



Progress Report from the Project Director

MORRIS THOMPSON CULTURAL AND VISITORS CENTER

December 2005

For many years, the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau, the National Park Service, and the Tanana Chiefs Conference have dreamed of sharing a new facility on the banks of the Chena River in downtown Fairbanks that would:

- Celebrate what is special and unique about Interior Alaska—our land, our rivers, our people
- Cement Interior Alaska as a visitor destination—and ensure our region benefits from the visitor economy
- Become a community gathering place, where diverse cultures come together to learn to understand, appreciate, and respect one another.

What we've envisioned for years is now within our reach.

- Just last week, Governor Murkowski's capital budget proposal included \$2.9 million for the Morris Thompson Center. This is the full amount needed to meet our \$4 million goal for state support—and the amount that guarantees we have the funding in place to break ground when the snow melts this Spring!
- With federal funding secure and the hope of meeting our state goal this session, we can now turn our full focus to private funding. To date, our leadership team has raised \$1.7 million. Significantly, more than \$1 million of that has come from the Alaska Native community, including recent gifts of \$300,000 from Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, \$25,000 from both Chugach Alaska and CIRI and \$10,000 from Koniag, Inc.
- New individual gifts come in the mail almost daily. Jim Bowles, President of ConocoPhillips Alaska presented a check for \$50,000 as part of a briefing on the project for members of the Interior delegation. In addition, local CPA's from Walsh, Kelliher and Sharp made a pledge of \$10,000. We've come a long way! Are you a Friend of the Morris Thompson Center yet? Call me, I'll take your year-end gift...or go to our website at www.morrithompsoncenter.org to make a gift on-line.
- TCC and Denakkanaaga hosted a half-day workshop recently to further develop plans for cultural activities within the Morris Thompson Center. It was a day full of great ideas about how a number of organizations in the area could utilize the theatre, classroom, and artisans workshop to enhance and expand their current programs. Plans are for Denakkanaaga, the regional elder's organization, to move into the facility. The regular presence of Elders from throughout the region will enrich programming within the Center's walls. TCC and Denakkanaaga are refining plans now, and will present a business plan for its cultural programming in January. We welcome Cathi Ipalook, Executive Director of Denakkanaaga as our final board member.
- The land acquisition process is nearly complete. The City of Fairbanks currently owns 96% of our preferred site, with one remaining parcel to purchase. The City has been a key part of this project since the idea was just a 'scribble on a napkin'. We value their partnership.
- The board of directors met this week with Charles Bettisworth and Company and approved the 10% architectural design concept. Plans are to pre-qualify construction contractors in February, and select a final contractor by April. The contractor will then work jointly with the architects to refine the final design.

As we head into the new year, we are thankful for the many people who have worked hard to bring us where we are, and look forward to another great year in 2006.

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