

As told by one of our incredible volunteers, Jaqueline Smith, who has been mentoring the artist and has been working with him to curate this exhibition. Jaqueline and Charles wrote this bio together:

Charles is a 66 year old gentle man who has dealt with mental health issues much of his life. The last time he was hospitalized in Nanaimo Hospital an occupational therapist introduced him to mosaics tiles. He preferred a piece of paper and some paints and began painting. He has not required hospitalized mental health care for the past 7 years.

I first saw a small painting of his over the piano at a church where I work in a food bank. He has been a client with the food bank for a number of years and this painting was a gift of gratitude to the food bank staff.

Initially I met a shy man and asked about his paintings. A long story short, he has allowed me to mentor him and guard and show some of his paintings for others to see.

He does not have internet and prefers to only use a flip top phone. I think his work is unique and his process is remarkable. He lives in a small cab over camper in a campground in which he lives and paints.

In 2021 I took a few paintings into the Old School House Gallery in Qualicum Beach for the Executive Director Illana to see. She immediately said, "Let me see more, I would love to give him a show." She personally purchased a painting; his first sold work. He has as yet not come to see any of his work displayed.

Charles lives a quiet life which he enjoys. He lived in a remote cabin in Manitoba for many years, and then on a boat in Nanaimo Harbour for 13 years and now as above, in a campground.

Throughout the last few years we have talked, and I find him to be a bright, sensitive man with a kind heart and of good humour.

As you see, he is meticulous in his painting. I am in awe of how nothing is disturbing in the composition with colour and shapes all in harmony. I personally feel joy in looking at his work.

He says "Painting has saved my life. The darkness disappears when I am painting."

Charles has given me permission to tell his story freely. "I have nothing to hide and if it helps someone else that would be good."

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Jaqueline Smith, 2023.