



Businesswoman of the Month

Charlene 'CJ' SanJenko

Founder & CEO, reGEN media

"We can heal ourselves and our families in three generations if we choose to keep this a sacred priority." ~ Wenecwtsin, Wayne Christian, former Chief, Splantsin Nation

Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being in business feel different because they are different. Grounded in a long history of community, reciprocity, and care for all our relations, a call to business is a commitment to a chosen vehicle to drive impact forward. The purpose of building a sustainable business is to care for family and community, enriching lives by placing priority on what we can create rather than what we can extract. One Indigenous visionary has set out to amplify and expand our understanding of this possibility through her new business venture in the inclusive innovation space – meet Charlene 'CJ' SanJenko of reGEN media, the first and only Indigenous-owned and female-led regenerative media studio.

Charlene has spent over two decades committed to building frameworks designed to access possibility and more fully experience human potential to create expansive impact. Most recently, this has taken her into a newly emerging sector called regenerative media. Regenerative media is defined as the kind of soulful, expansive, challenging, and transformative storytelling that deeply nourishes us and can truly lift, shape, and heal individuals and cultures.



She has championed women leaders and changemakers via her first company, PowHERhouse, since 2013, enabling them to create an epic impact since she believes that imagination activates greatness. PowHERhouse celebrates 10 years of changemaking this Fall, continuing their work in utilizing the art of expression and impact amplification to actively encourage individuals and organizations to more deeply inhale and step into all of why they exist.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zjsd08Q5i7w>





Charlene's life serves as a bridge between two cultures, a journey she calls her 'faithwalk' which has now led her to start reGEN media, an alliance-building organization that will seed a regenerative media landscape. Alongside her co-lead and award-winning filmmaker, Naomi McDougall Jones (Naomi's viral Ted Talk, [What it's like to a be woman in Hollywood](#)), she is building a full-system eject pod, exploring an inclusively innovative way to fund and distribute transformational media that is also accessible to everyone and easily incorporated into people's daily lives. As SanJenko says, "Media is the most powerful lever for change in our lifetimes. Regenerative media moves us beyond entertainment without being devoid of it."

But before we actually dive into her story, the Indigenous Business Magazine proudly announces Charlene 'CJ' SanJenko as the Businesswoman of the Month for its August and September edition. This title is accredited to her numerous achievements, efforts and contributions to making the Canadian economy inclusive and diverse. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours, and now, let's resume our story.

Inspiration for Powerful Narratives

Charlene can easily envision the broader picture and take the road less travelled to get there because of her varied experiences as a National Marketing Manager of a privately held investment firm, two-term municipal politician, competitive athlete & performance coach, and advocate for local (rural) economic development. She hopes to usher in a day where brand resources for marketing and communications are prioritized on campaigns that focus on the greater good by drawing on her background in financial services, marketing and communications, politics, and impact production. Charlene aims to develop "The Story of Us," an interactive documentary series that documents the unfolding tale of impact as we practice generational thinking and prioritize our resources to build the society we desire by 2030. In 2016, Charlene created a pilot series called PowHER TV.

Empowering Underrecognized Voices through reGEN Media

In May of 2022, Charlene opened the first Indigenous-owned and female-led regenerative media studio called reGEN media with the intention of promoting the telling of transformational tales by underserved artists. She believes that possibility and expansion lie just beyond our belief, and imagination bridges this gap. Meet reGEN media here [\[link to intro video here\]](#). As one of the first six regenerative filmmakers in an inaugural team of six, Charlene needs to experience an ecosystem to understand how best to utilize it to influence lasting change.

reGEN seeks to investigate novel approaches to finance and integrate transformational media into society by de-risking the experimentation in the business model of media-making itself. This includes shifting the flow of advertising dollars. “If we change the flow of finance, we will change our future. We know this through the growth of impact investment; now, we have the opportunity to create the same effect with advertising dollars which are expected to reach over \$740 billion globally in 2023. Shifting from brand advertising to impact allyship could have as momentous an effect as impact investment has had. We work with brands and corporate partners who are interested to learn (and unlearn) more about the emerging space of regenerative media and how it ties into their prioritized commitment of doing and being better in the areas of sustainability, DEI, reconciliation as well as telling a more cohesive story about these commitments to teams, stakeholders, and clients. Impact allyship is the future of advertising, and Charlene is currently engaging industry champions who are interested to shape a better future.

Alongside her co-lead Naomi McDougall Jones, Charlene aims to eliminate roadblocks and facilitate the financing, monetization, and activation of transformative stories via congruent partnerships in the burgeoning media tech field. Together, they are focused on:

- 1) Bringing together practitioners from the entertainment industry, impact innovation, and the regenerative economy movement to **illuminate what’s unwell** with business-as-usual storytelling and **develop shared analyses** on what **regenerative media** needs to be to emerge as a viable alternative;
- 2) **Seed funding experiments in regenerative media**, leveraging integrated capital to support creation and distribution of stories in ways that embody the tenets of regenerative media that have been identified in-community; and,
- 3) **Change the who of storytellers**, with a focus on lifting up Indigenous filmmakers, given long-standing Indigenous knowledge and practices of storytelling as a sacred force for healing and wellbeing.



To accomplish these core priorities, reGEN media's ecosystem will bring these five core components to life:

1. Mothers of Film relational philanthropy program

- A charitable crowdfunding program which will develop into an integrated capital social finance film fund in the future for both individual and institutional impact investment.

2. Regenerative filmmakers - The ecosystem focuses on working in teams and cohorts rather than solo journeys for increased efficiencies, energy, and learning.

3. Theatrical distribution network - An independent theatre distribution network brings events and screenings to (primarily) rural communities, building vibrancy, economic opportunities, social development, and connection while doing so.

4. Film hub - reGEN's innovative media-tech showcase platform consists of streaming, e-commerce, and audience-interaction components, designed to build sustainable revenue around artists while brand advertising dollars co-create engaging campaigns.

5. NextGEN filmmakers - The ripple of impact grows through a unique co-fundraising and community champions experimentation to further test and pilot a new model, as reGEN shares tool, support, and film hub platform to increase the ripple of impact.

A Model for Profit and Purpose

The monetization approach used by reGEN media is intended to maximize investment possibilities while reducing the burden on producers. Investors and brand marketers are encouraged to join the discussions, as their participation allows them to leave a legacy of healing for people and the world. Charlene's ultimate goal is to make storytelling an effective tool for social and economic change by creating collaborations that investigate such possibilities. "As we heal from our roots, the societal challenges we are currently facing will heal."

Charlene's ultimate goal is to make storytelling an effective tool for social and economic change by creating collaborations that investigate such possibilities. "As we heal from our roots, the societal challenges we are currently facing will heal. Better media = Better discussions = Better and brighter future!"



You can learn more about reGEN media's projects, services, and cohort offerings by browsing their official website at www.regenimpactmedia.com

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