

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



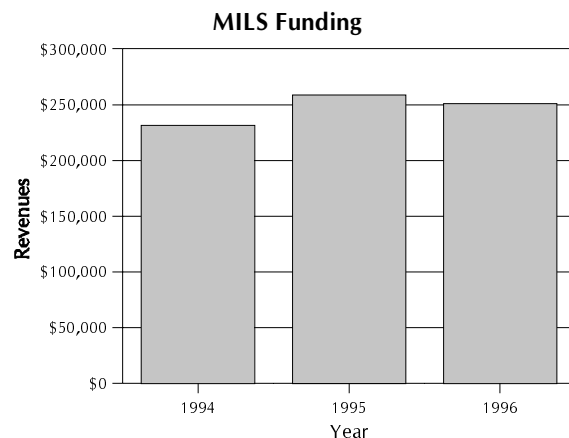
MILS continued its emphasis on helping tribes gain federal recognition which helps tribes increase the percentage of tribal members with full employment, lessen dependence on welfare and increase economic activity. A second major area of emphasis is the Indian Child Welfare Act that mandates federal

procedural and substantive standards

in state court proceedings that seek to place an Indian child outside of the child's home. In 1996, MILS continued to upgrade its computer equipment and was selected as a pilot site for a case management and timekeeping software package which will allow MILS to use centralized intake and send new cases to the branch office via GroupWise E-mail. MILS obtained a grant to open an office in East Lansing to serve the southern part of the state. MILS uses centralized intake for both offices from one toll free number and MILS attorneys travel to every part of the state when it is required to meet client needs. Without the funds from IOLTA and Filing Fees funding MILS would have had to reduce its staff by one-third or more and would not have had sufficient resources to attract additional funds to support a new office.

A mother gave temporary guardianship of her child to the child's paternal grandparents who agreed to help the mother get past a rough period in her life. When the mother was back on her feet, the grandparents refused to return the child. The mother asked MILS to help return her child. MILS showed the court that the Indian Child Welfare Act mandated immediate return of the child to the parent in cases where the custody arrangement was created voluntarily by the parent. The child was reunited with his mother.

A tribe was trying to expand and improve the housing available to its members. MILS helped the tribe develop housing ordinances and assisted with organization of a housing commission. This will enable the tribe to develop plans for the housing and pursue the needed funding through HUD and other programs for housing which particularly focuses on the needs of elders and low income families.



MICHIGAN INDIAN LEGAL SERVICES, INC.

Contact: James A. Keedy, Executive Director • (616) 947-0122

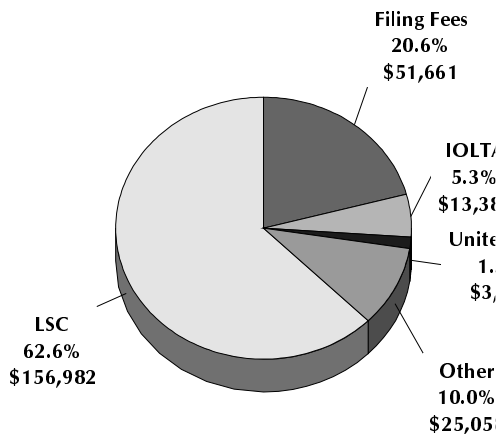
Community Outreach and Collaboration. MILS staff continue to attend meetings of the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs where issues of concern to the Native American community are aired. Community members and agency representatives attend the meetings and learn of MILS' services. MILS staff participate in the Michigan Indian Advisory Council on Aging. MILS staff regularly attend tribal council meetings. Members of the tribe attend the meetings and learn of MILS services. An MILS attorney gave a presentation on the fundamentals of tribal jurisdiction to tribal members at annual community meetings. Over 200 tribal members attended. The MILS director is a member of the Legal Services Association of Michigan Computer Committee and worked many hours in 1996 to help improve the delivery of legal services through the use of technology.

Client Age	
18 & Under	0
19-59	134
60 & Over	7
Groups	3
Total	144

Pro Bono Support. MILS involves the private bar in assisting its clients through the advice and counsel given to MILS attorneys by other Indian law practitioners. Since the nature of MILS' work makes it difficult to engage pro bono attorneys to assist MILS clients directly, MILS seeks financial donations from attorneys as an alternative. MILS also utilizes the services of pro bono programs of the American Bar Association and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association, such as their program, A Business Commitment, which provided an expert in computer law to help MILS negotiate a contract for software development services, indirectly benefitting MILS clientele.

Client Ethnicity	
White	7
Black	0
Hispanic	0
Native American	134
Asian	0
Other	3
Total	144

MILS Sources of Funding for 1996: \$ 250,7



MILS Cases Closed in 1996: 144

