



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Office of Trust Services
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

A Salute to Service

Honoring our OTS Veterans

NOVEMBER 2024

A Salute to Service

2024 Active Duty Military Express Appreciation for Veterans

"I want to thank you for your time and service and your family that was separated from you during your service. It takes a hero like you to protect me and this country from harm and danger. I am proud of you."

- Jason P.

"Thank you so much for your service, courage, and bravery. I could not be prouder of all of you"

- Erin J.

"Thank you for giving your time, energy, and hearts to protecting us and our country! There are no words that can truly express my gratitude for your service. Thank you!"

- Elizabeth H.

"I hope you know how much we are thankful for your service."

- Daniel O.



"Thank you for your courage and for putting your country first."

- Daniel O.

"Veterans day is to honor all the people who put their lives in danger to protect everyone living in our country, this is exactly what you did. Thank you so much for being amazing."

- Isabella P.

"Thank you for providing a space in the world for me to believe, think and express the ideals, thoughts and opinions I have even if my way of thinking may be different from yours."

- Carin M.

"Here's to the many heroes. I am so appreciative of each of you. Thank you for all you have done to serve our country and serve our families."

- Brett R.

"I am forever grateful for what you have done to maintain America's freedom. Happy Veterans Day!"

- Edward T.

"I appreciate all that you have done and continue to do every day. You had to be so brave and strong and that must have been hard. Whenever I feel like life is too much, I just remember to be brave and strong like those who protected and served to keep me safe".

- Bella L.

"We salute you; we really do!"

- Caleb R.

"Thank you so much for your service to our country. We owe so much to you and your family for your sacrifice."

- Katie R.

A Salute to Service

2024 Veterans Serving in the BIA, Office of Trust Services



Darin Begay

Inventory Management Specialist
Division of Program Management & Coordination
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Travis Blacketter

Program Analyst
Division of Land Title and Records
Lakewood, Colorado

Dale (Albert) Bond

Division Chief
Division of Energy & Minerals Development
Lakewood, Colorado

Michelle Cruz-Salem

Contract Specialist
Division of Wildland Fire Management
Meridian, Idaho

Tony Davis

Electronics Technician
Division of Wildland Fire Management
Boise, Idaho

Darla Evankovich

Realty Specialist
Division of Trust Land Consolidation
Billings, Montana

Jeffrey Good

Division Chief
Division of Water and Power
Wrangell-Peterburg, Alaska

Melinda Huser

Beneficiary Contact Representative
Indian Energy Service Center
Lakewood, Colorado

Bradford LeCompte

Fleet and Facilities Manager
Division of Wildland Fire Management
Eagle Butte, South Dakota

Kyle A. Levin

Mechanical Engineer
Division of Energy & Minerals Development
Lakewood, Colorado

Myles Lytle

Environmental Protection Specialist
Division of Environmental & Cultural Resources
Gallup, New Mexico

Paul M. Mahon

Cartographic Technician
Division of Land Titles and Records
Bloomington, Minnesota

Darryl Martinez

Natural Resource Specialist
Division of Wildland Fire Management
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Michelle Morrison

Beneficiary Services Chief
Indian Energy Service Center
Lakewood, Colorado

Chid Murphy

Division Chief
Division of Resource Integration & Services
Gallup, New Mexico

Craig Williamson

Branch Chief, Fluid Minerals
Indian Energy Service Center
Lakewood, Colorado



MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR

November 11, 2024

Colleagues,

An integral aspect of our National Native American Heritage Month celebrations is Veterans Day. Often, we don't dwell on the dangers that face our servicemen and women as they work to protect our freedom. But it is there. Today we honor and celebrate those who are willing to put their lives on the line for millions of Americans through their service in America's military, including reservists, National guard members and their families who have shared in their sacrifice.

Additionally, we dedicate time to honor those among our Office of Trust Services ranks that served. These individuals exhibited loyalty, determination, skill, and courage in their duties, with many being highly decorated for their valor. To the veterans on my staff, it is because of your heroism and sacrifice that we enjoy safety at home and abroad. We honor you this Veteran's Day and thank you for your military service and for the expertise you bring to the Office of Trust Services. You model leadership, integrity, and teamwork in your everyday duties.

Happy Veteran's Day and Native American Heritage Month!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Johnna Blackhair".

Johnna Blackhair
Deputy Director – Trust Services



Photos: Varsity girls he coaches against Native American teams from continental US and New Zealand. Varsity girls participated in a tournament in Phoenix AZ sponsored by Native American Basketball Invitational. Coaches badge from Native Nationals in Mesa AZ. Darin Begay in military uniform, F-16C Crew chiefs picture (9th Air Force, 347 Tactical Fighter Wing, 70th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, Bravo Flight.)

Darin Begay, Staff Sergeant (E-5), United States Air Force Veteran

BIA Position: Inventory Management Specialist, division of Program Management & Coordination, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Darin Begay has been working with the Office of Trust Services for four years. He is an Inventory Management Specialist, with Program Management & Coordination. He is a member of the Navajo Tribe. He earned the rank of E-5 in the United States Air Force and while serving from 1987-1991. While in the military his primary duties as a Tactical Aircraft Maintenance Specialist, tasked with taking care of the F-16 tactical aircraft systems, when the pilots aren't flying them, ensuring they are repaired and maintained to be ready at any time.

Aircraft maintenance specialists perform end of runway, post-flight and preflight, thru-flight and phase inspections. Perform integrated combat turns and hot pit refuels, advise on maintaining, servicing, and inspecting aircraft and related aerospace equipment, and troubleshoot and maintain aircraft structures, systems components, and related equipment. These airmen remove and install aircraft components, conduct functional test of repaired components and systems, and adjust, align, and rig aircraft systems. Inspections include structures, systems, components, and related systems and interprets inspecting finding to determine what corrective actions might need to be taken.

In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his wife and going to the gym with her. He serves as head coach for all Native American Youth Girls' basketball team, 505 Thunder. 505 Thunder participates at local and out of state basketball tournaments. He also serves as head coach for 7U boys and girls basketball team, in coordination and guidance with the NB3 Fit Youth Development Program. Not only basketball, but also coaches' youth cross country team. Helping youth age group of 7 to 16, prepare them for endurance and motivation needed for cross country training. Whether is it 2k or up to 5k, the youth have been building their confidence every step of the way.



Photos: Travis Blacketter delivering ordinance to an expeditionary airfield, Travis atop 14,000-foot peak in Colorado, and a screenshot of parcel creation process

Travis Blacketter, Corporal (E-4), United States Marine Corps Veteran

BIA Position: Program Analyst, Division of Land Titles and Records, Lakewood, Colorado

Travis Blacketter has been working with the Office of Trust Services, Division of Land Titles and Records as a Program Analyst working on Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) in Lakewood, Colorado for eleven years. He is a member of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe. Travis was tasked with creating a new GIS Branch under OTS called Branch of Geodata Examination and Validation for the purposes of supporting OTS GIS needs and support for the BIA Regions. He is currently the acting Branch Chief for this new GIS modernization effort.

He earned the rank of Corporal in the United States Marines and served for 4.5 years in Iraq, Kuwait, Japan, Thailand, and Gaum. He built, delivered, and deployed air launched rockets, missiles, and bombs, in support of ground forces during active combat missions.

He describes one of his most memorable experiences working with the BIA to be working with multiple BIA Regions to support the parcel creation process. For fun and in his free time he enjoys climbing 14,000 feet plus peaks in the lower 48 states.



Photos: Visiting the community of Utquagvik on the North Slope of Alaska, HH-60 ride Kodiak, Retirement ceremony Kodiak, AK

Jeffrey Good, CAPT (Retired), PE, PMP, United States Coast Guard Veteran

BIA Position: Division Chief, Division of Water and Power, Wrangell, Alaska

Jeff Good has been working with the Office of Trust Services, Division of Water & Power for 11 months. His position is Chief, Division of Water and Power Division which promotes self-determination, economic opportunities, and public safety through the sound management of irrigation, dam and power facilities owned by Bureau of Indian Affairs. DWP's mission also includes the protection of Indian water rights, water development projects, litigation support and attorney's fees as well as the Bureau's responsibilities under the Federal Power Act in re-licensing hydropower projects that affect Indian trust resources.

Jeff served as a Captain in the U.S. Coast Guard and had the honor to serve in the positions of Commanding Officer, Base Kodiak, AK; Surface Forces Logistics Center Industrial Operations Division, Norfolk VA; Civil Engineer Resource Management Branch Chief Washington D.C.; Executive Officer, Training Center Petaluma CA; Facility Engineer, Training Center Petaluma CA; Technical Design Branch Chief, ISC Kodiak, AK; Commanding Officer, Coastal Patrol Boat Project Resident Office Lockport (PRO), LA; Executive Officer, Coastal Patrol Boat PRO Lockport, LA; Engineering Officer, Group Woods Hole, MA; Civil Engineering Unit Juneau, AK; Student Engineer, USCGC DAUNTLESS after cross-decking from USCGC DEPENDABLE, Galveston, TX.

In his short time with the BIA, the memorable experiences have been meeting the dedicated people within BIA who work hard every day supporting Indian Country. Jeff enjoys golfing, fishing, hunting, hiking, boating, and outdoor activities.



Photos: Melinda Huser at the 101st Support Group (Corp), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Ft. Campbell, Kentucky CSG Ball 2003. Melinda receiving an Aviation Safety Award, Aviation Brigade, 25th Infantry Division (Light), Scholfield Barracks, Hawaii. Melinda holding her oldest son, Charlie, 1995.

Melinda Huser, First Lieutenant (O-2), United States Army Veteran

BIA Position: Beneficiary Contact Representative, Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA), Indian Energy Service Center (IESC), Lakewood, Colorado

Melinda Huser has been working as a Beneficiary Contact Representative at the IESC - BTFA since March 2024. She is a member of the Cherokee Nation, Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Melinda enlisted in the Army in 1992 and served as an Ammunition Specialist until her enlistment concluded in 1996. Following this, she served in the Inactive Ready Reserve while she attended the University of Hawaii, where she earned a B.B.A. in Accounting. In the wake of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Melinda rejoined the Army, receiving her commission through Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Fort Benning, Georgia, followed by Finance training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. She served as an Army Finance Officer at Fort Campbell, KY, until August 2005.

New to the federal government, Melinda brings with her a wealth of experience from her previous roles, including the Director of HR/Risk Management for the City of Cape Canaveral, FL. She expresses great enthusiasm for her new position, her memorable experience includes appreciating the diverse group of individuals dedicated to assisting Indian beneficiaries and the positive impact their work has on the Indian community. In her free time, Melinda enjoys cooking, spending time with family, reading, playing the piano, and traveling.



Photos: Kyle Levin exiting a plane, Kyle exiting a plane, Airmen posing for photo in front of the plane

Kyle A. Levin, Senior Airman (E-4), United States Air Force Veteran

BIA Position: Mechanical Engineer, Division of Energy & Minerals Development, Lakewood, Colorado

Kyle A Levin has been working with the Office of Trust Services, Division of Energy and Minerals Development (DEMD) as a mechanical engineer focused on renewable energy development for more than 9 years.

He earned the rank of Senior Airman in the United States Air Force where he served for 6 years. As an Airborne Cryptologic Language Analyst, he preplanned and organized airborne operations and conducted real-time translation and geolocation of intercepted Arabic communications. He directly supported personnel recovery efforts for downed allied aircraft in multiple Afghanistan warzones in addition to providing local oversight of domestic and foreign special forces teams during active Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) operations. Over the course of his enlistment, Kyle completed 5 wartime overseas deployments in Qatar and Afghanistan in support of OEF. He flew aboard RC-135V/W (Rivet Joint) and MC-12 aircraft for a total of more than 1,000 combat flight hours overseas. He also flew aboard the RC-135S (Cobra Ball) during peacetime missions to collect data on ballistic targets to verify arms treaty compliance.

Kyle describes one of his most memorable BIA experiences as “watching one of my first projects, a 1.2 MW solar array at Picuris Pueblo, evolved from a feasibility study grant application into a constructed project. It really showed me that what we do here at DEMD does make a difference.” For fun and in his free time, he enjoys hiking, camping, boating, fishing, guitar and karaoke.”



Photos: 1) My son Andrew, “best wingman I ever had.” He’d grow up to earn a master's degree in aerospace engineering, studying with NASA Goddard, Edwards Air Force Base Fight Test Center, and the Naval Postgraduate School, 2) Members of the 12th Tactical Fighter Squadron “Dirty Dozen” Kadena Air Base, Japan 1990. Two wonderful daughters – Emily (USMC, PFC) and Michaela – complete my team”.

Paul M. Mahon, Captain, United States Air Force Veteran

BIA Position: Cartographic Technician, Division of Land Titles and Records, Bloomington, Minnesota

Paul Mahon has been working as a Cartographic Technician in the Midwest Region, Land Titles and Records Office (LTRO) and greatly enjoys assisting the Branch of Geospatial Support (BOGS) and the LTRO in mapping Reservation Trust land. Paul Mahon served as a Pilot, Instructor and War Planner from 1986-1997. After graduation from Pilot Training at Vance Air Force Base Oklahoma, he completed F-15 training courses at Luke AFB, Arizona. He completed two peacetime tours in the F-15 being assigned to the 12th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Okinawa, Japan, and the 54th Fighter Squadron Elmendorf AFB Alaska. He was also assigned to the 89th Flying Training Squadron and was a member of the European-NATA Joint Jet Pilot Training program (ENJJPT) as an instructor Pilot. As a member of the ENJJPT program he trained pilots from Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Norway and Belgium



Photos: Michelle Morrison at Ronald McDonald House Charities in 2017, talking with visitors at "Stewards of the Sea: Defending Freedom, Protecting the Environment" exhibit during Mount Trashmore's Earth Day celebration, Virginia Beach, VA 2016, and with fellow shipmates at Navy Operational Support Center, Tulsa, OK.

Michelle Morrison, Lieutenant/Direct Commission Officer (O-3), United States Navy Veteran

BIA Position: Beneficiary Services Chief and Fiduciary Trust Officer, Indian Energy Service Center, Lakewood, Colorado

Michelle Morrison has been working with the Office of Trust Services, Indian Energy Service Center for four years. She is a member of the Cherokee Nation. Mrs. Morrison enlisted in 2003 in the Navy Reserve and served as an E-5 Yeoman, 2nd class Petty Officer, (Administrative Assistant). She provided operations, logistics, joint planning, communications, public affairs, and exercise support to joint combatant commands at US Pacific Command and US Southern Command. Selected in 2008 as a direct commissioned officer in Human Resources she provided support to the Navy Personnel Command & Navy Recruiting Command. She was mobilized to the US Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk, VA in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. There she worked as the Operational Energy Action Officer in the Fleet Installations, Environmental and Energy Readiness Office on the Great Green Fleet Campaign of 2016. This initiative helped transform the Navy and Marine Corps energy use in accordance with the energy and efficiency goals outlined by the Secretary of the Navy to diversify fuel sources, strengthen operational flexibility and improve combat capability.

She enjoys spending time with family and friends and walking her cattle dogs. She lives on a small farm with cows and horses and tries to lead a healthy lifestyle by staying physically active. She and her oldest granddaughter participate in 5K walk/runs through the year with the Cherokee Nation Wings group. She completed the Route 66 half-marathon, a Tough Mudder and the Native American Pathstar Alcatraz swim.