

HEALTH & EDUCATION

Rehabilitation: a constant struggle between the old self and the sober self

by Cathy Cline, Editor

Editor's note: This is the second in a series of six articles which focus on the process of drug and alcohol rehabilitation for a Native American youth at Nanitch Sahallie Native American Youth Residential Treatment Program in Keizer, Ore.

The purpose of this series is to highlight the destruction which occurs when drugs and alcohol become an indispensable part of a Native American's life, to remind our readers of the thin line between casual use and dependency, and, finally, to share with you the personal battles which must be fought before one can turn his/her back on drugs or alcohol forever.

The first article in this series was published in the January issue of Smoke Signals in which you were introduced to "Jay," and his long history with drugs and alcohol. After being surrounded by drugs and alcohol his entire life "Jay" sought counseling the day he woke up with his arms bruised from drug needles.

"Jay" has been at Nanitch Sahallie for several months now and continues to struggle with learning a sober way to cope with challenges.

The corners of his mouth were turned down and his eyes looked dark and heavy, obvious signs that 18-year-

old "Jay" is struggling with his personal rehabilitation progress.

Working his way through the 12-steps to recovery is a challenging experience for "Jay," who is letting go of an old identity dependent on drugs and alcohol, and coming to terms with his sober self.

Learning how to deal with life's dilemmas with a sober disposition is a part of the internal process of rehabilitation. Fortunately, "Jay" likes what he sees in his new identity.

"It feels good to learn about myself as I work my way through the 12-steps to recovery," "Jay" said. "I like being known as a nice guy now, instead of a hoodlum like in the past."

Spending a week at home for Christmas helped "Jay" decide that he wants to move to the Salem area when he leaves Nanitch Sahallie. "I really like this area and my hometown is too much of a high risk area for me," he said. "I think being home for too long could cause me to relapse."

"I was asked to mix drinks for my family while I was at home," "Jay" said. "It didn't bother me, but there's only so much of it I would be able to tolerate before I started

drinking again."

Going through the rehabilitation process has given "Jay" a lot to think about, including his future. He just recently took the General Education Test through a job training program in Salem.

Deciding on a career move is not easy for "Jay." "Housepainting is a real hobby of mine, but I really love cars so, I may end up a mechanic," he said.

"I am just really looking forward to getting a job and living a sober life," "Jay" said. A life he thinks will not include relationships. "It's so confusing, it's easier for me to not let relationships interfere with my life."

"Jay" is also struggling with social acceptance from his peers. As a role model at Nanitch, he finds that all the attention he gets forces him to be more responsible. However, he reminds people that putting a person on a pedestal is like pressuring them to be superhuman.

"Nobody is perfect," he said. "We are all human and bound to make mistakes."

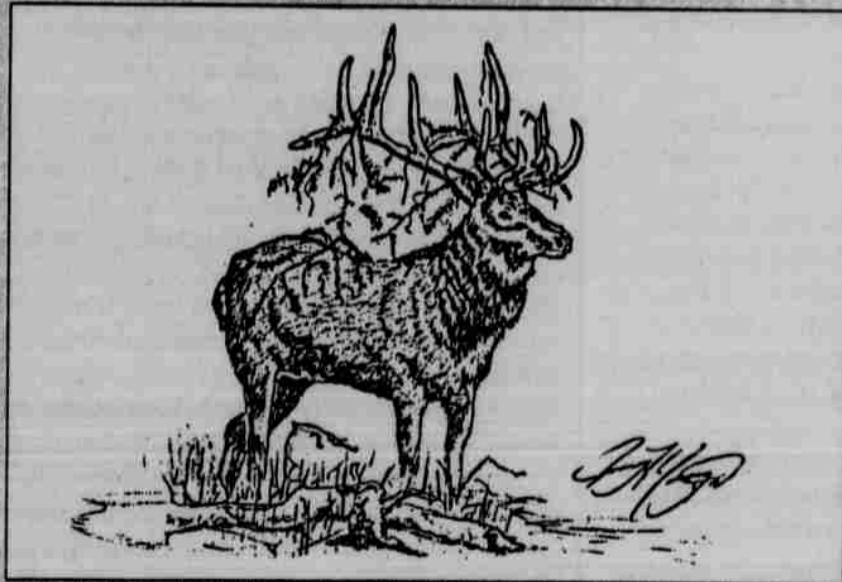
To get his mind off the pressures of rehabilitation, learning his new identity, and designing a future "Jay" likes to write poetry. "Writing poems puts my mind at ease," he said. "It makes me feel better."

Hunter Safety Class

March 23rd through 27th
6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Nazarene Church

Deadline for Registration
March 13, 1992
NO EXCEPTIONS!

Please call and leave your name and number with Karen or Tracy at 879-5211.



IMMUNIZATION CLINIC

March 26, 1992.
Nanitch Sahallie Treatment Center
5119 N.E. River Rd
Keizer, OR 97303

10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Sponsored by the Grand Ronde Tribal Health Program.

Please bring your child's immunization records and any questions that you might have regarding your child's health. We would like to meet you and your child/children. If you have any questions, please call the tribal health program at 1-800-422-0232.