

**ENS Ian Saxton
Jr COSTEP Summer 2011
Missouri Southern State University
Tanana Chiefs Conference
Fairbanks, Alaska**

My name is Ian Saxton; I attend college at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin, Missouri. I am pursuing a biology degree specific to environmental health with a minor in chemistry.



I first learned of the opportunity and experience associated with the U.S. Public Health Services (USPHS) when I was a sophomore in college from a Jr. COSTEP presentation. I also had the privilege of hearing two Commissioned Officers from the FDA and CDC present on their experience with the USPHS Commissioned Corps. After hearing the presentations I knew that public health was a career path I wanted to migrate to. When the Jr. COSTEP application became available I jumped at the chance to experience the amazing opportunity myself. I felt this opportunity would help me experience a career field that enhances my college knowledge and skill set for future opportunities. My Jr. COSTEP led me to Alaska, which was ideal for my career goals. I wanted to experience new types of culture facing issues that are somewhat taken for granted everyday in the lower forty eight of the United States.



I was selected to do my Jr. COSTEP in Fairbanks, Alaska working with Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) helping interior rural Alaskan villages. TCC is a nonprofit organization servicing over 42 villages through interior Alaska. The services provided to the villages are everything from dental care to behavioral health. I was assigned to the office of environmental health under Lt. Commander Mike Reed as my preceptor.

My Jr. COSTEP experience in interior rural Alaska was educational, memorable, and rewarding. I had the opportunity to contribute my knowledge and apply it to every day environmental health issues experienced by village communities. I worked closely with my preceptor, Lt. Commander Mike Reed, understanding public health concerns and their effects on rural communities in interior Alaska. We traveled to a number of villages' facilities conducting surveys on water treatment, wastewater treatment, and clinics. In participating, I gained an understanding of common public health concerns and operation issues that have direct effects on the community. This internship has allowed me to have hands on experience directly affecting individual lives. The most rewarding experience of this internship is acquiring the training and skills set required to have a positive effect on the communities I was able to serve.

I would recommend this experience as a Jr. COSTEP to anyone interested in a career that applies their college knowledge and directly impacts the communities they work in. The excitement of traveling, meeting new people, and learning about new cultures is the icing on the cake. I loved this experience and the people I met along the way. I will never forget this summer and how I spent it. I would like to thank anyone who had part in allowing me to experience this amazing summer. "What is the difference between school and life? In school, you're taught a lesson and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson." (Tom Bodett)

