

---

# Once homeless artist creates calendar to pay it forward

November 29, 2017

One of the paintings by Daniel Bourgeois in the calendar he created.

Tom Bateman/Times and Transcript

About four years after first coming to Moncton's Salvus Clinic, homeless and battling health issues, Daniel Bourgeois is now selling copies of a calendar featuring his works of art to help the clinic he credits with finding him a home, and getting his life on track.

The calendar features 12 acrylic paintings by Bourgeois, created in the comfort of the home he found with the help of the Church Street clinic.

The paintings, mainly of popular scenes from around Moncton, are arranged in the calendar



in meaningful ways: a maple leaf for July, the old Moncton High School for September, the traditional start of the school year, and the monument to three fallen Mounties for June.

Bourgeois has been painting for a while, sometimes selling his work on the streets. As he progressed through Salvus' housing program, the idea for a calendar became clear.

"I wanted to help somebody," he said. "I just threw the idea at all the girls [at Salvus] and they thought it was a great idea."

Salvus calls itself a "different kind of clinic" that cares for those dealing with homelessness, poverty, mental health issues and substance use. It has about about 1,900 active clients, said co-founder Dr. Susan Crouse on Wednesday.

They are offered everything from the flu shot to help finding housing. The clinic celebrates its 10th anniversary next week.

For Daniel, housing was the key to turning his life around.

Bourgeois was first introduced to the clinic by Vitalite Health Network's mental health staff. With time, he landed a spot in one of the 15 peer-supported housing units the clinic operates in partnership with the United Way.

Before that, the Moncton man bounced between tents and rooming homes, where Crouse said he'd get bullied.

"The turning point was getting stable housing where he could look after himself. There was a lot going on at the rooming house," Crouse said.

"By moving into his own independent housing, having a place where he can go to the bathroom, do his own laundry and cook, he could really start to look after his health needs. He did a lot of learning along the way."



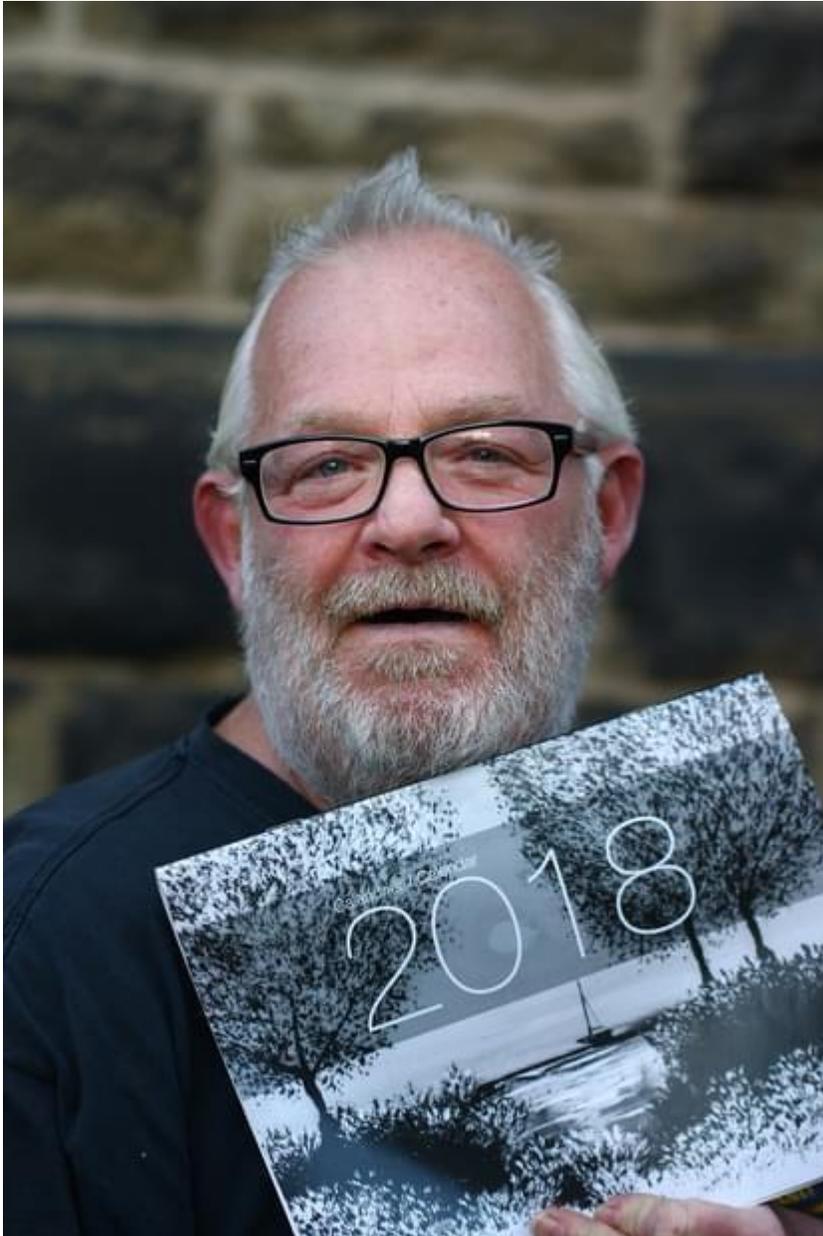
Dr. Susan Crouse and Daniel Bourgeois pose with the calendar Bourgeois, a former patient, painted to raise funds for Salvus Clinic and Vitalite Health Network.  
Tom Bateman/Times and TranscriptHide Caption



One of the paintings by Daniel Bourgeois in the calendar he created. Tom Bateman/Times and TranscriptHide Caption



One of the paintings by Daniel Bourgeois in the calendar he created. Tom Bateman/Times and TranscriptHide Caption



Daniel Bourgeois poses with the calendar Bourgeois, a former patient, painted to raise funds for Salvus Clinic and Vitalite Health Network. Tom Bateman/Times and TranscriptHide Caption



Dr. Susan Crouse and Daniel Bourgeois pose with the calendar Bourgeois, a former patient, painted to raise funds for Salvus Clinic and Vitalite Health Network.  
Tom Bateman/Times and TranscriptHide Caption

Daniel Bourgeois poses with the calendar Bourgeois, a former patient, painted to raise funds for Salvus Clinic and Vitalite Health Network. Tom Bateman/Times and TranscriptHide Caption That learning included an art class lined up by the clinic.

"I was scared, I didn't do anything for a couple of weeks," Bourgeois remembered.

But Bourgeois flourished in both the class, and in the housing, to the point where he was approved for a home of his own through the Department of Social Development.

Crouse said she visits there about once a month, but otherwise Bourgeois is on his own.

Today, he shares his home with his cat Missy. Bourgeois works delivering the Times & Transcript in the mornings and collecting bottles and cans for revenue. In his spare time, he paints.

Fuelled by research at the public library and instructional YouTube videos, he "just started producing all sorts of wonderful paintings," Crouse recalled.

Before long, he was creating the art now reproduced in the calendar.

Bourgeois agrees with his doctor: getting his health, finances and life on track is due to living in a home that is "always the same temperature.

"It's a calm place, it's calmer and it's much better," he said.

The Salvus Clinic has 140-some people who have been assessed and are in a "real need for housing," Crouse said.

They've housed about 34 people in the last year.

"There's a lot of Daniels out there," Bourgeois said. "We need a hand up, not a handout."

Crouse said the federal government's announcement of a \$40-billion national housing strategy last week "sounds good," but she needs to be reassured there will also be money for those supporting people receiving housing.

"They need the support to go along with it, it's not as simple as waving a wand and giving them a house," she said.

Still, combined with a provincial affordable housing strategy anticipated to be ready next spring, Crouse and her colleagues are "as optimistic as we've been in a long time that something's going to change."

Bourgeois' calendar is available for sale at the Moncton Market on Saturdays for \$20. The proceeds will be split between the Salvus Clinic and Vitalite Health Network.