



### **RAEVEN'S SUCCESS STORY**

Raeven was born and raised on a reservation where she and her family lived in poverty and without running water. Frequently, as a child, her basic needs went unmet. She remembers feeling hopeless, with no reason to believe she would amount to anything. As an adolescent she frequently got into trouble, skipping school and using drugs. By the age of 13, she was sent to Juvenile Hall and she felt like she probably belonged there so she continued doing things that would send her back. Later she would spend time in a group home for violent youth and eventually serve three and a half years for car-jacking. While she was in the custody of the California Dept. of Juvenile Justice, she completed her GED, took college classes and began to explore the strength of her Native culture and spirituality. She felt stronger when she returned home, but she had no support system in place and by age 26 she was a mother of two children, addicted to alcohol and drugs and involved in a violent relationship. When Child Welfare Services intervened, it became a lifeline for her. Her caseworker challenged her to attend 90 recovery meetings in 90 days (a tremendous challenge because she was homeless at the time), but she rose to the challenge and ended up attending 300+ meetings. It took a lot of self-will for Raeven not to fight those who were trying to help her, but she persevered. She connected to her higher power, took parenting classes, completed a recovery program, interned at Hilltop Recovery Center, enrolled at Humboldt State in their social work program, and this December will mark 5 years of being clean and sober.

#### **In Raeven's Own Words:**

**What would you tell other people in Lake County about what is most important to your success?**

**How would you encourage them?** The unconditional compassion and love I received from my recovery sponsor created a relationship where I could experience trust and fully disclose the things that were holding me back and sabotaging my life. If Child Welfare Services and AODS hadn't intervened in my life, I don't know where I would be. I would have lost myself. Allowing good people to help you is so important. I've now had the opportunity to go back to Juvenile Hall and talk to the youth who are there about my experience. If you persevere, you will be able to help others and that is a huge reward.

**What kept you from giving up when things were hard?** My commitment to a better future for my children and the support of my sponsor were key. My children are in a safe, clean and sober home with no domestic violence. They play sports and will begin scouting soon. I have daily check-ins with them asking about their highs and lows, practicing the skills I learned in parenting classes and which I

now teach to others. They have a completely different life than I had and that is worth everything to me.

**What are you most looking forward to, now that your life is on a different path and what makes you feel most equipped to keep moving in a positive direction?** I look forward to earning my bachelor's degree in social work and continuing to work as an alcohol and drug counselor at Ukiah Recovery Center. I want to learn more about Native American recovery models and the impact of historical trauma so that I can better help those within my own Tribe and culture. I feel equipped to keep moving in this positive direction because of my education and training. My eye is on the prize.