

Intern Autumn Janiszewski
Summer 2017
Illinois State University
Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium
Sitka, Alaska

My name is Autumn Janiszewski, and I am pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Health at Illinois State University. I am expecting to graduate in the spring of 2018 and am required to complete nine credit hours of a professional practice. Fortunately, I was able to meet these academic requirements through a position with the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC), Sitka, AK.



Traveling to Hoonah by seaplane

Working with American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) has been an interest of mine since my first environmental health lecture at Illinois State University. Dr. Bierma started the class, and every class after, by introducing alumni and their internship opportunities. Learning about these experiences made me feel confident in my decision to switch to an environmental health major. And since then, I've felt I could greatly benefit from an opportunity to work with AI/AN communities.

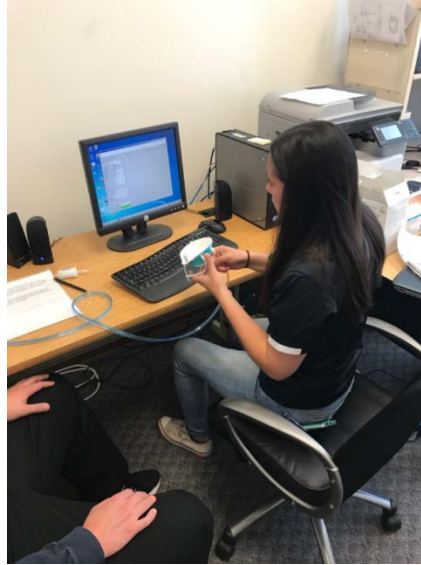
Working as an environmental health intern provided me with an opportunity to enhance my professional skills while working in an environment with beauty beyond description. My position at SEARHC allowed me to travel to different AI/AN communities throughout southeast Alaska. Learning about the values and traditions of the tribal cultures and working hands-on in the environmental health and safety field has been an incredible experience.

I enjoyed the duties assigned to me in my position at the Safety Department and was able to use my knowledge from Illinois State University in much of my work. One of my primary responsibilities included conducting environmental tours and writing reports that addressed any findings. In Sitka, and in several communities, I inspected SEARHC clinics and facilities to ensure regulations were followed and a safe environment was provided. Traveling to different villages was my favorite aspect of the job. I traveled in seaplanes and had breathtaking views of the ocean, mountains, and marine wildlife!

In addition to performing environmental tours, I assisted in developing a pharmaceutical waste management program. I chose this topic to use for my internship project since it was the most time consuming task for the summer. I developed a blueprint addressing the regulations under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and outlined the steps necessary to implement the program. Other responsibilities of mine as an EH extern included conducting respirator fit testing of employees, and conducting landfill and food distribution inspections. The inspections opened my eyes to the problematic conditions found in remote locations. Access to resources is limited in many of these communities which can make addressing certain issues difficult. I have a new appreciation for the common assets available in other states and acknowledge the efforts in southeast Alaska.

As if this position wasn't a blessing in its own, I worked with the kindest people on a day-to-day basis. My co-workers and people from the community were welcoming and made me feel completely comfortable in a town over 2,000 miles away from home. I also appreciate the opportunity to learn from my supervisor, Andrew Atkinson.

Concisely, working as an environmental health intern has given me the confidence and preparation needed for my future profession. My time in Sitka, AK has been an unforgettable experience. I appreciate the position I had and hope to return to Alaska in the future.



Conducting a respirator fits test