about our greater community more often, so many of our problems would either disappear or be clearly defined for us to address.

**What do you think our sector needs to be thinking about?**

The non-profit sector should be focused on authentic reconciliation and Indigenization of our sector. If we move forward from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work in a positive, genuine fashion it will be difficult for the other sectors to avoid. We can be the role models for the rest of society. We are at a distinct advantage in that many of us are at the grassroots level.

*Do you know someone we should profile as part of this series? Email us at [philanthropistprofiles@gmail.com](mailto:philanthropistprofiles@gmail.com)*