

MICHIGAN INDIAN LEGAL SERVICES, INC.

MILS Office Locations: Traverse City and East Lansing

MILS Service Area: State of Michigan

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



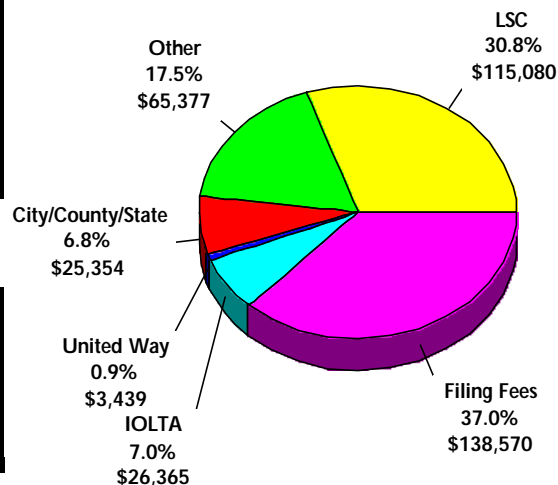
One of MILS's priorities is enforcement of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) through representation of families in court and through education of the bench, bar, and child welfare agencies. In 1998, MILS made good progress in its education campaign. MILS staff wrote two articles about the ICWA that were published in the "Michigan Child Welfare Journal." An MILS staff attorney prepared materials about the

ICWA for inclusion in materials to be distributed by the Michigan Judicial Institute to family court referees at a training program. An MILS staff attorney also conducted several ICWA training sessions for Family Independence Agency (FIA) employees and assisted in the FIA ICWA implementation team. MILS court representation resulted in family reunification in several cases. Another MILS priority is federal recognition for all Michigan tribes seeking it. MILS continued to assist two tribes with about 5,000 members in making strides toward federal recognition. The work this year included gathering and organizing historical information, completing additional interviews, and working with federal officials to define the process clearly to assist the tribe in writing its petition.

The Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver Act is designed to help students trying to advance their job skills through education. When some of Michigan's colleges and universities believed they no longer had to honor the act's requirements, MILS conducted research, contacted the schools and, through negotiation, was able to convince the schools of their legal obligations to these students. With MILS's assistance, a number of students who would not otherwise have been able to continue their education were able to do so.

Assisting children and families is an essential aspect of tribal sovereignty. MILS helped a tribe's child welfare commission and a tribal council with the development of an extensive children's code to deal with situations where children are in need of care or families need parenting assistance. The tribe has been able to use this children's code to provide guidance as it assumed jurisdiction over a number of cases transferred from state courts.

MILS Sources of Funding for 1998: \$ 374,185



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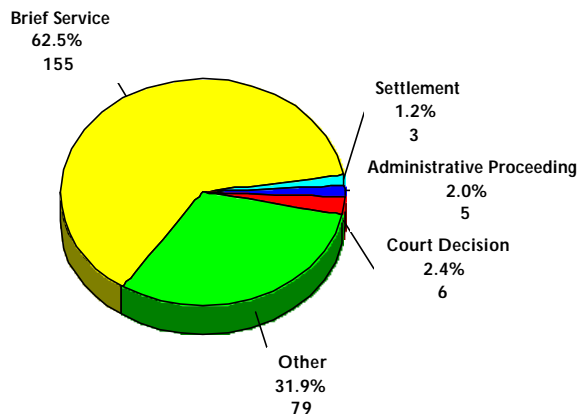
Community Outreach and Collaboration: Enforcement of the Indian Child Welfare Act assisted many Indian communities in preventing the trauma that used to occur when children were removed from their families, tribes, and culture and placed in non-Indian homes to grow up ignorant of their backgrounds. MILS also focused on federal recognition efforts to help tribes increase the percentage of fully employed tribal members, decrease dependence on welfare, and enhance economic activity. For example, prior to federal recognition, the small reservation of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians had poor housing stock, with many units lacking indoor plumbing. Jobs were scarce, and families were separated when family members left the area to find employment. Today, after federal recognition, the tribe employs many persons. It has built housing for the seniors and families, a health clinic, and a shelter for abused women and provides many other services to fight poverty and health problems.

Client Age	
18 & Under	4
19-59	221
60 & Over	23
Total	248

Pro Bono Support: MILS continued to involve 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. 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 Project, the Michigan Legal Services pro bono program and the pro bono programs of the American Bar Association.

Client Ethnicity	
White	3
Black	0
Hispanic	0
Native American	245
Asian	0
Other	0
Total	248

MILS Types of Service in 1998



MILS Cases Closed in 1998: 248

