

MICHIGAN INDIAN LEGAL SERVICES

2003 MILS Office Locations: Traverse City and Lansing

MILS Service Area: Statewide

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



MILS focuses on helping tribes gain federal recognition. Federal recognition provides opportunities for the tribes to obtain the tools needed to move their members out of poverty. Federal recognition gives tribes access to resources which helps tribes increase the percentage of tribal members with full employment, lessen dependence on

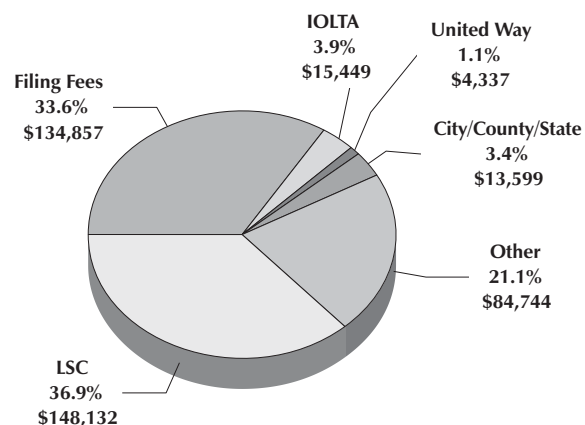
A low-income mother was not able to represent herself effectively in a custody matter which resulted in an order granting parenting time to the abusive father. MILS helped her obtain reports describing the abuse and file an objection to the referee's recommendation. The mother then appeared in court on her own and won a favorable decision.

welfare as well as increase tax revenues and economic activity for the state.

MILS also expanded outreach to tribe reservation communities in 2003 to better serve clients. Each outreach visit provides an opportunity for anyone to talk to an MILS attorney during a period of 4 to 5 hours. Some clients receive additional follow up services from MILS after the clinic. MILS made nine outreach visits in 2003 and will expand the visits again in 2004. MILS uses a case management system that allows secure access from any Internet connection. The tribes provide office space with access to a telephone line or connection to internal networks for the outreach visits. With Internet access MILS attorneys are able to use the MILS case management system to enter new cases into the system, check for conflicts as they interview the client and enter case notes, all from remote locations. Because MILS is a statewide program, this service has greatly increased the capacity of MILS attorneys in the field to immediately offer assistance to clients.

MILS provided general counsel to a tribe seeking federal recognition, including helping the tribe maintain an organization that will be ready to assume the reigns of government when recognition is granted. MILS assisted in preparing the case for recognition and interim steps, such as using a non-profit form of government in the interim.

MILS Sources of Funding for 2003: \$ 401,118



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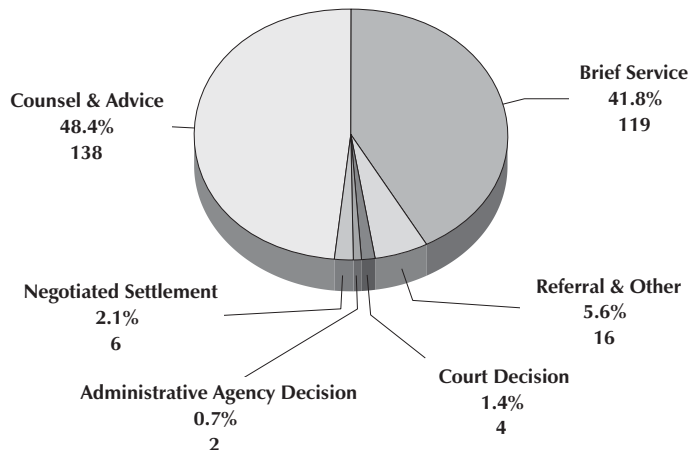
Community Outreach and Collaboration. MILS is one of the partners in the Michigan Tribal/State Partnership. The Tribal/State Partnership seeks to improve compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act and better care for Indian children. MILS is often called on by Indian agencies to provide expertise to projects, such as Civil Rights Office of Indian Affairs. MILS and the Family Independence Agency continued its partnership that trains tribal and state social workers and a small number of attorneys on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) to make them aware of and improve compliance with the ICWA's purpose of keeping Native American families together if possible. MILS provided training at seven locations in Michigan to approximately 240 state and tribal workers. MILS also provides advice to attorneys representing clients in Indian Child Welfare Act matters and publishes a brochure on the Indian Child Welfare Act available in paper and on the Internet at www.mils.org.

Client Age	
18 & Under	0
19-59	272
60 & Over	12
Groups	1
Total	285

Pro Bono Support. Typically MILS involves the private bar in assisting its clients by utilizing the advice and assistance of other Indian law practitioners. MILS involves the private bar at every opportunity on a case by case basis but because of the specialized nature of MILS' work, it is difficult to engage general pro bono attorneys to assist MILS clients directly. MILS seeks financial donations from bar members as an alternative. MILS also involves the private bar in assisting its clients by seeking advice and counsel from the Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Project, the Michigan Legal Services pro bono program, and the pro bono programs of the American Bar Association. Two MILS attorneys themselves provide pro bono services in clinics for clients at a domestic violence shelter in their area.

Client Ethnicity	
White	9
Black	1
Hispanic	2
Native American	270
Asian	0
Other	3
Total	285

MILS Types of Service in 2003



MILS Cases Closed in 2003: 285

