



# *Progress Report from the Project Director*

## MORRIS THOMPSON CULTURAL AND VISITORS CENTER

October 25, 2004

**With summer behind us and fall underway, it's time I updated you on the great things that are happening.**

- **The Congressional Delegation has inserted \$6 million for the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center in the Interior budget.** At last word, the budget was in conference committee, with the expectation that it would be sent to the President for signature after the election during the lame duck session. This project got its start when Senator Stevens provided our first planning grant in 2000, and the delegation's support has been consistent since. They do so much for all of Alaska!
- **We have our FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) at last! the Doyon, Limited Chief's Court.** The Federal Highway Administration signed off on our Environmental Assessment in August, after two years of revisions and delays. Thanks to John Hargesheimer, Nortech Environmental, for persevering despite the administrative obstacles, and thanks also to Howard Thies who kept things moving at AK DOT.
- **The City of Fairbanks has begun the land acquisition process** on our preferred site along the Chena River near the Wendell Street Bridge. HDR Alaska, our real estate contractor, has ordered appraisals and is beginning to contact the eight landowners on Block 2. We are hoping for a smooth and speedy acquisition process. I see the Director of Fairbanks Community Mental Health whose office is in the same building as mine regularly. She reports that when we buy their clubhouse along Wendell Street, they will be able to fulfill their dream of a new facility that will finally allow all their programs to be under one roof. It's a win-win that we can all feel good about.
- The Economic Development subcommittee of the **Denali Commission has recommended a grant of \$313,000 to the Center.** This recommendation requires approval by the full commission, but we are heartened by the strong support of Commissioners Jim Sampson, Julie Kitka, and Mark Hamilton as well as Co-Chairs Jeff Staser and Loren Leman. The Commission and the Center share a common goal—to provide the underpinnings for economic opportunity in rural villages.
- Hip, hip hurray for the **staff of the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau. 100% of their staff has made a gift to the Legacy for Progress Campaign. Not to be outdone, the project Partners are also 100% donors.** The message is simple—we all believe in the project and are willing to put money into it. If you aren't yet a "Friend" it's time to add your name to the list. Call me.

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- There was great passion in the room when project supporters requested a corporate gift from John Shively/Holland America Line. **Campaign Vice Chair Rhonda Boyles, Richard Wien, Judy Warwick, Steve Thompson, Josephine Huntington, and Julie Biddle each told Shively in their own words why they believed the Center would be good for Fairbanks and the Interior.** We await news of the Holland America Line decision.
- Information about the Center is now at your fingertips. **Check us out on the web** at [www.morristhompsoncenter.org](http://www.morristhompsoncenter.org)
- If you're at the AFN Convention this week in Anchorage, be sure to stop by our booth on the main level across from the registration table to see our beautiful brochures and get your own personalized luggage tag that declares you as a "Friend of the Morris Thompson Center".