



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Wildland Fire Management is proud to introduce Mr. Jared Jajola, the Branch's first wildland firefighter to graduate from the Office of Trust Services (OTS) Student Internship Program.

Jajola earned a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies from Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado in May, 2017, ending four years of college education.

As part of the Student Internship Program, Jajola completed two summer internships. The first was at the Southwest Regional Office during the summer of 2016 and the second at the Mescalero Agency in 2017.

Jajola was initiated into the world of fire in 2016 at basic fire school. During the five days of intensive training, firefighters learn about the wildland fire environment, safety standards and procedures, the incident commands system, fire behavior, fire weather, and fire effects. Students are also taught radio etiquette and how best to take care of fire equipment.

Once certified as a basic firefighter, Jajola spent his internship working on a BIA Type 6 Model 52 engine to provide initial attack services to reservations in the Southwest Region. Due to their engine experience, crewmembers become expert water handlers and understand the importance and art of maintaining water pressure in all types of sensitive pumps. They also gain experience as helicopter crewmembers and field observers.

In addition to working on an engine, Jajola spent four weeks with a 20-person initial attack hand crew supporting the Boundary Fire in Arizona and on the Modoc National Forest.

Hand crews serve a different purpose than engines. Crewmembers work and live together for two-week periods using chainsaws, Pulaskis, shovels, water hoses and pure strength to construct containment lines to put a wildfire out. Sometimes hand crews repair containment lines following suppression activity. No matter their function, fire managers rely on them to be fit, capable and experienced.

Through funding provided by the BIA Branch of Wildland Fire Management, Fire Interns receive \$5,000 in tuition assistance and seasonal employment opportunities working for BIA or Tribal wildland fire management programs. In addition to tuition assistance and seasonal employment, upon graduation, BIA may place graduates directly into a career position within the BIA without competition. This conversion prevents students from experiencing a break in service and speeds the hiring and training process.

Jajola is now a permanent employee at the Southwest Regional office in Albuquerque, New Mexico. As a Forest Technician, he is supporting the regional office as a line firefighter and will be assisting with various planning projects.

Congratulations to Jajola for completing a difficult degree in Environmental Studies and BIA's OTS Student Internship Program! May you go far in your career and feel rewarded throughout your service to Indian Country.

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