

Mr. Eric Harvie

“The museum, really that’s boring.” I muttered as my parents dragged me into the Glenbow Museum.

The hall was so crowded that I had to push and weave my way around to get through the semi-circle of people crowding around the large art exhibits. I couldn’t help but notice a gold embossed plaque that read: Thank you to Mr. Eric Lafferty Harvie, a philanthropist and founder of the Glenbow Museum for his generous donations. I stumbled out of the crowd and strolled over to a grand painting that caught my eye. It showcased wide open plains with long dried wheat strewn everywhere. The fields looked as if they were made of pure gold. The sky contained white fluffy clouds that were backlit with an ethereal glow. This painting was truly majestic. It reminded me of Alberta’s boundless prairie landscape. I could almost feel the wind blowing over the rolling hills with the sweet smell of the wheat fields.

“This is the absolutely best painting I have ever seen,” I accidentally said out loud.

“I do agree, young man. This is a very elegant piece,” said a tall distinguished gentleman, with a pitch black moustache.

“Eric! Where do you want this piece?” shouted out a muscular lad carrying a large box with a cloth over it.

“Put it by the window.”

“You’re Eric Harvie!” I said in surprise “What an honour!”

“Nice to meet you. This is indeed an exquisite piece of art. In fact, it’s one of my favorites. This is one of many pieces of art I have donated to the Glenbow Museum. Art gives us an experience like nothing else can. A chance to connect, understand and explore perceptions, feelings and innovative thoughts.”

We walked over to the next painting. This piece of native art depicted a large predatory bird. It was black and white, and had different shades of red highlights. The bird had eyes in its head; but it also had eyes in some unusual places like on the wings and chest. Each of the bird’s sharp knife like talons were clutching a small fish. It had shield like armour covering its chest. It reminded me of a native warrior, strong and free.

While we marvelled at the painting I asked Mr. Harvie, “Why did you donate all these magnificent pieces of art when you could have kept them all to yourself?”

“I wanted all Albertan families to have the opportunity to view the artwork so that their children could gain an understanding and appreciation for its historical and cultural significance. If we lose the link to our past, we have indeed lost something of great value. Knowledge should always be shared and never monopolized. When people come to the museum or any art facility, they spend family time together, engage in conversation about favorite objects, share stories, and learn about historic events. I wanted people to use their leisure time for pleasure through enlightenment. I have been bestowed upon such great fortune in my life that I truly felt an obligation and a privilege to share it with my community at large.”

Mr. Harvie excused himself. I was so impressed by the generosity of Mr. Harvie’s gentle spirit. He has inspired me to volunteer and give back what I can to society. This summer I would like to volunteer at the Glenbow Museum. Mr. Harvie has taught me that museums and public art foundations offer a dynamic opportunity to expose people to unique experiences, preserve our history, and provide an opportunity for learning about other cultures. This exposure provides the foundation for creativity, critical thinking, and a deeper connection to the world. Thank you Mr. Eric Lafferty Harvie for giving the people of Alberta this wonderful gift.

Bibliography

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