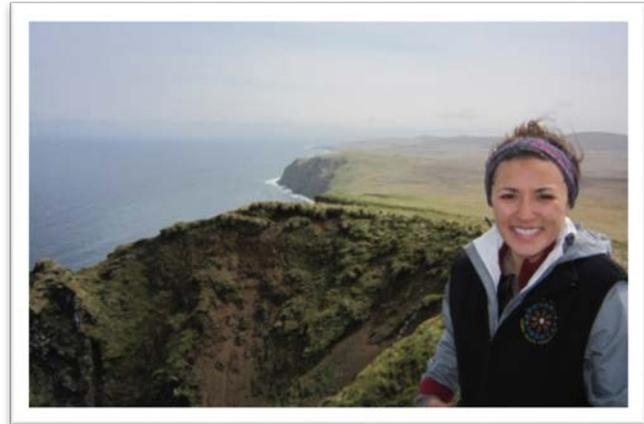


**Student Intern Sallye Countz  
Summer 2015  
East Central University  
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium  
Anchorage, Alaska**

My name is Sallye Countz, and I am a senior pursuing a degree in Environmental Health Science at East Central University in Ada, OK. I am proud to say that I have been born and raised in Oklahoma, and that I am a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. My passion for helping others, coupled with a desire to see a healthier population, was sparked when I first heard of the field of environmental health from CDR Danny Walters, USPHS. This summer, I returned as an intern to the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) to work with the Environmental Health Support team.



A beautiful hike to the 1,000 foot cliffs in St. George, a community I visited to conduct EH surveys.

I believe that summer internships are unique experiences that provide valuable knowledge and practical skills to help students in preparation for post-graduation, and I highly recommend that every college student takes advantage of these opportunities. I applied for this internship a second time, and soon received the exciting news that I had again been selected. Last summer, I had the amazing chance to learn about the rich culture and traditions of the Alaska Native people. I also learned of the challenges that they face, which helped me decide that I wanted to be involved with helping ANTHC achieve their vision that “Alaska Native people are the healthiest people in the world.” I had the privilege of working with many different programs within environmental health. The Community Environmental Health and Tribal Air Quality are the two programs that I worked most closely with.



Performing rabies vaccinations.

With the Community Environmental Health Program, I traveled to conduct environmental health surveys, training, and technical assistance in many different communities and facilities located in the Anchorage Service Unit. With my coworker, Joy Britt, I performed N95 respirator fit testing for the workers in the village health clinic, and I became certified as a lay vaccinator during a rabies clinic that we hosted. I conducted surveys alongside Joy Britt, Lacey Walsh, and Michael Manzo for village health clinics, community water and wastewater systems, and solid waste disposal sites. When conducting the surveys, I became very familiar with state and federal environmental regulations that the communities and facilities must comply with. I also assisted in research for recycling options that are

available to rural Alaska communities and gathered drinking water samples to be tested for the community. With the gathered information, I composed reports with findings and recommendations that help each facility comply with these regulatory requirements, and then sent them to the communities.



A map of the Phase I Assessments completed throughout Alaska.

I also aided the Tribal Air Quality Program with their EPA Clean Air Act 103 grant by providing air quality consultation, monitoring support, technical assistance, and mini-grant support to the communities. The goals of this program are to assist tribes in identifying problems, educate staff and communities, implement strategies to reduce air pollution, and to work with EPA and states to protect air quality and human health. To aid in assisting these communities, I was trained on how to calibrate and replace the motor of a high volume PM-10 air sampling system. I also reached out to communities to evaluate the status of air quality through the completion of Phase I Assessments. Through a series of questions, these assessments can help tribes begin to understand air pollution hazards in their communities. I learned of the many challenges faced by rural communities that are unique to the geography and climate of Alaska.

In Alaska, it is common to travel by small bush planes to reach these communities, since there is no road system that connects one place to another. One of my favorite things about the job was that I got to fly often for work and see the natural beauty of the mountains and waters throughout the state. These trips also proved to be amazing learning experiences, as there is such a rich culture and history behind the Alaska Native tribes and their people. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting people from many different backgrounds and listening to all that they wished to share. It is so important to become involved in the communities and build relationships. I have found Alaska to be one of the most beautiful and adventurous places in the world. Internships, similar to this one, not only provide work experience, but also are rare opportunities to travel while you are young and to test the waters in places away from home. I will forever be thankful for the amazing learning experiences that I have gained, and the friendships I have made with my coworkers. They have helped shape who I am as a person and who I will be in my professional career.