

**ENS Tish Morrison
Jr. COSTEP Summer 2014
Colorado State University
Santa Fe District Office
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Doing an internship with the Indian Health Service was my dream, a goal I had even before being able to apply to the COSTEP program. Once the opportunity came around, I quickly jumped and started the long, very tedious process of having my dream internship come true. I had no idea how much all the hard work and months of waiting would pay off for me over the two and half months here in Santa Fe. Greetings, my name is Tish Morrison and I will be a senior this fall at Colorado State University in beautiful Fort Collins, Colorado. I will be finishing up my Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health in May 2015.

Originally from New Mexico, I knew being at the Santa Fe District Office as my duty station would be perfect for me in allowing me to serve the communities I grew up around as a child. One of my career goals is to give back to populations and communities I grew up with and was fortunate enough to gain life experience from. Our office served 6 tribes directly and work with two other staff to serve a total of 14 tribes around the greater northern New Mexico area which had a immense amount of diversity between all of them. During my time in Santa Fe, I was under the direct supervision of LT Molly Madson and CDR Jeff Dickson as well as working with numerous tribal officials, community health representatives, injury prevention specialists, safety teams, and other personnel throughout the Albuquerque Service Unit.

My first couple of weeks on the job were packed full of rabies clinics! Over the course of the summer, I helped vaccinate over 1,000 dogs and cats in the communities we served. At first, I was really nervous I would be



vaccinating animals as I had never had the experience before, however, once I got the hang of it, it became incredibly easy and it was a great way to build relationships with the animal owners. I absolutely loved being out in the field for these days and doing something in the community hands on which directly affects tribal community health everyday. Rabies still occurs in the communities we served so it was important to educate the owners about how serious and fatal rabies can be. Later on in the summer I got to address the bigger problem of animal control through a project where I created a manual to serve as a resource for New Mexico tribes on how to create and manage an effective animal control program in the community. Animal control is an

issue in tribal communities across the nation and there are not a lot of resources provided to address the issue as well as the issue of people dumping animals into the community already struggling with an abundance of animals.

Rabies clinics were only a fraction of the work I conducted during my internship. I participated in and led my own food surveys in different restaurants and feast day celebrations which expanded my knowledge of food

safety and the FDA Food Code. I also got to experience the 4th of July Nambe Falls Celebration and the Little Beaver Rodeo and Powwow celebration which were all day events of inspecting food vendors as well as seeing the array of cultures from all around tribal communities in the southwest. The culture and tradition was absolutely beautiful and something I had never experienced before. Working with the vendors up at Little Beaver was also an incredible experience because of their openness and fun loving spirit that made the day not as hot and long! Jeff Dickson would commonly say, “I get paid to do this!” and he was so right because it does not seem like work at all.



The other activities I was involved in during my time at the Santa Fe Office were institutional surveys to reduce injury prevention, participating in injury prevention meetings for Jemez and San Felipe pueblos focusing on how to better prevent elder falls and motor vehicle crashes in their community through a federal grant. I also participated in a sanitation survey in Taos where I got to see a new chlorination system that is less hazardous than what we learn in typical drinking water systems, and co-teaching a Food Handler's

Course in a community. Teaching the Food Handler's Course was another one of my favorite parts of the summer because it was again, being in the field and having a direct effect in environmental health so food workers keep their patrons safe that come into their establishments.

This internship was eye opening to me as a person and professional about to enter the workforce after graduation. In my position I was able to improve my technical writing skills, surveying experiences and knowledge, written and verbal communication, and my experience of what opportunities environmental health can really offer me. As a person, I obtained first hand experience working with diverse communities right in my backyard my whole life. I also grew as a person being independent in the workplace, networking with others, and realizing what it means to commute to work!

To anyone who is thinking about an internship with the United States Public Health Service, absolutely do it! The application and process is worth every experience you will have during your time. I cannot begin to thank all of the people I have worked with here in Santa Fe and the lasting relationships I have created with them. The sense of community in the Indian Health Service and Commissioned Corps is something you will not find in many other workplaces. I am so thankful everyday for this opportunity and I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.