



Raven's Way Intake Specialist
222 Tongass Drive
Sitka, Alaska 99835
Tel: (800) 770-3063 or (907) 966-8716
Fax: (907) 966-8705
Email: rwintake@searhc.org

Treatment model focuses on building assets

“Long ago, our ancestors knew what it was to be strong; to be strong in body and in spirit. Their strength came from training and discipline. Those who were not strong did not survive. Our ancestors know the survival of our ways is in the strength of our young people.” — Raven’s Way graduation certificate

There are many reasons why teens turn to drugs — peer pressure, depression, feeling lost, curiosity, escape. But young people who develop internal and external strengths (or assets) are better able to lead healthy lives, cope with life’s stresses and resist substance abuse and behavior problems.

Students in the Raven’s Way adolescent residential treatment program (Yéil Jeeyáx) learn about healthy life skills and building strengths. The Raven’s Way program incorporates all four aspects of health and wellness — developing healthy bodies, hearts, minds and spirits. The program also teaches them effective problem-solving, conflict-resolution and leadership skills, while promoting positive identity, self-esteem and pride in accomplishment.

By using the Native medicine wheel as its model for health, the Raven’s Way program helps students use a variety of approaches to develop physical, mental, emotional and spiritual strengths. From the moment they enter the program, students begin to heal physically from the substances they have been using. Drugs, alcohol, caffeine are removed and replaced with healthy food and lots of water. Students establish a healthy sleep routine, and get daily exercise through morning runs, hiking and kayaking. They often say feeling good physically is the first incentive to staying alcohol- and drug-free.

Raven’s Way students are able to strengthen their mental skills by completing academic schoolwork and treatment homework and participating in daily problem-solving activities with peers. Students take turns being Leader of the Day in order to learn leadership and teamwork skills. They strengthen their emotional functioning through group and individual counseling, journaling, sharing life stories, reading about survivors, developing healthy relationships with peers and staff, small-group feedback and support, talking circles, and sweat lodge.

Students have the opportunity to participate in several different activities to strengthen their spiritual well-being, including moments of silence, pouch ceremony, rites of passage, talking circles and sweat lodge, and a self-directed three-day solo wilderness journey. Since more than half of treatment at Raven’s Way takes place in wilderness settings, spiritual healing often is nurtured through connection with the natural environment. Native cultural activities are often part of this spiritual growth for students, who learn self-acceptance and pride regarding their cultural backgrounds and practices. Since students come from all over the state of Alaska and 85 percent are Alaska Native, there are opportunities to share and learn from their diverse cultural backgrounds.

The students view completion of the 40-day treatment program with pride. Rather than being ashamed of being in “treatment,” they take pride in completing the rigorous program and feel stronger and more competent to face life’s challenges. The group supports each other to stay in treatment and complete treatment together. More than 82 percent of young people admitted to Raven’s Way complete the treatment course.