

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:

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Science Lessons from the Standing Rock Reservation

FORT YATES, ND – While most Standing Rock Reservation youth were enjoying their summer break by sleeping in, dancing at Pow-Wows or staying up all night playing video games, 20 local high school students were busy learning about Science at Sitting Bull College’s NATURE-Science Summer Camp, held June 21 – July 2.

Sponsored by the National Science Foundation-EPSCOR fund, this year’s summer science camp area of study was focused on the energy industry, including three student produced public service announcements (PSA) in a video format.

Dr Mafany Mongoh was the lead instructor for the summer science program and helped students produce the PSAs.

“The PSA videos included messages about Waste-Litter problems, Water quality testing for E. Coli and overall water pollution,” Mongoh said. The videos were used as part of the student’s final exams for the program.”

Special science topics for student group activities during the two week program included communications, water purification, hazardous oil leaks/spills and solar storms, all with emphasis on Green Energy related ideas.

Dr Gary Halvorson was the program administrator and is current chair of the Agri-Business division at Sitting Bull College.

“The kids get exposure to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) through hands-on activities,” Halvorson said. “Many of the students who complete this program go on to pursue a career in the Sciences, plus they get real life experiences with college life.”

The annual summer camp is open to all high school students, but recruiting efforts target high school juniors and seniors, with freshman and sophomores encouraged to apply.

According to Halvorson, this program is one of only a handful of tribal programs involving teacher collaboration between Reservation high schools, tribal colleges and state universities.

“The program was established about 12 years ago and we are currently in our third year of a three-year grant,” Halvorson said. “Support from the National Science Foundation-EPSCOR fund has helped sustain this program and we look forward to working with them in the future.”

The NATURE-summer science camp is a two-part program, with the first starting earlier in the summer, when teachers from all five North Dakota tribal colleges, North Dakota Reservation high schools and state universities gather to establish the curriculum used in the part two of the program held in July

This year, 13 students and 7 student-mentors from the Standing Rock Reservation participated in the program, including youth from the Reservation districts of Little Eagle and McLaughlin, South Dakota, as well as students from the districts of Fort Yates and Solen/Cannonball, North Dakota.

Assisting with this year’s program were science teachers Harriet Howe and Nina McCain from McLaughlin High School and Joe Two Bear from Solen High School.

One special highlight of this summer’s program was a field trip to an oil drilling site (Bell Lake), just north of Medora, North Dakota, where students were hosted by the Whiting Petroleum Corporation, including a guided tour of a fully functioning oil rig.

“This summer science camp is a partner program to the Sitting Bull College’s Sunday Science Academy held one Sunday per month during the normal school year,” Halvorson said. “Many of the students who participate in the Sunday Science Academy become mentors for the NATURE science summer camp”

For more information about the Sitting Bull College NATURE Science Summer Camp contact Dr. Gary Halvorson at (701) 854-8071 or send an email to garyh@sbc.edu.