



NEVADA TRAILBLAZERS

Meet Kostan Lathouris

An Attorney Working Hard to Help His Tribe

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When Kostan Lathouris entered law school, he had a different focus than most. He wanted to better position himself to be of service to his tribe: the Chemehuevi (cheh-meh-way-vee) Indian Tribe. And since graduating law school, he has done precisely that.

Lathouris serves on the Chemehuevi Tribal Council, which consists of nine members and is the tribe's governing body. In addition, he operates his own law firm, Lathouris Law, PLLC, where he handles federal Indian law and tribal law matters for his tribe and others, including drafting and updating tribal laws, representing tribal interests in tribal-state gaming compact negotiations, and asserting and defending tribal sovereignty in tribal and federal court litigation. Lathouris was also appointed vice chair of the Nevada Indian Commission.

Lathouris has always had a close connection with his tribe and is proud that he lives in the tribe's ancestral lands, which include Southern Nevada. Growing up, he fondly recalls memories of spending time with his grandmother on the Chemehuevi Reservation. They would routinely make the couple-

hour drive to the reservation to spend time together and attend the tribal council's meetings.

While Lathouris always knew he wanted to give back to his tribe and help it prosper, he did not always know how he would do so, much less that he would do so as a lawyer.

Lathouris grew up in Henderson and worked in his family-owned restaurant in Boulder City. He was a good student, but college was not on his mind until a fortuitous meeting with a UNLV recruiter his senior year. As a result of that meeting, he would go on to attend UNLV and graduate from its honor's college with a degree in political science.

Following college, Lathouris worked with his tribe and served on both its economic development board and gaming commission. He only turned his focus to law school after realizing that among the various attorneys who represented his tribe, none were members of it. He wanted to change that.

Throughout law school, Lathouris prepared himself to handle the unique challenges posed by federal Indian law and tribal law, serving as the first Native American to chair UNLV's Native American Law Student Association. For his efforts, he received the Barbara Buckley Community Service Award, the State Bar of Nevada Diversity Scholarship, the Public Interest Law Association Full

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

Meet Kostan Lathouris

Grant, and the Professional Development Fellowship, and he was awarded second place in the 2015 National National Legal Services Authority Moot Court for “Best Spoken Advocate.”

After graduating from law school, Lathouris now endeavors to assist his tribe however he can while creating a sustainable model and framework for the future. As an attorney, he has represented his tribe in critical litigation concerning its sovereignty. For instance, in *Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, et al. v. McMahon, et al.*,¹ the tribe prevailed in the Ninth Circuit and in opposition to a petition for writ of certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court on allegations that state law enforcement unlawfully subjected tribal members on the reservation to certain state regulations, and successfully defended against claims that challenged the status of the tribe’s lands.

When asked how he feels about assisting with such a significant legal victory, particularly as a relatively young lawyer, having graduated law school in 2015, Lathouris said that he was happy he “could be of better service to my tribe.”

In addition, Lathouris worked on *Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians, et al. v. Newsom, et al.*,² where the plaintiff tribes, including his own, successfully argued in federal district court that the state of California had committed bad faith in gaming compact negotiations. Further, he has led a project for codifying and updating his tribe’s laws. As a council member, he drafted legislation to protect tribal members’ free speech at tribal council meetings and, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, drafted legislation for his reservation to help combat the spread of the virus and advocated for procedures to increase virtual access to tribal council meetings.

“Kostan is a tremendous asset to the tribal council,” Chemehuevi Tribal Chair Sierra Pencille said “He is fair, organized, and extremely knowledgeable. He brings a systematic and diligent approach to policy making.”

And, perhaps, more importantly, he is a “compassionate person, very conscientious of the impact that government decisions may have on the population and the environment,” and “a great role model for our younger generation and is always willing to mentor others.”

“The Chemehuevi Tribe is very fortunate to have him as a leader,” Pencille said.

In his free time, Lathouris enjoys spending time on the tribe’s reservation, whale-watching, and traveling to visit family and friends.

ENDNOTES:

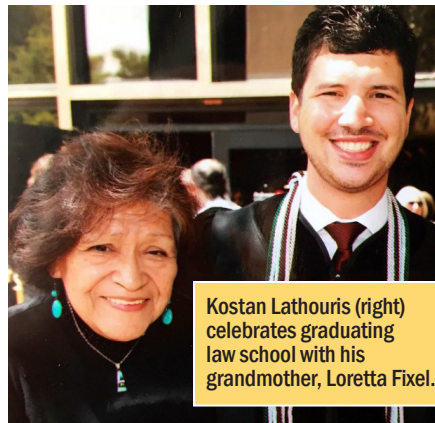
1. 934 F.3d 1076 (9th Cir. 2019), *cert denied*, ___ U.S. ___ (U.S. March 9, 2020) (No. 19-820).
2. Case No. 1:19-CV-0024 AWI SKO (E.D. Cal. Mar. 31, 2021).



Kostan Lathouris (right) whale-watching in Monterey, California, with his father, Evangelos Lathouris.



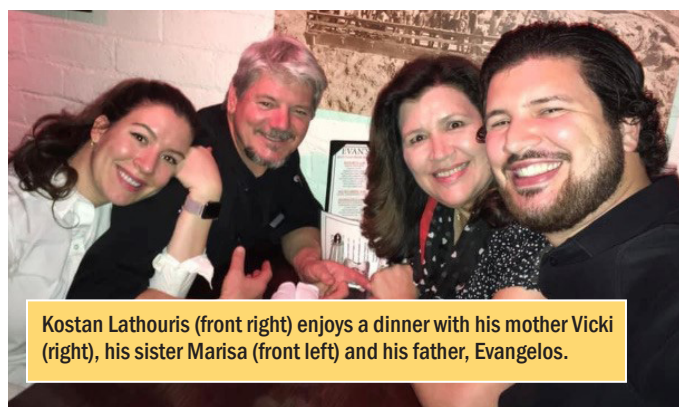
Chemehuevi Tribal Vice Chair Tiffany Adams (left), Kostan Lathouris, Tribal Chair Sierra Pencille, and Tribal Secretary-Treasurer Amanda Sansoucie attend the Annual General Membership Meeting on the Chemehuevi Reservation.



Kostan Lathouris (right) celebrates graduating law school with his grandmother, Loretta Fixel.



Kostan Lathouris poses at the Tribal Council House on the Chemehuevi Reservation.



Kostan Lathouris (front right) enjoys a dinner with his mother Vicki (right), his sister Marisa (front left) and his father, Evangelos.