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My name is Josh Burns and I first heard about the JRCOSTEP while sitting in an Environmental Health Club Meeting. I thought it sounded like a solid internship, but I wasn't really sure of what I'd be getting myself into if I applied. I talked to the recruiters, as well as my professors about the internship; both assured me that it would be an awesome experience. I then went through the rigorous application process and was selected to serve in Bemidji, Minnesota. Bemidji is around 5.5 hours away from my hometown, Eau Claire, WI. I wasn't sure if I would enjoy Bemidji or not, but I must say that it was one of the best communities that I have had the pleasure of being a part of!

My preceptor was LCDR David Kostamo. LCDR Kostamo was one of the nicest, most genuine, and fun people that I have ever worked with. He gave me enough guidance so I knew what I was doing, but he also provided me with many opportunities to be independent and take on new tasks on my own. LCDR Kostamo and I worked out of the Minnesota District Office.



After my initial arrival, my first task was to become ServSafe certified. I also went on to become a ServSafe Proctor and Instructor. Being certified gave me the ability to survey food vendors and restaurants at the reservations. I surveyed three different powwows, which all varied in size and style. At the powwows, we would survey the actual powwows grounds, as well as the food vendors that showed up. It was very fun and interesting to get to see powwows.

Another type of survey that I got to be a part of was the water and wastewater surveys. The first survey was a review of a previous comprehensive survey at the White Earth Reservation. This was basically just a follow up survey to see if the facility was beginning to make the suggested corrections. The next survey was an Operation and Maintenance Survey in Mille Lacs. We looked at many different items including lift stations, holding ponds, a water tower, and the well house for the community water system.



The next type of survey that I had the pleasure of doing was clinic surveys. We surveyed the White Earth Clinic, Pine Point, and the Naytahwaush Clinic at White Earth and conducted respirator fit testing and fire extinguisher training for the clinic staff (photos left). Also at White Earth, we measured and calculated turnover rates in negative pressure rooms. Another different opportunity I was able to be a part of was providing fire extinguisher training at the NE IA SHING Clinic, Mille Lacs. Coworkers and I trained the clinic staff on proper fire extinguisher use. Additionally, we evaluated a fire drill.



I was also assigned a project to complete before my internship was over. My project was creating an Operation and Maintenance Manual for the water system at the Chiminsing Community Center in Isle, MN. The reason for creating the Operation and Maintenance Manual was because the community center serves many different people. The center holds funerals, weddings, powwows, Tribal Council meetings, and two summer school programs. At large events, there are 300-400 people participating. This is generally concerning because the Community Center is serving hundreds of people. No water system preventative maintenance plan is currently in place nor is a routine water testing schedule and no employee had proper maintenance training for the

Class E Water System. The primary goal of the Operation and Maintenance Manual was to lay out training requirements for the system. The finished document ended up being around fifty pages. It was rather fun to put it together because throughout the process I was able to learn a lot about how water systems work.

My environmental health background allowed me an extremely fun, non-work related opportunity. In Bemidji, we had an extremely severe storm come through one night at 1:30 a.m. My friend's mom is the head public health nurse at the Beltrami Clinic. After the storm, power was out at the clinic and the fridge and freezer that held the vaccines were becoming too warm. I was able to help her transport the vaccines to the Sanford Health Clinic to prevent them from spoiling. I lost a lot of sleep that night but it was so fun, and quite worth it.

Overall, I am so happy that I had the opportunity to be a part of the JRCOSTEP. I got to experience so many different types of surveys and collaborate with many different people. Everyone that I had the pleasure of working with was really quite enjoyable to be around. The time I spent this summer in Bemidji was the most valuable learning experience I have ever had in my college career. I would absolutely recommend a JRCOSTEP to anyone considering environmental public health.