

BIA Develops the Next Level of Wildland Fire Prevention Training

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is defining a new strategy in agency-specific training techniques with their Fire Prevention Academy. This course is split into three one-week tracks that cover fire prevention materials applicable to both the novice, as well as the more advanced course participants. The first track of this year's inaugural academy took place during the third week in March. The goal was to go above and beyond what other prevention trainings provide by equipping the students with more than standardized course instruction. Pat Durland, the now retired Department of the Interior's National Program Leader for Wildland/Urban Fire and Wildland Fire Prevention and Fire Education, praised the course saying, "The BIA training went beyond the successes I have seen in agency-designed wildland fire prevention training! They have chosen to act rather than wait, and to lead rather than follow." The BIA's Prevention Academy includes training in agency-specific matters such as tribal policies, laws and ordinances; communications skills training; and cultural awareness.

Approximately thirty participants from across the country gathered in Spokane, WA to attend the training, which was hosted by the Mount Tolman Fire Center of the Colville Indian Reservation. Participation was not limited to BIA employees, but was open to anyone who works within the realm of fire prevention. Most participants were from the BIA; however both the Forest Service and various State agencies were represented.



Communication Skills Training with Dr. Joe Trahan

Many students of this course, and many fire prevention personnel in general, were at one time wildland firefighters. BIA's Prevention Academy is leading the way as a good first step in bridging the gap between a reactive and a proactive approach to wildland fire. For many, this was the first formal training they had had in prevention. The first track of the BIA Fire Prevention Academy was, according to participants, needed, welcomed, and very effective. Commenting on the success of the Academy, one student stated, "Prevention is a must, and this course is my new Pulaski..."

Contact: Sam Scranton, National Interagency Fire Center, Deputy Fuels and Fire Use
(208) 387-5794