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**Jr. COSTEP Summer 2010**  
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The Yukon-Kuskokwim (Y-K) Delta is a unique component of the Alaskan Native tribal lands. Isolated by the sometimes unforgiving but beautiful landscape of the tundra, the area is rich with tradition. Subsistence, language, spirituality, family, and respect for elders are key ingredients of village life. The Y-K Health Corporation employs 1,800 individuals who service the public health needs of 50 native villages, ranging in size from barely 20 people to over 1,200. I worked in the Office of Environmental Health and Engineering (OEHE), which focuses on village operations and environmental health needs. Maintaining the community water systems, solid waste disposal and health clinic safety through inspections, as well as injury and rabies prevention are among the chief duties overseen by the OEHE department.

During my internship I traveled by plane or boat to a dozen of the surrounding villages and participated in or performed duties including a diesel spill investigation, set-up of a Microscopic Particulate Analysis (MPA) apparatus to test for surface water infiltration of a well, health clinic inspections, solid waste site inspections, hundreds of rabies vaccinations, and placement of Kid's Don't Float stations. One highlight was getting to meet Lisa Jackson, the EPA Administrator, along with other federal and state officials during a flush-and-haul demonstration of a homeowner's wastewater at a village site. I met and reported to elders at the Tribal Councils and administrators at the village corporations and city offices. I interacted with locals while they prepared their nets for fishing, cleaned their catch, cooked their meals, and prepared their steam-bath houses for use. I answered the questions of curious children and accepted every dried fish strip or traditional meal I was offered.

In town, I worked in our water lab where we tested drinking and source waters for the presence of coliforms. I surveyed the use of personal flotation devices at various docking locations in different weather conditions and tides, wrote informative indoor air quality articles for the local newspaper, and started preliminary research for dust reduction method trials on unpaved village roads. We organized a rabies clinic at a local park. I also reported findings and events to federal, state, and local agencies as well as community members.

In my free time I traveled as much as possible. I camped in parks from Denali to Homer, caught salmon up river of Bristol Bay on the Naknek River, sea kayaked in Kachemak Bay, whitewater rafted on the Nenana River, played on the local softball and ultimate Frisbee leagues, attended Saturday Markets, and went for walks across the tundra with my roommates' husky, Quamukta (Yup'ik for 'Dog').

As a senior Biology/Environmental Health student at East Tennessee State University I knew I wanted to participate in an internship that would be educational and rewarding for me as well as valuable to others. Working with the Indian Health Service as a JrCOSTEP in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta was the XtraTuf that fit. I was afforded the unique opportunity to travel and work with people across Southwestern bush Alaska and get a taste of the 'real' Alaskan experience in the Last Frontier.