

Your life is a series of stories. Tell a story that has helped shape you or reflects who you are today, and how that will move you into the future. (Example: stories of relationships, events that have happened in your school or community, etc.)

(Please write an essay of up to 750 words using 1.5 spacing, and use additional white paper if required. Please have proofread before submitting.)

Last fall I was chosen to be an Arctic Youth Ambassador, which is sponsored by the US Fish and Wildlife, Alaska Geographic, and the Department of State. Being a part of the Arctic Youth Ambassador program has helped me understand and connect with my community and culture on a deeper level. This program has opened my horizons and I couldn't be more proud to represent my culture and community on a state wide and even national level. I have attended forums, and conferences, speaking about the changing arctic and protecting our fisheries resources. I'm concerned with how changing environmental conditions will impact the future sustainability of our resources here in Unalaska. The Arctic Youth Ambassador program has allowed me to use my passions to convince others of the importance of protecting our resources for the long term, and in helping them realize that real living people are being affected by the changes in the Arctic and the Bering Sea.

During the Arctic Youth Ambassadors trip to D.C. last Fall, the question was brought up, "If you are so directly impacted by climate change, why don't you just move?" and at first it was hard to put it into words. Then I thought about it. With our native culture slowly fading, sometimes all we have left is the food, the language, and our land. Moving to a completely different environment, for my grandma and the other elders would create a hardship and potentially destroy our culture. Growing up with Aleut ethics, I have been taught that it is my responsibility as a youth to take care of and provide for the elders. This is why I am passionate about protecting our resources and making sure the elders and youth have a future.

I see myself becoming college educated and working to protect my culture and our natural resources. I plan on going to the University of Oregon and pursuing a major Environmental Science or Environmental Law. I am passionate about protecting our land and fisheries, and I plan on creating environmental policies designed to enhance and provide for a sustainable future for all of Unalaska. Public policy discussions and future leaders will need to consider the how we shape and carve out an environmental future across Alaska. I plan to use my experiences and lessons learned as a tribal youth representative, an Arctic Youth Ambassador, and as a student government officer, to forge regulations that keep, protect, and ensure our natural resources are healthy and sustainable for generations to come.