

Former drug, alcohol user becomes counselor to those in need

Editor's Note: The following story about Char Campbell was submitted by Versa Smith at Early Childhood Education as a source of inspiration for those who are experiencing personal problems and tough times and in response to the article by Guy Wallulatum in the last issue of Spilyay Tymoo. It was written by Judy Merritt, a free-lance writer from Rapid City, South Dakota. The article first appeared in "Winds of Change", Summer 1996, published by AISES.

Char is a friend. It would be impossible to write her story without beginning with that statement. She is a single parent, a mother to six children. She is a Washtenaw Odawa from the Grand River Band Ottawa in Michigan. She was a high school dropout.

When I first met Char three years ago in Rapid City, South Dakota, she was working on her master's degree from South Dakota State University at Ellsworth Air Force Base. During the years it took to get her education, Char's material resources were extremely limited. When her kids were sick, or her car broke down, or her drains backed up, or her cupboard emptied out all too fast, she never lost sight of her goals and never lost her sense of humor. Most importantly, she never felt she was lacking in abundance, because her abundance came from a deep spiritual connection to the Creator.

Now Char is a substance abuse therapist, a family and mental health counselor and a clinical specialist back in her home state of Michigan. The foundation of her work as a therapist is not based on current psychological theories and research (though she is schooled in them), but on a deep sense of compassion and a genuine sense of commitment to humanity, as well as a strong sense of her traditional indigenous values.

Because she is no stranger to the streets, because she has experienced the devastating effects of alcohol, abuse and racism, and because she has overcome any obstacle that was put before her, she is a very unique specialist. She is an inspiration to

anyone who has fallen into the pitfalls of life simply because Char has fallen into just about every one of them herself.

"There was a time when I didn't like who I was," Char said. "I was using. I was in and out of unhealthy relationships. I was engaged in unhealthy behavior. But somehow, I knew that the core of me was someone with a good heart."

"I also knew that the Creator was always with me. I wasn't sure shy. But each time that something in my life appeared bad, I learned from the experience which turned it into something positive. I finally came to the place when I could fully accept what was planned for me. I realized that with an education I could use my experiences to help other people through theirs. I could have a chance to light the spark in someone else's life that would begin their path to health and growth."

Wise Women

If there was a time (and I'm sure there was), that wise women were recognized within the tribe for their ability to help solve problems by how they lived their lives, Char would have been one of those women. People must have gone to those women for advice and help because they were aware of their sense of balance, justice and integrity and were drawn to them. They must have sat with those women with children playing at their feet and food cooking over the fire while they talked of things of the heart. And they would have listened to each other and laughed together and learned from each other.

Somehow when they left the circle, they would feel lighter and clearer about what needed to be done to solve their problems. Or realize that their problems perhaps weren't problems at all, but just another step on the path of their lives. Something from which to learn. Something from which to honor the richness of the human experience.

This may sound like an idealized fantasy, but it is how I often experienced my relationship with Char. It is the quality that she felt at the core of who she was that made

her turn her life around and go to school to obtain the credentials to become a therapist. It is the way that she approaches her work.

Char works with women who have had problems with substance abuse in a "Women's Circle." The focus of the group is not on the substance abuse, but on addressing issues such as parenting, self-esteem and relationships. The women are told they are there to support each other and to affirm the knowledge of other experiences that they bring to the group.

Char knows how difficult it is for a single mother with limited resources to attend a group. She works closely with Fran Compo, the Department of Social Services Indian Outreach Worker and member of the Grand River Band Ottawa tribe, to assist in child care, arrange for transportation and do everything possible to help the women attend the group.

"With the problems to getting there taken care of," Char said, "there is a chance to light that spark toward leading. If they can't get there, there's nothing we can do to help in that process." In this way, the facilitators of the group demonstrate to the women that they are concerned about working within the full circle of the women's lives. This approach, Char feels, is more acceptable, and therefore more meaningful to Native culture.

The Importance of Family

Char also works with a circle of men in the Kent County Correctional Facility in substance abuse education and treatment. In these groups Char facilitates discussions among the group members. Often her focus is on families, "I get very intense with these men," Char said, "because I am very serious about their children getting a good home life."

She hopes that by stressing the importance of family in these discussions, the prisoners can move outside of themselves into a greater circle of human connection and the responsibilities that are part of that connection. She is very careful to do this in a nonjudgmental way.

Testing is another area where Char's understanding of Native

culture is very important in her work. She uses many testing instruments with substance abuse. Some, she says, are good, but they are predominantly biased. She is careful to review the results with each individual to find how the answers relate to culture and spirituality, instead of diagnosing a culturally-definable experience as a deviance or pathology. She feels it is very important to recognize Native spirituality and what happens in that realm for her clients.

"If Grandpa (who is dead) is coming every night to tell someone something," Char said, "I try to help find out what he's saying, or send that client to a medicine person, and not classify them as delusional."

Char feels she was fortunate in her education because the schools she attended worked toward being sensitive to the needs of Native people. Two of these schools were South Dakota State University and the University of South Dakota. I told her that many Native people here refer to South Dakota as the Mississippi of the Indian population because of the deep racism that they have experienced.

"Considering that situation, which is accurate," I told her, "then something in the way you presented yourself helped to foster positive experiences at these schools."

She thought for a minute and answered, "If something did happen that felt like racism, I would think about it until it was clear in my mind, then I would present it to the person or persons involved in a balanced way that focused on the justice and injustice of the situation."

She has been an inspiration to me and a role model. When it felt like I couldn't get my schoolwork done, especially after my granddaughter was born and I had two children under my wing instead of just one, I would think of Char making it through school with six kids and I would concentrate a little harder. She has more than once pointed out my ethnocentric bias in a way that honored our friendship. She has more than once reached out a hand to pull me out of a few pitfalls in my life.

When she moved to Michigan, it was hard to let her go, but I realized that she had more to offer to the world than just being my friend. I think she has more to offer to the world than just being a therapist. I believe that after she has had a chance to merge her experiential knowledge and book-learning into a concrete working model for substance abuse

therapy, she will have to write a book to share her wisdom and include more people in her circle. Children will be playing at her feet. A tray of food will be warming in the microwave. And there will be much laughter and tears as she tells us stories of the heart that will have the power to heal. And we will all walk away from the circle marveling at the richness and wonder of the human experience.

What others are doing Nez Perce gaming suffers growing pains

LAPWAI, Idaho (AP)—No one is taking anything off the top and no deals have been struck concerning profits at the Nez Perce Indian Tribe's two casinos, tribal members have been advised.

"No machines are designated for a specific person or group," interim gaming manager Daniel Picard said.

Julia Davis of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, said it's time to stop the rumors.

"We are our own worst enemies," she said. "We question it to death. We politicize it."

At a meeting for the general tribal membership, a gaming commission was barraged with questions and concerns about the newly opened Clearwater Casino near Lewiston and the It's Ye-Ye Casino that opened 10 months ago at Kamiah.

Those attending questioned the need for background checks of casino employees, the required \$75 employee gambling license, drug and alcohol testing and the potential for fraud.

Slots considered "cocaine" of gambling

SEATTLE (AP)—Slot machines at Indian casinos in Washington state would be as addictive as crack cocaine to compulsive gamblers, legislative opponents of Initiative 671 said Wednesday.

They also said the measure on the November 5 ballot would threaten restaurants, bowling alleys, taverns and other businesses, and could lead to the spread of electronic gambling throughout the state.

Those contentions were disputed by a leader of the campaign for the initiative, which would legalize slot machines and video poker at tribal casinos.

If the measure is approved, "The Legislature is going to be under tremendous pressure to expand slot machines and video poker to taverns, horse tracks and other venues," said Sen. Dwight Pelz, D-Seattle, chairman of the Senate Labor, Commerce and Trade Committee.

"Cities and counties would lose funding from taxpaying businesses that go broke trying to compete with casinos that pay no state or local taxes," he said.

"I don't think the people of Washington state want this kind of sleazy, addictive gambling added to the unfortunate many that we've accumulated."

Until 1972, state law banned almost all games of chance except charity bingo. Since then, punchboards, pulltabs and low-stakes cardrooms have been legalized. Under the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988, tribes have negotiated with the state to operate casinos featuring blackjack, roulette, poker and craps.

The state now has 250,000 problem gamblers, said Sen. Mike Heavey, D-Seattle, vice chairman of Pelz's committee.

"Slot machines are the crack cocaine of gambling addiction," Heavey asserted. "In Nevada, slot machines account for 70 percent of casinos' revenue."

Dave Storkson, who owns bowling alleys and restaurants in Seattle and Anacortes, said he had to close a cardroom in Anacortes after the nearby Swinomish and Upper Skagit tribes opened casinos offering table games.

Apaches close casino, lay off 350

MESCALERO, N.M. (AP)—Unable to continue paying workers at its closed gambling casino, the Mescalero Apache tribe on Wednesday laid off half of its 700 casino employees.

Tom Gallagher, the tribe's chief financial officer, said 350 Casino Apache employees at the Inn of the Mountain Gods resort near Ruidoso lost their jobs, effective 5 p.m.

"We want to do what we can to help (workers), but the decision to enact the layoffs is one of economic reality," Gallagher said. "Obviously, we have no revenue coming in."

The layoffs came at the end of the current pay period. The tribe acted when no decision was made by the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver on a tribal request to keep the casino open.

The request has been pending before the appellate court since Sept. 25, one day after a judge ruled she lacked the authority to allow the casino to continue operating.

Alaska Natives strive to save languages

ANCHORAGE (AP)—With Alaska Native children slowly dropping their Native languages, many tongues now spoken could disappear in a few decades, a University of Alaska Fairbanks linguist is warning.

Michael Krauss says only Central Yup'ik and Siberian Yup'ik are being spoken by the youngest children in their regions. For other languages, the outlook isn't good.

As part of the Alaska Humanities Forum speakers program, Krauss lectured on the topic several weeks ago. He told the Anchorage audience he hopes that discussing the decline of Alaska's Native languages will help reverse the 100-year trend that is erasing them, started when missionaries began teaching English in church-run schools.

For a language to flourish people need to use it, he said, and bilingual programs won't suffice in public schools. "Bilingual programs are only

Laurie Ann Wilson, president of the gaming commission, told members the panel doesn't have all the answers yet but will be attending more training in October. "We're taking steps to protect the integrity of our casinos," she said.

Wilson said an independent auditor will provide reports to the commission.

"It's important to realize we can't just willy-nilly open as a gaming enterprise and do what we want," said Picard. "We are operating under very specific and legally binding laws" and if they aren't followed, "there will be no enterprise."

A financial statement distributed at the meeting indicates the Clearwater Casino is off to a good start financially. Total operating revenue was \$2.7 million with operating and other expense at \$2.5 million. But Jaimie Pinkham, tribal executive committee treasurer, said not all start-up costs were included, so the actual net income wasn't available.

The Kamiah casino reported a net as of Aug. 31 of \$99,061.

"We're on the front lines," Storkson said. "Those are the discretionary dollars that are being spent in these places."

Heavey and Senate Minority Leader Dan McDonald, R-Bellevue, said it would be better to return to tighter limits on gambling than to loosen the reins.

"I don't think the social costs of this are considered to anywhere near the extent that they should be," McDonald said.

Doreen Maloney, general manager of the Upper Skagit tribe and spokeswoman for Tribes for Responsible Gaming, said slots would cut the number of people going elsewhere to gamble and might bring some into the state.

"You've got to look at how you retain it here or bring it in," Maloney said. "A substantial amount of people go (to Nevada) for electronic gaming."

She also said pit bosses and casino supervisors are trained to watch for compulsive gamblers and suggest they get help. "The same way as when you're dealing with someone whom you see who abuses alcohol."

Maloney challenged the claim that electronic gaming devices are more addictive than horse racing, bingo, punchboards, pulltabs or other legal forms of off-reservation gambling.

"I would love to see the analysis or some sort of independent study that bears that out," she said.

"We'll look for a study and try to get it to you," Pelz said.

Initiative 671, supported by 19 tribes in the state, would allow 295 Indian electronic gambling machines per tribe for the first year and 495 after that.

The machines would be limited to tribes that negotiate gaming compacts with the state. Fifteen percent of the gross profits would go to local governments and economic development commissions, salmon restoration, police, emergency services and charities.

An initiative filed by 19 tribes last year would have limited state policing of casinos and included a provision offering compensation to voters. It lost by a 3-1 margin.

Two tribes in Eastern Washington have installed slot machines in their casinos over the state's objections and are fighting the issue in federal court.

Indian Language Charter School to begin next fall

The Language Program has applied for a grant through 509-J School District to begin an Indian Language Charter School at Warm Springs Elementary School, according to Language Program Coordinator Myra Shawaway. The Language Program

Springs Elementary. The Charter School will focus on Warm Springs Elementary School because it is here and the tribe and community can feel they have ownership of it. Depending upon how successful the program is at Warm Springs Elementary, it

Community Meetings are set up for comments, ideas and general input from community members.

First meeting will be Wednesday, October 23 at the Agency Longhouse—dinner at 6:00 p.m., Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Second meeting will be Wednesday, October 30 at the Simnasho Longhouse—dinner at 6:00 p.m., Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

intends to pursue this regardless of grant approval by the 509-J School District, even though grant funding would provide teacher training and development of materials.

The tribe is the developer of the Charter and the 509-J district is the sponsor. Shawaway says she will hear from them the first week of November. The School Board gave the approval to apply.

The Charter School has been a long time coming. In 1978, an Educational Assessment was done that addressed the issue of developing Indian Language curriculum for the students in Warm Springs. The Language Program is working toward meeting some of those goals. In 1984, a comprehensive plan was developed to introduce those same plans. This Charter School is being developed from plans that are twelve years old and older, so the tribal officials are pleased with the Charter School.

The elementary school is receptive of this Charter School and has set times aside to introduce Indian culture. An introduction in the past failed because the plan was not fully developed. There will be a fully developed curriculum for kindergarten students by next fall.

A pilot program will begin in 1997-98 school year. The curriculum will begin in the kindergarten level then move to first grade. It is the Language Program's intent to follow each grade level through Warm

may continue into the Middle School. Within the next five years, their goal is to develop something for the following years, so that after the fourth grade it doesn't just drop off, and the education format continues.

The Charter School will start with the Sahaptin language for the first year. The Sahaptin language is already developed enough to constantly work with. And as they develop, the Wasco and Paiute languages will be added.

"The Paiute language is moving right along," says Shawaway. Wasco language teachers are working full-time jobs, and that puts a glitch into developing the curriculum. The Language Program hopes that Tribal Council will see to it that another position for the Wasco language may be added.

"The schools have been looking for new ways and new options to do education. With

"In other educational language programs within a school they have seen real changes in scholastic abilities."

that, we were able to get our foot in the door to do the Charter School and be able to develop what we feel is pertinent to us and our children here. We have the support of the Oregon State Board of Education to work with this kind of initiative," says Shawaway.

The Language Program has a \$5,000 initial planning grant

which will be used for community meetings. They are planning to hold two meetings before the end of October. There will be flyers posted informing the community of these meetings. There will be one at Simnasho Longhouse and one at Agency Longhouse. In the community meetings, the Language Program will introduce already existing curriculum they've developed. "I think it's kind of surprising. The language teachers actually did 30 days of intense training on language curriculum, lesson plans, unit plans, and are now developing thematic units," says Shawaway.

Officials do not think new Charter School will "take over" Warm Springs Elementary. "The language program will be supportive of the existing school. There will be no big changes—Language once a day, five times a week. It will be worked out with the Principal and staff."

The Charter School will have its own school board. They're looking at recruiting their own board members—an elder, a student, three parents (one from each language), Myra Shawaway—Program Coordinator, Education General Manager, Elementary School Principal, and Education Committee member, community representatives, advisors within that school board, A representative of the Oregon State Board of Education will serve as an advisor to assure that "we are complying with standards of the state," says Shawaway. If you feel you could add to the needs of the children in scholastic abilities send a letter

"We're real pleased with our teachers. They have come a long way, from not having anything to now having a direction."

are also getting quite proficient with the computers," Shawaway says.

"Alice Harmon, Curriculum Developer, and I are going to Training this week. At this training we will cover proficiency of language, contents standards that the State of Oregon is working on now to change the way we look at teaching languages. We will put in our two cents so that it's not jumbled together with the other languages. It also assures that what they do write on these standards doesn't inhibit our growth as native language speakers and teachers. They will realize that native languages are different from each other."

The Language Program at this time is asking for community input. Give Myra a call with any concerns or suggestions regarding the Charter School. People may call, write or visit Myra at her office located at the Language Program trailer behind the Education Center.

stating why you would like to serve on the Charter School board.

The Language Program's intent is to assure that the 509-J school district, Tribe, advisors, and the community, all pull together and have a comprehensive project and nobody is left out.

According to Dawn Smith, Warm Springs Elementary