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Jr. COSTEP Summer 2013  
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Pine Ridge, South Dakota**

As a transfer into the Environmental Health Sciences major at Illinois State University, it was within the first couple of weeks of classes that I learned an internship was a requirement for graduation in our department. This, I felt, would prove no problem. I have always worked full-time while in college and an internship seemed like the perfect way to understand the aspects of our future careers unlike any other experience. I have learned that hands-on learning is the best way for me to grow as a member of the workforce. The decision to apply for this internship was easy, but the application process was not. I spent many hours trying to call past doctors, attain past transcripts, talking to professors I had just met for recommendations and the like in order to organize all the necessary documents for the internship application. I was encouraged by multiple members of the USPHS through our conversations to continue and finish the application process through my winter break at school. Then, after finishing some last minute paperwork, I was told I would be starting an internship on the Pine Ridge Reservation in May of 2013.

Starting the internship, I remember my first couple of days being on a quick tour of the reservation and this really showed me the scale of the area we would be working with. The office gave me an opportunity to really get into the aspects that the sanitarians have to deal with. Food service surveys became a large part of my duties for the internship, both of temporary vendors at powwows and of the restaurants and businesses throughout. As a manager of a bakery-café back in Illinois, I was comfortable in this aspect, while able to really learn the details of the other side of surveys. Although I felt comfortable in the operational aspects of my restaurant, I was able to see the food safety side of many different types of restaurants and the different challenges each present. It also gave me a chance to really understand the aspects of the food code in a detail I had never experienced before. Understanding that these surveys are a partnership between our department and the operators became key in encouraging them to adopt the advice we were giving and truly understand the reasons behind.

Surveying the vendors of the powwows also was eye-opening as we were able to see different scales of items being sold and different scales of food safety in practice. And advising these booths on the aspects of food safety felt like making a real difference in what could easily become an outbreak. Getting to watch the grand opening ceremonies was definitely one of the experiences I will not soon forget from these experiences. This cultural expression of colors, dancing and sounds often drew me to stay past my regular duties.

During rabies clinics I was able to help a team of veterinarians to vaccinate and check health of hundreds of dogs and cats. The demand so high, the lowly advertised clinics would be bursting with people bringing many animals in; sometimes even bringing the dogs that wandered through the streets in. This experience was both fun and heart-breaking as many animals were brought needed serious medical treatments and the owners were unable to make it to a traditional veterinarian. It was a great feeling to get to help as much as we did, despite the hard aspects of the job.

Also spending a few days with the Aberdeen Area Institutional Environmental Health Officer, Captain Curt Smelley, was both a pleasure and a highly educational experience. Although his experience and knowledge was far beyond what I could have hoped to attain in three years of college, he would not hesitate to explain the details in a way that I could understand aspects of the field.

Focusing on updating and presenting a Food Handler's course to the employees of the Head Start facilities, I was able to use the knowledge I had and the skills I had learned from the amazing sanitarians I worked with. This presentation was a critical aspect of keeping the food handlers updated and well-informed on the best

practices to keep children safe. Because I had worked with so many of food handlers in different areas, I was able to hone in on the aspects of food safety that were most important and most missed during my surveys. Delivering the presentation to the group was an exercise in public speaking that I always enjoy as well.

The entire experience utilized the knowledge I have learned at Illinois State University, while focusing on developing the skills essential to functioning in this field. Experiences like this seem to be a rare opportunity and a pleasure to have been a part of. And with the extremely informative and ceaselessly supportive sanitarians in this area helping me, it was an experience that will follow me in whatever job I end up in one day. With an internship like this, future Jr. COSTEPS can be assured to have a great time and an opportunity to see and experience a different part of the country, as I have.