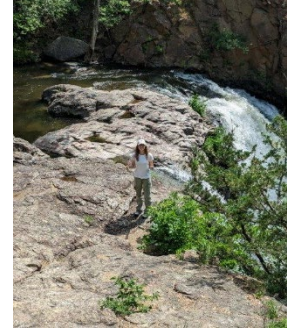


**Lauren “Blaine” Pennala**  
**Extern Summer 2023**  
**East Tennessee State University**  
**Bemidji Area Office**  
**Bemidji, Minnesota**



My name is Lauren “Blaine” Pennala, and I spent this summer in Bemidji, MN. I was stationed at the Indian Health Service (IHS), Bemidji Area Office with LT Joe Sarisky. I am from a small town in Tennessee about 45 minutes west of Knoxville, TN. I currently have one semester left at East Tennessee State University and will graduate in December 2023 with a degree in Environmental Health. This summer with IHS has already caused so much growth in me and I cannot wait to see where it takes me next.



I was able to serve nine of the eleven tribes in MN and one in WI. This includes Bois Forte, Shakopee, Upper Sioux, Lower Sioux, Fond du Lac, White Earth, Red Lake, Mille Lacs, Prairie Island, and St. Croix (WI). I worked closely with my preceptor whose service area includes Bois Forte, Shakopee, Upper Sioux, and Lower Sioux. I was also able to join the other field environmental health officers on surveys within their service area. I completed over 120 surveys this summer. These surveys were broad and extensive. I surveyed five casinos, three clinics, three elderly nutrition programs, four childcare buildings, and six powwows. I was also able to attend and collaborate on three ServSafe classes. I collaborated with people outside of the field environment health. For instance, I went on two trips with the engineers to wastewater treatment plants. I also completed nitrous oxide testing for a dentistry. I really enjoyed how diverse this externship was. My summer was mostly food safety, but I also worked on general safety, emergency preparedness, water, vectorborne disease, and clinics. I also got a good balance of fieldwork and office work. This is the perfect externship if you are looking for a little bit of everything.

I was able to work independently, in a team, and one-on-one. I was given the freedom to be creative with independent projects. I was also very much a part of a team. This was a perfect balance for growth in many categories. I was able to develop interpersonal relationships with my team members and with the population we serve. I am proud of my academic and professional growth, but I am most proud of my personal growth. I would recommend this externship to anyone who has the opportunity.