

BRIDGES

Connecting People, Land and Culture

Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center



2010—A Year of Memories, Special Gifts and Progress

We're almost there! State Grant and Special Gifts Boost Exhibit Funding

To date, we've raised more than \$28.9 million. We need just \$375,000 more to fund the exhibits. We owe much thanks to those who have helped us in 2010. When Gov. Sean Parnell signed the FY10 state capital budget this summer, it included a \$500,000 grant. "The Interior Delegation has been very supportive over the years," said Leadership Team Chair Sam Kito. "They've helped create something very special."

Indeed, community response has been extremely positive. It's clear from what we are hearing, the community appreciates

this new facility. Members of IBEW Local 1547 came by for a group tour. Business Manager Jay Quakenbush said, "When we walked into the exhibits, a few jaws dropped. The exhibits reflect our members lives, the industries we work in, how we enjoy the outdoors, the hunting, fishing, snowmachines, boating, dog sledding to name a few."

The positive response from membership prompted a \$10,000 gift from IBEW. "We felt it really captured the Alaskan way of life, and we wanted to do what we could to help get the exhibits finished."

We are thankful to many local businesses and organizations who have made special gifts this year.



"One part of the exhibits focuses on how we make a living – and mining is a significant part of that story," said Kinross/Fort Knox Gold Mine's Lorna Shaw as she presented a \$10,000 donation to Board President Charlene Marth. "Kinross is proud to be a part of telling the story of how we make a living in Interior Alaska."



IBEW's Jay Quakenbush (far left) presents Board President Marth with a \$10,000 contribution. Also pictured (left to right) are Tony Delia and Karm Singh.



"The bank was impressed with how the Center serves the entire community. It's not just about tourists. Everyone can use and enjoy the facility. As a community bank, that's something that we are happy to be a part of," said Mt. McKinley Bank President Craig Ingham as he presented a donation of \$15,000.



Michael Friborg with the Operating Engineers Local 302 presents a check for \$1,000 to Project Director Cindy Schumaker. "Our union was a part of building this facility, so it is right that we make a contribution to help get it done."



Flint Hills Resources showed its support with a gift of \$10,000. External Affairs Director Jeff Cook (center), who knew Morris as a friend and colleague, said, "This contribution is in Morris' honor." Also pictured are Board President Charlene Marth (left), Flint Hill's Marisa Sharrah (right) and interns (back).



MORRIS THOMPSON
CULTURAL AND VISITORS CENTER

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Open Daily

8am-9pm/Summer (May 11-Sept 25)

8am-5pm/Winter (Sept 26-May10)

To

Our Mission

The Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center combines the missions of its partners to:

- Celebrate Interior Alaska's people, land and culture
- Promote economic development with an emphasis on rural Alaska
- Be a community gathering place, where diverse cultures come together to appreciate and respect one another

Your support—whether a first-time or an additional gift—will complete the Center.

BUILDING PARTNERS

Alaska Geographic Store
www.alaskageographic.org
907.459.3710

Alaska Public Lands
Information Center
www.alaskacenters.gov
907.459.3730

Denakkanaaga
907.451.3904

Fairbanks Convention and
Visitors Bureau
www.explorefairbanks.com
907.456.5774

Tanana Chiefs Conference
Cultural Programs
www.tananachiefs.org
907.459.3740

Honor Wall: Don't Miss the Opportunity to Have Your Message Included

Would you like to be listed on our Honor Wall? With a donation of \$150 or more you can have your name, or the name of someone you love, inscribed on our Honor Wall. This stainless steel plaque will be 7 feet tall by 18 feet wide and will hang in our main lobby. It is our way of recognizing the many businesses and individuals who have helped make the Morris Thompson Center a reality. "We want our donors to be able to see their name, and know they've been a part of making this happen," said Project Director Cindy Schumaker.

We installed a temporary mock-up of the Honor Wall in mid-October, so if you are already a *Friend of the Morris Thompson Center*, your name should be listed. Please stop by to check it out, and don't hesitate to let us know if a correction is needed.

The size of your inscription is based on the size of your gift. If you have already given, any new gifts will be combined with previous gifts to determine your giving level. All inscriptions are limited to 45 characters, including spaces and punctuation. For more information, call 907.459.3701 or email info@morristhompsoncenter.org.

Thanks for computer [linking to Project Jukebox oral histories]. I got to listen to my mom sing!
Cal Simon & Mary Beal

"[The exhibits] make us want to come back in the winter!" Lee and Lisa Simmons

Visitors' Voices

It actually feels like I'm outside, especially the part where it's night time and the moose is outside.
Kira Pride, age 11.

From Sunflowers to Vegetables, Historic Garden Makes Community Members Smile

It could have been the most photographed flower in Fairbanks this summer! Topping out at 8 feet 3 inches, the tallest sunflower in our historic garden provided one of downtown Fairbanks' best photo ops. The garden

produced hundreds of vegetables this year. The leafy greens, herbs and other veggies were harvested by facility manager Jason Faris and delivered weekly to the Stone Soup Café.



Chris Harper/FCVB

Portrait of Morris Thompson Unveiled

Morris' family and friends gathered at an MAFN reception in October to see the unveiling of a portrait of the Center's namesake. Athabascan artist James Grant, Sr., a nephew of Thompson's, started the oil on canvas portrait in 2008. The 5 ft. by 4 ft. oil on canvas painting was nearly complete when Grant passed in April 2010. The portrait was completed by Yupik artist Moses "Uksuq" Wassilie, a favorite artist of Thompson who had also painted a portrait of Morris' wife Thelma.



Completion of the hand-carved cedar frame also has a familial connection. James Grant's brother, Jay Schrock, is an accomplished wood carver who often worked side-by-side with Grant on his art projects. Schrock completed the frame based on his brother's original plans. Hand-carved flowers representative of Athabascan beadwork, a traditional Chief's necklace, and a painted scene from Thompson's hometown of Tanana adorn the cedar frame.

Morris' daughter Nicole attended the unveiling and offered these thoughts.

“I've heard stories in my life about my father. The one that sticks out the most was when he was a little boy. Kids would come by and ask him if he wanted to go play outside, and he'd say, 'No, I'm going to read books because I'm going to be a big man some day.' That [story] is my favorite. His perseverance, humor, work ethic, and his love for life is his legacy.”

Visitors' Voices More than 95,000 people have visited the Morris Thompson Center so far in 2010. Here's what they are saying.

I've lived here 13 years and this is exactly what I needed to learn about Alaska.
Lita Cristallo & River Bennett

That's our life!
Don Honea, 1st Traditional Chief

Fairbanksans "LOVE" Their New Antler Arch

The world's "Farthest North Antler Arch" (that we know of) was installed north of the Center along the Chena River. Made up of more than 100 moose and caribou antlers collected from all over Interior Alaska, the arch quickly became a popular photo spot for locals and visitors alike. We were surprised and thrilled to see a local wedding party staging photos under the arch. We believe the happy bride and groom demonstrate the collective "love" Fairbanksans feel for their new arch!



Karen Lundquist/FCVB

What's Happening?

Upcoming Events

Athabascan Beadwork, Tufting and Porcupine Quill Workshops: 2-day workshops, Nov 27&28, Dec 4&5, 8am-5pm. \$150 per workshop. Contact Dixie Alexander, 907.459-3740, velma.alexander@tananchiefs.org

Holiday Film: Sat, Dec 4 @ noon. Enjoy *A Walt Disney Christmas* and hot chocolate.

Holiday Open House: Sat, Dec 11, noon-4pm. Music and ornament making.

Open Mic Night & Christmas Bazaar: Fri, Dec 17, 4-7pm. Performers and artists of all kinds are welcome.

Holiday Film: Sat, Dec 18 @ noon. Enjoy *The Polar Express* and hot chocolate.

Downtown Solstice Celebration: Sat, Dec 18, 4-8pm. Hot chocolate, s'mores and fun while waiting for the fireworks.

Check out our programs and events calendar at www.morrithompsoncenter.org.

Athabascan Artist Dixie Alexander Named Cultural Program Director

Tanana Chiefs Conference has hired Gwich'in Athabascan Dixie Alexander as Director of Cultural Programs at the Morris Thompson Center. Dixie, one of 12 children, was raised in Ft. Yukon in a traditional lifestyle. She is a successful businesswoman, artist, and teacher. She spent more than 20 summers sharing her Athabascan culture with tourists at the Riverboat Discovery's native village. Her traditional artwork can be found in collections worldwide, including the UA Museum of the North and the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.

Dixie was a key advisor in planning and creating the Center's exhibits. "Dixie's deep knowledge and passion for sharing Athabascan art and culture with everyone she meets makes her uniquely suited for this essential position," said lead exhibit designer Bianca Message, President, André & Associates. "Dixie's contribution helped provide crucial insights into the development of both the storyline and the exhibits."

"Big's place needs to be a place where you see Alaska Native people," said Alexander. "Elders, dancers, storytellers, bead workers, skin sewers, carvers, basket makers, moose skin tanners, doll makers...all demonstrating their craft, learning from each other, teaching an appreciation for our way of life. It's my dream to bring a vibrant program to life and to help make my fellow Athabascans proud of the investment TCC has made in the Morris Thompson Center."



Flying Bishop's Plane Graces Center's Lobby

More than 250 family and friends of the late Bishop William Gordon, Jr. gathered in October to dedicate the plane and exhibit installed in his honor. They sang hymns in Inupiat and Athabascan dialects, laughed, and shared warm memories with the Bishop's wife Shirley and their children Bill, Paneen, and Anna who were all on hand for the dedication.

Bishop Gordon arrived in Alaska in 1943. During his 30 years of service, the Bishop logged hundreds of thousands of air miles ministering to congregations

throughout the state. The sound of his plane buzzing a community became a frequent and welcome greeting. "We weren't excited about church, we were excited about donuts," joked the Rev. Anna Frank.

"He loved his work and the people he met along the way," said his wife Shirley. "And he was loved in return." We hope the sight of the Bishop's plane hanging in our lobby reminds those who visit the Center to celebrate and strengthen the ties that bind Alaska's diverse people.

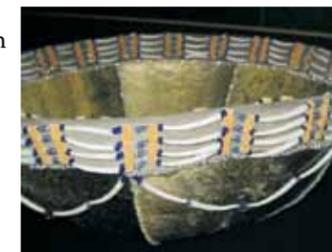


Fish Skin Basket Enriches Cultural Dimension of the Center

Doyon, Limited donated a king salmon skin Athabascan Chiefs basket for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) display within the Center's exhibits. The display features artwork from each of the 12 Alaska Native regional corporations established under ANCSA.

Athabascan artist Audrey Armstrong spent three years collecting the skins and three months making the basket.

Armstrong said that the king salmon skins and the beads and shells used for the basket "represent the respected status of Native chiefs and leadership that guide Native people. The blue of the beadwork symbolizes the sky and water – both important elements of the Athabascan culture and subsistence lifestyle."



A special *Friends of the Flying Bishop* plaque will list the names of businesses and individuals who make a donation to the Center in honor of the Bishop. For more information, call 907.459.3701 or email info@morrithompsoncenter.org.