

MICHIGAN INDIAN LEGAL SERVICES

MILS Office Locations: Traverse City and East Lansing

MILS Service Area: Statewide

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



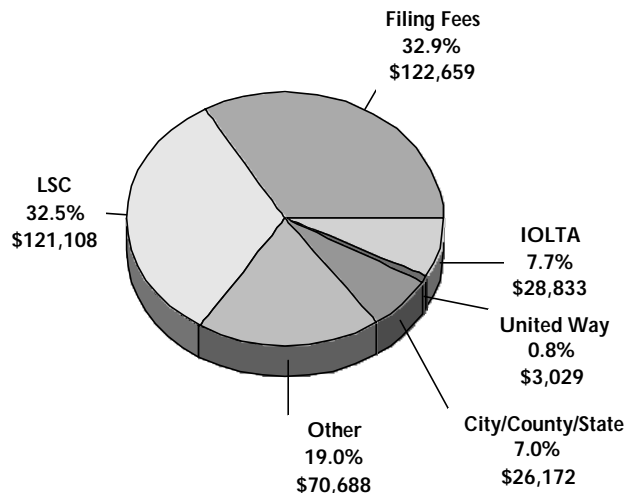
In 1999, MILS continued its emphasis on helping tribes gain federal recognition, because federal recognition gives tribes the tools they need to raise their members out of poverty. Federal recognition allows the tribes to exercise their rights of self-government, protect their members through the Indian Child Welfare Act, provide health and educational services to their members, and provide job training and economic opportunity.

Federal recognition helps tribes increase the percentage of tribal members with full employment, lessen dependence on welfare, increase tax revenues for the state, and increase economic activity. Also in 1999, MILS became part of the state Family Independence Agency Indian Child Welfare Act Implementation Team organized to obtain tribal input to comply with the law. MILS has provided training and assisted in redrafting and reviewing the current state policies concerning the act.

A 29-year-old Native American Michigan resident planned to continue his education at a state university. He could do so only part-time and with the assistance of the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver program, which was enacted to combat the problem of low college graduation rates for American Indians. When the university erroneously cancelled his financial aid, MILS talked with school officials about the statute, explaining that it does not require a specific number of credit hours and convinced the administration to change its policies to conform with the program.

MILS assisted a nonprofit Indian agency to gain status as a tax-exempt charity by drafting the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and other paperwork. The tax-exempt status made it possible for the group to obtain resources and expand its activities. It now assists the community by providing a meeting place for Native American organizations and cultural activities and events. It has been able to publish a newsletter, host elders luncheons, fund local pow wows, sponsor participation in educational conferences, and provide job-related assistance.

MILS Sources of Funding for 1999: \$ 372,489



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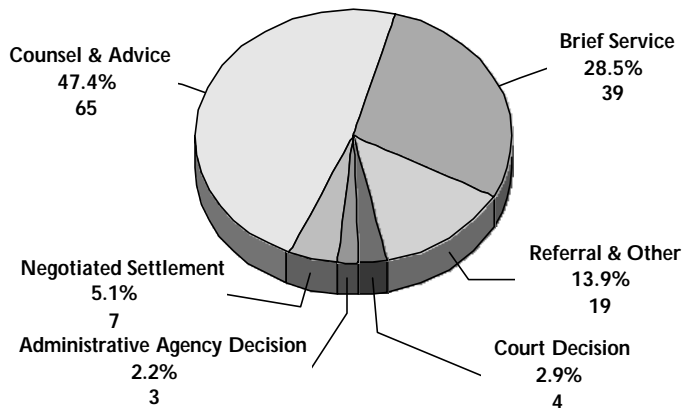
Community Outreach and Collaboration: MILS worked with two tribes that are seeking federal recognition. One tribe has a petition pending review, and MILS assisted with matters such as nonprofit corporation issues while awaiting the decision. For the second tribe, MILS continued to help prepare the petition for federal recognition by gathering and organizing historical information, completing additional interviews, and working with federal officials to clearly define the process. MILS continued to provide legal advice to the tribe at its monthly tribal council meetings and annual membership meeting. Also in 1999, MILS's work toward 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.

18 & Under	1
19-59	116
60 & Over	6
Groups	14
Total	137

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.

White	2
Black	0
Hispanic	0
Native American	121
Asian	0
Other	14
Total	137

MILS Types of Service in 1999



MILS Cases Closed in 1999: 137

