

Criminal Center awards Nenana man

Vern Charles Nusunginya became the first Criminal Justice Center student to graduate with a bachelor of arts degree in justice.

He did it in a big way by earning an almost perfect 3.8 grade point average at the University of Alaska, Anchorage.

Although Nusunginya's long-range career ambitions involved being a top level administrator in the police component of the Alaska Criminal Justice System, he intends to temporarily delay accepting a police position. The

School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University has offered him a graduate assistantship and he plans to obtain a master's degree before returning to Alaska.

"Eventually I'm going to be commissioner of the Alaska Department of Public Safety," said the Native Alaskan. Based on his past successes he has to be taken seriously.

Having graduated from the Nenana Public Schools--where he spent his first five years of school in a one-room, wood

stove heated quonset hut--he was the 1972 salutatorian at Sheldon Jackson College where he received an associate of science degree in biology.

Nusunginya earned an associate of arts in police administration from Anchorage Community College in 1976, graduating cum laude.

In the interim, while attending Alaska Methodist University, he served as president of Alaska Native Students and as an official of Native Emphasis Week project. Nusunginya was elected

secretary of the Toghotthele Corporation, the Nenana Native village corporation, for 1975 and 1976.

Although he received several scholarships, Nusunginya also worked as a fire fighter for the Bureau of Land Management, a carpenter's assistant for the Yutana Barge Lines and a heavy equipment operator, among other things.

As a student, his most recent research has been on career mobility patterns of Alaska Criminal Justice executives.

The faculty at the Criminal Justice Center anticipates that Nusunginya will make a substantial contribution to the improvement of the justice system in Alaska.