

# Women must tell selves "I can do it" to lead

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If Alaska Native women want to work in positions of responsibility in their corporations if they want to become leaders they must continue to tell themselves "I can do it," says a woman from the Interior who has done just that.

Georgiana Lincoln, director of programs for the Tanana Chiefs Conference, a Doyon Board member and director of the Rampart Village Corp., told more than 30 women participants at a workshop on strengthening leadership skills that they must continue to remember that they have the

abilities to lead and to bear responsibility outside their traditional roles.

Lincoln and Emma Widmark, Grand President of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, spoke to the women who were attending the three-day statewide women's conference sponsored by the Commission on the Status of Women in Anchorage last week.

Widmark, who was elected to the ANS president's position after being recruited by some ANS members, told the women they must be willing to accept the rewards and problems that accompany leadership duties.

She told them that people

serving the ANS and the Alaska Native Brotherhood repeatedly remind themselves of the people whom they are serving and recognize that they, as leaders, will have to sacrifice and humble themselves for the people they are serving.

Widmark said the organizations also strive to involve all members so they reflect their attitudes.

Widmark told the women that the leadership of any organization must provide long-range objectives for the organization; must reflect the philosophy of the group and must develop plans to accomplish goals and take stands on issues.

Leaders also must evaluate the direction they and their organization are going and consider the long and short-term effect of their actions.

Ms. Lincoln told the group that in traditional times, there was no doubt about women acting as leaders in their tribes and villages.

She referred to numerous sheets of paper hanging in the lobby of the Sheraton Hotel where the conference was held. The sheets were the "wish list" for the year 2001 - the things that the conference delegates would like to see accomplished by that year.

Lincoln said the lists "saddened me because I asked 'Is that us? Do we feel those injustices?'"

"If we live as Native people I would have to tell you, no, Native women were always leaders," said Lincoln, who said women were consulted with on all aspects of life.

This began to change when more white people moved to the areas and reduced the percentage of Alaska Natives from 100 percent to less than 12

percent in the state, she said.

Lincoln, who described herself as a former "table pounder," when she felt strongly about an issue, said she now occasionally tells her male counterparts to remember their heritage. "I have to remind Native men that I am equal. I say, 'Hey, remember from our grandparents' and uncles' days when we worked as a team. Don't let the outside influence change that.'"

She told the group that they must remember that they can attain leadership positions and do well at them. Inspiration, whether it comes from within or outside, is necessary, said Lincoln.

She spoke of Toni Jones, another Interior woman who has a high-ranking position with the state university system as assistant to the chancellor.

Lincoln said she had started college much later than the

normal post-high school age and Jones continually urged her on, gave her encouragement to do what, at times, seemed impossible.

During one school term Lincoln returned late from her commercial fishing operation and was told she was too late to enroll. Jones encouraged her to enroll anyway and make up the missed school work. Lincoln did and made the Dean's list that term.

She said she recently encouraged another Doyon Ltd. woman shareholder to run for the board of directors. The woman said, "Next year, I'm not ready," and didn't run. Lincoln said she felt she should just have jumped in.

"I needed Toni there for encouragement."

"Let's not wait on somebody else to do a job. We have to do it. We have to say we can and just do the job," said Lincoln.