

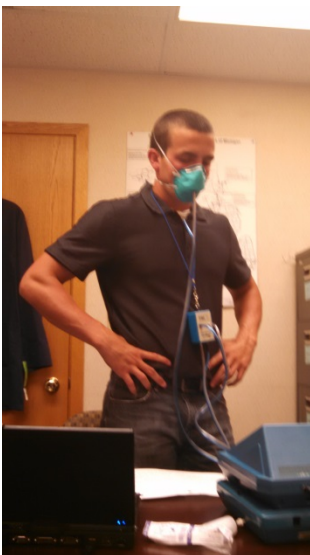
ENS Jeffrey Robison
Jr. COSTEP, Summer 2014
Illinois State University
Rhineland District Office
Rhineland, WI

My name is Jeff Robison, and I am currently a student at Illinois State University (ISU) where I am pursuing a Bachelors of Science degree in Environmental Health. In order to complete this degree, the program requires students to complete a professional practice (internship) during the time enrolled. While in search of an internship I was introduced to the Jr. COSTEP program by my professor CAPT George Byrns, USPHS (Ret.). Through his stories and knowledge about the Indian Health Service (IHS), I realized that this internship would subject me to a variety of areas within public health. My goal was to find an internship that would allow me to continue my education while also putting my skills I gained at ISU to the test; this made me realize that the Jr. COSTEP was the perfect program for me.



Inspecting Sequence Batch Reactor at a Wastewater Treatment plant

Shortly after applying to the program, I learned that I would be stationed at the Rhineland District Office in Rhineland, WI where I had the opportunity to work with my Jr. COSTEP preceptor Barry Hugo, RS Environmental Health Specialist. The Rhineland District Office is a part of the Bemidji Area IHS which covers 34 tribes throughout Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. My summer was spent covering 9 tribes throughout the Upper and Lower Peninsula of Michigan.



N95 Fit-Testing

During my time at Indian Health Service, all my educational goals were reached and exceeded. My summer was filled covering all the areas of environmental health that I had hoped to experience. Most of our days were spent traveling to the tribes to conduct routine inspections of food service establishments, healthcare facilities, buildings, and water/wastewater facilities. Through this, I became well-versed in the 2013 FDA Food Code and OSHA 1910 standards, which led to me becoming comfortable to conduct inspections on my own during the last half of my internship. In addition to the routine activities, I was able to join my supervisor in a variety of activities that addressed the public health concerns of our area. Throughout my summer I was able to investigate mold complaints, conduct N95 fit-testing using a PortaCount machine, inspect a tribal fishery, attend tribal health fairs, conduct open dump assessments, conduct temporary food handlers training for Pow Wow vendors, conduct inspections on vendors at Pow Wows, and attend tribal sustainability meetings.

Not only did I learn from all the hands-on experience, I was able to leave my Jr. COSTEP internship with trainings and proficiencies. During my summer, I was able to gain my 5-year ServSafe Food Safety Manager Certification. This led me to taking on a project to redo our offices Food Handlers Training course. Upon completion of this project, I had created a 30 slide PowerPoint presentation and 25-question test for our office to train the tribes on how to properly handle food. In addition to these, I was able to work extensively with my first environmental health reporting software. This was a great opportunity to gain knowledge in database programs that I will be working with my entire career.

After all the work was completed, I was able to experience the beauty and seclusion of the Northwoods. Traveling through the Upper Peninsula every week was an added bonus to an already amazing experience. I was able to view large waterfalls, gorges, the Porcupine Mountains, expansive untouched national forests, the Great Lakes, and hundreds of rivers, lakes, springs, and streams. The travel on the job was extensive but the beauty of the areas that we traveled through made my internship experience even more unforgettable.

My overall experience working with Indian Health Service has been outstanding. I was given the opportunity to work with knowledgeable, amazing people both with the IHS and those with the tribes. I believe that the hands-on experience and education gained through the Jr. COSTEP program is unattainable anywhere else. I would highly recommend this program for any individual looking for an internship that will challenge you to grow as a professional and as a student. I will cherish my experience with the Jr. COSTEP program for the rest of my life, and I thank the Indian Health Service for giving me such an amazing opportunity!



The Bears Den Overlook located in
The Ottawa National Forest



Agate Falls, Agate Falls Scenic site located in Ontonagon
County, MI



Lake of the Clouds located in the
Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park