FAIME

A guide for communities

AFFECTED BY MINING

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION WITH EXPERTS FROM THE FAIME DATABASE

2026

About this guide

This guide provides tools, strategies and actionable advice for effectively navigating engagements with FAIME experts. It offers practical advice on decision-making, communication strategies, conflict management, and more. By applying the insights found in this guide to your work with FAIME experts, you enhance the likelihood of effectively leveraging expert knowledge and achieving project objectives that are meaningful and relevant to your community.

Photo credit: SSN (Stk'emlupsemc te Secwepemc Nation)

About FAIME

The Find An Independent Mining Expert (FAIME) is a secure online database of global experts available to provide services to Indigenous and other communities affected by mining. FAIME lists experts that offer diverse skill sets and facilitates contact between experts and the communities or organizations seeking expertise.

The database increases access to scientific, socio-economic, and technical services to assist communities in addressing issues arising from new and existing mining projects affecting their territories and well-being. The services rendered by FAIME experts can aid in the prevention and mitigation of negative environmental, social and economic impacts of mining.

Photo credit: Chris Miller/RWB

Benefits of the FAIME database

1. Facilitates timely access to independent, qualified, credible, and trustworthy experts for mining-related challenges

2. Supports Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and enhances community-led decision-making processes

3. Helps public interest organizations advance their missions by providing equal access to expertise, leveling the playing field between communities and mining companies

Understanding the Role of Experts

When engaging with mining projects that impact your community, collaborating with experts can provide essential insights and support. Understanding the types of experts needed to address your concerns and their specific role(s) will enable you to interact with them more effectively and leverage their skills to benefit your community.

TYPE OF EXPERTS

ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERTS

These professionals specialize in ecological studies, environmental impact assessments, and sustainability practices. They can help assess how projects affect your local environment and advise on mitigating negative effects and enhancing environmental conservation.

An environmental expert could evaluate the impact of a new mining operation on local water sources, suggesting containment and filtration strategies to prevent contamination. Alternatively, they can review existing environmental impact reports as independent third-party experts.

SOCIAL SCIENCE EXPERTS

Specialists in social sciences, such as human geographers, sociologists or anthropologists, examine the social dynamics and cultural impacts of projects. They can help understand community changes, social impacts, and work towards culturally relevant solutions.

A social sciences expert could be used in the development of a socio-economic impact assessment for your community to understand the potential changes in employment, local business impacts, and shifts in population dynamics due to a new mining project. These assessments can be used to negotiate agreements that mitigate impacts such as funding social programs, building childcare centres, etc.

Photo credit: Pexels, ArtHouse Studios

Understanding the Role of Experts

ECONOMICS EXPERTS

These professionals specialize in economic analysis and financial planning. They can assess the economic viability of projects, assess the economic impacts of past or present mining, and help ensure fair economic benefits for communities.

A financial expert could assess the actual viability of a project and its life expectancy. Then, based on this understanding, assist in the negotiation and evaluation of a compensation package offered by a mining company, advising on how to best invest to ensure long-term community benefits. They can also assist in the feasibility of any business opportunities that the mining company might offer to the community as compensation.

TECHNICAL EXPERTS

Engineers, technologists, and other technical professionals provide specific knowledge on the design or engineering of a project, on its infrastructure, and suggest revisions to the design of the mining infrastructure. They ensure that the technical aspects of a project are feasible, safe, and efficient. A technical expert could analyze the structural integrity of proposed mining facilities near your community, ensuring that all constructions meet safety regulations to prevent accidents.

A technical expert could analyze the structural integrity of proposed mining facilities, or specific parts of them, such as tailings ponds and dams, near your community, ensuring that all constructions meet safety regulations to prevent accidents.

Photo credit: SSN (Stk'emlupsemc te Secwepemc Nation)

Example Areas of Expertise

- Air quality monitoring/air pollution
- Biology/eco-toxicology
- Chemistry
- Economic geology
- Fisheries biology and management
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Geology/soils/sediments
- Geostatistics
- Health/public health
- Medicine/human eco-toxicology
- Meteorology
- Mine waste management/dams safety/closure plans/remediation
- Mining engineering/mining processing
- Metallurgy
- Modelling/computer science
- Radioactivity
- Risk assessment methodologies
- Water quality/geochemistry
- Water quality standards and regulations
- Water quantity/hydrology/hydrogeology
- Water treatment technologies/systems
- Climate change laws/policies
- Threatened/Endangered species laws/policies
- Environmental/health impact assessment
- Human rights/civil liberty/civil rights
- Indigenous knowledge/law/land use protocols
- Mining laws/mineral tenure systems
- Pollution prevention laws
- Public information/consultation processes
- Agroeconomics
- Data analysis
- Ecological economics
- Financial assurance for mine reclamation & spills
- Fiscal justice/taxes/royalties
- General economics
- Mineral economics
- Project/company/market financial analysis
- Socio-economic assessment
- Anthropology
- Archeology
- Gender/racism/discrimination impact assessment
- Psychosocial health impact assessment
- Social/cultural impact assessment
- Sociology
- Grant writing
- Media/Communications
- Science communication skills
- Technical strategy skills
- Corporate profile research

What Experts Can and Cannot Do

When working with experts, it’s important to understand what they can and cannot do. Experts bring valuable knowledge and skills, but their role is to support your community, not to make decisions on your behalf. By understanding the role of experts, you can make sure their involvement is effective and works in the best interest of your community.

What Experts Can Do

- Provide specialized knowledge and objective advice based on their area of expertise.
- Assist in identifying potential risks and benefits of a project.
- Offer solutions or alternatives based on best practices and proven methodologies.
- Facilitate understanding of complex technical, legal, or environmental issues.
- Act as technical interpreters, mediators or advocates in discussions with governments, corporations, or other entities.

What Experts Cannot Do

- Make decisions on behalf of the community. While they provide valuable insights, the ultimate decisions should be made by the community members themselves.
- Represent community needs without comprehensive engagement, permissions and input from community members. Best practice dictates that any time an expert is meeting with an external party (such as a government or industry representative) as part of a project representation from the community should be present. This may be a Chief, Councillor, or other appointed community member.
- Provide support in areas outside their expertise. It's important to engage the right type of expert for specific challenges or questions.

Knowledge Translation

It is the expert's responsibility to present any findings or insights from the project to your community in a way that is clear and understandable. The specifics of this process will be discussed in the project planning phases. It is important that you communicate to the expert the types of communications that will work best for your community.

For example:

- Would you like the expert to give a visual presentation at a community meeting?
- Would you like the expert to create a short briefing note that can be circulated within the community?
- Would you like the expert to hold a question and answer session for community members?

Note that these are just a few of the options available to your community. Regardless of the form the communication takes, it needs to communicate the information in a way that individual community members can understand. Presenting a PowerPoint presentation with scientific jargon/data that is not relatable to community is unacceptable.

Photo credit: Pexels, Maxime Levrel

Preparing to Work with Experts

Engagements range from one-off consultations, which require minimal preparation and are typically short in duration, to more extensive short-term projects that may last several weeks and involve detailed consultations on specific issues. There are also long-term collaborations that extend over months or years, necessitating deep, ongoing interactions and a substantial time commitment to relationship building and project evolution.

The scope and nature of projects that experts consult on through FAIME varies significantly. It is important to adapt your level of preparation accordingly. When necessary, ways you can prepare include:

1

Preparing to Communicate Your Situation

Begin by reflecting on the particular challenges or opportunities your community is facing. When you first meet with an expert, they will want to understand what your community is experiencing and how your community is being impacted from your perspective. Be prepared to discuss the issues you are facing and explain the impacts on different groups within your community, if possible. For example, if your community is experiencing a specific health issue, such as an increase in respiratory illnesses by individuals residing close to a local mine, the expert may ask you to describe how that is affecting children, youth, Elders, and others.

Preparing to Work with Experts

2

Working with the Expert to Establish Project Objectives

Once you have communicated the situation your community is experiencing, the expert will be responsible for helping you establish relevant project objectives related to the situation. For example, the expert may suggest conducting a socio-economic impact assessment for your community to document changes experienced by the community due to a new mining project. The expert would then be responsible for clearly outlining:

1. what your community will receive by the end of the time working with them (for example, a completed impact assessment)

2. why and how the work with them could be helpful to your community (for example, by creating an impact assessment that can be used as a tool for negotiating agreements that could fund the development of infrastructure related to healthcare.)

You are never obligated to accept the suggestions of experts. If the expert suggests a project objective that you do not think would be helpful to your community, communicate your rationale to the expert. It is their job to work with you to develop project objectives that will be beneficial to your community.

Preparing to Work with Experts

3

Gathering Relevant Information and Data

The expert will ask you to gather all information and data your community has relevant to the project. This might include any previous studies related to your community, environmental impact assessments, legal documents, or other documents. In some cases, you may not have any information or data for the expert to use. If this is the case, communicate the situation to the expert so that they know your community will need support in gathering relevant data for the project (or, in some cases, in hiring the right individual to gather the relevant data.)

4

Organizing Community Representation

Decide who will represent your community in discussions with the expert. Choose individuals who will be able to understand the information the experts will be presenting and will be able to communicate it to others as necessary. These representatives should be prepared to advocate for the community's needs. Consider including a diverse group to capture various perspectives within your community, such as youth, Elders, land-users and others.

Photo credit: MiningWatch Canada

Setting Up the Project

Organizing and planning effectively is key to setting up for a successful project. The following documents are often used to guide projects, and are set up prior to beginning work. These documents are often developed collaboratively. In most cases, the expert will provide initial versions of the documents for your review and approval. You are never obligated to accept the terms or conditions of a document. You are entitled to request the expert revise a document as many times as is necessary for it to appropriately reflect your needs.

Project Overview

This document provides a summary of the project, outlining its purpose, goals, and the key people involved. It serves as a roadmap for all stakeholders, helping everyone understand why the project is important and what it aims to accomplish.

Work Plan

This is a detailed outline that lists tasks, assigns responsibilities, and sets deadlines. Ensure that the expert includes specific details in the work plan regarding the number of hours they will spend on each task.

Budget

This details all expected costs associated with the project, including payments for materials, expert fees, and other miscellaneous expenses. This typically includes includes fees associated with contracting the expert.

Contract

This is a formal document that specifies the responsibilities, roles, and benefits for all parties involved. The contract will protect your legal rights and will outline service terms, confidentiality, compensation, and other details.

Photo credit: Inter-American Association for the Defense of the Environment (AIDA)

Establishing Effective Communication

Effective communication is fundamental when working with experts to ensure that your community's needs are understood and addressed appropriately. Here are key aspects to consider in establishing clear and productive communication channels:

Language and Cultural Considerations

It is the responsibility of the expert to respectfully navigate cultural differences. It is okay to directly communicate to the experts any customs or protocols that are important they uphold or participate in. The expert is there to support you, and will be expecting to be given direction in this regard.

Photo credit: Mitchikanibikok Inik First Nation

Setting Expectations and Boundaries

Clear communication begins with setting transparent expectations and boundaries. Early in your engagement with experts, clearly outline what is expected from both parties. Discuss and agree upon the scope of work, timelines, and the outcomes you hope to achieve. It’s also important to set boundaries regarding availability and methods of communication to ensure that interactions are respectful of everyone’s time and commitments. Establishing these parameters upfront will help prevent future conflicts and ensure a smooth collaborative process.

Building Strong Relationships with Experts

Developing strong relationships with experts may help in achieving long-term benefits for your community, especially in the case of projects that span over long periods of time. These relationships are built on trust, transparency, mutual respect, and a commitment to ongoing collaboration.

Trust and Transparency

Trust is the cornerstone of any successful partnership. Foster trust with experts by being open and transparent about your community's goals, concerns, and expectations from the outset. Ask that experts to do the same regarding their capabilities, limitations, and any potential conflicts of interest. Do not be afraid to ask experts directly if they feel they will be able to accomplish a task or achieve a goal. Maintaining honesty about what can realistically be achieved and any challenges that might arise during the collaboration will strengthen trust between all parties.

Mutual Respect and Understanding

Mutual respect and understanding are essential for navigating cultural differences and effectively working together. Respect experts' professional boundaries and expertise, and expect the same respect for your community's knowledge and experiences. Recognize that all parties bring expertise to the table, and that it is the combination of community insights and expert knowledge that will lead to a successful project.

Long-term Relationship Building

Building long-term relationships with experts means thinking beyond the immediate project. Consider how these relationships can be sustained and grown over time to benefit future projects. Do not be afraid to reach out to the expert with questions, even after the project has concluded. Also, if the experience working with the experts has been beneficial to your community, explore other areas where the expert's skills might be beneficial and discuss possibilities for future collaboration.

Conflict Management and Decision Making

Handling Disagreements and Conflicts

Disagreements and conflicts are infrequent, but they can occur in any collaborative effort, especially when diverse perspectives are involved. Establish a conflict resolution protocol early in your engagement process. This might include steps like open discussions, mediation sessions, or involving a neutral third party to help resolve issues. Attempt to approach conflicts with the goal of understanding underlying concerns and finding a middle ground. Maintaining a respectful and open environment during disagreements facilitates smoother resolution and prevents the escalation of conflicts.

Please note that FAIME is not responsible for the actions of individual experts or the outcomes of engagements with experts. FAIME cannot participate in conflict resolution discussions on behalf of any party. If you feel that an expert has not appropriately adhered to their role as discussed in project negotiations, reach out to FAIME to report the interaction. Note that your report will be held in confidence and will not be shared with the expert.

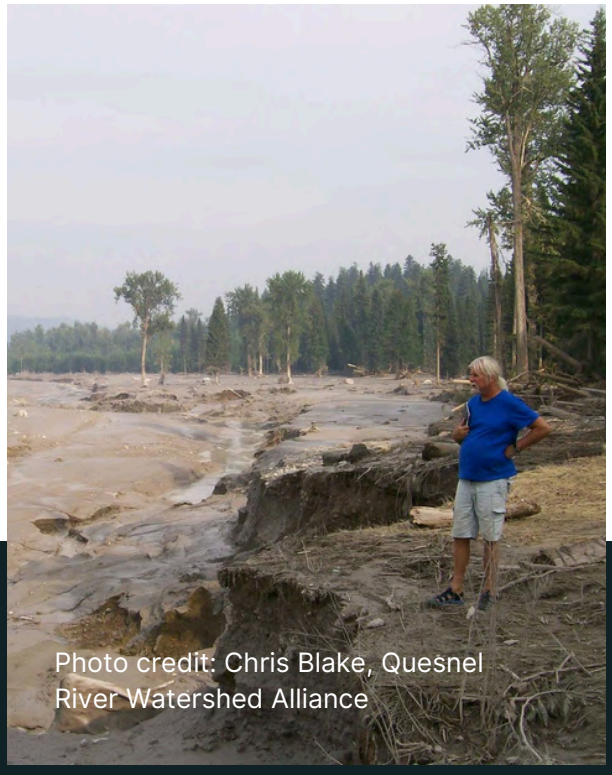

Photo credit: Chris Blake, Quesnel River Watershed Alliance

Decision-Making Processes

Clear and transparent decision-making processes are essential for effective collaboration with experts. Decide early on how decisions will be made, who will be involved in the decision-making process, and how decisions made by your community will be communicated to the expert.

Monitoring and Evaluating Expert Contributions

To ensure that collaboration with experts achieves your community's goals, it's essential to have mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their work. Here's a streamlined approach:

1

Setting Benchmarks and Expectations
Define clear, measurable goals for the project, such as timelines, quality standards, and desired outcomes. Ensure these benchmarks are included in project documents like work plans and contracts

2

Monitoring Progress
Schedule regular updates, such as weekly or monthly check-ins, to assess whether experts' contributions meet the established benchmarks. Consider using tools like progress reports or project tracking software to facilitate these reviews.

3

Feedback and Evaluation
Implement feedback mechanisms for community members to express their views on the expert's performance, using methods like surveys or focus groups or community meetings. At the project's end, conduct an evaluation against the initial benchmarks to assess the outcomes and processes. Share these results with both the expert and the community to inform future collaborations.

By effectively monitoring and evaluating expert contributions, your community can ensure that the collaboration is fruitful and directly contributes to your community’s development.

Monitoring and Evaluating Expert Contributions

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4

Assessing Recommendations

When considering recommendations from experts, it's important to remember that these suggestions are just that—recommendations. You are under no obligation to follow them if they don't align with the unique needs and values of your community. It is crucial that any action you take feels right and serves the best interests of your community. If a recommendation doesn't resonate with your community's goals or culture, you have the option to seek a second opinion or explore alternative solutions. Feel free to adapt the advice or consult with other experts to ensure the recommendations align with your community's unique needs. Ultimately, all decisions should reflect what is best for your community.

Photo credit: Pexels, Lucia Barreiros Silva

Leveraging Expert Knowledge for Community Benefit

Translating Expert Advice into Practical Actions

Once the expert provides recommendations, the next step is to work together to convert these recommendations into actionable steps that can be realistically implemented within your community. Depending on the situation, this may be done with the expert you have been working with, or may need to be done with a different expert that has different expertise. For example, an expert who specializes in assessing changes to the environment may be the right person to help your community develop an impact assessment document, but may not be the right person to design a community action plan for managing the environmental risks in the long term.

Photo credit: Inter-American Association for the Defense of the Environment (AIDA)

Educating the Community Using Expert Knowledge

Identify how you would like the expert to communicate information to your community. For example, you can organize workshops or discussion forums where the expert can present their findings and recommendations directly to the community, or ask the expert to create a short handout regarding their findings for circulation within the community. Feel free to ask the expert to present or communicate their findings in multiple formats or over multiple presentations.

CASE STUDY

Community Review of an EIA/EIS with the Help of Technical Experts

An Indigenous community in South America was approached by a mining company planning to develop a copper mine on their traditional lands. The community, concerned about the potential environmental impacts, particularly on their water sources and local fisheries, decided to seek external expertise to review the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that had been submitted by the mining company. The community reached out to FAIME for assistance, and a team of technical experts was brought in to help. Three key experts were selected to work with the community:

1. **An environmental engineer** who focused on analyzing the proposed mining and waste disposal methods, ensuring the design of the mine's infrastructure, including tailings dams, was safe and aligned with regulatory requirements.

2. **A geochemist** who examined the water quality predictions, focusing on potential contaminants that could enter the rivers, streams, and groundwater, which were vital for the community's daily use and for local fish populations.

3. **A hydrologist** who assessed the water quantity impacts, considering how the mine could affect local groundwater supplies and the potential for contaminated groundwater to reach the surface waters, including those that fed into important fish habitats.

As concerns about fish and water safety were significant, the team also engaged a fisheries biologist to evaluate the risks to the local fish species, particularly salmonids, which were a critical food source for the community. Throughout the review, the experts worked closely with community representatives, providing plain-language explanations of their findings and hosting several community meetings to answer questions. The experts also helped the community prepare their own response to the mining company, outlining their concerns and proposing additional protective measures, such as enhanced water treatment methods and stronger tailings dam designs. Thanks to the support from experts, the community was able to advocate effectively for changes to the mining project that addressed their environmental and cultural concerns, helping ensure the protection of their water and fish for future generations.

Learn more

Additional resources and information on effective collaboration with experts can be found on the FAIME website at www.faime.org/resources.

If you have any questions, please contact the FAIME team at info@faime.org.

Email Address

info@faime.org

Website

www.faime.org/resources