

**ENS Garrett Steiner  
JRCOSTEP Summer 2016  
Illinois State University  
Rhineland District Office  
Rhineland, Wisconsin**



My name is Garrett Steiner and I am currently a student at Illinois State University. I will be starting my senior year this coming fall. I plan on graduating this December with a Bachelor's of

Science Degree in Environmental Health. One of the major requirements of ISU's environmental health program is that students complete a 9 week internship during their stay. My goal from the beginning was to pursue an internship that would help me grow, not only as a professional, but as a person in general. The director of ISU's environmental health program, CAPT George Byrns, USPHS (Ret), understood what I was looking for and introduced me to the Indian Health Service (IHS). After many semesters taking his courses and participating in student research projects with him, I heard many amazing stories about his time working with the IHS. After researching more about the program, the JRCOSTEP seemed like it would be a perfect way to put everything I had learned, so far, to the test.

I was informed, relatively quickly after applying, that I would be stationed at the Rhineland District Office in Rhineland, Wisconsin. This was a surprise to me because I was actually familiar with the area before I even arrived for work. The Rhineland District Office is part of the Bemidji Area IHS, which serves tribes throughout Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin. I had the pleasure to be assigned to my preceptor, Barry Hugo, Environmental Health Specialist. Mr. Hugo mostly deals with tribes located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and the northern half of Lower Michigan.



Throughout my time with the IHS, I developed as a professional more than I could have ever imagined. Not only did this experience cover areas that I had learned about in school, but I was able to experience parts of the environmental health field that I hadn't been exposed to before. A large majority of my days were spent traveling to different tribes in order to conduct routine inspections of food service establishments, recreational areas, healthcare facilities, water/wastewater facilities, and buildings in general. Most of the time, these inspections took place within tribal casinos. Because of these inspections, I became very familiar with the 2013 FDA Food Code and the OSHA 1910 standards. I had not been introduced to building codes before arriving here, so it was great to get that kind of exposure. Eventually, I became comfortable enough that I was able to conduct inspections all by myself. In addition to

the routine inspections, I was able to take part in a wide range of other public health related activities. These activities included: conducting air quality assessments in drug-impacted homes, providing food handlers training to various tribes, inspecting tribal fisheries, inspecting

temporary food vendors at powwow celebrations, and many others. Because we did so many inspections, I became very familiar with the WebEHRS online database. My main project for the summer had to do with Legionnaires' disease. I was tasked with creating a condensed packet of information that could be handed out to every tribe in the area. This packet will help educate tribal members about the bacteria and also recommend ways to prevent its growth. In addition, the packet explains how to develop a water management program to reduce growth and spread within tribal buildings.

Not only was the work experience amazing, but I got to interact with so many different people over the summer. My communication skills improved drastically during my time with IHS. The ability to communicate is so important in this job, and it is a skill that I will take with me for the rest of my life. In addition, the opportunity to work with people of a diverse culture was a very unique aspect of this assignment. Obviously, this was something I would not be able to experience with any other internship.



One of my favorite parts of this internship was living and working in one of the most beautiful areas in the country. I love the outdoors, so I immediately fell in love with the north woods. Having the opportunity to see untouched national forests, large waterfalls, and the Great Lakes made this assignment truly special.

My experience working with the IHS has been incredible. Everyone I worked with in the office has been very welcoming and helpful. I am very thankful I was given this opportunity and I would recommend it to anyone looking for an internship. I was challenged at times and it helped me grow as a professional and a person. I am excited to share my experiences with other students back at Illinois State University and friends at home. I will never forget the experience that I have gotten through the JRCOSTEP. I thank the IHS for giving me such an amazing opportunity.

