

MICHIGAN INDIAN LEGAL SERVICES, INC.

MILS Office Locations: Traverse City and East Lansing

MILS Service Area: Statewide

Service Population: 25-50,000 individuals living at or below 125% of the poverty level



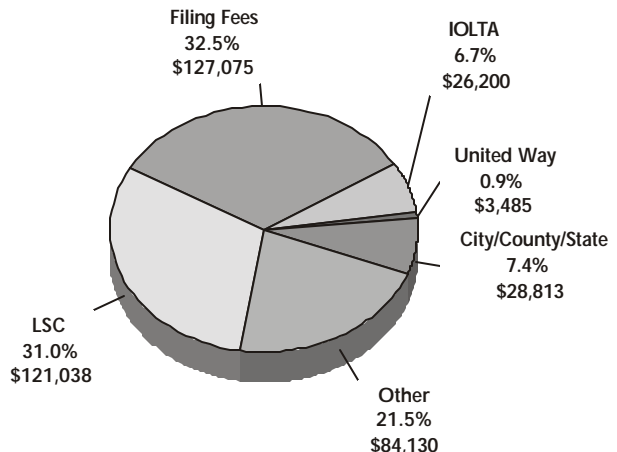
In 2000, MILS completed work on a petition for federal tribal recognition on behalf of a tribe, a project that began in 1994. The final product included the 205-page petition and 21 boxes of supporting documentation describing tribal history. MILS continued its emphasis on helping tribes gain federal recognition, because federal recognition gives tribes the tools they need

to raise their members out of poverty. Federal recognition allows the tribes to exercise their rights of self-government, protect their members through the Indian Child Welfare Act, provide health and educational services to their members and provide job training and economic opportunity. Federal recognition helps tribes increase employment for its members, lessen dependence on welfare, increase tax revenues for the state, and increase economic activity.

MILS helped a tribal client draft an election ordinance. Previously, the tribe had conducted elections informally, which could have led to disputes. An MILS staff attorney attended several meetings of the tribal committee charged with developing the ordinance. MILS prepared a draft of the ordinance for review by the tribal council. Based on the council's suggestions, MILS revised the draft, and the council adopted the ordinance to guarantee fair and orderly elections.

MILS was contacted by an adult Indian adoptee who needed information about his parents' degree of Indian blood so that he could apply for membership in his tribe. While handling a prior similar case, MILS had devised a process to keep information about biological parents confidential and yet comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act, which requires disclosure of such information. According to that procedure, MILS contacted the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and established the client's degree of Indian blood. Using the letter from the BIA, the client was able to identify his tribe and apply for membership.

MILS Sources of Funding for 2000: \$ 390,741



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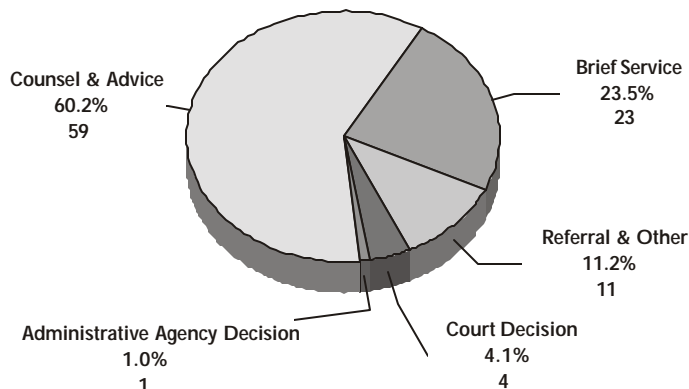
Community Outreach and Collaboration. MILS has provided primary legal support for five tribes that achieved federal recognition. MILS drafted the petitions for, interacted with federal officials, drafted tribal constitutions and codes, and provided day-to-day legal advice to the tribal governments. As a result, all the tribes have improved the lives of their members. Before federal recognition, some of the communities were so impoverished that many homes lacked indoor plumbing. One such community now has its own sewer system and new housing for seniors and families. All the communities have seen dramatic increases in the numbers and percentages of family members who are working. All have increased access to health care, educational benefits, social services, and job training. One tribe has become the largest employer in its county. One community has built a home for domestic violence victims and a civic center. After federal recognition is achieved, MILS continues to work with tribes to help set up their governing systems, including tribal legal codes and peacemaking systems.

Client Age	
18 & Under	0
19-59	67
60 & Over	20
Groups	11
Total	98

Pro Bono Support. MILS continued to use the services provided by the pro bono programs run by the other legal services providers in Michigan and to seek help from programs such as the Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Project, the Michigan Legal Services pro bono program, and the pro bono programs of the American Bar Association. MILS also involved the private bar in assisting its clients by seeking advice and counsel from other Indian law practitioners. Because the nature of MILS's work makes it difficult to engage pro bono attorneys to assist MILS clients directly, MILS sought financial donations from attorneys as an alternative.

Client Ethnicity	
White	3
Black	0
Hispanic	1
Native American	83
Asian	0
Other	11
Total	98

MILS Types of Service in 2000



MILS Cases Closed in 2000: 98

