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Jr. COSTEP Summer 2008
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During the summer of 2008, I had the privilege of doing my Jr COSTEP under the supervision of Lieutenant Commander Martin Smith in the Redding District Office at the Indian Health Service.

While in Redding, I had the opportunity to experience various aspects of environmental health pertaining to the different tribes that I was fortunate enough to work with. The areas of environmental health that I touched ranged from water sampling, food

sanitation, solid waste issues, as well as injury prevention.

One of my first tasks while in Redding was to perform fluoride surveys of water samples from different tribes. This was important because the tribes would fluoridate their own water. Because too much fluoride exposure may be hazardous it was our responsibility to make sure the tribes were not over fluoridating their water. I learned that acceptable fluoride levels are from 0.9 PPM to 1.5 PPM.



During my time in Redding I also learned how to execute food sanitation surveys at different food venues such as mobile espresso carts, mini marts, and casinos. When performing these surveys I utilized the California Area Indian Health Service Food Establishment Sanitation Survey which was compiled of numerous codes from the FDA Food Code 2005, National Fire Protection Association, Uniform Plumbing Code, and National Electric Code. I used this checklist to help complete these surveys. After the surveys were completed, I

wrote reports stating the areas of concern for the food venues, what needed to be changed, and where they needed improvement.



Additionally, solid waste issues were a major part of my Jr COSTEP experience. I worked with the Hoopa Valley Tribe in getting their sanitation deficiency system (SDS) updated. I completed this task by going around their reservation and identified their solid waste areas which were a ½ acre in size. I also helped the Yurok tribe create an atlas of their solid waste sites on their reservation. The sites have the name of the solid waste site and a brief description of the site such as GPS

coordinates, elevation, and distance away from water.

In addition, I also did some work with injury prevention using the Occupant Protection User System (OPUS). This summer I updated OPUS by conducting seat belt surveys at various locations which include the Hoopa Valley Reservation, Yurok Reservation, and the United Indian Health Service (UIHS). The data of the seatbelt surveys included the driver and front passenger use rates. While at Hoopa and UIHS I trained people from the tribes on conducting seat belt surveys and entry into the OPUS data base. Also, I attended an Injury Prevention Level 1 Training in Arcata, CA which was hosted by the UIHS. At the training I learned key aspects to creating and maintaining a successful injury prevention program.



Furthermore, this summer I experienced the Northern California fires. The smoke from the fires greatly impacted the health of the surrounding tribes. Lieutenant Commander Smith and I were able to assist some of the tribes by distributing N-95 respirators as well as communicating the tribes' medical needs to the California Area Office in Sacramento, CA. We also helped the Yurok Tribe create a Public Service Announcement to inform the tribal members of the dangerous consequences that wood burning smoke can cause. The Jr COSTEP experience really opened my eyes to what environmental health entails and the major impact it plays within the tribes. I was given the opportunity to broaden my horizons not only within environmental health, but also with the different Indian communities I was privileged to work with. During this externship I was able to use the

skills and concepts learned in the classroom and apply them out in the field. Thank you USPHS for giving me the chance to experience a career within the Indian Health Service. This was an amazing opportunity that I will never forget.