



# THE KLAMATH TRIBES

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## KLAMATH-MODOC-YAHOOSKIN

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### **NEW GM of Kla-Mo-Ya Casino Brings Wealth of Experience**

CHILOQUIN, Ore. – Michael Black has devoted 37 years to the gaming and casino business. And after a brief retirement in Arizona, he has returned to the industry as the new General Manager of The Klamath Tribes' Kla-Mo-Ya Casino in Chiloquin.

Black's career in the gaming industry began after attending college at the University of Oregon, where he also played baseball for the Ducks. His first job was in Salem on the regulatory side of the Oregon State Lottery Commission, working in the field with instant scratch tickets. Within three years, he took over the Products Development Division and worked his way up to the Video Poker part of the business with Megabucks and Powerball, where he spent about a third of his career working.

He then went to Fife, Wash., to work in the gaming manufacturing sector for a couple of years. Then his first opportunity to work for a tribal casino presented itself with the Coquille Indian Tribe in Coos Bay, North Bend, Ore., working in the operations and slot side of the business for a little over six years.

He then moved to Flagstaff, Ariz., to work for the Navajo Nation assisting in the opening of the Twin Arrows Casino. Following his two years there, he decided to retire. Black has a passion for golf, but after two months on the fairways, he grew restless to return to work. That's when he reached out to The Klamath Tribes after viewing a job posting on the Tribes' website for the General Manager position at Kla-Mo-Ya.

At 64 years of age, he is now back on the job at a casino, completing his third week of work at Kla-Mo-Ya and enthusiastic for the opportunity.

"You come in here and, you know, you're trying to make a difference for the tribe," Black said, speaking at his office behind the casino. "And I mean, you're working, you got a lot of stuff that you're trying to either bring up to speed, fix gaming floors, work with other departments, maybe they didn't get a chance to work with the casino before, like the hotel, Travel Center, those types of things. It takes a lot of energy out of you, but it's a lot of fun. It's very rewarding to see the tribe succeed and be successful."

Black is systematically approaching the changes he plans for the casino, beginning with refreshing the slot machines, with six new ones being installed this week. In addition, he would like to introduce slot

tournament play games and expand the base of the product offered on the gaming floor. And he wants to start a VIP Host Program for high-end players.

“I want to get them onboard to where we can start reaching out to these players out of the Medford area, out of the Bend area and Klamath Falls, and get the high-end players to come in here,” he said. “Not to discard the others; we want the day-to-day players too. But I want to incorporate the Travel Center and the hotel, and we're going to try to get them to come over here.”

In addition, he said they will increase marketing efforts, utilizing local media outlets, and media outside in places like Bend and Medford. Lastly, Black is addressing hiring needs, beginning with a Chief Financial Officer. He said there are over 27 positions that need to be filled at the casino in all departments.

“We'll get there,” he said. “We're just in the hiring process. Everybody is feeling the pinch trying to get quality people. And that's what we're going to do.”

On the horizon, Black would also like to see card tables return to the casino, which was discontinued during the two years of COVID. He envisions card games like Ultimate Hold'em, Three-card poker, and Blackjack, in addition to traditional poker games.

But before a card can be dealt, hiring talented people to work at the casino is his first goal. “It depends on the talent we have and how much more recruiting we have to do because you surround yourself with good people,” he said. “We're blessed to have a lot of good people here already. But we still need to go out and get a few more to beef up our departments. We've got to put resources back into our team. And that is training, from frontline staff, supervisors, and managers all the way up the food chain.”

Lastly, Black would like to make some changes to the restaurant and bar. One thought he shared was offering pizza cooked in an oven. “I'll entertain anything I can to start expanding the menu making it look a little bit different. Refresh it.”



Mike Black is the new General Manager of the Klamoya Casino in Chiloquin. (Photo by Ken Smith/Klamath Tribes. *Image available for media use.*)

**About The Klamath Tribes**

*The Klamath Tribes primary mission is to “protect, preserve and enhance the spiritual, cultural and physical values and resources of the Klamath, Modoc and Yahooskin Peoples by maintaining the customs of our ancestors.” The heart of Tribal life is centered in the area of Chiloquin, Oregon and includes 12 Departments, Health Clinic, Childcare Center, Tribal Court, goos oLgi gowa Center, Research Station, and three tribal enterprises. The Klamath Tribes’ 12 departments facilitate service delivery to multiple aspects of tribal life, including health and fitness, education, economic development, social services, cultural preservation, natural resource protection and more. For more information visit <https://klamathtribes.org/>.*

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