

# THOMPSON CENTER TRACKS



Tracking the Progress of the **Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center**

## Governor Requests \$2.9M in Capital Budget to Complete State Funding

Governor Murkowski's capital budget proposal, released in mid-December, included \$2.9 million for the Morris Thompson Center. The appropriation during this legislative session would bring the state funding for the project to \$4 million.

"This is the full amount needed to meet our goal for state support – and the amount that guarantees we have the funding in place to break ground when the snow melts this spring!" said Project Director Cindy Schumaker.

With \$19.2 million secured toward the \$26 million project, and the hope of meeting the state goal this spring, the Center is turning its focus to raising the remaining funds through private sources.

## Cultural Programs Begin to Take Shape

The Morris Thompson Center wanted a strong Elders presence for its programs. With a leaky roof and regular calls to the plumber, Denakkanaaga needed a new home for its Elders program. So, it was a win-win situation when the regional Elders organization accepted TCC's invitation to move into the new Center.

"The regular presence of the Elders from Interior Alaska will enhance every program at the Center," said Denakkanaaga Executive Director Cathi Ipalook, who was recently appointed to the Center's board of directors.

TCC and Denakkanaaga hosted a workshop in December to further refine plans for cultural activities at the Center. Great ideas emerged about how Alaska Native organizations could use the exhibits, theatre, classroom and artisans' workshop to enhance and expand their programs. Elders also said they fear their languages are nearly lost and wanted to spend time with the youth, teaching the languages and traditional ways. They'll have a large potential audience to draw from – as one participant noted, "Youth means the middle aged folks, too!"

To transform these ideas into the Center's programs will be the job for TCC communication director and Center board member Charlene Ostbloom, who recently assumed responsibilities for the cultural programming at the Center.

"The Center's programs will celebrate and help preserve our heritage, and we'll need input from Alaska's Native communities to do it right," Ostbloom said. "Our partnership with Denakkanaaga will be invaluable in creating meaningful and sustainable programs."

## Alaska Native Support Tops \$1 Million

An outpouring of support during October's Alaska Federation of Natives convention in Fairbanks helped push the contributions from the Alaska Native community past the \$1 million mark, more than half of the Center's \$1.7 million private contributions.

During the convention, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation announced its \$300,000 gift. "We support the partnership approach the Morris Thompson Center has taken to promoting tourism in the rural communities of the Interior and North Slope regions," said ASRC Chief Executive Officer Jake Adams. "We

worked alongside Morris Thompson for three decades, and are proud to contribute to this manifestation of his vision."

ARSC joins Doyon Limited, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association, Beaver Kwit'chin Corporation, Chugach Alaska, CIRI, Koniag Limited, the Native American Bank, Sealaska, Tozitna Limited, Sam Kito and dozens of other individual donors.

Also during AFN, attendees made their individual donations by dropping cash on a blanket on stage during one of the dance performances. "It was deeply moving to see this outpouring of support," said Charlene Marth, Morris Thompson's niece.

The Center also benefited from the generosity of middle school students in Dorothy Jordan's justice class in the village of Tanana, who raised \$120 for the project. "We talked about the law being there to protect us, but also about our responsibility to give back by taking care of our Elders and supporting projects like the Center that will help our communities," Jordan explained.



Mark Lester/Anchorage Daily News

AFN attendees drop donations for the Morris Thompson Center onto a blanket as the Tanana Traditional Dancers perform in the background, raising \$2,770 for the Center in just 10 minutes.

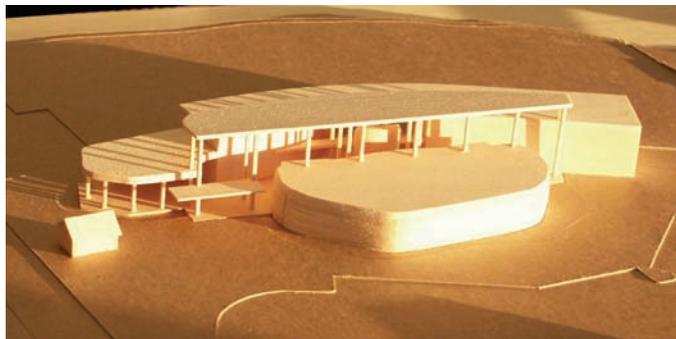


Image courtesy Charles Bettisworth and Company, Inc.

The design concept for the Morris Thompson Center complements the Centers' riverfront location and features lots of windows to bring in natural light and to connect visitors to the Interior's land and rivers.

## Design On Track for Contractor Selection

At its December meeting, the board of directors approved the 10% design concept (shown above) and gave Charles Bettisworth and Company the go ahead to continue with design.

Project partners are making their final modifications to their space requirements. "As the floor-plan takes shape, we see how our programs and activities will complement each other," said the National Park Service's Don Pendergrast. "We've also been able to share some spaces – which will help cut down on costs."

Planners expect to pre-qualify construction contractors this February so a final selection can be made by March. The general contractor will then work hand-in-hand with the architects to refine the final design, a process that will help identify and address problems before construction documents are finalized. With this schedule, the Center should be ready for hard hat tours when AFN returns to Fairbanks in October 2007.

**Did you know...**

... Tourists in Alaska spend more than \$1.8 billion annually. The Center will celebrate what is unique and special about Interior Alaska to inspire tourists to spend another day in the Interior or plan a return trip to see what they missed.

All over the country, visitors centers encourage visitors to do more and stay longer. This means they're spending money in our community, and that's good for us all.

– Steve Frank  
Leadership Team

Thompson Center Tracks is a publication to update friends and supporters on the progress of the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. For more information, contact Cindy Schumaker at 907.459.3880 or thompson.center@tananachiefs.org.



Charlene Ostbloom

ConocoPhillips President Jim Bowles, far right, presents a \$50,000 donation for the Center to Doyon, Limited CEO Orie Williams, second from right. Bowles indicated that ConocoPhillips would continue to support the effort to build this tribute to one of Alaska's most respected Native leaders. Also pictured are ConocoPhillips Fairbanks Representative Rick Solie and Morris Thompson Center Project Director Cindy Schumaker.



M O R R I S T H O M P S O N  
C U L T U R A L A N D V I S I T O R S C E N T E R

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**Local Support Continues to Grow**

Right: Therese Sharp presents a \$10,000 pledge on behalf of Walsh, Kelliher and Sharp CPA's and Richard Wien presents a personal gift of \$1,000 to campaign vice chair Rhonda Boyles, center. Wien's December guest opinion in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner – aptly titled "Fly in Formation to the Future" – noted that the Interior Delegation should view this project as being critical to Fairbanks' future. "The recent AFN convention demonstrates the potential for Fairbanks as the economic, cultural and social hub for Alaska," he wrote. "It's a great example of Alaska's Native and non-Native communities united for a common purpose."

Bottom right: Matt Atkinson presents Northern Alaska Tour Company's \$10,000 pledge to Project Director Cindy Schumaker. NATC is a small Fairbanks-based company that provides air and ground tours throughout Alaska's arctic. Their gift will go toward the visitor industry's \$50,000 goal to name the Center's conference room in memory of Frank Rose, a visitor industry leader who died in early 2004.



Above: Karen Cedzo. Right: Courtesy NATC.

Are you a friend of the Morris Thompson Center?  
Make your gift online at [www.morrithompsoncenter.org](http://www.morrithompsoncenter.org).