

THOMPSON CENTER TRACKS



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

With Federal Support Secured, Focus Turns To State, Private Funding

Thanks to the generous and committed support of Alaska's Congressional Delegation, the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center secured another \$6 million in federal support in December 2004. The funding, included in the National Park Service's appropriation, brings the federal contribution to \$15 million, more than half of the estimated \$26 million project cost.

Efforts are now focused on securing the balance of the funding – \$4 million from the State of Alaska and \$7 million from foundation, corporate and individual supporters. The Leadership Team has set an ambitious but attainable goal for 2005 – \$2 million in state funds matched by \$2.5 million in private funds – to ensure that the project stays on track to award a construction bid in 2006.

Enthusiastic support from the community will be key to reaching our goal. Citing the vital role the Center will play in strengthening Interior Alaska as a visitor destination, both the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly and Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau recently passed resolutions calling for \$2 million in state funding this year. In February, members of the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce also carried our message to Juneau as part of their annual legislative fly-in. Funding this session would build on last year's \$550,000 state grant.

Denali Commission Awards Grant

The Denali Commission shares a common goal with the Center – to provide the foundations for economic opportunity in rural Alaska. At its January meeting, the Commission approved a \$313,790 grant to underscore its support for the Center's vision for enhancing private sector tourism opportunities in rural villages. Commissioner Julie Kitka proposed the grant, which was also supported by fellow Commissioners and Leadership Team members Jim Sampson, Mark Hamilton and Lt. Gov. Loren Leman. Thanks, Commissioners!

Changing of the Guard at APLIC

Center partners wish a fond farewell to Clay Anderson, project representative for the Alaska Public Lands Information Center, who retired from the National Park Service in January. Longtime Fairbanksan Don Pendergrast takes over management of APLIC, in addition to his duties at Gates of the Arctic National Park. Pendergrast brings expertise in exhibit design and educational programs from his past work with the National Park Service, most recently with new multi-agency visitor center in Coldfoot.

Your Gift Can Make a Difference

With a \$26 million project goal, some might think their gift won't make a difference. "Not so!" says Project Director Cindy Schumaker. "Large numbers of \$50 and \$100 gifts are just as important. They show that the community is really behind the project – something that foundations, corporate donors and legislators consider when deciding which projects get funding."

With \$553,000 in gifts and pledges – including 100% participation by employees of the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau, one of the project partners – we're off to a great start.

Join us! Use the enclosed envelope to make your pledge to the Morris Thompson Center today.

Rasmuson Foundation Funds Visioning Workshop

"It's a cold, clear winter day in February 2010. What do you see happening at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center?" That's the question Brian Rogers, President of Information Insights, posed to participants in a visioning workshop for project partners and invited guests in February. The exercise, funded by a \$10,000 grant from the Rasmuson Foundation, will help strengthen the vision for cultural programming in the Center.

Participants envisioned getting out of their cars in a well-lit parking lot, following walkways lined with ice carvings. Inside, the Center bustles with activity. Groups of Japanese visitors use the Center's exhibits and resources to plan their week in the Interior. Schoolchildren gather around an Alaska Native artist demonstrating basket-weaving. Tribal College

students arrive for an Athabaskan language course taught by a village Elder. All are potential activities at the Center, and the exercise will help to develop the budget for the Center's year-round programming.

Center Plans for Long-term Operations

At the invitation of the Rasmuson Foundation, TCC's Administrative Officer Robin Renfroe and Project Director Cindy Schumaker attended the Foraker Group's workshop with national consultant Tom Harris *Planning for Your Organization – Its Growth and Facilities*. Harris pointed out that, too often, non-profit organizations embark on a capital campaign before knowing whether their budget can afford the costs of a larger facility and expanded programs. Working with independent appraiser Karl Sopp, the partners developed an annual operating and maintenance budget estimate of \$600,000, to be covered by proceeds from the Center's endowment and lease fees charged to FCVB, APLIC and TCC based on the space they occupy in the new facility.



Photo by Dave Monroe
Grand View Bed & Breakfast owner Dave Thompson presents his pledge to Project Director Cindy Schumaker, adding his name to the growing list of Friends of the Morris Thompson Center.



Photo by Nicholas Jacobs
On the front lines of the visitor industry, the staff of the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau understand that the new Center will cement Interior Alaska as a must-see destination. To demonstrate their personal commitment, 100% of the staff have made their own personal donation to the project.

Did you know...

... The Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center is an extraordinary partnership of the **Alaska Public Lands Information Center/National Park Service, Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau, Tanana Chiefs Conference, the Morris Thompson family, and the City of Fairbanks.**

They have joined forces to build a multi-agency facility to educate residents and visitors alike about Interior Alaska's land, economy and culture, and to create a community gathering place where people come together to learn to understand and respect one another.

Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center Legacy for Progress Campaign

Campaign Chair Sam Kito, Jr. **Campaign Vice Chair** Rhonda Boyles

Honorary Co-Chairs Lisa Murkowski, Ted Stevens, Don & Lu Young, Frank & Nancy Murkowski and Loren Leman

Leadership Team Al Adams, Charlie Ball, Buddy Brown, Bill Deaver, Steve Frank, Mark Hamilton, Jo Heckman, Willie Hensley, Oliver Leavitt, Byron Mallott, Carl Marrs, Kathy Mayo, Jim Sampson, Cathy Schultz, John Shively, Steve Thompson, Jim Whitaker, Richard Wien and Orie Williams

Partners Don Pendergrast, *Alaska Public Lands Information Center*; Deb Hickok, *Fairbanks Convention & Visitors Bureau*; Robin Renfro, *Tanana Chiefs Conference*; Charlene Marth, *Family Representative* and Pat Smith, *City of Fairbanks*

Thompson Center Tracks is a publication to update friends and supporters on the progress of the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center. For more information, to add a friend to our mailing list or to become a Friend of the Morris Thompson Center, please contact:

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Photos by Cindy Schumaker

Above Kathy Mayo, Mike Andon, Harriet McCotter, Anna Barker, Rev. Helen Peters and Kathleen Peters-Zeray (left to right) at community presentation in Tanana in February. Inset Morris and Thelma Thompson's daughter Nicole with her husband Terry Jordan at a presentation in Anchorage in January.

Sharing Our Story

The Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center – it's a wonderful story, and we're sharing it across the state! Project Director Cindy Schumaker and members of the leadership team have shared the vision for the Center with more than 80 groups. From audiences of two to 200, the response is overwhelmingly positive.

"It's hard not to get excited when you see how the partners are coming together to create something so positive for Interior Alaska," says Leadership Team Vice Chair Rhonda Boyles. "The synergy of this unique partnership of federal, city, non-profit and native organizations is creating something that's going to be much bigger than the sum of its parts."

Help us share the story! To request a presentation for your community or organization, please contact Project Director Cindy Schumaker at cindy.schumaker@tananachiefs.org or 907.459.3880.