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Jr COSTEP Summer 2011
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This summer I was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to work as a US Public Health Service COSTEP with the Phoenix Area Indian Health Service Division of Environmental Health Services in the Reno District Office in Nevada. My experiences were broad and included working with many tribes, including the Duck Valley Shoshone-Paiute, the Elko Band of Te-Moak Western Shoshone, and the Pyramid Lake, Walker River, Las Vegas, and Yerington Paiute Tribes of Nevada. I also worked with the Northern Ute Indian Tribe and the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah. My assignments this summer were a mix between field work and special projects. It was an amazing experience, during which I developed communication skills, both verbal and written, as well as obtained a great deal of hands on experience in the field.



To be able to actually practice the profession of environmental health, with the aid of experienced Environmental Health Officers and mentors, served to educate me in environmental public health matters in a way a class room or text book never could. I have learned the art and science of forming professional relationships with people, both in the office and in the field. I have seen environmental health at its most basic level, the individual. Having been able to go to the Reservations and meet with the real people whose life you are trying to better is a monumental feeling.

My work this summer included many projects: updating the food handler's participant manuals; collecting information on animal & Rabies control and response procedures for the surrounding tribes; and creating a "Green Guide" for businesses such as daycares, restaurants, as well as homes. I have also started a field guide for new EHO's and future COSTEPs so they can feel more confident going into the field from the beginning.

In addition to those projects, I assisted my Preceptor, LCDR Kelli Stamper, with health education efforts that included temporary and general food handlers' trainings, as well as blood borne pathogen and chemical safety training. I also had the opportunity to participate in a Tribal Council Meeting where the EH program was asked to provide information and recommendations to the Tribe regarding mold and moisture issues in resident homes, as well as approaches to risk communication to help address resident fears related to mold exposure.



I have conducted surveys on many different types of facilities. I attended two powwows and in addition to the temporary food handlers' training, conducted the vendor surveys. Other surveys included everything from mold assessments to food surveys, to pools, and infection control surveys at jails. I have been privileged enough to work with people who have the great, big picture ideas for environmental health that I do.

Some of this field work required me to travel, a prospect that I was excited about from the beginning. In addition to extensive travel throughout the Schurz Service Unit in NV, I traveled to two of the other service units in the Reno District: The U & O Service Unit in

Ft. Duchesne, UT where I worked with LT Chris Chestnut, and the Elko Service Unit, in Elko, NV, where I worked with LTJG John Hansen. In addition, I went to Cedar City, UT with LTJG Jason Hymer to cover a powwow. This granted me the opportunity to see areas of the country that I have never seen before, and may never be able to see again. I was exposed to cultures that I had never been involved with before and I soaked up as much information about these unfamiliar places as I could.

Overall this summer has transformed me into an individual who sees herself as capable of dealing with an array of public health problems. I have morphed into a completely independent and confident person who has been exposed to a multitude of areas of environmental health. If I had to list all of the things that I have been exposed to and been taught the list would quite possibly, never end. I can say for certain though, that it has taught me real environmental health.

