

Worl stresses need for ERA adoption

By Ceceile Kay Richter
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Speaking in Juneau, a place she said her people had owned and occupied since time immemorial, Rosita Worl, keynote speaker to the Southeast Women's Leadership Conference, said that "we are living in desperate times today."

"We have moved from the era of the War on Poverty to undeclared war on minorities, women and children, and blue collar workers," she said.

"Gains made by minorities and women in the last two decades are threatened."

Worl warned that the "ethos of Reaganomics" was a massive redistribution of wealth and that another episode of class

conflict between rich and poor continues.

She pointed out that many of the discriminatory practices which have oppressed Native Americans and Blacks also oppress women. However, she added, while programs have been designed to move minorities into the economic mainstream, women have not been so singled out.

Worl said that if the equal rights amendment were not adopted no federal policy existed to eliminate sexual inequality. She questioned with disbelief that our nation would not politically accept a doctrine which promotes equality for men and women.

"I am absolutely convinced

that if social equality is to be achieved, it will be through women," she concluded.

Worl's remarks were made March 5 to an audience of almost 200 women attending the Southeast Women's Leadership Conference and the annual Legislative Fly-In of statewide women's groups.

Worl was at the conference not only as the keynote speaker but in more subtle ways as a role model for the women attending.

A Tlingit woman, Worl has distinguished herself as a scholar, a University educator, an organizer, a publisher, a Native leader, and a woman's leader. In 1968 as a single parent with three children she began college at Alaska Methodist University where she completed her B.A. degree. With her three children who are now grown, she publishes the *Alaska Na-*

tive News.

In between, she has completed an M.A. in anthropology at Harvard and classwork for a doctoral program. She has worked for the North Slope Borough in Alaska and has been on the faculty of the Arctic Environmental and Data Center of the University of Alaska. She is president of the Alaska Native Education Association and has served on numerous boards and councils.

Worl was introduced at the conference by Emma Widmark who knew her as a fellow student at Harvard. Widmark is presently serving her second term as Alaska Native Sisterhood Grand Camp President.

Several major roles were held by Native women at the Conference which was organized by the Juneau Women's Resource Center with a grant from the Alaska Commission

on the Status of Women.

Carol McQueen, Grand Officer of the Alaska Native Sisterhood and an EEO Training Officer for the Department of Fish and Game led a workshop on Intercultural Communication.

Ethel Lund, President of the Southeast Regional Health Corporation, was on a panel on women's health. Evalee Azar, a commissioner on the Commission on the Status of Women, was active as a workshop participant.

Chris Swanson and Joann Riley of the Alaska Native Sisterhood shared responsibility for a brainstorming session on resolutions. Riley also took on one of the more complex roles of the conference, moderator of the final floor session at which some 30 resolutions were passed.