

The AYEA Art in Action Training: Telling Our Stories 2008

Anna Barnwell

From September 10-15th, 2008, twenty Alaskan youth participants and Peer Leaders from Akiak, Chefornak, Anchorage, Homer, Palmer, Anderson, Healy, Bethel, Emmonak, Kotlik, and Kasilof gathered for the *AYEA Art in Action Training: Telling Our Stories 2008*.



Getting Creative: Like last year's *Summer Institute* this year's training focused on using art and media as a way to take action on issues that youth face in their communities. For the first time, AYEA partnered with [Art in Action](#), a youth leadership organization from Oakland, California. Five talented Art in Action trainers came to Alaska to teach participants in three tracks of art and media: Digital Storytelling, Dance/Theater, and Spokenword/Music. Participants chose the track they were most interested in and then spent their time at the training creating and producing pieces to present at the "Telling Our Stories Performance" held on Sunday, September 14th at Out North Theater in Anchorage.



Sharing environmental perspectives: In addition to the creative tracks, AYEA Peer Leaders facilitated workshops on environmental issues facing Alaskan communities, presented tools and ways for youth to take action with AYEA, and encouraged participants to be leaders in their communities by creating a shared vision of leadership.

The training was a huge success! During the performance, participants shared passionate and heart-warming stories about a range of issues youth care about. The issues varied from concern about Alaska's eroding coastline, overcoming personal and family tragedy, traditional hunting and fishing in rural Alaska, consumerism and changing societal values, and much much more. The performance reflected the inspiration present throughout the *Telling Our Stories* training. The power of a personal story fostered



friendships and group cohesion; youth and adults alike came away from the training feeling connected to other people in the state in a way they never thought possible. Participants said that some of their favorite moments of the training were being exposed to environmental issues across the state, meeting new friends, taking a group hike up to the top of Flattop in the Chugach Mountains, and working with the Art in Action trainers on their pieces for the performance.

Check out the Stories online! The pieces created at *Telling Our Stories* are available online on [AYEA's MySpace](#), YouTube, the [AYEA website](#), or by request from AYE staff. If you are interested in learning more about this year's *Telling Our Stories* or would like to learn more about plans for next year's *Telling Our Stories* please contact Maeve Taylor (taylor@nwf.org) or Megan McBride (mcbriem@nwf.org).



Thank You! AYE staff would like to thank our partner **Art in Action** for their wonderful instruction during the training. Maryam Roberts, Galen Peterson, Ashel Eldridge, Alli Starr, and Xiomara Castro: you are all amazing. We would also like to thank **World Wildlife Fund** for lending us technological equipment; **Arctic Organics** for giving us fresh greens; **Alaska Conservation Foundation** and all of the other donors who made our travel scholarships possible, and the amazing, reliable, and helpful adult volunteers who made

the meals, performance, and fun free times during the training memorable.

THANKS SO MUCH! SEE YOU NEXT TIME!