

Anishinabe Legal Services



Strategic Plan 2019

Background and Process

Just two years after its 50th Anniversary in 2017, ALS engaged in Strategic Planning in early 2019 to develop strategies to advance its mission, vision, and core values for the near future. This document includes revised mission, vision, and values statements, as well as four core priorities with related strategies and action steps. With the understanding that change occurs rapidly in today's world, ALS also developed a strategy screen to guide its work when new opportunities and challenges emerge. This strategy screen is based on the work of David LaPiana in "Real Time Strategic Planning." Nearly 100% of ALS's board and staff members were involved during the different facets of the strategic planning process. All board and staff had the opportunity to complete a comprehensive survey addressing their vision, priorities, and concerns for ALS and to participate in four facilitated meetings with board and staff members to develop the 2019 Strategic Plan. ALS engaged Rebecca Schueller Training & Consulting, LLC, Bemidji, Minn., as its strategic planning facilitator.

ALS practiced "real time strategic planning" during their planning process by negotiating a revised scope of work to focus on the importance of a new legal home for ALS's clients and staff. Board and staff members met with the facilitator in four separate meetings to develop a realistic budget and plan to make the new building a viable initiative for ALS. Board development training, which was initially included in the scope of work, was intentionally moved back to June 2019 to enable attention and focus on the new building campaign during a critical window of opportunity in March and April 2019.

The ALS Story: The Journey from Civil Legal Services to the U.S. Supreme Court

Established in 1967, ALS celebrated its 50th Anniversary as the first independent Indian Civil Legal Services organization in the United States in 2017. Today, ALS remains the only civil legal services provider with local offices on-site at Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth and which directly serves residents of the three north central and northwest Minnesota Indian Reservations. Although the service area overlaps with other civil legal aid offices in northern Minnesota, it is rare to find attorneys who practice and provide services within the local tribal courts, and even fewer with expertise concerning Indian law issues. In addition to providing civil legal services, ALS also contributes to the development of tribal courts.

Annually, the agency's ■■■ staff attorneys and ■■■ paralegals serve 600 individuals and families living on and near the three largest northern Minnesota reservations: Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth. In this high poverty region, staff attorneys and paralegals assist low-income and indigent clients of all races with essential civil legal services that help them secure income and disability benefits, support tenant rights to housing, protect personal safety for victims of domestic violence and other crime, and protect elders' rights, advocate for consumers, and more.

Major court decisions affecting Indian Country began in this grassroots office, notably the landmark *United States Supreme Court case: Bryan v. Itasca County*. ALS attorneys helped secure a U.S. Supreme Court decision affirming that states could not tax tribal members on the Reservation without clear congressional consent. The Court further clarified that Public Law 280 does not grant states *any* civil regulatory control over Reservation activities. This decision is widely credited with empowering Tribes to initiate economic development initiatives, with helping to expand tribal judicial codes and jurisdiction, and with paving the way for modern Indian gaming.

The next sections of this plan include:

- ▶ ALS Strategy Screen
- ▶ Updated Mission, Vision, and Values Statements
- ▶ Strategic Priorities
- ▶ Related Strategies and Action Steps for Each Priority
- ▶ Appendices: Participants, Achievements, and Mission, Vision, and Values Clarification

Strategy Level Decision-Making Screen

Approved March 9, 2019

ALS recognizes that significant changes occur rapidly in today's world. It is essential to have a strategy screen to address the organization's Role when new and emerging opportunities, issues, and challenges arise. Using the framework in "The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution" by David LaPiana, ALS developed the following screen to answer the fundamental question: **Is this the right strategy or direction for our organization at this time?**

1. Is it a fit with ALS's mission and values?
2. Does it advance ALS's vision and strategic priorities?
3. Does it meet critical needs for our clients or advance Indian Law or Treaty Rights?
4. Is it in alignment with ALS's role(s) and expertise?
5. Does it address a community needs gap?
6. Is there or can there be another organization/~~entity~~ that does, or is willing to do this more effectively for our ALS's clients?

Anishinabe Legal Services 2019 Strategic Plan

MISSION: Why do we exist & who do we serve? What is our service area? What issues can ALS impact?

The ALS mission is to ensure equal access to high quality legal assistance for historically under-served people living on or near the Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth Tribal Lands and to protect legal rights and Tribal Sovereignty.

VISION: What future are we working to create? What is the change that ALS seeks to make in the world?

ALS envisions communities where all people have **access to high quality, professional civil legal services that are culturally-sensitive and informed**. These services will be available to all people regardless of age, race, gender, familial status, veteran status, disability, sexual orientation, or tribal membership.

ALS **embraces collaboration** so that the **civil** legal needs of low-income, indigent, and vulnerable individuals will always be met by either ALS or its partners.

ALS promotes strong and vibrant tribal courts where individuals receive high quality, culturally-sensitive and informed legal services.

ALS envisions Northern Minnesota communities where legal rights and Tribal Sovereignty will be upheld, protected, and widely recognized.

VALUES: What Beliefs Guide Our Work?

ALS strives to protect low-income and vulnerable individuals by safeguarding their rights to quality housing, personal and family safety, and income security.

ALS supports family safety and preservation.

ALS promotes tribal sovereignty.

ALS practices and promotes safety, well-being, dignity, and respect for clients and staff.

ALS fosters broad community understanding of Indian Law, Treaty Rights, and Anishinabe **Values and** Teachings.

Anishinabe Legal Services - 2019 Strategic Plan

PRIORITIES (approved March 9, 2019)

1ST Priority: Develop a new legal home for ALS clients and staff through a New Building that Provides Adequate, Comfortable, and Professional Space and is Cost-Effective to Operate

Strategy #1 – Create and “vet” a realistic building budget, inclusive of land, building costs, annual operating costs, escrow for new roof/etc.

Strategy #2 – Create a Compelling Case/Need Statement

Strategy #3 – Build Compelling Shakopee “Ask” (tribal council resolutions)

Strategy #4 – Research & Develop a List of Other Funders which have the willingness & capacity to support this project – capital funders, Greater MN funders, Native Nation Builder Funders

2nd Priority: Increase Attorney Retention and Longevity

Strategy #1 – Analyze workload and begin to limit caseload size to reduce stress and transition challenges

Strategy #2 – Promote board/staff teamwork through more frequent board/staff discussion and team environments

Strategy #3 – Increase private fundraising from individuals and businesses.

3rd Priority: Create a Special Housing Litigation Unit

Strategy #1 - Strategically hand-pick “Impact” housing cases that can change practices of housing authorities on specific practices/issues/policies in the future. Staff noted that this is the biggest unmet daily need they receive calls about.

Strategy #2 – Participate with other housing advocates and providers to promote understanding of landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities, Fair Housing Law, and promote mutually negotiated housing exits as needed.

Strategy #3 – Prioritize caseloads to enable adequate time and attention to attorney work to protect housing rights.

4th Priority: Secure funding from Larger Tribes with Significant Casino Revenue

Strategy #1 – Seek Tribal Council Resolutions from Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth to support a request to Shakopee Mdewakaton Sioux Community and Prairie Island for New Building Support and Capacity Expansion to Staff Red Lake and White Earth Satellite Offices

Strategy #2 – Develop a compelling new building case to initiate the request process to Shakopee and Prairie Island

Anishinabe Legal Services

2019 Strategic Planning Priorities

1ST Priority: Develop a new legal home for ALS clients and staff through a New Building that Provides Adequate, Comfortable, and Professional Space and is Cost-Effective to Operate

Timeline: Be in the New Building by June 30, 2020.

Important Considerations:

1. The new building is an urgent need due to the safety concerns and crumbling infrastructure that could potentially require significant financial investment if a major plumbing or structural emergency occurs. The new building needs to happen before significant time and energy is put into other strategic priorities.
2. Critical Window of time – March 1-April 30. Make initial funder inquiries now. June 30, 2020 is an ambitious timeframe...need to make headway soon.
3. Discuss with staff and board the importance to saying “no” to other opportunities that arise in the March 1-June 30 window...to make headway on the building, ALS needs the determination to say “no” to other initiatives that will take staff time and energy.

Strategy #1 – Create and “vet” a realistic building budget, inclusive of land, building costs, annual operating costs, escrow for new roof/etc.

#	Action Steps:	Timeline:
1.	Update manufactured unit estimate in 3/9 budget.	ASAP – Chari.
2.	Sell existing building. Potential to gross \$30K, minus \$5K seller’s fees for \$25K net. Contract with realtor.	List ASAP. Negotiate close no later than April 30, 2020 to minimize temporary relocation needs.
3.	ALS will get at least two written bids for the manufactured unit.	4/30/19.
4.	Budget for staff capacity to work remotely – need locking filing cabinets, laptop, pay for unlimited data plans, arrange remote access to server. Set up office for Steve in LL Facility Center.	Ask LL ASAP re: space for Steve for April 1-June 30, 2020. Apr. 30 – Chari talk to ea. staff re: remote office needs.
5.	Arrange remote access to server files.	Chari – talk to Paul Bunyan by 6/30/19.
6.	Office furnishings – need for locking filing cabinets, budget desks/chairs + office needs for ea. staff at \$1K/staff, + conference room table/chairs/printer stands, admin./workroom needs, and reception/lobby area furniture.	Purchase by May 30, 2020 for move-in by 6/30/2020.

Strategy #2 – Create a Compelling Case/Need Statement

#	Action Steps:	Timeline:
1.	<p>Building is a Need, not a want. Crumbling infrastructure, tree roots growing into pipes and foundation. Flooring uneven and dangerous.</p> <p>a. Building not currently handicap accessible and not safe for clients, staff, or visitors.</p> <p>b. ALS currently spends \$1,500/mo. on occupancy, including utilities. Roughly half is building repairs/maintenance. + larger plumbing and repair costs as emergencies arise</p> <p>c. Request a free energy audit from power company and include results as part of case statement.</p> <p>d. Need conference room space that can allow seating for all staff members for weekly case meetings and for larger joint board/staff meetings.</p>	Feb. 22 initial discussion; refine and follow up
2.	Construction professional assessed building and said don't put more money into existing structure. It will continue to drain resources over time. Verbal only, not in writing. Have Hunter (Red Lake Construction Manager) re-assess building and put recommendations in writing.	By 4/30.

Strategy #3 – Build Compelling Shakopee “Ask” (tribal council resolutions)

#	Action Steps:	Timeline:
1.	Talk to Joe Dean at Shakopee and staff	By 4/30/19
2.	Get Tribal Council resolutions from RL, LL, WE	4/30/19
3.	Cody talk to Planning, Grantwriting, Econ. Devel. Depts. re: best sources & how to get RBC support for capital contributions and the Tribal Council Resolutions for Shakopee.	4/30/19
4.	Use Paul Day and Joe Plummer to help figure out Shakopee “ask.” See if either has relationships with Shakopee RBC members. Ask them to help with LL, RL, and WE Tribal Council resolutions.	4/30/19
5.	Analyze Past Grants, esp. building grants, what is the range? What is the average? Make the “right” ask.	4/30/19

Strategy #4 – Research & Develop a List of Other Funders which have the willingness & capacity to support this project – capital funders, Greater MN funders, Native Nation Builder Funders

#	Action Steps:	Timeline:
1.	ALS Board will solicit law firms for building support – Twin Cities, Fargo, Duluth. Valerie will take the lead and may ask other board members to co-sign or make calls for firms where they have the best connection.	By May 30, 2019
2.	<p><u>For each funder, determine:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are their current priorities (must check website/and/or call _____) b. Who else have they funded/are these groups similar to ALS (i.e. population, types of services, etc?) c. Analyze Past Grants, esp. building grants, what is the range? What is the average? d. What are their funding deadlines? 	4/30/19
3.	Set priorities – who do we approach first and why? Plan must be in place. Additional supporters named on March 9: Enbridge (work with Leech Lake and Fond du Lac) on a request), Ottertail Power, Minnesota Power, Dynamic Homes, Ho-Chunk Nation, Inc., more distant tribes (based on the landmark Bryan v. Itasca work), Marvin Windows, Digi-Key, Wells Technology (Joe Plumer will ask), Famous Dave’s. Ask John Herrera for \$5,000-\$10,000.	March 30, 2019
4.	Bush Foundation – Native Nation-building focus. Could approach for capital+operations or project funding.	
5.	Blandin – ALS was invited to submit for strategic planning. Ask Blandin when ALS can re-apply for capital or other strategic planning priorities. Ask what Blandin would be most interested in funding.	4/30/19

Anishinabe Legal Services
2019 Strategic Planning Priorities

2nd Priority: Increase Attorney & Administrative Staff Retention and Longevity

Strategy #1 – Analyze workload and begin to limit caseload size to reduce stress and transition challenges

#	Action Steps	Timeline
1.	Increase support staff to handle paperwork, time cards, time reporting and procedural items attorneys don't need to handle. Check out interns and tribal employment programs for help. Train reception staff to ask attorneys what they need help with when there is reception down time.	2019
2.	Decide what cases ALS will say "no" to	List made by June 30, 2019
3.	Support Institutional knowledge by creating templates and how tos for forms, letters, etc. Put them in PICA. Could be a summer clerk project – tribal court or Tribal college. Attorneys S-drive list.	By Aug. 31, 2019
4.	Make a list of projects for MJF clerks.	By May 15, 2019
5.	Title IV-E – get out of long-term cases. Creative workarounds for no-shows	???
6.	Add support staff to help with contract cases that can't be turned down	2019
7.	Talk to court administrators and judges re: redistributing caseloads. ALS has a flat rate; other contracted lawyers are paid hourly.	By Sept. 30, 2019

Strategy #2 – Promote staff teamwork through more frequent staff discussion and team environments. *This was initially presented as Board/Staff teamwork. After discussion on Feb. 22, it was clear that most of this feedback was about staff teamwork.*

#	Action Steps	Timeline
1.	Restructure weekly staff meetings – focus on what is most important that week; who has time to help others; how do we move very old cases towards resolution. Rita will help with reminders emails on Friday to ask people for a specific list of what they need help with. This will be added to staff mtg. agendas.	Immediately;
2.	Attorney case list monthly – Cody compiles (staff will help submit info. to Cody) – share with the board to increase understanding of staff workload. Include a case list in board reports.	Starting in March 2019 and then monthly.
3.	Resurrect Beer Fridays!	Immediately!

Strategy #3 – Increase private fundraising from individuals and businesses to provide better salaries and health insurance.

#	Action Steps	Timeline
1.	Rebrand ALS in conjunction with new building campaign and grand opening. Add funds for this to new building budget – consider Region 2 Arts Council.	April 30, 2019 for bgt. Dec. 31, 2019 for rebranding work.
2.	Send staff to Minn. Amer. Indian Bar Assoc. meetings – to attend, network with other lawyers, and to present on Indian Law and Treat Law cases to raise ALS’s profile.	Start budgeting for this.
3.	Refocus newsletter and website on strategic planning vision. Develop financial “asks” for specific components of ALS’s work. Chari needs help with website content and updates.	Immediately.
4.	Specific options to consider for funding: Sanford (Medical-legal partnerships), Wal-Mart (\$30K State Foundation grants), Lueken’s, Insurance Companies, Universities (space and donated catering)	???

3rd Priority: Create a Special Housing Litigation Unit

Strategy #1 – Strategically hand-pick “Impact” housing cases that can change practices of housing authorities on specific practices/issues/policies in the future. Staff noted that this is the biggest unmet daily need they receive calls about.

#	Action Steps	Timeline
1.	Target these cases to make systemic change, focusing on: Due process, habitability, allowing tenants to stay in housing even if children are removed from the home; nepotism in housing programs. Ellen and Steve.	Immediately
2.	Focus on local tribal housing authority policies and due process rights, as well as practices regarding recertification	TBD
3.	Address NAHASDA requirements in tribal courts (no federal court jurisdiction for this).	TBD

Strategy #2 – Participate with other housing advocates and providers to promote understanding of landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities, Fair Housing Law, and promote mutually negotiated housing exits as needed. *Note: Strategies 1, 2 & 3 re-ordered after Feb. 22 staff planning follow-up.*

#	Action Steps	Timeline
1.	Outreach to LL Homeless Resource Center (Tammy Shoots), White Earth Homeless Program (Mary Riegert, Matt Folstrom); Red Lake Homeless Shelter (Jordan May).	
2.	Develop marketing flyer that tribal housing programs can share with clients: ALS can help represent you in evictions, recertifications for housing, etc. Cody – call Harry (LL) and other tribal housing directors to ask that they put this information on the Housing Authority websites.	Sept. 30, 2019
3.	Provide Housing Rights Education to Tenants and Housing Authority staff. Ask tribal housing authorities to invite ALS to a dinner they host and provide tenant attendance incentives for	

Strategy #3 – Prioritize caseloads to enable adequate time and attention to attorney work to protect public and tribal housing rights.

#	Action Steps	Timeline
1.	Internally dedicate time for this – use strategies under Priority 2/Strategy 1.	Begin ASAP
2.	Systems Level – Indian Country Housing Work and Development. Send staff to Minnesota American Indian Housing Conference.	Start with 2 staff in 2019. Build from there.
3.	Increase support staff for attorneys to allow them to handle more housing cases. (see Priority 1). Use tribal employment programs.	2019
4.	Explore NAHASDA and Low Income Tax Credit Housing (example noted of Travois in Kansas City) – how can ALS attorneys help tribes with these funding sources? Taylor.	2019

4th Priority: Secure funding from Larger Tribes with Significant Casino Revenue

Strategy #1 – Seek Tribal Council Resolutions from Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth to support a request to Shakopee Mdewakaton Sioux Community and Prairie Island for New Building Support and Capacity Expansion to Staff Red Lake and White Earth Satellite Offices

The new building request is addressed under the new building priority action steps.

***Hold off on capacity expansion request until 2020 – after the building funding request is met. New – develop a 2020 funding request for the Capacity Expansion to staff the Red Lake and White Earth Satellite Offices.

Strategy #2 – Develop a compelling new building case to initiate the request process to Shakopee and Prairie Island. Cody and Chari will handle this – it’s under New Building Action Steps above.

Appendix A: Strategic Planning Participants

Board

*³Joe Plummer, *Chair*
Beltrami County Bar Assoc.
Representative

*³Theresa Flocken, *Leech Lake IEC*
Representative

*²Dave Frank, *Beltrami County*
Attorney's Office, Beltrami County Bar
Association Representative

*³Angel Daher, *Mille Lacs Band of*
Ojibwe, Minnesota American Indian
Bar Association Representative

*³Valerie Field, *Attorney at Law,*
Minnesota State Bar Association
Representative

*³Ron Cayko, *Fuller, Wallner, Cayko, &*
Pederson, Cass Lake Bar Association
Representative

Board Continued

*²Tim Rindahl, *White Earth Elders*
Council Representative

Staff

*⁵Cody Nelson, *Executive Director*

*⁴Taylor Burdick, *Staff Attorney*

*³Steve Campbell, *Staff Attorney*

*³Rita Holler, *Paralegal (SOAR & SSI)*

*⁵Chari LaDuke-Clark, *Administrative*
Director

*²Christina LaDuke, *Administrative*
Assistant

*²Jerome Song, *Staff Attorney*

*³Ellen Weinberg, *Staff Attorney (ALS*
White Earth Office)

*⁵Lynn Wessel, *Financial Administrator*

Notes on Board & Staff Participation:

*¹ Participated in pre-retreat Planning Surveys

*² Participated in pre-retreat Planning Surveys and one of the two Board/Staff retreats.

*³ Participated in pre-retreat Planning Surveys and both Board/Staff retreats.

*⁴ Participated in pre-retreat Planning Surveys, both board retreat/staff retreats, and at least one staff team facilitated discussion

*⁵ Participated in pre-retreat Planning Surveys, both Board/Staff retreats, and both staff team facilitated discussions.

Board-Question 5: The ALS accomplishments I am proudest of are:

#1 Responses:

helping people

Staff's concern about their client's and committment to providing quality legal services to the population they serve.

Overseeing the representation of clients in the tribal community

Numbers of people they help - made it to 50 years

Bryan v. Itasca County

sovergeinty issue work

2nd Responses:

Finding resources

The strong work ethic of the staff as evidenced by the number of clients and cases served each year.

Helping to develop the tribal court system

good at getting grants

Staff who truly care

outreach to peopkle lacking transportation, reliable communication, or other means to seek legal advice

3rd Responses:

Ability to access funding and resources necessary to finance the operation.

Helping to ensure that ALS is a vibrant organization

web site - on line tribal court forms

Representation in Tribal Courts

maintaining Red Lake and White Earth presence/staffing

Q4 Staff-The ALS accomplishments I am proudest of are:

Answered: 6 Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
#1	100.00%	6
#2	100.00%	6
#3	100.00%	6

First Responses:

I am too new to have accomplished anything.

Helping ALS to maintain uninterrupted client services during periods of staffing transitions/turnover

SOAR SSA project

protecting the rights of tribal members

Second Responses:

I have read the Gellings decision on housing rights and am very impressed with it. It is something for ALS to be proud of.

Helping to raise funds to increase or maintain client services (creating new advocate positions or keeping existing levels of advocate positions with ALS intact)

Helping the homeless receive SSA benefits

developing and maintaining community relationships

Housing Court advocacy Leech Lake

Protecting victims of DV by getting orders for protection or assisting in family law cases which help to protect parents rights from the abuser!

Third Responses:

Special projects (i.e. TIG, Bamenim Collaboration, Blandin)

bringing help to those in the community

being a leader in the community

Chips work Leech Lake

Being available in the community, easy to talk to, open door policy (for most staff, but especially at the front desk). An ear to listen!

Appendix C: Mission/Vision/Values Clarification

Mission Clarification:

Clients are individuals, not tribes or tribal programs

Represent tribal members, those eligible for membership and descendants no matter where they live

Represent tribal members and non-tribal members in the Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth Tribal Courts and in State Court

Represent low-income & indigent people

Vision Clarification:

Community-wide impact litigation as resources permit – Jan. 25, 2019 statement. Following March 9, 2019 Retreat, ALS board and staff revisited their history in the landmark Bryan v. Itasca decision and realized there are issues (notably housing) on which they can make greater impact for individual clients by remembering their history and initiating strategic community-wide impact litigation.

Values Clarification:

To provide services which uphold the Seven Anishinabe Values of respect, truth, wisdom, compassion, love, humility, and generosity. In second retreat, clarified that there are many more Anishinabe values and decided not to limit to the 7.

To work collaboratively with partner organizations and develop community relationships which support legal representation for low-income people and their related needs for housing, safety, and economic security.

Provide legal protections for vulnerable people, including those who are low-income, children, seniors, those fleeing domestic violence/stalking/sexual exploitation or trafficking

Safe, affordable housing is the foundation for healthy families and self-sufficiency.

To provide a supportive, fair working environment for staff so that we practice our values to encourage staff to treat all program participants with high dignity and respect

To provide high quality, consistent legal representation over time.

To provide legal assistance that meet program participants needs for housing, family law, Orders of Protection, Wills and Estates.

Dedication

This plan is dedicated to the region's people living on and near the Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth tribal lands and to the developing tribal courts in the region.

Funding Partnership

Thank you and Mii-gwech to the Blandin Foundation for the financial support which made this process possible, and for the Blandin Foundation's ongoing commitment to the area's Native Communities.



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