

**ENS Alyssa A. Shelton
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Illinois State University
Minot District Office
Minot, North Dakota**

My name is Alyssa Shelton, and I am a student at Illinois State University (ISU). I am completing a Bachelor's of Science in Environmental Health. As a part of my education, I am required to complete a professional practice (internship) prior to graduation. While in search of an internship my professor, Dr. George Byrns, a retired USPHS CAPT, suggested I consider internships with the Indian Health Service. Through his stories and continuous positive comments, I knew the JRCOSTEP was the experience I was looking for.



Visiting the North Dakota Heritage Center in Bismarck, ND

Soon after I completed my application, I discovered I would be stationed in the Minot District Office in Minot, ND with my preceptor CDR Molly Curry. The Minot District Office is one of three district offices in the Great Plains Area (GPA) which covers North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa and Nebraska.



Environmental Health Officer Jim Dodd and I at a construction site on the Turtle Mountain Reservation

During the summer, I was able to put my education to the test and gain experience while in the field. Many of my days were spent traveling to one of the reservations to conduct routine surveys of food service establishments, childcare facilities and other various surveys completed by DEHS. Through this I became more knowledgeable with the 2013 FDA Model Food Code and the primary consensus standard for childcare facilities, Caring for Our Children. When not completing surveys, I was being orientated to the tribal community.

With the help of the CDR Curry and CAPT Allen, I developed a project to benefit the entire Great Plains Area. I quickly got to work on a Customer Satisfaction Assessment of DEHS surveyed schools, Head Starts and elder feeding centers in the GPA. By completing key informant interviews with a questionnaire I wrote, I was able to facilitate feedback on surveys completed by Area EH staff. From here I finalized my findings in a report that included a list of recommendations to improve inspection

facilitation, outcomes, and record keeping. My research also showed that facility owners and operators in the GPA greatly appreciate the work completed by IHS. I would like to extend a

thank you to facility staff that so kindly participated in my Customer Satisfaction Assessment. Personally, this project improved the quality of my inspections and reassured the GPA that communities are benefiting from our work.

The JRCOSTEP experience did not only advance my education, it gave me an opportunity to experience a new part of the county and meet new individuals. During my travel I was able to view beautiful rolling hills of bright yellow canola, purple flax and fields of glowing sunflowers. Also, coming from Illinois, I was amazed to see sunsets lasting past 10 p.m. Thanks to one of my co-workers, I was able to travel to Lake Metigoshe which shares it waters with Canada. On the lake, I was able to try water skiing for the first time and take a boat ride to Canada's borders.

I highly encourage any student pursuing a career in environmental health to complete a JRCOSTEP. Whether you are in the rolling hills of North Dakota or the sandy deserts of Arizona, you will be a part of an amazing community willing to help you succeed.



No Man's Land
International border between U.S. and Canada



I would like to give a special thank you to CDR Curry, CDR Reed and Dr. Byrns for helping me be a part of this amazing educational experience, for I would not have made it here without you.