

**'NAMGIS FIRST NATION  
ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT  
CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Seeking evaluative feedback on the services it provides to 'Namgis First Nation Band members, staff, and others, the Band's Accounting Department arranged to have a client satisfaction survey conducted. The department deals with a wide range of people for a variety of tasks. Included are staff members who have personnel, payroll, budgetary, and other transactions; homeowners and renters who make payments to the Band; post-secondary students who receive a living allowance while attending school; Nimpkish Fisheries skippers whose accounts are managed by Accounting; and members of Band Council, boards, and committees who regularly need financial information in the governance process.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### **Questionnaire development**

The questionnaire, which ended up being four pages long, was developed by the Comptroller and the consultant, utilizing ideas and specific questions suggested by the Accounting Department staff. Since there were a number of questions which needed to be asked of everyone as well as questions unique to each of the five categories mentioned above, the questionnaire was constructed with an opening, general section of about 1½ pages (including introductory paragraph) for all to complete. Following that were five specialized subsections, each ¼ to ½ page in length. Each section had a prominent heading asking members of one particular category to answer the questions there and asking others to skip to the next section. Two different forms of the questionnaire were actually prepared, differing only in the instructions for returning them.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on a half-dozen staff people (staff and non-staff) and several small changes made before being printed up. To ease handling and stand out, it was printed on 11" x 17" paper in booklet form on salmon-coloured paper.

### **Sampling**

The department generated lists of people falling into the categories listed above. Other Band staff kindly helped to create a Band membership list and mailing labels that eliminated most duplications. It was decided to send a questionnaire to the entire list of people in each category, so, in effect, there was no "sampling," but an attempt at total coverage. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed, approximately 110 to staff and 340 to others. Due to the use of several distinct mailing lists, a handful of people may have received more than one questionnaire.

### **Questionnaire distribution & return**

During the week of January 14, questionnaires were mailed out from the Band office. Each envelop contained a cover letter from Chief Bill Cranmer, urging cooperation with the survey. Staff members were sent the questionnaire via inter-office mail with a request to return it the same way. Others received a stamped envelop addressed to the Band and were asked to return the questionnaire that way or to drop it off at the Band office. The opening statement asked that

questionnaires be returned no later than January 25. E-mail reminders were sent to all staff about two weeks after the distribution. Questionnaires were accepted until data analysis started.

### **Data analysis & presentation**

Data which were quantifiable were analysed with the help of WINKS, a survey analysis software program. Written-in data were recorded and grouped to form themes. In this report, the results are reported in the same sequence as the questions appeared. Written-in comments are shown in *italics*, separated from one another with a • and are verbatim, with the exception of a few words added here and there to make the material more understandable. Percentages are generally presented, and raw numbers where they can make the results more meaningful. Readers should keep in mind that with a small total number, a change in response by just a few people can alter the percentages dramatically.

## **III. WHO RESPONDED**

A total of 77 persons (a 17% response rate) responded to the survey, 38 of them (49.4%) on the Band staff and 39 not on the staff (50.6%). The response rate for staff was significantly higher than for non-staff - roughly 35% vs. 11%.

Respondents were asked to answer the questions in as many of the five sub-sections of the questionnaire as applied to them. That produced the numbers in Table 1, telling more about who completed the questionnaires. Most respondents fit into two or more categories, thus producing a total (101) greater than the 77 persons who actually responded..

<b>Kinds of respondents</b>	<b>No.</b>
Band staff members	38
Homeowners & renters	34
Post-secondary students	20
Council, Board, committee members	5
Nimpkish Fisheries skippers	4

**Table 1. Profile of respondents**

## **IV. GENERAL EXPERIENCES WITH ACCOUNTING**

The first section of the questionnaire, to repeat, dealt with general experiences with the Accounting Department and was intended for all respondents.

Most respondents (57.4%) deal with the department about once a week (between one and five times per month) over the last year. Another group (13.7%) deal with the department six to ten times a month, and 11% even more frequently. A final group of 17.8% say they never deal with the department. As might be expected, staff deal with Accounting more frequently: 40.5% more than six times a month, contrasted with 8.3% for non-staff.

Respondents deal with the department for many different reasons. The questionnaire had a list of a dozen reasons; respondents could check off as many reasons as applied to them. Leading the list was payroll (44.2%), not surprising considering almost half the respondents were staff members. Other reasons could be written in, and were, by eleven persons; however, most of those responses could have easily fit into the listed categories. On average, staff members checked 4.0 reasons, non-staff 1.8 - a statistically significant difference.

Reasons	No.	%
Payroll	34	44.2%
Housing payments	25	32.5
Travel advances	23	29.9
Accounts payable	21	27.3
Post secondary student payments	21	27.3
Tobacco purchases	20	26
Garbage & utility payments	20	26
Program budgeting	15	19.5
Pension or Ext. Health Benefits	15	19.5
Nimpkish Fisheries	10	13
Board or committee business	5	6.5
Social Assistance	3	4
Other reasons (written in)	11	14.3

**Table 2. Reasons for dealing with Accounting**

The third question asked for overall satisfaction with the department on six criteria. On each criterion, respondents could circle a number from 1 (least satisfactory) to 5 (most satisfactory). As shown in Table 3 below, the department garnered the largest number of responses in ratings 3,4, and 5, and earned only a few 1's and 2's overall. The overall average rating was 3.7. A couple respondents added notes about staff treating you poorly if they're mad at you, and that some named staff provide good service while others don't.

On every one of the six measures, staff, on average, rated the department higher than did non-staff. Those differences, however, were statistically significant only on "Really know their stuff," "Able to explain things clearly," and "Thorough."

Rating criteria	1 (Least satisfactory)	2	3	4	5 (Most satisfactory)	Mean
Really know their business	1 1.5%	6 8.8%	21 30.9%	23 33.8%	17 25%	3.72
Accurate	0 0%	6 8.8%	19 27.9%	28 41.2%	15 22.1%	3.76
Respond quickly	4 6%	10 14.9%	20 29.9%	18 26.9%	15 22.4%	3.45
Courteous	4 5.7%	10 14.3%	13 18.6%	19 27.1%	24 34.3%	3.79
Able to explain things clearly	0 0%	7 10.6%	17 25.8%	21 31.2%	21 31.8%	3.85
Thorough	1 1.5%	9 13.9%	14 21.5%	23 35.4%	18 27.7%	3.46
<b>OVERALL TOTALS</b>	<b>10 2.5%</b>	<b>48 11.9%</b>	<b>104 25.7%</b>	<b>132 32.7%</b>	<b>110 27.2%</b>	<b>3.70</b>

**Table 3. Ratings given Accounting Dept. On Six Criteria**

How quickly the department responded on the most recent encounter respondents had with it was the focus of the next question. Half (50.7%) of those answering said the departmental response came immediately (the same day), while 17.3% said it was the next business day. About one-fourth (24%) said the response came within a week, 5.3% said it took longer than a week, and one person said the task was never completed. Staff experienced significantly shorter response times than did non-staff with 82% getting a response no later than the next business day vs. 56% of non-staff who received a response that quickly.

Understanding that for some people, finances can be intimidating, it was decided to ask how comfortable respondents are in asking for help on accounting matters. The largest number (58.3%) said it was easy to do, while 19.4% said it was awkward or embarrassing and 22.2% were unsure. Asking for help was much easier for staff: 75% of them said it was easy while only 41.7% of non-staff described it that way. A few people qualified their response by adding that it depended on what the matter was and what staff member they were addressing.

One of the experiences about half the people in our sample regularly have with Accounting is receiving garbage and utility statements. We asked how clear or understandable those were. As Table 4 shows, 2/3 felt the statements were very or generally clear and understandable, while 20.5% felt they weren't.

How clear/understandable	No.	Per cent
Very clear/understandable	9	23.1%
Generally clear/understandable	17	43.6%
Unsure	3	7.7
Not very clear/understandable	5	12.8
Not clear/understandable at all	3	7.7

**Table 4. Clarity/understandability of garbage & utility statements**

Respondents expressed widespread satisfaction with the options the department offers them for paying their garbage and utility bills. About one in five (20.6%) was very satisfied, 67.6% satisfied, 5.9% dissatisfied, no one very dissatisfied, and 5.9% unsure.

About one in five (18.2%) reported that they've had a dispute with the Accounting Department at some point, while three quarters (75.3%) have not, and a few (6.5%) are unsure. Staff and non-staff did not differ on this issue. Of those who took the opportunity to elaborate on their response, seven of nine described a negative experience:

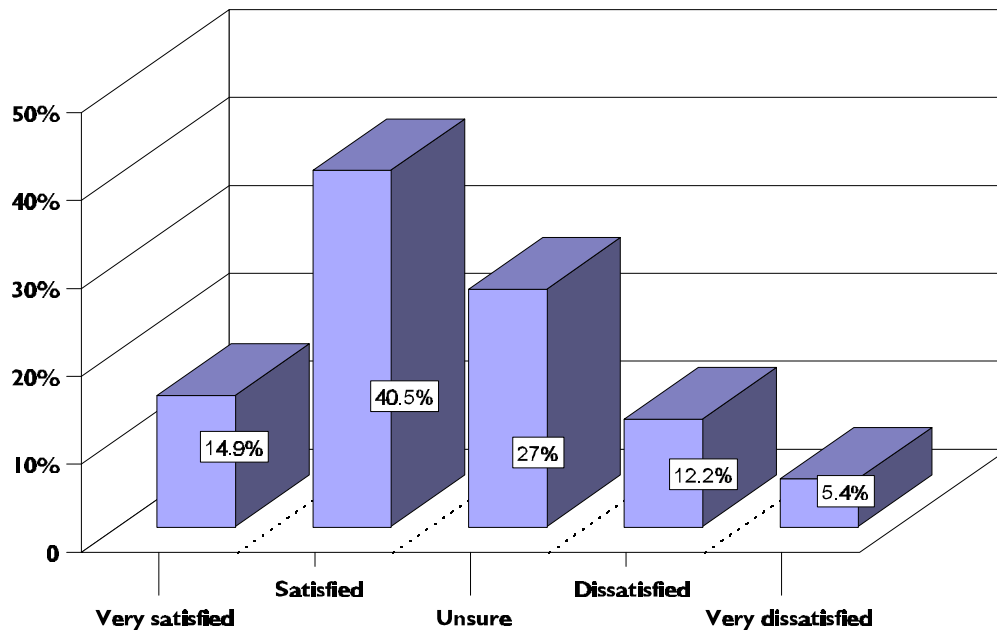
***Negative experiences***

- *Being a new resident in my grandma's house, there was no contact about payments or nothing, or what is owed or outstanding - no contact or direction*
- *In regard to house payments, I was completely confused after she explained it to me*
- *Not [handled] very well and the outcome wasn't in my favour.*
- *No, Still wondering about outcome.*
- *\$675 a month is very difficult to live on being a full-time student.*
- *Ignored*
- *Paper work lost for 1 year. I had to find alternative sources for post-secondary funding(student loans) during this time. Nothing was done except continued funding after this time.*

***Positive experience***

- *We had a minor conflict regrading holidays & sick time, which was resolved in a courteous and professional manner.*
- *[Outcome was] OK*
- *Yes, I've expressed my concerns*

Turning from personal experiences to group or political ones, the questionnaire next asked how satisfied respondents are with how 'Namqis finances are handled, given all the "high profile stories regarding First Nation finances in the news." Those satisfied outnumber those not satisfied by a wide margin, as shown below. While 87.9% of staff members were very satisfied or satisfied, that figure drops significantly to 67.1% for non-staff respondents.



**Figure 1. Satisfaction with handling of Band finances**

Concerns with the handling of Band finances generally fall into three categories: questions about fiscal priorities, claims of special privileges, and lack of information. Many issues go way beyond the purview of the Accounting Department. Specific comments are listed below:

***Fiscal priorities***

- *Unacceptable priorities set by Band Council, e.g., administration building instead of Rec Centre being fully equipped and furnished at opening.*
- *Stability of the Recreation Centre and who is running it.*
- *That they don't have enough money to help out students that are trying to make something of themselves.*
- *Why isn't there any money? • \$675 a month is very difficult to live on being a full-time student.*
- *Recreation Centre management - lack of securing funding by manager, ie., Rec. Director*

***Special privileges***

- *We are all equal, all should stay in same places, not just councillors staying in fancy hotels while people visiting doctors stay in dumps. If 3 councillors go to some meeting, they only need one vehicle, one room.*
- *Reasons for exorbitant tax-free salaries. No one is living within their means. I live off \$16.00/hour, 5 kids, car, insurance and pay all bills & I still have money to spare and use wisely.*

***More information wanted***

- *We need more public knowledge of funds, what we are entitled to options and to be informed of \$ transactions.*
- *Because people are never updated or informed*
- *Don't know what is going on. No GM to discuss.*
- *Money management*

### **Other concerns**

- *Paying/hiring people from out of town*
- *I guess*

Asked how to increase members' knowledge of Band finances, respondents basically said, in a number of ways, "Give us more information:"

*• To be let in on what's available to us. That we know what funding is for. • More information available to band members. • An annual report available to off reserve members • I don't live in Alert Bay, so information should be distributed to off reserve members. • Update quarterly • More general meetings • Can be more informed in newsletters or personal mail • Don't live there - perhaps a newsletter on a website - for cheap, easy access. • Have the finance office send students letter to increase our knowledge. • More info about budget - not just the dept. you work under • What rights community members have in say of finances construed as inappropriate or could be better spent (told to community - explained clearly) • Too much confidentiality. Is everyone embarrassed to let the members know what they are making, they should be embarrassed. Too much bureaucracy, just like DIA. • 2 meetings a year • Provide more information about the Accounting/Finances in the newsletters!*

There were a few who commented on their satisfaction with the handling of Band finances:

*• I'm not concerned; if/when I become concerned then I will ask about it. I believe things are being run properly, (except students need a bit more for monthly living allowances) • Loved the presentation on finances by Comptroller. Easy to understand, gained more knowledge. • I just started to receive newsletters. Soon I will form an opinion.*

The final question in the general section of the questionnaire inquired how respondents thought the lengthy audited financial statements should be made available to the membership. Offered two choices, 36.8% of respondents felt statements should be available for pickup at the Accounting office, while 33.8% opted for having them mailed automatically to all Band members. Another 29.4% offered a wide range of other suggestions, with the single largest number proposing use of the internet.

### **Use Internet**

*• In summary on web site • on-line? • Electronic form? • 'Namgis web site • on-line • Via e-mail • E-mail document as .txt file • E-mail to out of town members • Order via e-mail • Post them on your web page. DOES NAMGIS FIRST NATION EVEN HAVE A WEBSITE?*

### **Let members know they can pick it up**

*• Mail notice to all that they can pick up a Band office. • Newsletter to inform band members that it is available • [Be available...] upon request - save \$ & paper • Upon request • Send out letters and members can pick up at the office if they want.*

**Use meetings**

- Explained at general meeting and it should not be consolidated, [but] breakdown by dept. • AGM • Have meeting to explain • The discussion procedure is a good way. Many band members could not understand them.

**Hand deliver**

- Delivered to cut costs of mail • Or hand delivered by someone hired. Send out in small sections - less reading at once. • Inform members of statements - maybe shortened version

**Use surface mail**

- [be mailed...] on and off reserve • 1 pkg per home to save on \$. Sometimes one home receives 3 pkgs.

**Other thoughts**

- Synopsis of findings - brief explanations of general position, where major expenditures are, over budget
- Should be band members' responsibility to go to the acc'ing office and view for him/herself
- Both practices are "ongoing"

**V. BAND STAFF'S ISSUES**

The first of the specialized sections of the questionnaire was aimed at Band staff, who numbered 38 in this sample. Too few listed their department to warrant reporting. Staffers were first asked how well the Accounting Department understands the needs of their particular department. The largest number (61.5%) said "Sufficiently;" 28.2% said "Very well," and 10.3% were unsure. No one checked either "Not too well" or "Not at all."

A second question to Band staff asked about the information Accounting provides to them. Data in Table 5 show a very high level of satisfaction on all three criteria: getting the information needed, when it's needed, and in an understandable form. Not a single person checked "Rarely" or "Never" on the three questions.

Rating criteria	Always	Generally	Unsure	Rarely	Never
Gets me the information I need	15 45.5%	15 45.5%	3 9.1%	0 0%	0 0%
Gets me the information <u>when</u> I need it	12 40.0%	17 56.7%	1 3.3%	0 0%	0 0%
Gets me the information <u>in a form</u> I can deal with	10 34.5%	18 62.1%	1 3.4%	0 0%	0 0%

**Table 5. Staff views of information Accounting provides**

Two questions dealt with personnel matters - whether information provided to staff about their pension plan and about the Extended Health Benefits Plan was adequate. Table 6 shows that exactly 50% were satisfied with the information in both cases, but about one in five was not satisfied and three in ten were unsure.

Information about...	Always satisfied	Usually satisfied	Unsure	Rarely satisfied	Never satisfied
pension plan	4 10.5%	15 39.5%	12 31.6%	3 7.9%	4 10.5%
Extended Health Benefits plan	3 8.3%	15 41.7%	11 30.6%	3 8.3%	4 11.1%

**Table 6. Staff satisfaction with benefits information**

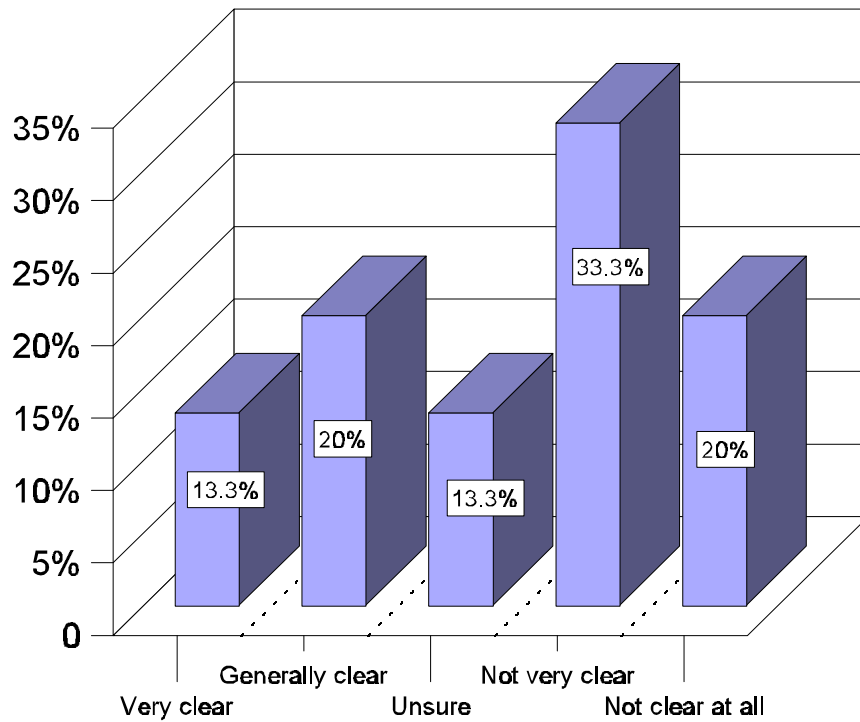
## VI. HOMEOWNERS' AND RENTERS' ISSUES

The second specialized section was intended for homeowners and renters, and 34 persons answered some or all the questions here. First off were three questions inquiring about Accounting's preservation of privacy, sensitivity to member's needs, and taking time to explain things. In Table 7, one can see that in each case, a majority of respondents rate the department positively, but about 20-26% disagree and 12-18% are unsure.

Rating criteria	Very well	Okay	Unsure	Not too well	Badly
Preserving your privacy	8 24.2%	14 42.4%	4 12.1%	3 9.1%	4 12.1%
Showing sensitivity to your particular needs	6 17.7%	14 41.2%	6 17.7%	4 11.8%	4 11.8%
Spending enough time to explain things clearly	5 14.7%	14 41.2%	6 17.7%	5 14.7%	4 11.8%

**Table 7. How owners and renters feel Accounting deals with them**

The housing loan statements sent to owners received more negative marks than positive ones, as shown below in Figure 2: Those thinking it not clear and understandable outnumbered those who thought it clear and understandable by 53% to 33%.



**Figure 2. Clarity/understandability of housing loan statements**

Respondents were closely divided on whether the amount of information on the housing or Major Repair Loan statements is about right (48.3%) or not enough (51.7%). No one felt there was too much information. The following comments were elicited:

***Problems with statements***

- *Every thing is missing. You send a statement no one but you understands. I don't even know who I'm insured under or by how much. To me I feel it's none of my business just bring your payment in is the way I feel on the matter.*
- *Example [little table showing am't paid, am't still owing]*
- *Start date balance*
- *Breakdown of expenses, why so high for repairs, need to hire a contractor, not hourly worker*
- *Not clear - confusing*

***Information re: loans***

- *We never know when we can apply for repair loans, or when we can apply for homes, when they will be built. Never really sure when housing meetings are. Is there different information for elders?*
- *I have been in my house for 13 yrs and I have only received 1 letter regarding MRP loans.*
- *Asked for loan/housing and received only one page. There's more to it.*
- *How often you can apply? Haven't seen any information.*

### ***Insufficient information on housing policies***

*• Housing committee is very vague in certain areas about things, having someone else speaking on behalf of the housing committee, passing the buck. • Received no answer • Info!! Policies, Criteria for Selection, etc...*

### ***Other issues***

- Send statement at least every three months so you know where you stand.*
- The conversation is there but "no" paperwork available to back it up.*

By a wide margin, respondents were satisfied with the variety of ways Accounting offers them to pay bills: One in nine (11.4%) was very satisfied, 68.6% were satisfied, another 11.4% were unsure, and 8.6% were dissatisfied. No one was very dissatisfied.

Offered an open-ended opportunity to add any other comment about dealing with Accounting as a homeowner, respondents wrote in the following:

### ***Can't understand info***

*• That accounting system. It has to go, It says nothing to me. • Get a new system that shows the payment made monthly, debit owing, and exclude all the other past years on slip. • Develop new forms showing what has been paid toward house pmts, and what is owing. • Make it CLEAR!! Don't understand current forms AT ALL!!*

### ***More personal or personable treatment***

*• Each individual should be contacted personally not just given papers. Communicate more effectively person-to-person, we have become a white society. • A friendlier staff and show respect to anyone who goes into the office no matter who they are!*

### ***Help with home maintenance***

*• (As elders) our yard - trees cut down - help for fences, etc. • Yes - yard needs help • Come check fire extinguisher and home for fire safety and handicap access and repairs for seniors.*

### ***Other comments***

*• No, outside of not everyone works in the band office and as a worker I have only a ½ hour for lunch and at 12:30 I'm back to work so I have no way of making a payment as I work until 5:00 pm and the office is locked until 1:00 pm.*

## **VII. POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS' ISSUES**

The third specialized section of the questionnaire was directed at post-secondary students receiving Band support through the Accounting Department. Such respondents numbered 20. They were queried about their satisfaction on seven dimensions. Table 8 contains those data, showing most satisfaction with the timing of payments, the approval process, the quality of the information, and the amount of information. Least satisfaction occurs with the level of financial support, the appeals process and level of knowledge about students' needs and situations. On two items there was a relatively high degree of uncertainty among respondents: level of knowledge about students' needs and situations and the appeals process.

Rating criteria	Always satisfied	Usually satisfied	Unsure	Rarely satisfied	Never satisfied
quality of information you receive from the post-secondary clerk	7 35%	6 30%	2 10%	5 25%	0 0%
amount of information you receive from the post-secondary clerk	6 30%	7 35%	1 5%	4 20%	2 10%
level of knowledge about students' needs and situations	5 25%	4 20%	6 30%	3 15%	2 10%
level of financial support you receive	4 20%	6 30%	1 5%	6 30%	3 15%
timing or speed of payments you receive	8 40%	7 35%	4 20%	1 5%	0 0%
approval process	8 40%	5 25%	1 5%	4 20%	2 10%
appeals process	6 37.5%	1 6.3%	5 31.3%	2 12.5%	2 12.5%

**Table 8. Student satisfaction with Accounting Department**

Students' suggestions for improvements centred around an insufficient allowance and better treatment:

***Allowance insufficient***

- 20 years ago students got \$675 and still today they are getting \$675, even though rent, food, etc. has gone up in price. How can a student live on that.
- While living in the city it costs a lot of money. The living allowance given to students is not nearly enough to support a student in the city.
- \$675 isn't enough to live on!

***Better treatment***

- While I am not a post-secondary student, it is clear that funding for such students is totally inadequate, and from students I have heard complaints about slowness of payments, lack of information.
- With the # of times I phoned with the change of address, nobody seemed to get and keep the information!

***Other suggestions***

- Consult with post sec. Students. Start a post sec cmte involving community.
- Overhaul

## VIII. NIMPKISH FISHERIES SKIPPERS' ISSUES

The next specialized set of questions were for Nimpkish Fisheries skippers; they numbered just four in this sample. They were asked about their satisfaction on a half-dozen issues. As Table 9 shows, the four were evenly split between those satisfied with things and those not satisfied.

Rating criteria	Always satisfied	Usually satisfied	Unsure	Rarely satisfied	Never satisfied
amount of information of settlement statements from Acc'ting	25%	25%	0%	0%	50%
layout and understandability of settlement statements	25%	25%	0%	0%	50%
turn-around time for advances	25%	25%	0%	0%	50%
turn-around time for settlements to be calculated and paid	0%	50%	0%	0%	50%
degree of confidentiality maintained	25%	25%	0%	0%	50%
overall level of service you receive	25%	25%	0%	0%	50%

**Table 9. Skipper satisfaction with Accounting Department**

## IX. COUNCIL, BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS' ISSUES

The final breakout section elicited views from Band Council, board, and committee members. There were five such respondents in the sample. Questions posed to them were about receiving the information they need, when they need it, and in a form they can use.

Rating criteria	Always	Generally	Unsure	Rarely	Never
Gets us the information we need	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Gets us the information <u>when</u> we need it	20%	40%	20%	20%	0%
Gets us the information <u>in</u> a form we can deal with	0%	60%	20%	20%	0%

**Table 10. Council, Board, Committee member satisfaction with Accounting Dept.**

## X. OTHER COMMENTS BY RESPONDENTS

Space was provided at the end of the questionnaire for any other comments respondents wanted to make. A number of people took advantage of the opportunity. Comments were of four kinds: compliments, criticisms of how people are treated by staff, concerns about Band fiscal priorities and practices, and scattered other thoughts. One person attached a copy of a 1989 letter and reiterated the concerns originally raised there.

### **Compliments**

*• I am quite satisfied with the Acc. Dept's function • I wish to thank all of you at the band office for your assistance in letting me reach my goals. Thank you. [Signed...]* • *For the most part I have been satisfied with the accounting department of the 'Namgis. I do however feel that the response to a call should be taken into a better direction. When calling an accounting clerk, it would be considerate of them to call you back, sometimes it is an emergency!!! Other than that I am satisfied.* • *I think the Accounting Dept. is very well organized, professional & effective.* • *The accounting department has been very efficient & helpful to me and I praise the job they've done within the limitations of their budget. A Sincere thank you to all of them!! [Signed] (Starving student in Vancouver)*

### **Criticism of how people are treated**

*• Keep personal issues out of office. Too much resentment. Members are human, they have feelings, should be treated as such. Every member should know what, how, and where and why these moneys are being spent the way they are. More information to the members. Has the Chief and Council informed the members about all the money we don't have that is being spent on treaty • Most people in the Accounting Dept. Act like they are better than anyone who has to "ask" for financial help! More understanding - less judgment! No gossiping! Lots of compassion! We are not all asking for a "hand out"!! • At times I come into Band office, and people who work there are only friendly to who they want to be friendly to. • When answering phones please be more pleasant. (Good morning, good afternoon, Thank you) main phone. • I know the office can get very busy at most times with the daily business each individual employee has to do. But when a person goes to the counter and has to wait, and sometimes feel because of your reason to go to accounting, staff are hesitant to inquire how they can help, such as taking a payment, counting money turned in. • We need to feel that our 'Namgis office is more approachable, in person & by phone. Sometimes rude greetings. We need to feel that our 'Namgis councillors are more approachable. Council meetings too. Education committee: deadline for secondary school living allowance & tuition doesn't match with colleges', etc. new catalogues. More follow up on applications. • What about crew members' opinions? Accounting is very vague in crew shares expenses. Accounting gets all the info from B.C.P. Can Fish, then just transfers it to Nancy's paper and charge us for something already done. Housing committee needs to follow thru on their suggestion and commitments made. Always having to wait for something if you are not liked. Letters mailed to councillor and dropped off never seem to get to its destination. When you need a letter delivered better off to hand deliver it to the person for sure arrival. • It would be excellent if all Accting staff would know all accounting systems, instead of referring to others or telling us to come back. They should know how to help and be more friendly. No one is that*

*busy or important not to acknowledge one person at the front counter waiting for 5 minutes or more. • Dress code - blue jeans & sweats need to go. It's nice to see people look good at their jobs. More dressier attire would make the staff feel good about themselves and feel good about dealing with the public.*

### **Band fiscal priorities & practices**

*• You are financing hairdressers instead of looking after the people that are trying to do some good looking after sick people and our elders. Start paying for people in nursing • Students shouldn't have to suffer because the Band spent their money badly. • [Name]'s 1989 letter attached re: lack of fiscal accountability by Band Council*

### **Other thoughts**

*• I believe that the 'Namgis First Nation is operating appropriately & satisfactory. However, as a student I find it is difficult to live in the city on \$675.00 a month. Our students should be supported so they may be successful. I hope one day this may be addressed. Thank you.*

*• I guess I need to become more familiar with financial terms in order to understand what's being said to me.*

*• Need better medical and dental coverage for employees. (DIA not covering enough). Need to have CPP an option for employees.*

## **XI. SUMMARY**

Over half the sample deal with the Accounting Department on at least a weekly basis to meet a wide range of needs, so it's an important part of their lives. This is especially true for staff. The average rating on a half-dozen dimensions was 3.7 on a 5-point scale with only 2.5% issuing 1's but 27.2% awarding 5's. Almost 70% get a response from the department no later than the next day; for staff members, the response is even quicker. Almost one in five, however, feel uncomfortable about asking for help from Accounting.

Garbage-utility statements are generally clear and understandable, and the options for paying them are satisfactory. Almost one-fifth have had disputes with the department; written-in comments suggest most didn't conclude happily for these respondents.

There's overall satisfaction with how Band finances are handled, but less so among non-staff (57%) than with staffers (88%). Several issues noted here, e.g. fiscal priorities and special privileges most notably, are beyond the jurisdiction of Accounting. There's a strong call for more information to be made available to Band members. The mixed responses on how best to get the audited statements to members suggests multiple methods, including electronic ones, be employed for sharing information.

Staff regard Accounting as understanding their particular department's needs in 90% of cases, and high marks are awarded on getting staff the information they need, when they need it,

and in a form that's useable. Somewhat lower levels of satisfaction are found on getting staff information about benefits.

Owners and renters doing business with Accounting rate the department positively on preserving their privacy, being sensitive to their needs, and taking time to explain matters, although there's 20-25% who are dissatisfied. The housing statement itself is viewed negatively by most. Other housing issues aired might be better directed at the Housing Department than Accounting.

Most post-secondary students receiving financial support through the Accounting Department are satisfied with the approval process, the timing of payments, and the quality and amount of information, but less happy with the appeals process, the current \$675/month level of financial support, and staff's knowledge about students' situations.

Two of the four Nimpkish Fisheries skippers who responded were dissatisfied on most measures and two were not.

Generally positive ratings are given the department by Band Councillors, board members and committee members on providing the information needed, when it's needed, and in a useable form.

Comments written in at the end of the questionnaires are most often addressed to Band members' treatment at the Band office and fiscal priorities.

## **XII. CONCLUSIONS**

- The data here can be read as saying that overall the Accounting Department is keeping most, but not all, stakeholders happy in terms of issuing information and responding to requests for service or assistance in a timely manner.

- There's a call for making information even more accessible and understandable and making people feel more comfortable when requesting help.

- The sharpest division in responses occurs between staff members and non-staff members on a number of questions. Staff members, of necessity, deal with the department more often and for more reasons. For whatever reason (e.g., knowing the hoops, knowing the people, being more in touch with the information, etc.), they generally reflect more satisfaction with the department.

- Among non-staff, stories of poor personal treatment when visiting the office were disturbingly common.

- The area of most negative ratings and comments is housing. The written information provided by Accounting is not satisfying to most respondents, and there are also broader issues about communication of policies and treatment of members that surfaced.

- While there's overall satisfaction with how Band finances are handled, there are still grievances directed less at the Accounting Department than at Band governance levels.