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Chickasaw Elders paintings on display

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— Nearly 250 people joined Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby to celebrate the opening of Chickasaw artist Mike Larsen's "I'm Very Proud to be Chickasaw" exhibit Thursday, Oct. 8 at the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. □

"I'm Very Proud to be Chickasaw" is comprised of 24 paintings, each featuring a Chickasaw elder. Mr. Larsen said that the name came about because each of the elders made the remark "I am very proud to be Chickasaw."

This is the second set of paintings in the Chickasaw Living Elders Project commissioned by the Chickasaw Nation in 2004 to capture the tribe's elders on canvas. □ The first set, "They Know Who They Are," was unveiled in 2007. □

During the reception, Gov. Anoatubby thanked the elders for being a "treasured cornerstone and foundation" of the Chickasaw Nation. □

"Mike Larsen has enabled our elders to speak volumes about our tradition, spirit and culture without uttering a word," he said. "These paintings will inspire future generations and serve as an everlasting reminder of the strength and determination of the Chickasaw people." □

Creating the series allowed Larsen and his wife, Martha, to spend numerous hours interviewing and sketching each of the elders portrayed.

"During this time, I was invited into 48 different homes filled with history," Larsen said. □

Each piece includes a title and brief description that convey the story and essence of the subject. □

Glenda Galvan, featured in "Patron Saint of Children," is shown holding one of the 20 foster children she has cared for over the last seven years. □

"I am very humbled to be featured like this," Galvan said. "But I hope that this painting not only shows my pride as a Chickasaw, but also sends the message that so many children need someone."

Nearly all of the elders featured were able to be in attendance with their families. □

Beverly Reynen joined her sisters to celebrate their mother, Irene Digby, and her portrait, "Cherished One." "It's an honor for her to be shown like this," Reynen said. "That's our mama; we know she's special and it feels great to know that others do to."

Larsen's artwork is a familiar sight in Oklahoma. Adorning the Oklahoma State Capitol Rotunda is "Flight of Spirit," a 26-foot mural of five world-famous Native American ballerinas. □ Also in the State Capitol is his breathtaking landscape featuring the sun-drenched Cimarron River, which was chosen in 2006 as the image for Oklahoma's Centennial postage stamp.

"I am Very Proud to be Chickasaw" will be on display through March 2010. The Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum is located at 1400 Classen. □ For more information, contact the museum at (405) 235-2714. □

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Photos



Glenda Galvan (left), a featured elder in Chickasaw artist Mike Larsen's "I am Very Proud to be Chickasaw" series with Larsen and his wife Martha. "I am Very Proud to be Chickasaw", an exhibit that honors the elders of the Chickasaw Nation, opened Oct. 8 at the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. The Chickasaw Nation