

THOMPSON CENTER TRACKS



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

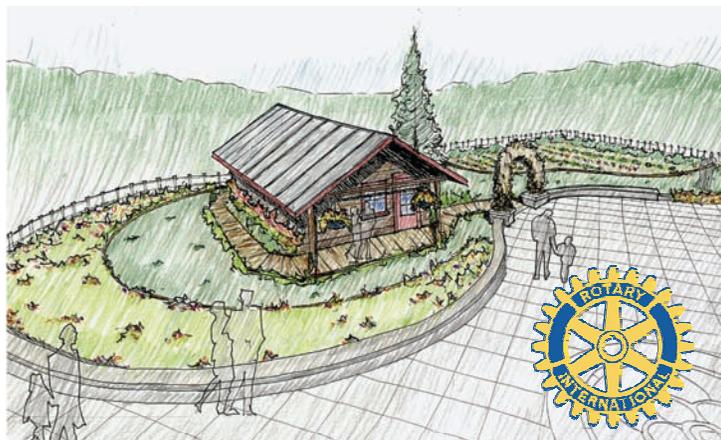
Rasmuson Foundation Commits \$1 Million

The Rasmuson Foundation recently pledged \$1 million to the Morris Thompson Center, making the foundation the largest private donor to the project. One half of the grant will be paid outright; the other half is a challenge grant that will be paid out as additional private funds are raised to match it.

“The foundation’s review team asked tough questions, and the project is certainly stronger for this thorough scrutiny,” said leadership team member Richard Wien, a long-time friend of the Rasmuson family. “I think the foundation and the family will be pleased with this investment in the Interior.”

To date, \$26.7 million has been raised towards the overall \$29.6 million project budget. The budget includes a \$2 million endowment for cultural programming. With the Rasmuson grant, up to \$800,000 in previously raised funds can be allocated to this endowment.

“The challenge grant is a good reminder that we still need \$2.9 million to meet our goal. We hope the community will be generous in helping us meet this one-to-one challenge” said project manager Cindy Schumaker.



Courtesy of Bettisworth North.

Downtown Rotary Supports Cabin Restoration

The Rotary Club of Fairbanks recently adopted the restoration of the historic cabin on the Center’s grounds as its annual project for the next two years, granting \$80,000 to help fund the effort.

“We wanted a project in downtown Fairbanks that would be seen and used by many people,” said Denali State Bank president and current Rotary president Jo Heckman. “When the board of directors, incoming president Howard Thies and I heard about the plans for the cabin, we knew it would be perfect.”

Located on the Center’s grounds, the cabin is one of the few pre-1910 structures in Fairbanks still on its original site. Tanana Yukon Historical Society president Renee Blahuta is working with cabin builder Sandy Jamieson and other local experts to restore the historic cabin to accurately reflect Fairbanks’ early days.

The cabin will be furnished with a sleeping alcove, wood cook stove, rough wood floors and other era-appropriate house wares. A vegetable garden and flower beds will be filled with plant varieties that could be shipped by seed from the lower-48 in the early 1900s.

Heckman says she hopes Rotarians will volunteer time for the annual planting of the Pioneer garden at the cabin.

“It’s not our style to just write a check and be done with it,” said Heckman. “We wanted a project that would get our members engaged and doing hands-on work.”



Wrapped in festive holiday green Tyvek, the Morris Thompson Center looks quiet from the outside, but things are buzzing inside.

Construction Runs Ahead of Schedule

“On time and on budget” is music to the ears of anyone involved in a construction project, but the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center has done one better: the project is running on budget and *ahead* of schedule.

Project planners attribute that success to the construction partnership of architects Bettisworth North and general contractor GHEMM Company, both Fairbanks-based companies. Following the “Construction Manager at Risk” method, GHEMM reviewed the original budget estimates and worked with the architects to make necessary adjustments before the design was finalized.

“With the way construction costs have skyrocketed over the past decade, it is a welcome relief to have a contractor that understands the true costs and can stick tight to the budget,” says City of Fairbanks public works director Mike Schmetzer, who is managing the construction project.

Construction has been running smoothly from the beginning, without hidden problems like contaminated fuel tanks. GHEMM moved onto the five-acre construction site on the corner of Wendell and Dunkel Streets in April, and the basic outline of the building had taken shape by mid-July. Today, the plumbing is in, the framing and sheetrock are almost complete, and Denakkanaaga’s kitchen and living room are almost ready for furniture.

GHEMM expects to complete the inside of the building by April, then move outside for landscaping, paving and installing the wood panels and black granite tiles on the building exterior. They expect to turn over the keys to the new owners by the end of July 2008, ahead of the contract’s October completion deadline.



Renderings courtesy of Bettisworth North.

Architect’s renderings show the exterior grounds and the lobby of the Morris Thompson Center. The project is on schedule to open in fall 2008.

Did you know...

...The Morris Thompson Center combines the goals of its future resident organizations – Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Alaska Public Lands Information Center, Denakkanaaga and Tanana Chiefs Conference. The center's mission is to:

- Celebrate Interior Alaska's land and people;
- Promote economic stability via tourism, with special emphasis on rural Alaska; and
- Serve a community gathering place where diverse cultures come together to understand, appreciate and respect one another.

You Can Help

Join hundreds of individual donors committed to the philosophy of working together on commonalities while celebrating diversity. To make your tax-deductible gift today, call 907.459.3880, use the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope or make your gift online at www.morristhompsoncenter.org.

Labor Unions Contribute Cash, Workforce



GHEMM project superintendent Dave Houx (left) and Carpenters Local 1243 training coordinator Jeff Pruss present a \$5,000 check to Morris Thompson Center director Cindy Schumaker at the jobsite this summer. The Fairbanks Building and Construction Trades Council is committed to providing tribal members with training and employment opportunities through the Alaska Works Partnership. The Council has been vital to helping GHEMM Company fulfill the 25% Alaska Native workforce contract goal during construction. GHEMM has met or exceeded this goal each month, reaching a high of 48% Alaska Native hire in June.



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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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.

Denali State Bank Donation



Denali State Bank president Jo Heckman (left) recently presented Inside the Smokehouse, an original oil painting by Lisa Rogers-Peter (center), to the Morris Thompson Center. Lisa's husband and a fellow artist Steven Peter (right) is a Gwich'in Athabascan from Fort Yukon. Steven helped build the frame and stretch the painting, which was inspired by a fish camp on the Yukon River. The painting will hang in TCC's corporate offices until the Morris Thompson Center opens next year.

Exhibits to Focus on How We Live in Interior Alaska

With construction underway, attention is turning to the Center's exhibits, which will open for the summer 2009 visitor season. Two new faces have joined the development team.

APLIC hired interpretive planner Pam Rice to coordinate the overall exhibit development. She will head up the research and writing for the exhibits and will reach out to local experts to gather historic photographs, artifacts and other material for the exhibits. She brings excellent experience from her work developing the recently opened Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot.

TCC contracted with local artist and cultural expert Dixie Alexander to lead the cultural exhibit development and artifact selection. Along with TCC's

cultural program planner Tanya Beatus, Alexander worked with an eight-member art selection committee to review submissions of art for display in the future Elder's Hall. Based on the committee's recommendation, TCC's Executive Board approved the purchase of 30 traditional Athabascan items for the exhibits. In addition to the items selected and purchased by TCC, the University of Alaska Museum of the North has agreed to loan nearly 100 items from their collection. These items will be displayed on a rotating basis.

Attention artists: TCC is accepting submissions for a second round of art purchases. Deadline for submissions is December 31. For more information contact Tanya Beatus at 907.452.8251 x3239.