

My name is Emily Taylor and I am a 15 year old Alaska Native, youth organizer for Alaska Youth for Environmental Action. I was born and currently live in Anchorage Alaska, but my family is from Naknek and Unalakleet. Right now I am a sophomore at Dimond High School.

I have grown up always going to Bristol Bay in the summers to fish. Bristol Bay is where my grandmother grew up, and it is home to one of the world's largest and most productive salmon runs. The fight against the Pebble Mine, a large threat to the Bristol Bay fishery, has been going on as long as I've been alive. I think growing up around such a beautiful watershed that had such a large threat looming over us led me to want to help in the fight to save the environment and protect the place I love so much. My auntie Melanie Brown is heavily involved in the fight against the mine and she encouraged me to speak up against the mine and helped me get my voice out there. I also learned more about climate change and the enormous climate crisis we are facing and I wanted to be able to do something to stop it. AYEА has really given me a platform to continue my activism and help stand up to do something about this climate crisis we are facing.

There are several events I have participated in that are very important to me. If I were to pick 3, they could be the Pebble Mine hearing held in Anchorage, our local climate strike, and the AYEА youth organizer summit. The public hearing on the draft environmental impact statement for the pebble mine was really my first public event and introduction to activism and the power of my own voice. I testified in front of the army corps of engineers on why the pebble mine should not be in place and why that is so important to me and my culture. I am a fifth-generation commercial fisherman and the mine would directly affect my way of life. I also got to speak at a rally after that and this was really the first time I got to feel the power of my own voice. The climate strike held in Anchorage on September 20th was a great success, despite the pouring rain we had that day. 500 people came to the event and we got powerful media coverage of it. We were really able to show the magnitude of people behind our movement and that we are here and here to stay. We were a large group of people that was hard to ignore. The AYEА youth organizer summit held just before the climate strike was an extremely meaningful experience that equipped me with so many useful skills and provided me with friendships that will last a lifetime. I learned about grassroots movements and community organizing and how I can help lead a movement. I also continued to learn about the power of my own voice and was provided with the resources and network to continue to use my voice for change.

With the rapid rate of climate change occurring worldwide, we are feeling the effects heavily in the United States, especially Alaska. The Arctic is warming at a rate two times faster than anywhere else in the world. Ice is melting, which exposes villages to storms that they previously would have been protected from. Sea levels are rising, and villages are eroding into the sea and having to be relocated. The migration patterns of animals are changing, which affects hunting and the long-held subsistence way of life for village dwelling Alaska Native people. Ocean and river temperatures are rising, which are killing salmon, an important food source. Effects are being felt all around the United States as well, whether people want to acknowledge them or not. Hurricane intensities are rising, floods are increasing, and the weather is becoming more

extreme. Some places in the midwest had extremely low temperatures, while here in Anchorage we had a relatively mild winter. This is not normal. This summer Alaska broke several records for hottest days, hottest months, or hottest summers. We had weeks where it was over 80 degrees Fahrenheit consistently. This is not normal. With these warm temperatures also came extreme wildfires. Our warm summer sky was looming with constant smoke, sometimes making it unsafe to even be outside. Many sports practices were canceled when school started due to exercising in the smoke being dangerous for our health. Climate change is affecting everyone and is a major problem especially here in Alaska.

Governments and corporations today should stop their reliance on fossil fuels and move towards cleaner and renewable sources of energy. Governments should enact legislation to move towards that as well as find other ways to reduce their impact on the environment. Economic incentives to move towards green energy are also something that would help fight climate change as it would make companies want to stop using fossil fuels. The biggest thing they should be doing is to stop using fossil fuels but something else companies could be doing is trying to reduce their waste and leading us into a more circular, regenerative economy. The way we recycle also needs to be systematically changed especially in the United States because it is extremely ineffective and most of it ends up in the landfill. I would say they are hearing many of the concerns brought about by young people but aren't really listening to them. Some elected officials are, but they are very few and no real action has been put into place so far. But I would say they definitely know that we are here and I think the four million people worldwide that participated in the climate strike shows that we have the people and numbers behind our movement and that we are not going anywhere. The Alaska Federation of Natives did just pass a resolution declaring a state of emergency on climate change which is very encouraging but we need bigger than that such as the green new deal or the Alaskan climate action plan put through as well. We need to be addressing climate change and we need to do it now.

I think young people are so committed to addressing climate change because we are literally seeing our futures being burned up right in front of our eyes. Many people that are older may not be very concerned because they will already be dead when the crisis really hits but young people will be there and we will have to face disaster. We are fighting for our future and the future of the generations to come after us. Many of us would love to be planning for a future just like our parents and grandparents did before us, but we are wondering if there will even be a future for us to have. Young people will see the effects of climate change head-on and in person and we are very concerned and saddened by that possibility. Young people want to be able to live out their lives on a habitable planet and keep the planet livable for generations to come.

To the people not aware or who do not want to be aware of the climate crisis I say that we are in a crisis. The effects are already being felt. The science is there we see it happening all around us and we must take action. Relocated communities, high-intensity hurricanes, and increased wildfires are just a few of the aspects of the climate disaster being felt. We must take action immediately. Disaster does not care what political party you are in and we are facing a disaster.

We must address this issue before it is too late. We must act for the sake of ourselves and the people to come after us.