



Cultural Programs at Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center

By Frank L. Yaska, Huslia Tribal Member

The Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center (MTCVC) consists of five organizations.

The Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center, Alaska Public Lands & Information Center, Fairbanks Convention & Visitors Bureau, Denakkanaaga, and Tanana Chiefs Conference all work together in the Center.

TCC Cultural Programs is focused on retaining and enriching Alaska Native Culture through bridge-building between Urban and Rural Native communities through modern technologies such as videoconferencing, and including rural communities in all events, performances, and contests that Cultural Programs has in the future.

Cultural Programs is located at MTCVC to build a bridge between the Native community and non-Native people. Cultural Programs plans on conducting a Quarterly Cultural Awareness Workshop to promote cultural exchange between visitors, businesses, and other community members.

Cultural Programs have two new staff: Joy Shockley, the Cultural Program Director and Frank L. Yaska, the Theater Program Coordinator. Both are young, energetic, well-qualified, and eager for the department's future and continue learning more about Alaskan Native cultural traditions.

Joy and Frank have been planning and coordinating vigorously to prepare venues in several of the rooms at MTCVC, such as the Theater, Classroom, Artisans Workshop, and the Frank Rose Conference Room.

They've also been meeting with the five partners of MTCVC to prepare the Exhibit Hall, the Gateway, and the Elder's Hall for their official opening, which is scheduled in late May of 2009.

All of the non-exhibit rooms in the MTCVC are available to rent to the public for appropriate cultural and community enrichment events.

Cultural-related events held by Alaskan Natives are free in most of the rooms, depending on the venue.

The Artisans Workshop is directly managed by TCC Cultural Programs and is open to all Alaskan Native Artists to use the workshop where they can comfortably conduct their craft/artwork, whether it is beadwork, painting, carving, regalia-making, sewing, spear making, wood-work, and coffin making. The Artisans Workshop exists solely for the utilization by Alaska Native craftsmanship. For example, Cultural Programs has already granted someone from Manley to use the workshop to refurbish two of his canoes.



The Frank Rose conference room can be utilized for any type of meetings, rehearsals, or luncheons. For example, Cultural Programs has scheduled the Fairbanks Young Native Fiddlers to practice in this room, as well as in the Theater and Classroom, on a weekly basis.



The Classroom can be reserved for a wide variety of uses. In the future TCC Cultural Programs would like to hold Cultural Workshops in this room.



The Theater is an exciting attraction. Cultural Programs is thrilled about what they have planned in this auditorium, such as documentary film screenings and performances.



The following lists only a few of over 40 activities they are going to hold at the MTCVC in the future.

- Quarterly Cultural Celebrations in honoring elders, traditional storytelling, Intertribal dancing and drumming

- Theater, Song & Dance Workshops to teach traditional song and dance as well as stories that can be portrayed through on-stage production, involving youth

- Basketry
- Skin sewing
- Bidzahulane/Kuspuk making
- Regalia, traditional attire during song & dance- necklaces, earrings, headbands, medallions, etc
- Parka Making
- Skin Tanning
- Language, Koyukon Athabascan
- Story Telling, local Fairbanks Elders tell their stories as well as have elders from rural areas tell stories via videoconferencing.
- Traditional Ways of Parenting

TCC Cultural Programs strongly encourages all people to use space at MTCVC



TCC Cultural Programs is now pleased to announce their first large venue

In partnership with Diigii Nalii, an organization dedicated to providing positive role models for young Native men, and playwright Anne Hanley, Cultural Programs is presenting a film in the Theater at the Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center.

“The Winter Bear”, recorded during the live performances in May of 2008 at the Lee Salisbury Theatre, is an original theatrical play that features student actors from Effie Kokrine Charter School.

“The Winter Bear” is a fictional story, but one of the characters is a real person, Sidney Huntington, a Koyukon Athabascan elder from Galena. In this story, Duane “Shadow” David, a misguided Athabascan teenager who has been in foster homes most of his life, is sentenced by the Tribal Court to chop wood for Sidney Huntington for a winter.

Sidney reluctantly takes in Duane and mentors the boy. Their journey from indifference to tolerance and finally respect for each other shows the importance of balancing culture and education to benefit the Alaskan Native people.

In the play, real characters interact with mythic animals Lynx, Wolf and Wolverine. A Bear presence, although never seen directly, hovers over all the action.

This production has received great reviews from the Fairbanks community, both Native & non-Native.

“The Winter Bear” film is showing during Thanksgiving Weekend!



November 26th, 2008 – 7:00pm Show, FREE PREVIEW

November 28th & 29th, 2008 – 7:00pm Show, \$5 General Admission

November 30th, 2008 – 2:00pm Matinee, \$5 General Admission

For tickets or for program questions contact Cultural Programs:

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