

**ENS Michal Los**  
**Jr. COSTEP Summer 2013**  
**Illinois State University**  
**Sioux City District Office**  
**Sioux City, Iowa**

My name is Michal Los and this upcoming fall semester I will be a senior at Illinois State University. I am pursuing a Bachelors of Science degree in Environmental Health with a minor in Safety. The ISU program requires a professional practice (internship) be completed in order to fulfill the degree requirements. I hadn't previously heard about the Indian Health Service or the U.S. Public Health until my professor, CAPT George Byrns, USPHS Ret, told us stories of his own professional experiences as a career Officer serving in the Indian Health Service during course lectures. I wanted to find an internship where I would be exposed to a variety of public health issues and be able to do some hands on learning and the work described by CAPT Byrns fit well with my educational goal so I signed up for the COSTEP program. Before my COSTEP, classroom and independent study time represented the majority of my public health knowledge. When I found out I was accepted into the JrCOSTEP program I couldn't have been happier. Now at the end of my COSTEP I have had numerous opportunities to put into practice the public health knowledge I've picked up over the past three years.



My duty station was the Sioux City District Office in Sioux City, Iowa. I had the opportunity to work with LCDR Mike Reed, District Sanitarian, who was my preceptor during my COSTEP internship. The Aberdeen Area IHS works with 19 IHS and tribally managed Service Units and provides services to Native Americans in Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. Working from a District office I was able to interact and work with four Service Units in the area. I had a great opportunity to learn from six Environmental Health Specialists and learn something new each time I was out in the field.



As part of my major project I worked with Anthony Kitto, Tribal Environmental Health Specialist for the Santee Sioux. I assisted with creating a Safety Management Plan for the newly constructed health and wellness center. This work consisted of taking draft safety plans, policies and procedures that were already in place and modifying them to fit the needs of the new facility. It was satisfying to know that I could have a positive impact on someone's life in the community.

I also assisted with a rabies vaccination clinic and even coordinated a rabies clinic during my summer COSTEP. During the first clinic, I assisted LTJG Brandon Parker and Dr. Gregory Taylor, USDA Veterinarian, carry out a two day clinic on the

Yankton Sioux Reservation. Following this activity I was placed in charge of coordinating a second rabies clinic for the Flandreau Reservation. For this vaccination event, I was responsible for working with the community to schedule a date, creating a flyer to promote the event, and coordinate with the USDA veterinarian to insure veterinary services were available at the clinic. It takes a lot of work to bring these events together but

it's worth it when you know a properly vaccinated animal doesn't pose a rabies risk and those that are bitten will not have to go through the rabies vaccination series.

Throughout the summer, I enjoyed working with the Service Units and being able to assist community members address a variety of public health concerns. I woke up each morning looking forward to the variety of experiences and learning opportunities. Throughout the summer I had the opportunity to conduct surveys in homes, casinos, convenient stores, halfway homes, pools, restaurants and elderly nutrition centers. I will never forget my time spent assisting with food safety surveys of mobile food vendors at the Santee Sioux Pow-Wow. To experience the Native cultures during my COSTEP was unforgettable. Although not the most fun, I gained a lot of experience writing technical reports and appreciated the feedback provided from LCDR Reed.

The experience I had as a COSTEP working with the Indian Health Service has broadened my knowledge of the environmental health field, and I would highly recommend the JrCOSTEP program to anyone who is interested in Environmental Health. This was a great learning experience but it was also very enjoyable thanks to the people I met during my time in Sioux City. I would like to give special thanks to LCDR Mike Reed for all the wonderful experiences and his help before I came on board and during my summer COSTEP. I will take what I have learned during the summer and apply it throughout my career in the Environmental Health field and I look forward to one day becoming an active duty Commissioned Corps Officer of the U.S. Public Health Service.

