

Patriarchal system keeps women subservient

Alaska Native women are under-represented in jobs or positions of responsibility and power in their Native regional corporations despite the fact that they have higher education experience, according to social anthropologist Rosita Worl.

Speaking to a group of more than 600 women who were attending a statewide conference sponsored by the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women, Worl criticized both Alaska governmental and Native leadership for continuing a paternalistic system aimed at keeping women from achieving their true potential.

Worl, a Tlingit from Juneau, said Alaska has an undeserved reputation for equality among all peoples when in fact, the state supports the systems that keep women and minorities from any positions of responsibility and power in the state.

World was particularly critical of programs to involve minorities and women in state government. "The Affirmative Action plan is little more than a policy statement which has been virtually ignored," said Worl.

She pointed to recent reports that showed women and minorities were at the low end of the pay scale in Anchorage

jobs but she included Native Regional Corporations in her criticisms.

"Despite the fact that women have higher education levels than men they continue in their traditional roles and are absent in power in the regional corporations," said Worl.

"Minority women are denied equal access everywhere.

"The paternalistic society which dominates the state today does nothing more than perpetuate male dominance and continues to keep women and minorities in a subservient position," said Worl.

"I am absolutely astounded that the patriarchy in the Legislature are eliminating the Commission (on the Status of Women)," said Worl. "If only they could eliminate the inequalities which exist today with the same stroke of the pen!"

She told the assembled women that if they want to change these patterns, they must become involved in the political process and voice their concerns at the voting booth during elections.

"Sexual paternalism and economic inequity is a reality of Alaska. To achieve our goals we must be willing to work for change."