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SAMA-LORETTO EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS EARLY NATIVE AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHS

Loretto – The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Loretto is pleased to announce the opening of *First Nations: American Indian Photographs* by Edward S. Curtis. On view now through October 15 in the Museum's Margery Wolf-Kuhn Balcony Gallery, the exhibition offers 46 vintage photogravures from the Museum's permanent collection.

First Nations covers Curtis's early 20th century work among many peoples and tribes, from the Cheyenne of the Plains to the Nunivak of Alaska. Featuring compelling portraits as well as landscapes, village scenes and community activities, the exhibition provides a thought-provoking glimpse into various aspects of Native American life as it was 100 years ago. At the same time, it gives an excellent sense of how a gifted non-Indian artist viewed his subjects.

Curtis is renowned for his photographs of American Indians. Born in 1868 and commencing his career as a teenaged apprentice to a photographer in St. Paul, Minnesota, Curtis made his first images of Native American subjects while working on the Northwest Coast in 1895. Four years later, Curtis joined an expedition to Alaska, during which he learned principles of ethnography and focused more exclusively on Indian subjects. By 1906, when J.P. Morgan commissioned the artist to produce his most famous work, a 20-volume set of photographs and text entitled *The North American Indian*, Curtis was regarded as a leading authority on Native American traditions and lifeways. Although his photographs are sometimes criticized for being overly romantic or even manipulated, they are nevertheless esteemed as highly important documents of Native American culture.

The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Loretto is located on the campus of Saint Francis University. Hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 to 5 p.m. Saturdays. The Museum is open to the public free of charge. For more information, call (814) 472-3920 or visit www.sama-art.org.