

**ENS McKenzie Dockery  
Jr COSTEP Summer 2012  
Illinois State University  
Bemidji Area Indian Health Service  
Rhineland, WI District Office**

My name is McKenzie Dockery and I am originally from Joliet, Illinois. I am currently beginning my senior year at Illinois State University in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois. This year I will be completing my Environmental Health degree and graduating in May 2013.

It is required, under the environmental health major, that all students complete nine to twelve weeks of professional practice within their chosen path of study. This summer I completed the required twelve weeks as a COSTEP for the Indian Health Service. I worked in the Bemidji Area and traveled all over the upper peninsula, lower Michigan and even Minnesota. My duty station was in Rhineland, Wisconsin and my preceptor was LT. Jeffrey Conner. I also accompanied LTJG Scott Daly and Marti Maynes when needed. I worked with twelve tribes which allowed me to gain a massive amount of professional experience. Working with the Indian Health Service was such an amazing challenge for me. I was able to meet some extraordinary people, observe traditions I would otherwise never get to, and I was able to gain professional skills in just twelve short weeks. This internship opened my eyes to the real world and allowed me to gain a vast amount of knowledge outside of the classroom.



I started my internship off unfamiliar with the Northwoods. It was hard becoming used to a small town, but in no time at all, I grew to love everything about the area. My very first week I accompanied LTJG Scott Daley to survey kitchens and casinos on surrounding tribal land. The second week I attended a Serv Safe course and received a food management certification. Not only do I get to walk away with this internship with a vast amount of experience, but I also get to take with me a five year certification. It wasn't long before I was co-conducting surveys of all tribal facilities, attending trainings, sitting in on important meetings, writing reports and was getting exposed to all aspects of IHS.

Other work included conducting mold inspections, tribal wide safety trainings, assessing landfills, inspections, and much more. Without this experience I would never have seen a moisture meter. I would have never thought I could get up and speak in front of, or even train, two hundred people. And I never would have walked through a landfill or helped be the determining factor for whether or not a restaurant could open.

I spent a majority of my COSTEP traveling and making myself a dependable part of the IHS team. The last few weeks of my internship I went from the Ashland, WI Area Office to Grand Rapids, Michigan then to Dorr, Michigan, Manistee, Michigan, Petoskey, Michigan and then to Duluth Minnesota. I was always busy and on the go; if I wasn't traveling and learning out in the field I was being shown the different aspects that go along with being in the office and doing reports.



The amount of knowledge I gained during this internship was immense and I will never forget the professional and life skills I have gained. Before this internship I dreaded speaking in front of people and now I welcome it. I used to be scared to speak out on things that I was familiar with and now I am confident in the knowledge I possess. Also, I was able to acquaint myself with American Natives and take a peek into their lives on the reservations, which I will never forget.

Overall the three months I spent working for the Indian Health Service flew by and allowed me to gain a better understanding of what it takes to be successful in the environmental health field. This internship allowed me to certify that my decision to pursue this path is right for me and that I will enjoy my chosen career no matter where it may lead me.