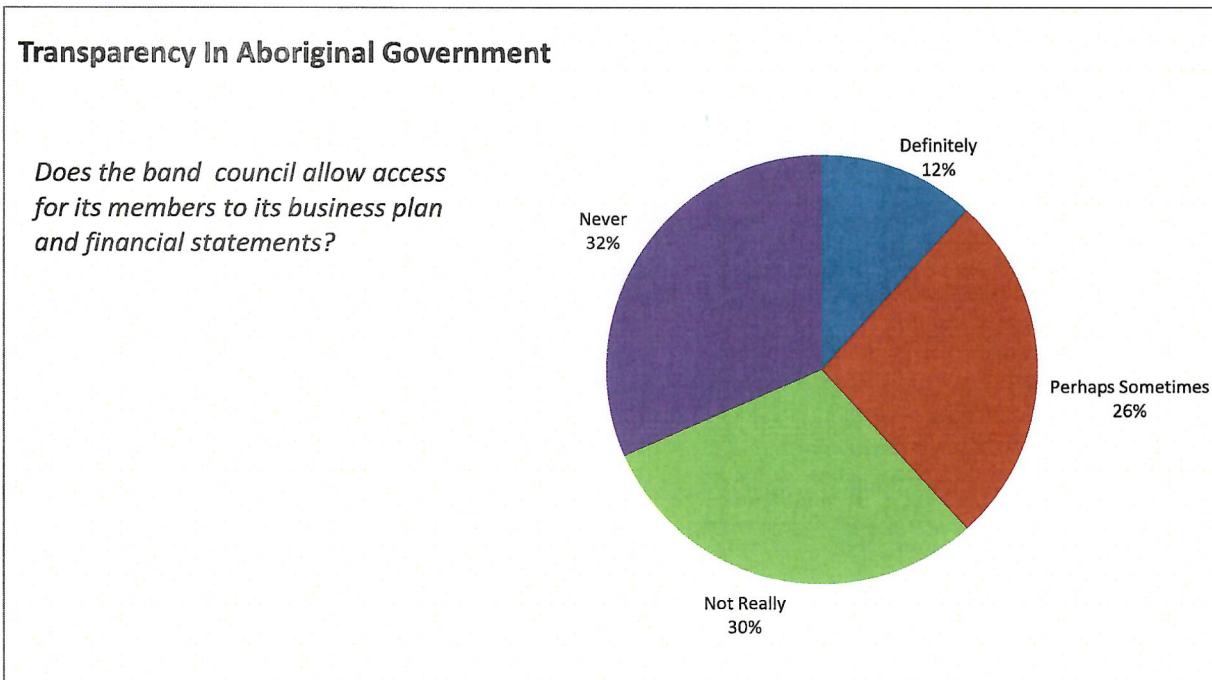


Transparency in Aboriginal Government

In order for residents to be informed and engaged in the decision-making processes of their community, it is important for band councils to be transparent. Information concerning council meetings, major decisions and band spending should be made easily available to all community members.

Transparency surrounding council activities that involve money are particularly important. When band resources are managed in a transparent fashion, it helps to ensure that funds are used for legitimate purposes that serve the public good. In order to gauge transparency in financial matters in First Nations communities, we asked our survey respondents the following question: "Does the band council allow access for its members to its business plan and financial statements." The distribution of the survey responses are illustrated graphically below.



- A majority of respondents (62 per cent) suggested that band members "never" or "do not really" have access to the band's business plan and financial statements.
- Just 12 per cent said that this information is "definitely" available to interested parties.

It is important for residents to have access to this sort of information to ensure that resources are being allocated rationally. Band councils should not be secretive about business plans and financial records. A major purpose of the AGI is to identify areas of strength and weakness in governance as it is practiced in Aboriginal communities across the Prairies. Transparency is an important safeguard against corruption, and it helps ensure all band residents are informed and able to participate meaningfully in decision making. Transparency in financial matters is clearly an area where significant work is needed in many communities.

Source: The Third Annual Aboriginal governance Index. Available at www.fcpp.org