

Fred Bigjim at AMU-

Co-ordinates Intercultural Studies

Frederick Bigjim, an Eskimo from Nome, has been appointed co-ordinator of the Center for Intercultural Studies at Alaska Methodist University.

Bigjim, who holds a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Alaska-Anchorage and a master's degree in education from Harvard University, is also an assistant professor in the center.

This semester, Bigjim is teaching a four credit course on the Alaska Native Land Claims, "dealing with the struggle that developed over the rights of Alaskan natives to use, occupy and acquire legal title to the land," he explains.

The course covers the political power struggle and other issues that evolved; a brief history and over-all philosophy of the bill; what it means to native people, both today and tomorrow and a discussion of the bill's impact on the native way of life.

At the beginning of the course this fall, Professor Bigjim asked

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FRED BIGJIM

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his students in a quiz, "What do you know about the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act?"

Of the 40 students, 85 per cent answered, "Nothing."

Bigjim says he chose college teaching because "I wanted the experience that teaching offers, and the university level offers better opportunities to explore the new avenues of learning and teaching because the students are more disciplined to learn."

He believes that Alaskan native students are now looking forward in greater numbers to a college education. Many of them are aided in this ambition by funding from the BIA and the state of Alaska.

Alaska Methodist University has a substantial population of native students from across the state. Bigjim's hope is that the Center for Intercultural Studies will one day be a gathering place for such students, as well as many others from the student body.

The center, in its first year of

implementation under AMU's re-organization which led to centers in Liberal Arts, Health Sciences and Environmental Studies as well as the Intercultural Studies, focuses on the North Pacific, including Russia and Japan, northern Canada and Greenland.

The goal of the center is to increase understanding of international cultural impacts upon Alaska and to help provide simultaneously the individual skills needed for significant service within the state.

Bigjim, in addition to his teaching duties, serves on the Board of Regents of Haskell Indian Junior College in Lawrence, Kansas, a BIA-operated school of 1,200 students.

He was recently appointed to the Alaska Native Human Resource Development Program Council, a seven-member board set up by the University of Alaska and the Alaska Native Foundation for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Bigjim lives in Anchorage with his wife and two sons.