

**ENS Sarah Malik**  
**JRCOSTEP Summer 2015**  
**Illinois State University**  
**Rosebud Service Unit**  
**Rosebud, South Dakota**

My name is Sarah Malik and I am pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Health at Illinois State University. I will be entering my senior year in Fall 2015 and, as part of my graduation requirements, must complete nine credit hours of professional practice (full time work experience).

I first heard about the JRCOSTEP opportunity from my professor, CAPT George Byrns, USPHS (Ret). Over the last three years I have heard Dr. Byrns tell numerous stories describing his 28 year career providing environmental health services to American Indian/Alaskan Native populations. His work sounded both interesting and challenging.



Taking a break while inspecting food vendors at the Oglala Nation Fair & Pow-Wow.

During a recruiting trip to my university in 2014, I completed an interview with CDR Mike Reed, Sioux City District Environmental Health Officer. After hearing about the variety of assignments available to JRCOSTEPs, I knew this would be the perfect program for me. During my discussion with CDR Reed, we talked about some opportunities in the Great Plains Area IHS, many of which sounded interesting. After being accepted into the JRCOSTEP program, I decided to request assignment to Rosebud, South Dakota, located approximately 800 miles from my home. Although I was nervous about spending my first summer so far away, I received a warm welcome and immediately felt at ease.

Prior to my start date, I was still unsure about which area of environmental health I wanted to focus my summer project on. Fortunately, I was provided with enough guidance by my Mentor, Mr. Charles Mack and CDR Reed to develop a project that was both interesting and of benefit to the Rosebud community. Ultimately, my project was to complete the 9<sup>th</sup> step in the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH) process, *create issue profiles*.



Conducting a seat belt survey.

PACE EH is a 13 step community-based process that takes place over a 1-2 year timeframe. The idea of the PACE EH protocol is to use community involvement to identify the top EH concerns, as seen from the community's perspective. Once identified, the process helps the community analyze these issues, and then develop a locally accepted action plan to address them. The *issue profiles* I developed are intended to summarize all the work the PACE EH task force has

completed during its almost 10 months of existence. The *profiles* help the task force demonstrate the importance and complex nature of each issue, and support proposals for corrective action.

Taking on this project helped me develop in several areas, such as; improving writing skills, professionalism, and knowledge of the PACE EH process. I'm proud to have contributed to such an important and meaningful project for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

Another important part of my work in Rosebud was food safety and sanitation. Throughout my assignment I was able to get a wide variety of experience in these areas. During my assignment I surveyed food vendors at pow-wows, surveyed kitchens for a summer food program, and taught a number of food safety courses to summer food employees. These experiences have made me a stronger and more confident public health professional.

In addition to food safety work, I was involved in a variety of public health activities such as; surveying community buildings, grocery stores and other institutional programs. I surveyed numerous homes using the *Healthy Homes* methodology, assisted with rabies vaccination clinics, and inspected health care units like the local alcohol and drug treatment facility.

Completion of seat belt surveys and playground safety assessments rounded out my experience with Injury prevention activities and help make Rosebud a safer place.

My Experience in Rosebud gave me more than an education in environmental health; I also had the chance to learn and experience Lakota culture. I attended pow-wows, talked with people who have lived on the reservation their entire lives and volunteered at the local Boys and Girls Club. I also had the chance to explore the land around me, like the Black Hills, the Badlands, and the Sands Hills area of Nebraska, with its beautiful waterfalls and parks.



Spearfish, South Dakota



Badlands, South Dakota

Overall, my experience in the JRCOSTEP program is one I will never forget and will strongly recommend to students in the program next year. During my time in Rosebud, I was able to experience things I could not have been exposed to during any other environmental health internship, like working on community injury prevention activities. I never expected to learn so much in such a short period of time. This experience has given me greater confidence in my decision to make environmental health a career and I appreciate all the work my mentor, Mr. Charles Mack and all the staff in the Great Plains Area did to make this experience work so well for me. Based on my experience, I would highly recommend this opportunity to interested individuals that have a passion to learn and work.