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My summer experience with Indian Health Services has helped me grow both personally and professionally. I feel that I have gained professional knowledge that is not obtainable in a classroom setting, and that will be priceless to me when I begin my career in Environmental Health.

I spent my summer providing trainings, surveys, and reports for tribes spanning all of Wisconsin and Michigan. I traveled at least once a week to a place I'd never been before. The dynamic with every tribe was different, and I gained a new understanding for the role of the Indian Health Service, which I was previously ignorant of. IHS is a plethora of different roles. Environmental Health Officers exercise knowledge in fire code, food code, playground safety, personal protective equipment, emergency response, and much more. The breadth of knowledge needed and experience gained is not easily matched, and it provided new challenges for me as a student daily. I believe that this would be a career that would never grow mundane or boring, and is perfect as an internship opportunity.

During my time here I surveyed day cares, casinos, food warehouses, hotels, government buildings, pow-wows, and other facilities. I also was able to help administer a Serv-Safe Course, as well as lead a temporary food handler training for a pow-wow. As a result, I feel much more confident in my food safety knowledge.

Also, I was able to go out and do Operations and Maintenance Surveys on a Water System for one of the tribes, which was a change of pace from the surveys and reports, and a look at yet another responsibility of IHS. We surveyed water treatment lagoons, sewage lift stations, water towers, pump houses, sand filters, and a booster station.

I was also given the opportunity to attend an NFPA and OSHA Topics training in Duluth, MN along side environmental health professionals from the region. What I learned proved to be incredibly useful when doing surveys for the rest of the summer, and proved to me the focus on continuing education that environmental health fields tend to have, a trait that means a lot to me as I hope to always grow within my career.

This summer was incredibly rewarding, the staff at the Rhineland District Office are a wealth of knowledge and experience and are fun to be around. This was an opportunity that anyone should jump at the chance to have.

