

SoundBytes

New Perspectives from Granville Johnson

Shifting the conversation on dementia involves recognizing its gifts

Granville Johnson is an artist and teacher whose advocacy work is always led by his passion for lifting people up. In this piece, he talks about the ways his art and his lived experience inform each other.

He sees dementia as an opportunity for insight. “Dementia gives you a chance to express your inner self, the good, the bad and the ugly. And in that expression, there are opportunities to grow.”

He focuses on what he can do, rather than what he can't. “I'm a lifelong artist and I'm writing my novel,” he said. “People will ask, how is it that you can have dementia and be coherent enough to write a novel? But you can manage if you work with it. We really have to fight not only for ourselves as people but sometimes for our very humanity to get people to understand that we are still all there.”

He believes the more society can get behind the idea of championing strengths rather than focusing on deficits, the stronger our community will become. Johnson lives in a remote part of Northern British Columbia and thrives in its natural beauty.