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Chickasaw artist presents second set in series

Phase two of Chickasaw artist Mike Larsen's Elders series will be on exhibit at the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City beginning October 8, 2009 through March 26, 2010. The second set of 24 paintings, *I am Very Proud to be Chickasaw*, was created after an overwhelming response from the Chickasaw people to the first set, unveiled in November of 2007 at the Oklahoma History Center.

"Mr. Larsen has done an excellent job of capturing the strength, spirituality, sense of humor and other honorable characteristics of our elders," said Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby. "These portraits are one way to express our gratitude and preserve the legacy of the elders who have paved the way for our success."

Commissioned by the Chickasaw Nation in 2004, *They Know Who They Are* was intended to capture the tribe's elders on canvas. Larsen and his wife, Martha, spent numerous hours interviewing and sketching each of the elders portrayed.

"We got to know them, to listen to their stories, listen to their history and go into their homes," Larsen said of the process. "It's been the most incredible experience that Martha and I have had."

Larsen's artwork has become 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 hanging 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. Larsen has also been commissioned by the Oklahoma Art Institute, the University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma City Civic Music Hall to create art for their venues.

With its focus on people who have shaped Oklahoma's history, the exhibit was a natural fit for the Gaylord-Pickens Museum.

"*They Know Who They Are* was such a powerful collection, and we are thrilled to debut its successor," said Shannon L. Nance, president of the Association & Museum. "The paintings themselves are beautiful, but it is the strength and grace portrayed in the subjects that is truly captivating."

The Museum's high-tech, interactive exhibits showcase the famous and everyday Oklahomans who have impacted the state, country and world. Visitors can become part of Oklahoma history by sharing and recording their own stories in the ONEOK Tell Your Story exhibit.

The Gaylord Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum is located at NW 13th Street and Shartel Avenue in Oklahoma City. For more information on the exhibit, contact the Chickasaw Nation Division of Arts and Humanities at 580.272.5520, and for more information about the Museum contact 405.235.4458 or visit www.oklahomaheritage.com.

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