

**BEMIDJI AREA INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST OF 2015
MR. BARRY HUGO**

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Hugo has served in the Bemidji Area IHS (BAIHS) Rhinelander District Office since 2013 when he began his career with the Indian Health Service after serving and working for the Bay City Michigan Health Department. Upon arriving in the Bemidji Area, Mr. Hugo rapidly became an exceptional environmental health officer who has voluntarily taken on the responsibility of mentoring junior staff. *He also has been instrumental in ensuring the expansion of BAIHS services to Tribes located in Michigan and promoting sovereignty of his assigned Tribes by developing ordinances and programs.* Most recently Mr. Hugo played a crucial role in the development and orientation of a new Rhinelander Service Unit Environmental Health Officer. *Mr. Hugo worked with a new staff to assist them in understanding the EHS procedures and policies. He took the initiative to schedule surveys, handle ongoing environmental health issues, and plan meetings to include these staff.* In addition, he stepped up and took on this responsibility during the District Environmental Health Officer's deployment to Africa for ~90 days.

SPECIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. Hugo's dedication, motivation and professionalism have substantially elevated the development, growth and quality of the environmental health program in the BAIHS as a whole. In addition to his usual workload of providing field environmental health services to eight tribal communities in Michigan, Mr. Hugo has risen to assume a lead role in key tribal initiatives of solid waste management sustainability and resilience within tribal communities. *This work has included the documentation of 21 open dump sites into the Sanitation Tracking and Reporting System (STARS) resulting in an SDS project to permanently close all 21 sites.* The project was completed in 2015. He has made a significant contribution to our DEHS Program efforts to work with Tribal EPA and Federal EPA *programs to end open dumping on reservations by closing and monitoring dump sites; strengthening tribal laws and ordinances; cleanup of sites and developing sustainable solid waste management programs.* These programs are identifying funding opportunities and resources to expand solid waste programs; to include the realization of a comprehensive environmentally sustainable solid waste program. Mr. Hugo is playing a key role in this process.

Mr. Hugo began working with his tribes to identify community environmental sustainability projects that could be implemented or enhanced to ensure tribal food sovereignty. One project, located in the Hannahville Indian Community, is considered a leading example of aquaponics. This is a sustainable process related to raising of fish and the growth of plants to provide multiple food sources for tribes. Hannahville's Aquaponics facility is raising, yellow perch, blue gills and sun fish in four 1200 gallon tanks. They have the ability to take approximately 8000 plants from seed to harvest in their existing facility. They have begun to provide these vegetables and micro-greens to the tribal programs and plan to distribute them through the summer farmer's market. Mr. Hugo's role has included assisting them with applying for funds resulting in \$10,000 being awarded, attending meetings, identifying other funds, assisting with integrated pest management, providing site development information, and sustainable ideas. The success of this project has led to the planned expansion of this facility to a second greenhouse the spring of 2016.

Another sustainability project Mr. Hugo has begun supporting is a Tribal Consortium of Maple Syrup Producers. The goal of this group is to develop a guideline and process for Tribes to use to begin/improve maple syrup production and distribution. Mr. Hugo has taken on the role of developing a food safety protection plan and process for the consortium to include in their guideline. He will also serve as a technical representative for his tribes who are currently or planning to begin maple syrup production for distribution.

Mr. Hugo worked with two tribes to develop food codes. Both tribes have drafts of codes completed and are submitting those drafts to Tribal Councils for approval in the spring of 2016.

PROFESSIONALISM

Mr. Hugo has obtained the following credentials: REHS (NEHA), Certified Professional Food Safety, and Aquatic Facility Operator. He has a Master's of Environmental Biology and a Bachelor's in Microbiology.

INNOVATION

Mr. Hugo's understanding and technical assistance on the use of the WebEHRS tools developed by CDP has served as an outstanding resource for the Bemidji Area. ***He has utilized the tool to create new tracking methods and developed ways the tool can be used in the field. He has also been instrumental in suggesting improvements to the program to track inspections and activities.*** This has provided staff in the Bemidji Area and at the National level the ability to reduce the time spent writing reports and aided the Bemidji Area in tracking completion of surveys, number of deficiencies, trainings provided, number trained, and percentage of time spent on activities. Mr. Hugo's input on properly tracking and the use of WebEHRs ***has increased the ability of the Area to focus limited resources and staff time on areas identified through WebEHRs as having a greater impact on environmental health and safety.***

SUMMARY

Mr. Hugo has shown outstanding leadership and accomplishments in providing outstanding environmental health services to the tribes within the Bemidji Area Indian Health Service. He accomplished this by assisting the DEHS Program in sustaining the level of service during staff vacancies, in partnering with tribes and multiple programs to implement environmental sustainability initiatives; by resolving complex environmental health and safety issues; by increasing the benefit of tools provided by the national program services, and in achieving the mission of the Indian Health Service DEHS program. Based upon the above, Mr. Barry Hugo is nominated for the BAIHS Environmental Health Officer of the Year.