

Women told of importance in today's society

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Women are in a very powerful position in today's work world, says Brenda Itta of Barrow, president of the Statewide Native Women's organization.

Itta told a group of about 30 Native women that "We have at hand the power and ability to change things." The women were attending a conference sponsored by the Women in Crisis Counseling and Assistance, the Alaska Native Women's Statewide Organization - Doyon Region, and in cooperation with the Family Services Division of the Tanana Chiefs Conference. The conference was held in Fairbanks during the World Eskimo Indian Olympics.

In addition to Itta's speech, the conference addressed issues of importance to Native women today including alcohol abuse and battered women.

Itta, a former aide to Sen. Ernest Gruening, a staff member of the North Slope Borough when Borough Mayor Eben Hopson was alive, and a candidate for state office told the women "We have at hand the power and ability to change things."

She said women should realize the powerful position they are in to influence men and they

should respect men "who are in leadership. It's a very beautiful position to be in," when a leader asks for a consultation, she said.

"Once they (men) open up, you may have the solution, you may have the answer," said Itta.

Itta stressed the importance of endurance when working toward a goal. "If we don't have the ability to endure until we reach the goal then our gatherings are fruitless."

She added, "I believe we can do it. It is that kind of determination one must have to survive."

She added, "Back home it's very easy to criticize and those are the things that break our people up."

Itta discussed solving problems in Barrow. "A group of us have gotten together. We have identified our problems. They are over identified. It's possible for us to solve them. When you get together you have to have responsible people." Team work is critical for problem solving she said. "It's very important we have teamwork. There's a security in reaching a goal together."

But she said women must be prepared to accept hardships. "I discovered that hardships and storms are a fact of life," she

said.

"There will be times when you experience a real hardy victory."

Seeing with clarity is also important says Itta.

"It's very important to see with clarity. Many of our people are having problems. I believe people cannot see clearly. There's an entrance of things that are not real. They're under an influence where they can't see anything."

She told the women to "Lead our people with clarity."

People must value what was given to them and they must try to use traditions that have endured over the years Itta said.

In another portion of the conference, Addie Golberg who is with Tanana Chiefs Conference discussed what an abused mother or wife could do.

"You don't have to call the police. You go in and fill out a form (available at Crisis Centers). You can keep him away for 10 or 40 days. A judge takes you in a closed hearing. The judge asks you questions. If

the judge feels there was or is a threat of violence he will keep the husband away for 10 days.

Golberg also discussed the advantages of the Domestic Violence Law.

"You don't have to pay for a lawyer." She said the husband also tells his side of the story and she referred to the 10 or 40 days as "a cooling off period."

"It's letting him know you're taking a stand. It's not like pressing charges. Pressing charges is the last legal option," she said.

She said it was a real achievement.