

Nanitch Sahallie Feature

By Brent Merrill

The following article is part two of a three part feature series about the Tribe's youth residential treatment center, Nanitch Sahallie. Part two of this series will focus on the transitional living component of the treatment process as well as some of the center's employees and what their functions are.

Transitional Living Component

□ Making the adjustment back into the main stream of life can be very difficult for youths who have just spent from 30 to 90 days in the safe, nurturing environment of a treatment facility. And, when the time comes to test those newly learned skills in the harsh environment of the real world, things can get pretty scary no matter what age you are.

At Nanitch Sahallie, clients participating in the treatment program have the opportunity to take part in the center's Transitional Living Component. The TLC program was designed to provide a comfortable, supporting environment for clients with a high probability of relapse.

The program is set up to allow the clients to attend school or work within the boundaries of the component's guidelines. "The Transitional Living Component is a method of helping the client get back into their lifestyle while at the same time recognizing that they do not have full strength. It's the Halfway House concept," explained Nanitch Sahallie program director, Joanna Rodgers. "The client can go out, go to school, go to work and yet in the evening come back and work intensely on themselves."

According to Tribal General Manager Jim Willis, the idea for the transitional living process has been around for some time. Willis explained the program as a "link" between the treatment center and the community. "It has provided a safe haven for young people to continue



Jamie Fraser

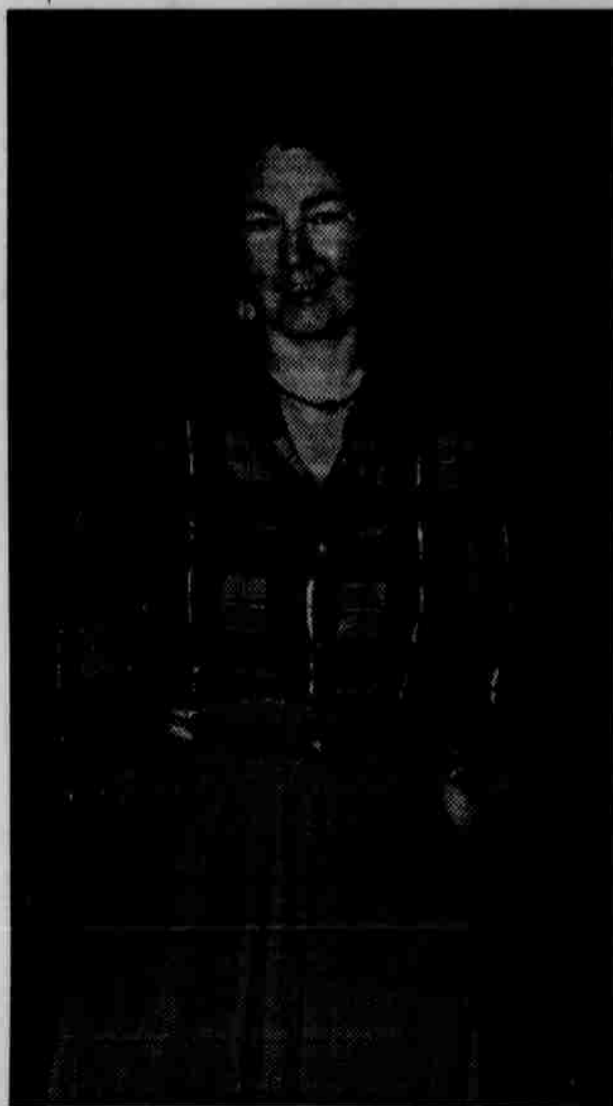
to develop their skills and to think about their lives and to think about ways to deal with their urges and addictions". It is accepted that some young people embrace the concept quicker than others but, if enough self confidence can be instilled in the client during their stay at the center, the chances for success rise dramatically. "It provides a bridge for the clients to use and that is the real value of transitional living," said Willis.

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- Jim Willis

In order for a client to be eligible for the Transitional Living Component they must first have completed the intensive residential treatment program. "Kids normally in their third or fourth week of treatment experience a lot of anxiety because they have to leave, and then they have to put their tools to work. Transitional living provides them with a buffer," said Willis.

Activities associated with the component focus on the prevention of client relapse, the establishment of client support systems, the building of a client's self esteem and decision making skills. "After a client goes through the treatment process they have the education that they need but, they might be having trouble putting it to use. That is when transitional living can be a wonderful thing", explained Rodgers.



Fiona MacNeill

Employees Featured

When you walk in the doors of Nanitch Sahallie the first person you normally see is receptionist Diane Harrison. Harrison began working for the treatment center in April of 1989 and since that time she has proven to be a valuable and competent employee. "I really like my job and I enjoy being a part of this program because I think we are making a difference in these young people's lives," explained Harrison.

Harrison's duties include taking care of discharge summaries, typing assessments, filing organization and updating. Harrison said that she also is responsible for notifying all those concerned when a client enters the program, graduates or checks out.

According to Willis, Harrison handles her responsibilities in a positive manner. "Diane is effective because she is confident and sincere. I think that is why the kids respond to her as well as they do".

When it comes to counseling the youths at Nanitch one of the most effective counselors has been Jamie Fraser. Fraser began working for the Tribe in June of 1989 as an Inpatient Counselor, specializing in aftercare. Fraser is involved with case management dealing for the most part with females. She also spends time lecturing and doing aftercare planning as well as working on relapse prevention.

Fraser explained that she was hired to deal with female clients specifically to help knock down the barriers that can be put up by a chemically dependant client. "When you're dealing with people that are chemically dependant most all of us in our disease have things that we've done that we have a lot of guilt and shame about," confided Fraser. One of those areas that tends to be affected is sexuality and there are those times when it's a lot easier to share your feelings with someone who is the same sex. It really helps with the denial stage of the addiction".

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Fraser said that she sees herself primarily as an advocate for the client in opposition to the disease. "I see that one of our primary responsibilities is to identify what the resources are available for the client and then making use of those resources." Fraser said that "It's the client who has to do the work to stay on the path and it's up to me to make it fruitful for them".

When it comes to continuing a client's education while in treatment the responsibility rests on the shoulders of the center's education coordinator, Fiona MacNeill. MacNeill began working for the center in October of 1989 and she said her program has been changing and developing since that time. "This program never existed before I came on board and so things have changed continually as we've evolved".

Currently, MacNeill serves as the liaison person between the clients and whatever school they left or may be going back to. "A big part of the program is motivation and some of the areas I try to work on are goals. I try to help them get more focused on where they are going".

When asked if she considers her job working with the kids as a challenge she said "Yes, it's a thrill a minute. I'm always telling people that I don't have to go to the movies anymore."

Part III of this feature series will focus on more of the employees, after care and will also include conversations with clients on their responses to treatment.