

MICHIGAN INDIAN LEGAL SERVICES

2007 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



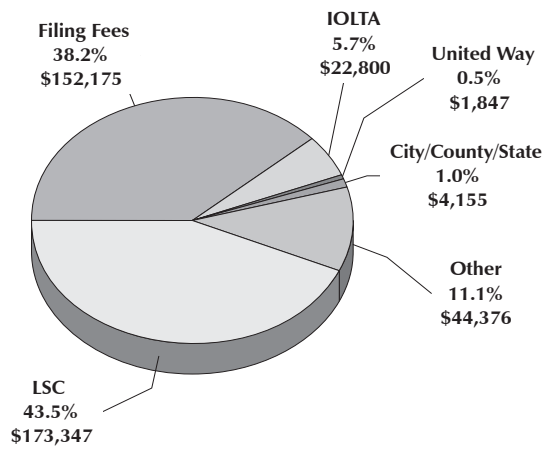
In 2007, MILS expanded its representation of clients in tribal court primarily in child welfare cases. MILS staff also completed the draft of model tribal court rules of evidence in 2007 and continued to work on the federal recognition petition for a Michigan historic tribe. MILS staff often travel to reservation communities to better serve clients and provide direct access to

An Indian-born man was adopted as a child and raised outside of his tribe. When he became gravely ill, he wanted to discover his given name and meet his relatives, but his adoption records were sealed. MILS obtained release of the information from the Tribal Court so he could meet his siblings and the other surviving members of his biological family, learn his birth name and family history and become enrolled in his tribe before he died.

an attorney. During outreach events, clients can be helped on the spot with advice and counsel or receive additional follow-up services. MILS has offices in Lansing and Traverse City and uses a toll-free number to take client calls and transfer them directly to an MILS staff attorney in either MILS office. MILS staff use a voice over the internet connection so that staff in Traverse City can talk to Lansing. MILS can also transfer client calls from one office to the other over this line. Tribes provide MILS with use of their telephone line or Internet connection so MILS can use technology to more efficiently provide services. In 2007, MILS initiated a pilot project to provide criminal representation in one tribal court using a targeted funding source. The criminal defense project is significant because tribal courts are not required to provide attorneys for indigent defendants.

MILS Sources of Funding for 2007: \$ 398,700

A young mother lost her children to foster care when the Tribal child protection agencies became concerned about their welfare. MILS represented her in hearings and helped her understand the importance of accepting help from tribal social service agencies to improve her parenting ability. Ultimately the tribal court was impressed with the mother's progress and returned her children to her.



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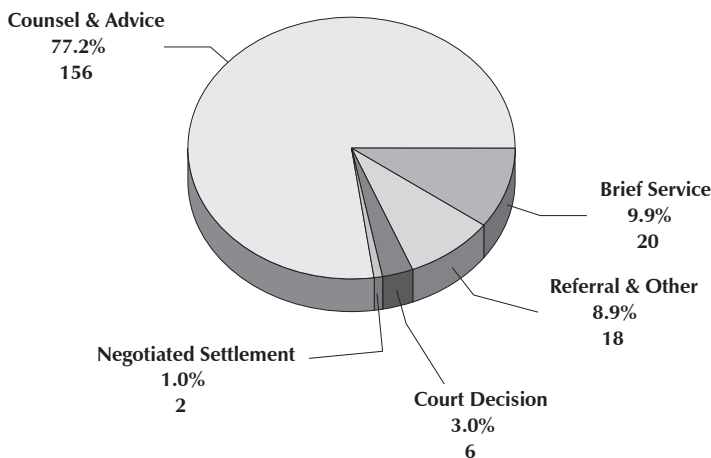
Community Outreach and Collaboration. MILS continues to partner with other agencies in the Michigan Tribal/State Partnership which meets four times a year to discuss ways to improve compliance under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and encourage better care for Indian children. MILS and the Department of Human Services continue to work together to train tribal and state social workers and attorneys on the operation of Indian Child Welfare Act and other information relevant to its purpose of keeping Native American families together. MILS publishes in paper and on the web a pamphlet about the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The pamphlet is written in question and answer format and is geared toward families that may encounter a situation where they, a family member or a friend may need to know how the ICWA can work to keep families intact. MILS recently published its first a newsletter which was sent to many locations where potential clients gather.

Client Age	
18 & Under	1
19-59	188
60 & Over	13
Groups	0
Total	202

Pro Bono Support. Because of the specialized nature of MILS' work, it is often difficult to engage general pro bono attorneys to assist MILS clients directly. Typically, MILS encourages other Indian law practitioners to assist clients in need of pro bono services. On occasion, MILS seeks advice and counsel from the Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Program (MI-LAPP) and pro bono programs of the American Bar Association. Two MILS attorneys provide pro bono services at a weekly clinic at the Third Level Crisis Center in Traverse City. MILS receives pro bono financial donations through the Access to Justice Fund.

Client Ethnicity	
White	10
Black	4
Hispanic	1
Native American	184
Asian	0
Other	3
Total	202

MILS Types of Service in 2007



MILS Cases Closed in 2007: 202

