



# *Progress Report from the Project Director*

## MORRIS THOMPSON CULTURAL AND VISITORS CENTER

April 23, 2004

With this report I am beginning a monthly communication with members of the Leadership Team and special friends of the Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center project. Since our plans call for stepped up fund-raising activity, I want to keep you well informed.

- Yesterday, Vice-Chair Rhonda Boyles was in Washington DC hand-delivering a project **update to our Congressional Delegation** and discussing the importance of their ongoing support for the Center. To date the delegation secured \$8.9 million for the project, and Rhonda reports they are firmly committed to seeing it through.
- Over the past few months I have been giving a **Power Point presentation** to a range of groups—the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, TCC Executive Board, FNSB Assembly & commissions, and groups throughout the community—all with the goal of increasing our number of friends for the project. It has been heartening to learn the **concept for the Center is enthusiastically supported**. Last night we had the opportunity to share our vision with the Denali Commission which said, “This project is a fitting legacy to Morris Thompson—it’s the type of progress he wanted to see for the region.”
- We are **now a non-profit corporation**. The Center will be owned and operated by the Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center nonprofit corporation governed by a Board of Directors representing FCVB, TCC, APLIC, and the Thompson family and with a purpose of ‘providing education to residents and visitors about the cultures and lands of Interior Alaska.’ Please extend a special thanks to Dan Winfree and his law office for handling this process for us in-kind.
- The **environmental assessment on the preferred project site is nearing completion**. Many of you will appreciate the significance of this. John Hargesheimer/Nortech Environmental delivered the revised document to ADOT&PF last week, and Northern Region Director Andrew Niemiec sent it on to the Federal Highway Administration stamped PRIORITY. We thank DOT’s Howard Thies for keeping things moving, and look forward to notification that the 30-day public comment period can begin. Our ultimate goal is a ‘Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)’ on our preferred site, which would clear the way to begin purchasing land for the Center.
- Speaking of our preferred site, there is a little log cabin there that project partners are committed to protecting. In fact, we’ve draw up a Memorandum of Agreement among the partners, the National Park Service, and the State Historic Preservation office, stating we will rehabilitate the cabin and its grounds to reflect its original appearance and setting during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our **plans are to incorporate the historic cabin into an outdoor interpretive exhibit**. We owe TCC archaeologist Tom Gillispie a great deal of thanks for his technical expertise, as well as National Park Service Regional Director Marcia Blaszak and her team in Anchorage for agreeing to serve as lead federal agency to protect the historic cabin.
- Finally I extend a special thanks to the **Legacy for Progress Campaign chair Sam Kito**. He has committed a considerable amount of time to this project; and his personal interest and enthusiasm have attracted many to our team. Thanks Sam!