

THOMPSON CENTER TRACKS



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



The Tanana Traditional Dancers perform; GHEMM employee Ryan McCarty drives Rev. Salmon's stake into the center point of the Elders' Hall.



Morris Thompson's niece Charlene Marth, cousins Anna Barker and Harriett McCotter and sister Bernice Aragon bow their heads during a traditional Athabascan blessing; After accepting Doyon's \$500,000 gift, Tanana Chiefs Conference President/CEO Jerry Isaac spoke of the value of the unique partnership of Alaska Native and non-Native organizations.

Ground-blessing

On May 30, more than 350 people gathered to celebrate the ground breaking for the future Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center in downtown Fairbanks. Senators Ted Stevens and Lisa Murkowski, Representative Don Young and Doyon CEO Ori Williams all shared memories and stories about Morris. The Tanana Traditional Dancers, many of them related to the Center's namesake, flew in from his hometown to open and close the ceremony with song and dance.

Traditional Chief Rev. David Salmon brought a ceremonial stake that he had made at his home in Chalkytsik. The stake quietly made its rounds among dozens of family members and friends, who each signed it before Rev. Salmon held it to the sky and blessed it. Then, GHEMM employee Ryan McCarty of Hughes signed his own name before driving the stake into the middle of the building site in the place that will become the Elders' Hall.

"I can't tell you the pride and smiles and dignity and seriousness he had as he took that stake and went leaping across the gravel to pound it in," said Rev. Scott Fisher of St. Mathews Episcopal Church, a good friend of the Thompson Family.

Orie Williams admitted that he had doubts about securing state funding. "You topped my expectations," he told members of the Alaska State Legislature in attendance. "It's been good to see urban and rural legislators working together. Alaska is on the cusp of great things. It's time we recognize that our future success depends on all Alaskans working together." Along with Doyon Board President Georgianna Lincoln, Williams presented the full payment on Doyon Limited's 2005 pledge of \$500,000.

Representatives from Alaska's cruise industry presented payments from the DC-based Cruise Industry Charitable Foundation as well as Holland America, Royal Caribbean and Princess Tours. The cruise industry has contributed a total of \$300,000. Totem Ocean Trailer Express President Bill Deaver also presented a payment on TOTE's \$150,000 pledge.

To date, more than \$25.3 million has been raised toward the overall project goal of \$29.3 million. The funding includes \$16.5 in federal grants, \$6.1 million from the State of Alaska, \$250,000 from the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and \$2.4 million from more than 500 private businesses and individuals. An additional \$4 million in private support is needed to complete the project funding. Williams reminded attendees that "We're not done yet!"

Image credits: Ryan McCarty image courtesy Morris Thompson Center; Tanana Traditional Dancers (girls, top center) and Thompson Family image courtesy Ginger Placeres/Tanana Chiefs Conference. All other images by Patrick Endres/AlaskaPhotoGraphics.



Senator Stevens, Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior Hans Neidig and Representative Don Young.



Project Director Cindy Schumaker, second from left, with cruise industry representatives John Shively (Holland America), Don Habeger (Royal Caribbean) and Bruce Bustamante (Princess Tours) and TOTE CEO Bill Deaver.

Construction: "Full Steam Ahead"

GHEMM Company moved onto the five-acre construction site in April, even before the snow melted. By July 10, the first piece of steel was erected. Today, the basic outline of the future 38,720 square foot facility has taken shape.

"In 17 years, I've never seen a construction project run this smoothly," said City of Fairbanks Public Works Director Mike Schmetzer, who is managing the construction project. "Our architectural and construction teams work really well together and we're building on a firmly compacted riverbed, the best ground I've ever seen. This project is truly blessed."

GHEMM Company plans to close in the building before the snow flies, continue work inside throughout the winter and spring, and turn the keys over to the new owners in fall 2008.

You Can Help: Antlers Needed

We're looking for more than 500 moose, caribou or reindeer antlers to be used in an antler arch on the Center's grounds. If you have some to donate, either from your home or from fall hunting and berry picking trips, call 907.459.3880, email cindy.schumaker@tananachiefs.org or drop them off at TCC.



MORRIS THOMPSON CULTURAL AND VISITORS CENTER

Tanana Chiefs Conference
122 First Avenue, Suite 600
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Address Service Requested

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.

Historical Society to Restore Cabin

The Tanana Yukon Historical Society (TYHS) will take the lead on restoring a historic log cabin that sits on the Center's property. The cabin, built prior to 1910, is one of the few cabins of that era that remains on its original site.

"The cabin has been well kept over the years, perhaps because it had relatively few owners," said TYHS President Renee Blahuta, who will work with cabin builder Sandy Jamieson on the restoration project. They will examine the history of the cabin, determine the appropriate "period of significance" and then restore the cabin and the grounds to that time period.

Research has already determined that, in 1910, the cabin at 105 Dunkel Street was owned by Mary Gould. Mary's husband William was a salesman and the court crier for Fairbanks.

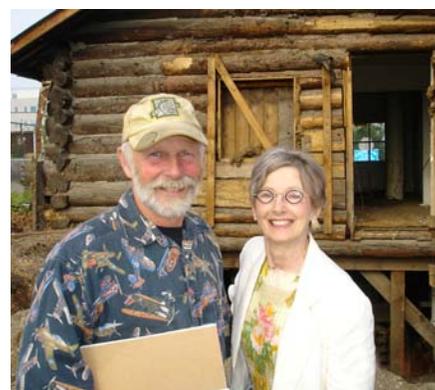
Once restored, the cabin will be furnished with a sleeping alcove, a cook/wood stove, and shelves with housewares. "When the restoration is completed, the cabin will look much like it did during the Fairbanks gold rush era," said Blahuta.



Patrick Endres/AlaskaPhotoGraphics

"We at KeyBank are very proud to be a part of this project. Morris Thompson was a friend and mentor," said KeyBank Vice President Mike Milam as he presented a \$15,000 gift to leadership team Vice Chair Rhonda Boyles and Project Director Cindy Schumaker.

Are you a Friend of the Morris Thompson Center? Call 907.459.3880 or visit the Thompson Center online at www.morristhompsoncenter.org to make your gift.



Local botanist Pat Holloway is also working with landscape architect Elise Huggins of Earthscape to design a "settler's garden" that will be planted each year by Center staff and volunteers. All of the plants in the annual flower and vegetable garden around the historic cabin will be plants that were available in Alaska during the 1910-1920 timeframe.

Above: Cabin builder and artist Sandy Jamieson and TYHS President Renee Blahuta stand in front of the historic log cabin that is being restored as part of the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center project. When the renovation is complete, local residents and visitors will be able to stroll through the cabin and surrounding flower and vegetable garden to get a sense of what life was like in early Fairbanks.