



The New Relationship Trust. Feedback Summary. November 13, 2006

# Feedback Summary

From Regional Engagements across B.C.  
What we Heard from You.

# The New Relationship Trust

Regional Engagement Process • Feedback Summary • November 13, 2006



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The New Relationship Trust Corporation

[www.newrelationshiptrust.ca](http://www.newrelationshiptrust.ca)



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# The New Relationship Trust

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### Introduction

In June, 2006, the New Relationship Trust (the “Trust”) Board of Directors hired CopperMoon Communications to gather feedback from First Nations leadership and their communities regarding their funding priorities and overall management of the Trust.

*“What you have done is a really good way for the Trust to make sure [they are] getting good information from all First Nations in the province from their own linguistic background... we are branded as the same.. but in fact are very different.  
- Chief Sophie Pierre, Cranbrook*

Between July and September, CopperMoon conducted a province-wide Regional Engagement Process, visiting 11 key communities as well as gathering feedback by telephone and over the Internet. This report provides a summary of the feedback gathered over that three month period.

Additional details have been published on-line at [www.newrelationshiptrust.ca](http://www.newrelationshiptrust.ca). The ‘Voices’ section of the web site contains a written summary report for each of the regional meetings, and video transcripts where available.

### Background

The New Relationship Trust Corporation is an independent, not-for-profit organization that was formed in April 2006. The Trust evolved out of the New Relationship document - a vision paper jointly agreed to by the First Nations Leadership Council and the Province of BC one year earlier. With the mandate of strengthening First Nations communities through capacity building, the Trust Board of Directors established a set of Objectives and proceeded to move forward to create its first Strategic Plan.

The Regional Engagement Process is an integral part of creating that plan, as it asks our First Nations people about their priorities for funding, as well as how they would like to see the money managed over the short and longer term.

### Participation

More than 300 attendees in total came to the 11 regional engagement process revolved around 11 regional ‘engagement meetings. In addition, approximately 250 written surveys were completed by both meeting attendees and other First Nations community members, and more than 400 written comments were recorded. Hundreds of First Nations community members shared their voice in the process.

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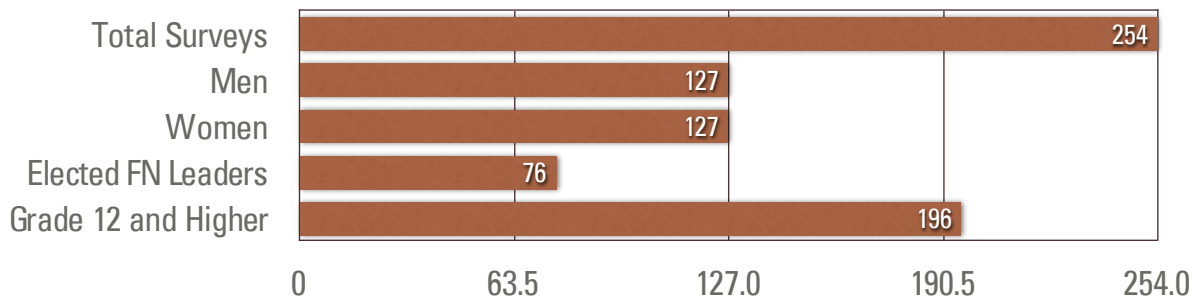
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### Participation

#### Meeting attendance by location:

Masset	12	Prince George	60	Port Hardy	13	Cranbrook	22
Prince Rupert	34	Vancouver	60+	Fort St. John	30	Port Alberni	30+
Terrace	32	Kamloops	50+	Northern Nations Alliance	10		

### Survey Participation



Although participation levels were good, it should be noted that the demographic of participants – both attending the meetings and responding to surveys – does not represent the overall demographic of BC’s First Nations’ population. The average age of survey respondent was 58, and there was a proportionally high level of educated people, as well as elected leadership, in comparison to the general populus. These discrepancies should be kept in mind when reading the next section of the Summary: Feedback.

### Feedback - What was heard

Feedback was specifically requested about the following questions:

- *What do you think of the Trust Objectives?*
- *What are your community’s priorities for funding?*
- *How would you suggest the fund be managed?*

In addition, many participants spoke up about related issues, such as the overall management of the Trust Corporation. Feedback below reflects what was said in the regional meetings, as well as survey data.

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### Feedback about the Trust Objectives

Participants were asked to review the following Trust Objectives (here in condensed form) and then to both discuss and rank them.

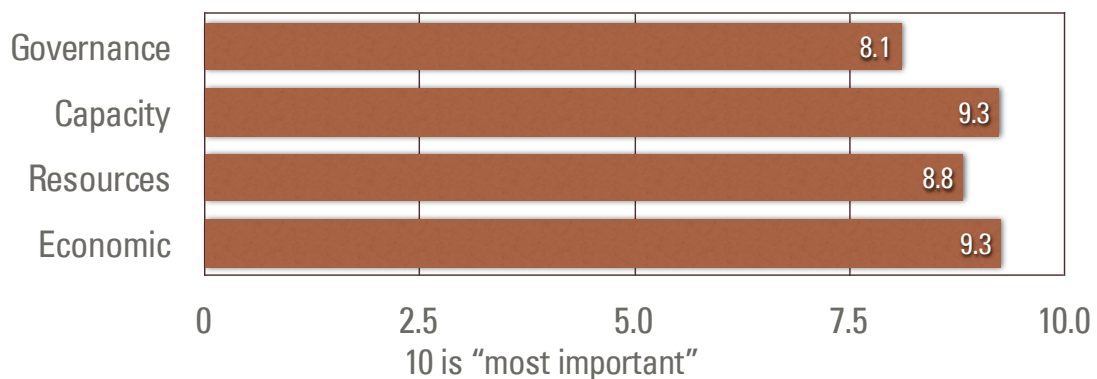
1. Enhance **Governance** within First Nations Governments: Better local government, negotiation with Province, and civil service.
2. Develop the **capacity** of First Nations: Better development of professionals, education, language and culture, and health care.
3. Enhance management of First Nations **lands and resources**: Better land management, resource planning, economic use of land, and growth of capital.
4. Enhance the **economic status** of First Nations communities: More revenue sharing, economic development, and pre-treaty agreements.

*"All of these could have priority--but focus perhaps should be to build the capacity & coordination to pull this all together" - RP, Fort St. John*

### Survey Results

In the survey, respondents identified all four of the Trust Objectives as being important. The second and fourth Objectives (capacity and economic status, respectively) were ranked as higher priorities for funding consideration. Objective three – land and resource management – was ranked as next most critical, and governance issues ranked last, both in discussion and on the surveys.

**Graph: Subjective rating of draft Trust objectives.**



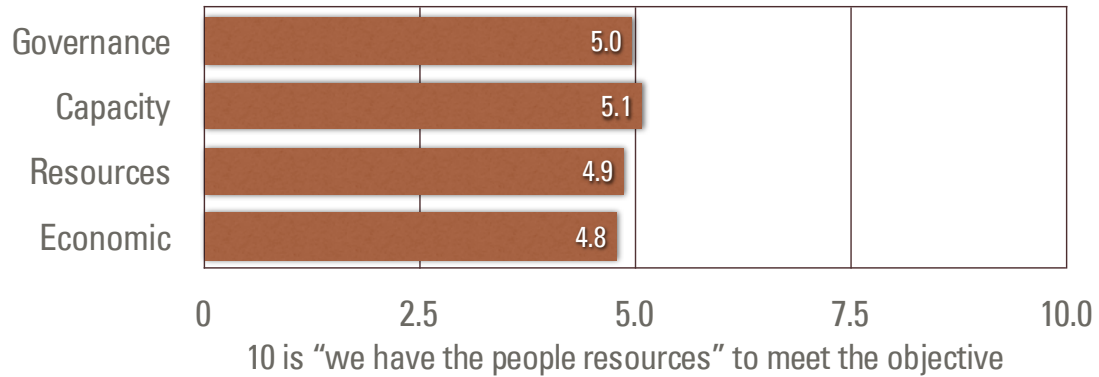
*This graph demonstrates that all objectives are important, as each one was rated highly.*

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When asked about whether or not communities had the capacity (human resources) to address the Trust Objectives, survey results showed a definitive ‘maybe’ response; respondents gave the question for all four objectives somewhere between 4.8 and 5.1 out of a possible 10 points, where 10 indicates a YES, the community has the human resource capacity to meet the objective.

#### Graph: Capacity to meet draft Trust objectives.



*"I hope the fund will focus on people, not politicians. We don't have "trained" people to meet objectives but if given the chance [they] would do their best" - CP, Port Hardy*

## Discussion results

In general, elected leadership at all meetings agreed in principle to the Objectives. The discussion about ranking the Objectives, as well as what was missing, was more difficult. Leaders' opinions varied on both points, and other participants often found it difficult to choose between Objectives. Further, comments were made that the Objectives were very broad and far-reaching.

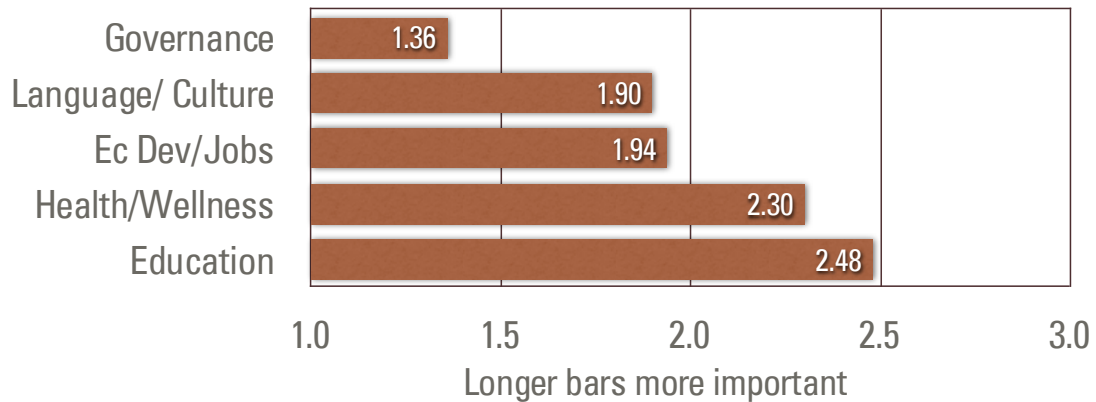
In comparison, a broader discussion on priorities extracted more detail (see next section). For example, participants were encouraged to identify the *type* of capacity was required in different communities. Similarly, a discussion of issues and goals produced more detail about *how* to enhance economic status within a region.

## **Feedback about Funding Priorities**

In contrast to the questions about the Trust Objectives, the discussion about funding priorities was much more open-ended. As a result, a long list of priorities for funding – both in meeting discussions and on written survey forms. To try to narrow the priorities down, participants were asked to rank their priorities, or to think about what was needed first by their communities in order to make positive change. The results were complex and varied.

### **Survey Results**

The survey asked respondents to rank five over-arching priorities, in order of importance. Results were as follows:



### **Survey Result: Education is top priority**

As seen in this chart, the top-ranked priority was Education, followed closely by health and wellness. Language and Culture was practically tied with Economic Development; and governance was the lowest ranked priority.

When responses to this question were broken down by demographically, we can see that elected leadership ranked health and wellness on par with education. Leaders also ranked governance higher than the average respondent. Youth, on the other hand, ranked education as the top priority by a wide margin, and governance very low. Women and men also had some differing priorities. Where women rated health and wellness and language and culture significantly higher than men; and men were more apt to rank economic development, education and governance higher than women.

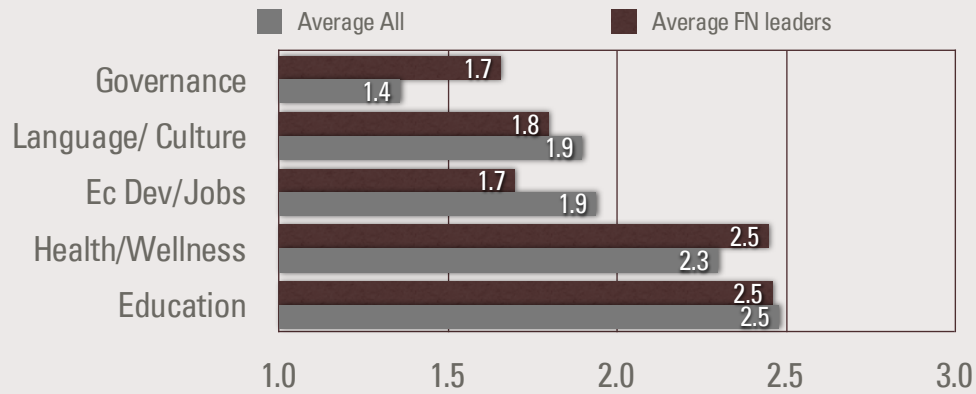
Education as a top priority correlated to a response to a question about barriers faced by communities. Here, most respondents identified the lack of trained people as the highest barrier to positive change.

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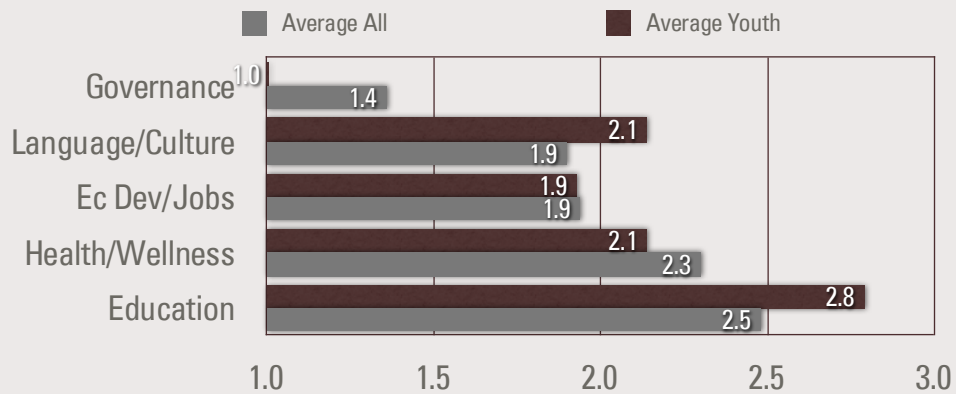
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### Survey Result: Education is top priority

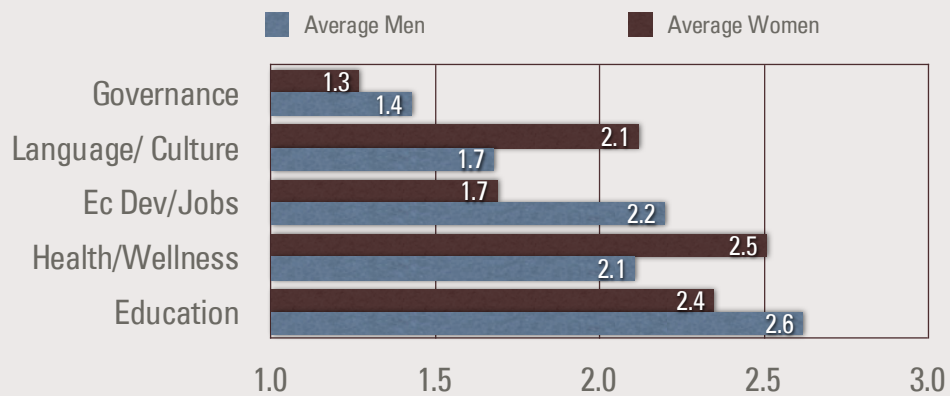
Graph: Elected Leaders



Graph: Youth



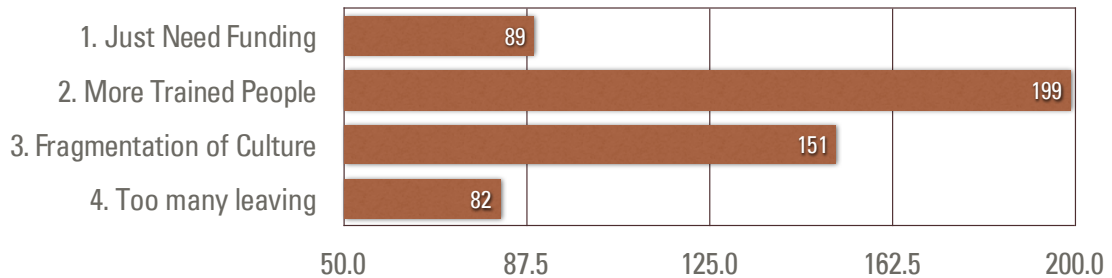
Graph: Men and Women



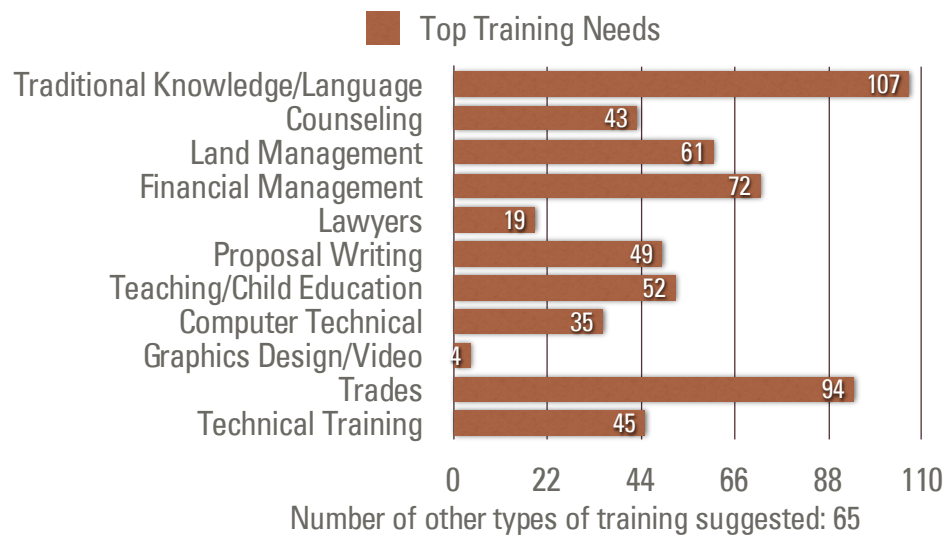
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Graph: What are the barriers facing your community?



Probing the question about education further, the survey asked about they types of training that were most needed. The top response, by a wide margin, was language and cultural training. The next highest responses were Trades, Financial Management and Land Management, followed by Counseling, Teaching, Proposal Writing and Technical Training. Lower priorities were Computer Technical, Lawyers, and Graphic Design/Video training.



**Survey Result: Types of training needed most are traditional knowledge and trades.**

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## Discussion Results

Discussion about funding priorities was complex. As one participant succinctly put it: “**everything is a priority.**” It was difficult for participants to rank one stream of funding priority above another, and many seemingly disparate needs were seen as linked together. For example, while participants saw economic development and jobs as key components of a healthy community, they also believed that individual healing was needed to pursue those objectives.

In order to attempt to focus the discussion, participants were asked to answer the following question: “How do we make the **most** change, and **where do we start?**” Despite the complexity of the discussion about priorities, the following few themes emerged:

### **Theme 1: Economic development and wealth creation as top priority**

Several participants identified economic development as the top priority for use of funds. The rationale was that economic wealth is required for all other priorities, such as support for social and cultural programs, as well as for self-sufficiency in general. When probed for further explanation on this theme, participants talked specifically about the need to create sustainable, First Nations-controlled industries, businesses, and jobs in their own regions. Revenue sharing opportunities was a consistent theme, particularly for those Nations that have seen others profit from their own resource-bases while First Nations communities do not.

Regions supporting economic development as a top priority:

**Prince Rupert, Terrace, Port Hardy, Fort St. John, Kamloops, Cranbrook, Northern Nations Alliance**

#### Funding priorities identified

- economic development
- wealth creation, investment capital
- job creation
- education and training
- infrastructure (schools, hospitals, roads, etc)
- language and cultural revitalization
- healing and wellness
- capacity building for self-governance
- capacity building in general
- environmental protection
- land and resource management
- relationship building with other Nations
- research support
- proposal writing support
- communications (both internally and information sharing between nations)

*“Economic development will pay for everything else. Everything costs money. With Economic Development comes the opportunity for everything else!” – CJL, Kamloops*

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#### **Theme 2: Culture, connection to the land, and language as the top priority**

A consistent priority that was raised at many meetings is the need to revitalize First Nations language and culture. Many participants said that without our cultural beliefs, values, and way of thinking we are lost. Many also raised the issue of how endangered First Nations languages and traditions are, and the large amount of people who are disconnected from the land and culture. Further, many spoke of the connection to the land and the importance of creating identity as First Nations individuals, which in turn drives individual health and prosperity of the entire Nation. Attendees at some meetings were in agreement that strengthening culture and language should come first.

Regions supporting language and culture as a top priority:

***Masset, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Port Alberni, Kamloops***

*"Our languages are disappearing and we need to get down to it" – EMA, (by mail)*

#### **Theme 3: Healing and wellness as the top priority**

A large number of participants expressed the need for healing as the top priority. This referred to the healing of wounds created by years of oppression and abuse that are felt both at the individual – emotional and psychological wounding, as well as collectively - whereby First Nations communities themselves carry forth oppressive and dependent behaviors. In some cases healing was tied strongly to culture, and it was suggested in a number of meetings that recovering culture and wellness go hand in hand.

On a practical level, spending on healing would include everything from training or acquiring counseling for communities to supporting programs that reconnect community members with their own heritage and culture. The rationale behind supporting this strategy was one of addressing the underlying issues that hold First Nations and their own people back from creating opportunities for themselves. Proponents of spending on healing believed that without addressing these fundamental issues, First Nations will be unable to create positive change for themselves over the longer term.

Regions supporting healing as a top priority:

***Masset, Terrace, Port Alberni, Prince George, Vancouver***

*"All the effects of colonization, which include the Indian Act, Residential schools, the churches and all the rest must be acknowledged, recognized and overcome before we can reasonably move forward in a healthy way."  
– NVL, (by mail)*

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#### Theme 4: Capacity Building / Education as the top priority

Capacity building in general – defined as the ability of First Nations to respond to opportunities and grow - was identified as a priority at every meeting. The lack of general capacity is a significant problem in almost every First Nations community. When discussing where to start and what is needed most, capacity building as a single theme has not emerged as a top priority. Capacity in the areas of language and culture, as well as job creation (economic development) usually come out on top.

The need for education was also raised at every meeting and, as mentioned above, topped the list of survey responses to the question of ranking priorities (although in discussion, education was often trumped by health, culture, and jobs as priorities). In general, there seem to be human resources available to First Nations, but the lack of capacity to hire these qualified people. There is also little consensus on what is meant by improving education. The general approach is ‘we need more kids graduating’ – but, as many people pointed out, the education system simply doesn’t work for First Nations, and it has been suggested in a number of places that the whole system needs to be re-worked.

This seeming dichotomy between the priorities of education and culture is demystified in the survey data. While on the whole, education came out at the highest priority area, training in traditional knowledge and language was identified as the **most needed** area of training.

*“It’s important for First Nations to work toward revenue sharing. The opportunities are happening now (oil, gas, mining) and we need to take advantage now, or we may lose out.” - SJ, Northern Nations*

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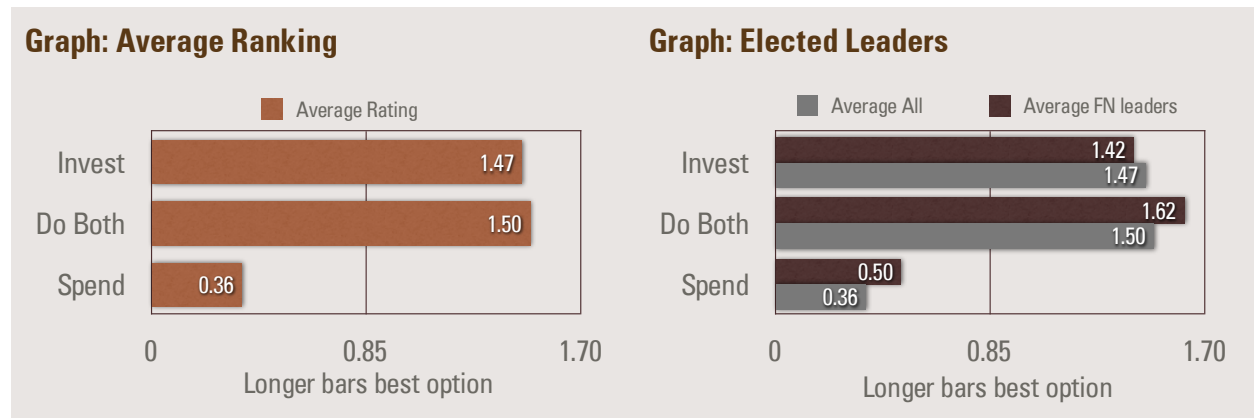
## Feedback about Managing the Fund

Another key question asked of participants related to how they felt the fund itself should be managed and dispensed. To focus this question, participants were asked to rank the following three options:

1. Invest the money and spend only interest
2. Spend half the money in five years; invest half until 2026
3. Spend all the money in five years

## Survey Results

Of the three options identified, the highest ranked on the surveys was #2 – a combination of spending and investment. This was followed closely by option #1, which favoured investing all of the money and spending only the interest.



Elected leaders were more inclined to favour spending – either in combination with investment or as spending in the shorter term - than the average survey respondent.

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#### Discussion Results

Discussion regarding management (spend vs invest) of the fund were animated, and opinions were varied. In fact, no question was more polarizing than this one, with strong arguments for and against each extreme.

Many who advocated **spending** in the short term argued that the fund should be dispensed now to address needs that are immediate and pressing. Languages are dying. Culture is being lost with every elder. Unemployment rates are growing. People are moving away from their home community. Land is being exploited without consultation... and so on. Other advocates of spending simply pointed to the low yearly and short term benefits of a perpetual fund. Still others argued that the money should not be left in trust, as it will just give the government an excuse not to provide further funds.

Advocates of **investing** the money pointed to the potential of long-term growth and the benefits of a perpetual fund. A cornerstone of this argument was that \$100 million is negligible when distributed to all of BC's First Nations, and therefore the strategy should be to grow the fund so that a real difference can be made, particularly for future generations. Those in favour of investment emphasized the benefits of increased return over time, and the possibility of more funding coming from other sources to grow the fund.

Further to the discussion of managing the fund, the issue of pursuing additional contributions to grow the fund was discussed at most meetings. Again, this topic resulted in a polarized discussion. While some people agreed that there was a need to pursue more funding, others spoke passionately about the need for First Nations to get off of the system of dependence on government grants and to develop their own economic opportunities and systems.

While the question of whether to spend or invest was not resolved, it was clear that there was support for both options.

*"100M is a start! It's really not that much money in this day and age! We shouldn't have to invest this to ensure future trust monies. We need it all to be spent for FN communities Now!" - BJR, Terrace*

*"Economic investment can generate wealth which could leverage support and resources to needs of all FN people within BC. Invest the \$100M." - ME, Cranbrook*

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## Feedback about Dispensing the Fund

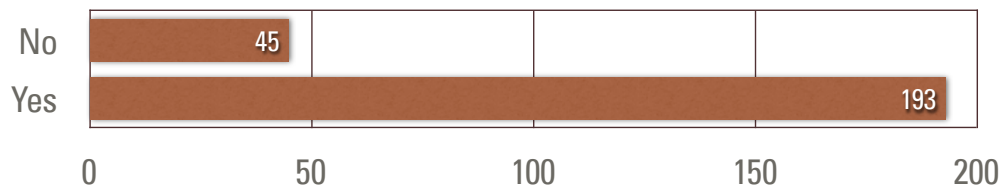
In addition to questions about managing the fund (spend vs invest) there was a significant amount of discussion about how to dispense the monies – to whom, how much, etc. This general topic was addressed in both discussion and on the surveys.

### Survey Results

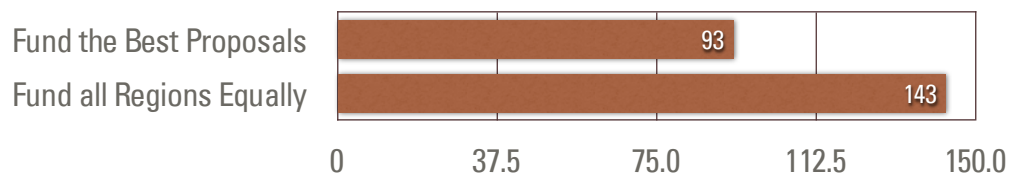
The following trends emerged on the surveys related to disbursement of funds:

- *Most respondents felt that there should be limits on how much funding is disbursed to each applicant*
- *More respondents felt that the process should favour those projects with aboriginal suppliers such as consultants, technicians, etc (over those without)*
- *More respondents felt that the Trust should work to fund all regions equally, as compared to awarding funds to the best proposals.*
- *Approximately 2/3 of respondents felt it was important to fund further research*
- *More people felt that multi-year funding should be available for projects*

**Graph:** Should there be limits on how much funding is dispersed to each applicant?



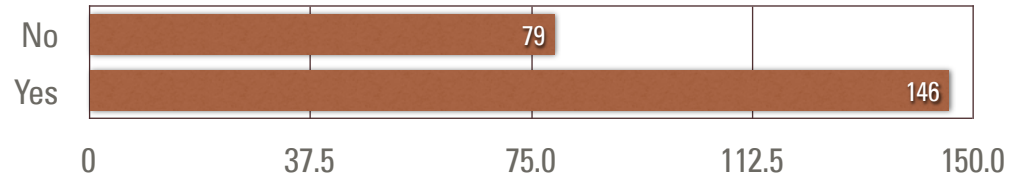
**Graph:** Should the trust fund projects regionally or just the best proposals regardless of region?



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**Graph:** Should the trust fund favour applications that have Aboriginal suppliers (such as consultants, lawyers, professionals, etc) compared to those that don't?



## Discussion Results

Discussion around dispensing the fund was more complex than the survey, and revolved around two key topics: funding eligibility and the overall application process.

The question of who should be eligible for funding came up at every meeting. Feedback was as follows:

Off-reserve organizations should be eligible to apply for and receive funding. This issue was raised at every meeting, and there was support in all cases for ensuring that off-reserve organizations be able to apply for funding independently of Bands. A number of urban organizations were represented at meetings, and these participants voiced the concern that their organizations are under-funded yet the majority of BC's First Nations population lives off-reserve. Opening up funding to off-reserve organizations was supported by a number of elected First Nations leaders, who acknowledged that on-reserve leadership is often unable to make the appropriate decisions to support their off-reserve community members.

*"A lot of this could be given to our urban First Nations...I go down to East Hastings and I think 'we as a nation have failed'... how do we reach out to those who are lost?" – AB, Masset*

*"Fund the best initiatives/projects that meet the purposes of the Trust." - LMC, Prince George*

Other eligibility concerns were raised by treated Nations (such as the Nisga'a and treaty 8) and treaty organizations – who were worried they may be ineligible and still need funds. On a couple of different occasions, other aboriginal groups were present (such as Metis organizations) and these groups also raised concerns about their ineligibility.

At the meeting with the Northern Nations Alliance, there were several First Nations organizations, including Bands, that have representation and interests in both BC and the Yukon. The groups spoke of the need to maintain efforts of unifying their Nations, rather than dividing them through eligibility restrictions. Those present at the Northern Nations meeting felt that funding should be made available to organizations that serve First Nations in both jurisdictions.

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#### **The Application Process**

The other topic related to dispensing funds that was heavily discussed was the application process itself. Specifically, a number of concerns were raised about modeling the application process on a typical, proposal driven one. The key concern here was that proposal driven processes typically favour those applicants who already have capacity. Conversely, many participants expressed a belief that communities with less capacity should be given greater priority for receiving funding.

Some suggestions related to the application process were made, including:

- *Make it more personal / less formal*
- *Consider an appeal process*
- *Have regional review panels, instead of one Province-wide one*

#### **More Feedback**

In addition to feedback related to the directed questions asked of participant, a number of unsolicited ideas and opinions were received and recorded. Some of the most commonly raised - and undisputed - feedback is summarized below, in no particular order.

#### **Board representation**

Participants wished to see better regional and language representation on the Board of Directors. This issue came up particularly in the coastal and northern meetings, where participants felt their communities were currently under-represented. It was also suggested that the Board include better gender and age representation.

#### **Skepticism regarding the New Relationship**

A lot of skepticism was raised regarding the reality of the new relationship. Many participants expressed beliefs that leadership – both Provincial and First Nations’ – had no real intention of creating stronger, more independent Nations. Coincidentally, a number of participants suggested that the Trust consider the meaning of the term ‘new relationship’ from a distinctly First Nations’ perspective, and strive to ensure its own operational and philosophical values are aligned with this concept.

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#### Nation Building

Further to the above idea, a number of participants spoke of the need to focus on activities and initiatives that support overall Nation Building. Some concerns were expressed about funding dividing First Nations people and communities, and some people felt that money should be specifically set aside to unite communities and support province-wide capacity building.

*"[We] need a strategic plan [that comes] from a holistic approach" - JLT, Port Alberni"*

*Board positions need to be reflective of province and include women and urban [representatives]" - TDW, Prince Rupert*

*"[I would start with] better communication between all of us, and a structure" - Chief Jacobs, Vancouver*

#### Conclusion

In just over three months, the Regional Engagement Process yielded a huge amount of interest and feedback regarding our communities' priorities and our peoples' ideas on how to best use the fund. The next, challenging step requires the seven-member Board of Directors to create the Trust's first Strategic Plan, using the feedback that has been gathered. That Plan will guide and inform the operations of the Trust for the next three years. The Strategic Plan will be completed in December, 2006, and funds will begin to be distributed to in the late winter / early spring of 2007. Updates will be posted on the Trust's website, [www.newrelationshiptrust.ca](http://www.newrelationshiptrust.ca), and sent to communities.

Creating the first Strategic Plan is a particularly daunting task when one considers the sheer breadth and scope of what is needed by our people today. The socio-economic gap between First Nations people and the general population in BC is measured in billions of dollars. At \$100 million, therefore, the Trust fund is only a fraction of what's needed – on a purely monetary level – to close that gap. And yet, if managed and dispensed carefully, that \$100 million can make a difference.

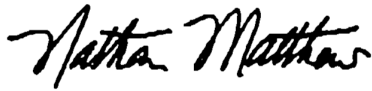
In closing, the New Relationship Trust thanks all who participated in the process. Your voices have been heard.

With gratitude and respect,

**New Relationship Trust - First Board of Directors**

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Chief Nathan Matthew (Chair): Simpcw First Nation



Kathryn Teneese (Vice-chair): Chief Negotiator, Ktunaxa Nation



Shawn (A-in-chut) Atleo: Regional Chief, BC AFN



Dawn Farrell: Executive Vice-President, BC Hydro



Donald Hayes: President, Hayes Forestry Company



Dave Porter: Political Executive, FNS



Chief Stewart Phillip: President, UBCIC