FAIME

A guide for experts

FROM THE FAIME DATABASE

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION WITH MINING-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

2026

About this guide

This guide provides tools, strategies and actionable advice for effectively navigating engagements with mining-affected communities as a FAIME expert. It offers practical advice on decision-making, communication strategies, effective stakeholder engagement and more. By applying the insights found in this guide to your work as a FAIME expert, you enhance your ability to achieve project objectives in ways that are both respectful and meaningful to the communities FAIME aims to serve.

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

About FAIME

The Find An Independent Mining Expert (FAIME) Database 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 while providing transparency with regard to the training and experience of each expert, the types of clients they have served, and their relationships with these clients.

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 of negative impacts of mining, including environmental, social, economic and other impacts.

Photo credit: Pexels, Vikash Singh

About FAIME

Being a FAIME expert means that you agree to abide by the mission statement and values outlined on the faime.org website. It's important that you take the time to review and reflect on these before undertaking a project facilitated by FAIME.

Photo credit: Chris Miller/RWB

Benefits of the FAIME database

1. Providing experts with the opportunity to offer their services to a broad range of non-industry clients, including non-governmental organizations, Indigenous groups, and government bodies supporting mining-affected communities.

2. Facilitating collaboration among professionals working with mining-affected communities, governments, and NGOs, enabling them to share knowledge, learn from each other, and create opportunities effectively, regardless of geographical location.

3. Offering experts driven by a desire to make a positive impact the chance to assist public interest organizations in advancing their missions, helping to level the playing field in terms of access to expertise between communities and mining companies.

Understanding the Impacts of Mining on Communities

Mining operations have significant environmental, social, economic, cultural, health and human rights impacts on nearby communities, with Indigenous communities being disproportionately affected by mining activities around the world.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Environmentally, mining can drastically affect the local landscape—deforestation, soil erosion, and contamination of water sources are common, which directly threaten culturally significant practices like hunting and fishing that affected communities may rely on.

SOCIAL IMPACTS

Socially, mining activities can lead to displacement, alteration of social structures, and increased social tensions due to an influx of external workers and altered land use patterns, causing disruptions to traditional lifestyles. The influx of external workers can strain local infrastructure, including schools and healthcare services.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Economically, the demand for labor can draw populations away from traditional activities and can lead to exploitative practices including poor working conditions and unfair wages. This can also lead to dependency on a single industry, which is unsustainable in the long-term.

CULTURAL IMPACTS

Culturally, mining activities can disrupt culturally significant place-based activities and traditions. For example, land that holds significant spiritual and/or historical value can be transformed by mining activities, impacting cultural landmarks, burial sites, hunting areas, and sacred spaces central to community identity and traditions.

Photo credit: Pexels, ArtHouse Studios

Understanding the Impacts of Mining on Communities

HEALTH IMPACTS

From a health perspective, affected communities often face increased exposure to pollutants that can lead to respiratory diseases, waterborne illnesses, and other health issues.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS

From a human rights perspective, mining operations can infringe on the rights of local communities, most commonly seen in Indigenous communities. This includes violations of land rights, lack of proper consultation, and inadequate compensation for land and resource use.

FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT

Ensuring that communities have the ability to exercise their rights to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is essential. This principle empowers communities to make informed decisions about mining projects that affect their lands and lives. It is crucial for mining companies to engage in ethical practices that respect the legal and human rights of those in impacted communities, thereby supporting not just economic development but also upholding justice and equity.

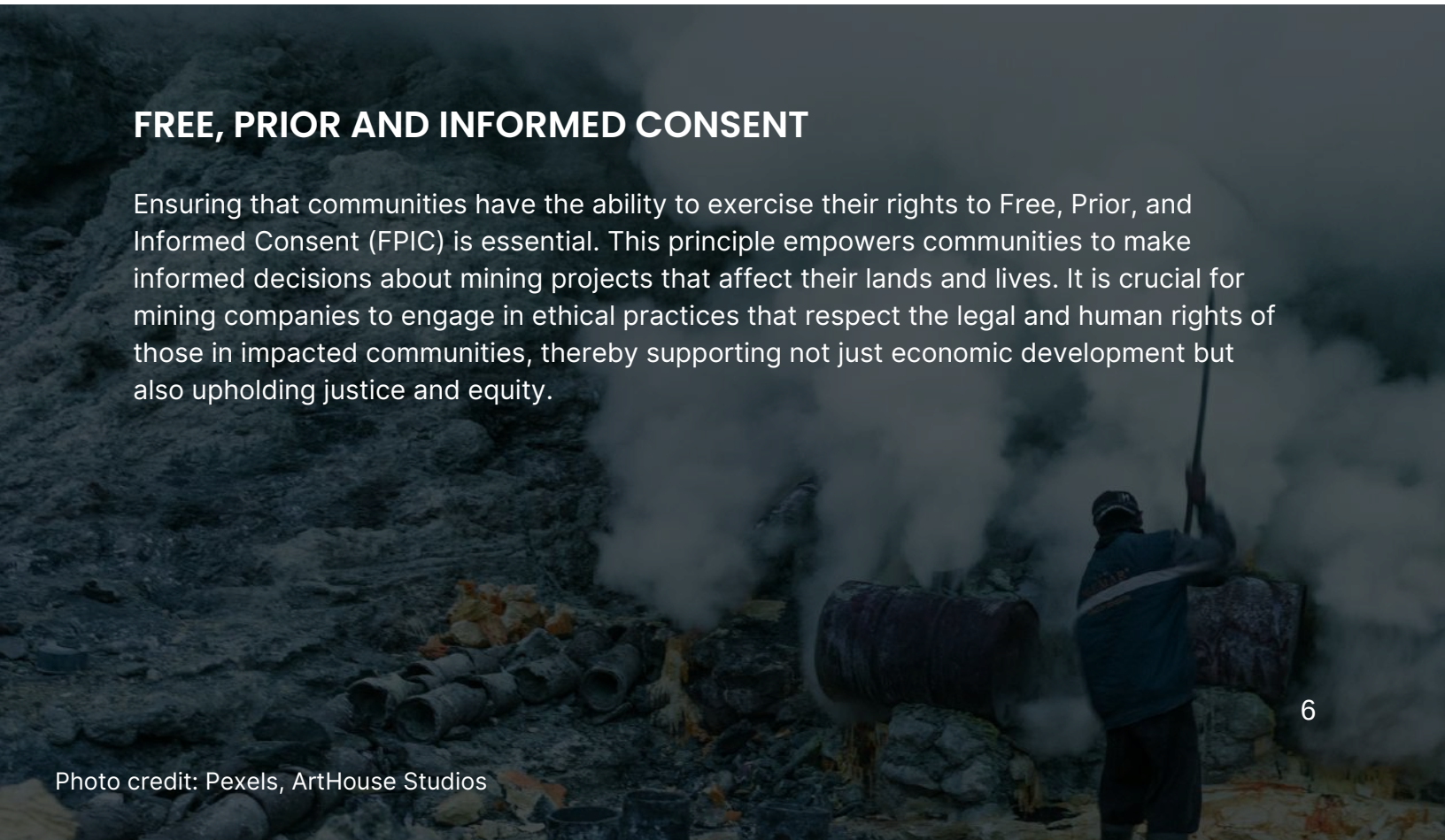


Photo credit: Pexels, ArtHouse Studios

To address these impacts of mining activities, timely provision of technical support to communities affected by mining projects and policies is critical. Without experts readily available to complement local knowledge with relevant expertise, communities frequently resort to assistance from individuals who do not have the appropriate experience or rely on information from industry-affiliated consultants. This often leads to the development of environmental, legal, or technical assessments that are not meaningful and can be harmful to affected communities.

It's important to recognize that while the negative impacts of mining are significant and well-documented, mining projects can also bring certain positive outcomes to communities under the right circumstances. These can include job creation, economic development, and access to corporate support for community projects, such as infrastructure improvements or social programs. As an expert working with mining-affected communities, it's important to be mindful of both the potential risks and benefits that such activities can bring.

Effective Engagement

Effective engagement in mining-affected communities begins with the acknowledgment that past events, such as colonization, may have created deep-rooted issues that affect relationships among local groups, create mistrust in outsiders, etc. Understanding these historical contexts helps in comprehending present dynamics and building a framework of respect and mutual understanding.

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.

Preparing for your project

The scope and nature of projects to which experts get connected through FAIME varies significantly. It is important to adapt your level of preparation accordingly. For short-term tasks like document reviews or specific consultations, prioritize clear communication, gain a basic understanding of cultural norms, and set clear expectations. For longer-term projects that involve sustained interaction with the community, prioritize gaining a thorough understanding of the community's cultural, environmental, and social contexts.

- **Historical Context:** What historical events, such as past conflicts or colonization, have shaped current local sentiments?
- **Cultural Practices and Norms:** Am I familiar with the community's customs, traditions, and social etiquette, such as their approaches to hospitality or communal eating practices?
- **Local Governance and Leadership:** Who are the key formal and informal leaders? Do I understand the local governance structures and the appropriate channels for communication and negotiation?

Preparing for your project

- **Community Perceptions and Interactions:** What are the community's expectations of outsiders when working with them? How has the community historically interacted with outsiders, and what lessons can I learn?

- **Conflict Resolution:** How does the community handle conflict, and what are the traditional mechanisms for resolution?

- **Religious and Spiritual Beliefs:** What religious practices or holidays might affect scheduling and engagement? Am I aware of any prohibitions that could influence my interactions?

- **Perspectives on Gender and Age:** How are gender and age roles defined, and how might they affect my interactions with the community?

- **Language and Communication:** Am I aware of the languages used in the community and their significance to cultural identity? Should I consider hiring an interpreter or learning key phrases to facilitate better engagement and demonstrate my respect for their culture?

Navigating Cross-Cultural Communication

Effective cross-cultural communication requires navigating diverse cultural norms and communication styles with sensitivity, adaptability, and understanding.

Tips for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication:

1

Do Anticipatory Research

Become informed on the culture's communication styles, such as formal greetings and conversation norms, prior to initial interactions.

2

Respect Local/Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Build on the foundational understanding that Indigenous knowledge systems hold intrinsic value equal to scientific methodologies, ensuring both are meaningfully utilized in project planning and execution.

3

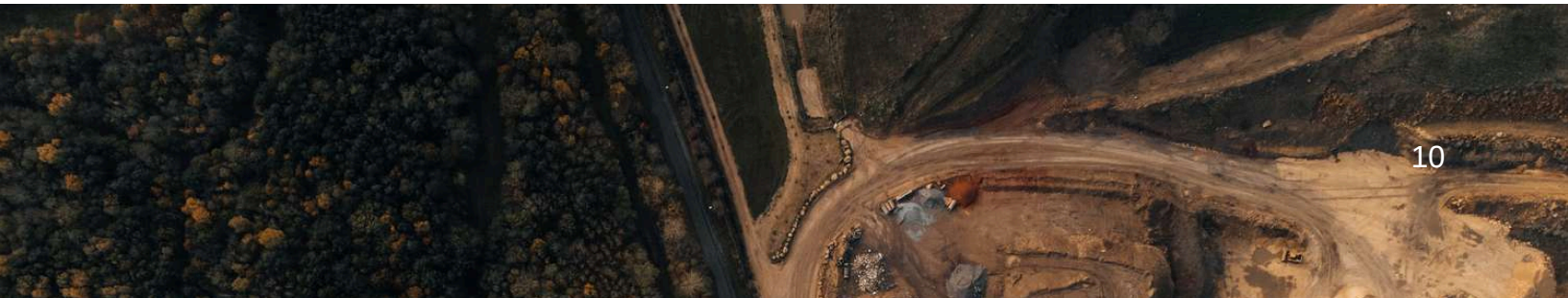
Create Space in Conversation

Listen attentively and be present for speakers' experiences. Be respectful during the silent spaces in conversation and do not feel like you have to fill them.

4

Use Straightforward Language

Use clear and straightforward language, avoiding slang, idioms, acronyms and complex jargon.



5

Translate Technical Data into Meaningful Information

Explain technical data in a way that is relevant to the community. For example, rather than stating that a water source contains 0.040 mg/L of a contaminant, explain that the water source is above or below the recommended threshold, and outline the impacts that may have on the community. An example may include its impact on fish health.

6

Avoid Complex Presentation Materials

When presenting ideas, avoid relying on PowerPoint and other presentation materials, which may appear impersonal and overly formal. Instead, opt for more interactive and engaging methods of communication that facilitate dialogue and personal connection, such as question-and-answer sessions, storytelling, etc.

7

Practice Active Listening

Focus on listening actively to understand the full message being communicated, asking clarifying questions to ensure comprehension.

8

Facilitate Open Dialogue

Encourage open and honest conversations, allowing space for questions and ensuring that communication flows both ways.

9

Avoid Closed Questions

Use open-ended questions to gather more insights and encourage discussion, avoiding simple yes/no questions.

10

Be Careful with Humour

Recognize that humor can vary greatly between cultures; avoid using humor that might be misunderstood or offensive.

Collaborative Problem-Solving

Strategies for Participatory and Inclusive Problem Solving

Participatory and inclusive problem-solving means engaging diverse stakeholders in every phase of the process, from defining the problem to implementing solutions, ensuring that all voices are heard, respected, and integrated into the decision-making process. This approach creates solutions that are more robust, equitable, and widely accepted.

Define the Problem Collaboratively: Begin by engaging a diverse group of stakeholders to define the problem collectively. This collaborative approach not only enriches the understanding of the issue but also ensures that various perspectives are considered right from the start. Encourage stakeholders to express their views and experiences, which can lead to a more comprehensive

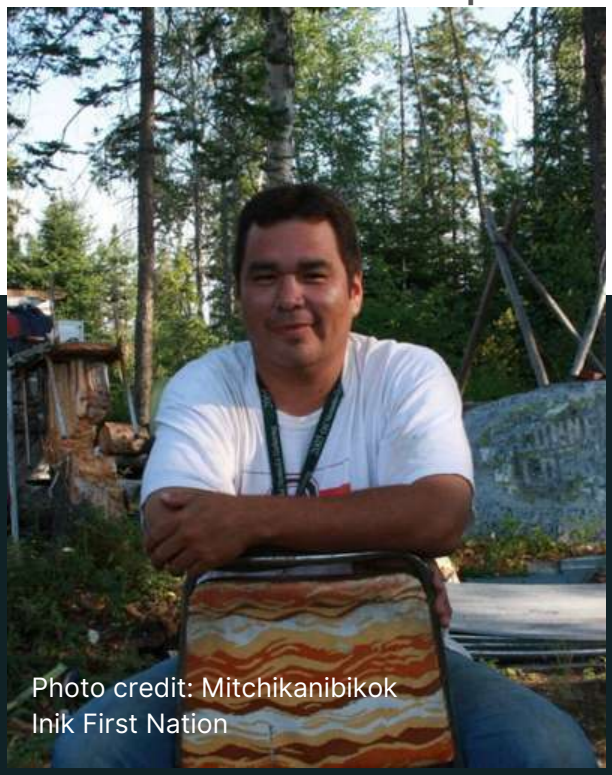


Photo credit: Mitchikanibikok Inik First Nation

Invite Diverse Perspectives: Ensure that the problem-solving team includes members from varied backgrounds, as appropriate.

Facilitate Open and Structured Dialogue: Create an environment where open communication is encouraged, yet structured to ensure everyone's voice is heard. Use techniques like brainstorming sessions, structured dialogues, and design thinking workshops, as appropriate, to guide the conversation and generate ideas. This not only stimulates creativity but also prevents dominant voices from overshadowing

Collaborative Problem-Solving

Evaluate Ideas Objectively: Set criteria for evaluating solutions that are clear, transparent, and agreed upon by all participants. Apply these criteria fairly to all proposed solutions to ensure that decisions are based on merit and relevance to the problem, rather than personal biases or influence.

Implement Solutions Collaboratively: Once a solution has been selected, plan its implementation in a manner that continues to involve all stakeholders. This collaborative implementation can help adjust the solution dynamically, addressing any issues as they arise and

Document and Reflect on the Process: Maintain detailed records of discussions, decisions, and the rationale behind them. Post-implementation, reflect on the process to identify what worked well and what could be improved. This ongoing documentation and reflection reinforce transparency and provide valuable insights for future problem-solving endeavors.

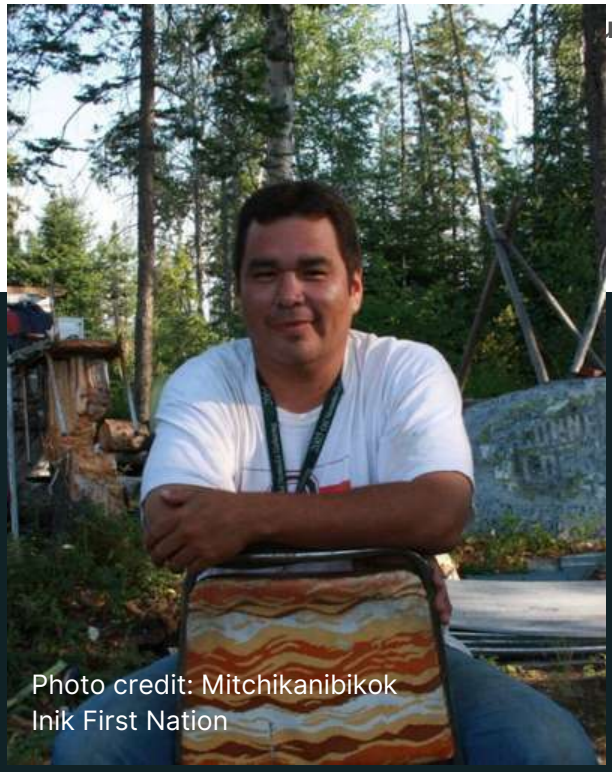


Photo credit: Mitchikanibikok Inik First Nation

Consensus-based decision-making processes

Different projects necessitate different approaches to decision-making. Consensus-based decision-making is often utilized in long-term projects due to their complexity and scope, which often benefit from broad stakeholder engagement. Short-term initiatives often utilize more direct decision-making methods in order for decisions to be made quickly and efficiently, allowing for prompt action and adaptation to immediate needs.

- **What It Is: Consensus-based decision-making is a collaborative process that seeks agreement from all participants. Unlike majority rule, where the majority's preference automatically becomes the decision, consensus requires that all group members actively support or at least agree not to oppose the decision. This process emphasizes the incorporation of diverse viewpoints and aims to find solutions that address the concerns of all parties involved. It involves thorough discussions, open dialogue, and sometimes, creative problem-solving to reconcile differing opinions. The goal is to reach a decision that is acceptable to everyone, thereby enhancing commitment and reducing the likelihood of future conflicts.**
- **What It Isn't: Consensus-based decision-making is not about achieving unanimous agreement or forcing a compromise for the sake of unanimity. It does not mean that every decision must satisfy all participants completely. It is also not about avoiding conflict. On the contrary, healthy and constructive conflicts are often a part of the consensus process, as they can lead to deeper understanding and better solutions.**

Photo credit: Pexels, Lucia Barreiros Silva

CASE STUDY

Governance Model Development with Support from Expert Facilitators

Three Indigenous communities in Canada noticed worsening water quality and quantity in their region, which was leading to declining habitat and the health of local wildlife, including fish populations. Concerned about these changes, the communities began monitoring the environment using both Indigenous Knowledge and scientific indicators to identify the causes and seek solutions.

To formalize their efforts and strengthen their response, the communities decided to establish an Indigenous-led nonprofit organization. Creating the organization involved several steps, one of the most important being the development of a governance model that would reflect the shared interests of all three communities.

FAIME brought in expert facilitators to support this process, contributing a range of relevant skills. Their expertise in stakeholder engagement ensured meaningful and respectful involvement from diverse community members, while their organizational development skills guided the design of a governance model that incorporated essential community principles and protocols, such as traditional governance practices and land-use protocols. Additionally, facilitators with backgrounds in social and cultural impact assessment helped align the model with the communities' cultural values and social needs.

Through this collaborative effort, the communities successfully agreed on a governance structure that included a Board of Directors with equal representation from each community, as well as multiple advisory committees to ensure ongoing input and guidance.

Ethical Guidelines for Working in Mining-Affected Communities

1

Informed Consent

Ensure that all participants and stakeholders involved in the assessment understand the purpose, methods, and potential impacts of the project. Obtaining informed consent is not a one-time action but an ongoing process that requires clear communication and the opportunity for stakeholders to withdraw consent at any point.

2

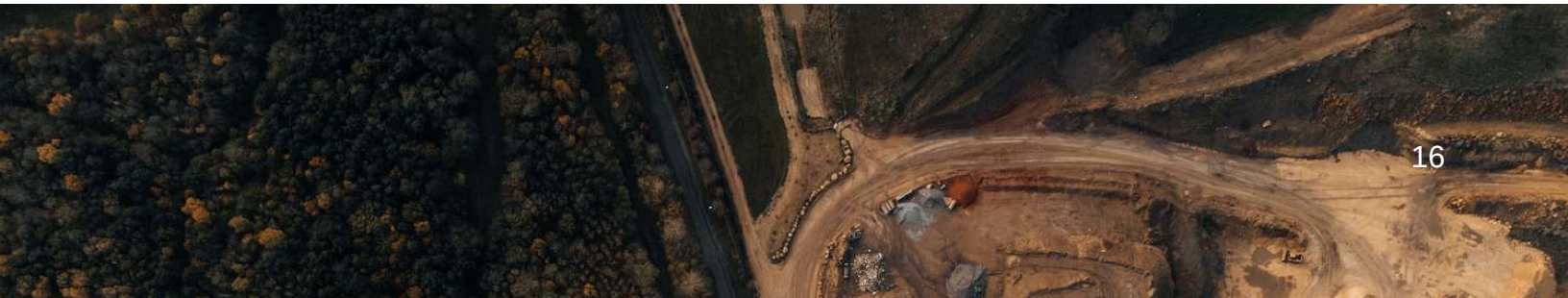
Cultural Sensitivity and Respect

Adapt methodologies to respect local customs and cultural contexts. This involves not only language and communication styles but also respecting local norms and practices during data collection and presentations.

3

Avoiding Harm

Minimize any potential harm to participants and communities. This includes psychological, social, and environmental harms that might arise from the assessment activities. Strategies must be put in place to mitigate any unintended negative consequences.



Data Ownership and Use

1

Clarity on Data Ownership

Clearly define who owns the data collected during assessments. Typically this is the community or stakeholders from whom the data was sourced. Legal data sharing agreements or MOUs should outline data ownership rights and use.

2

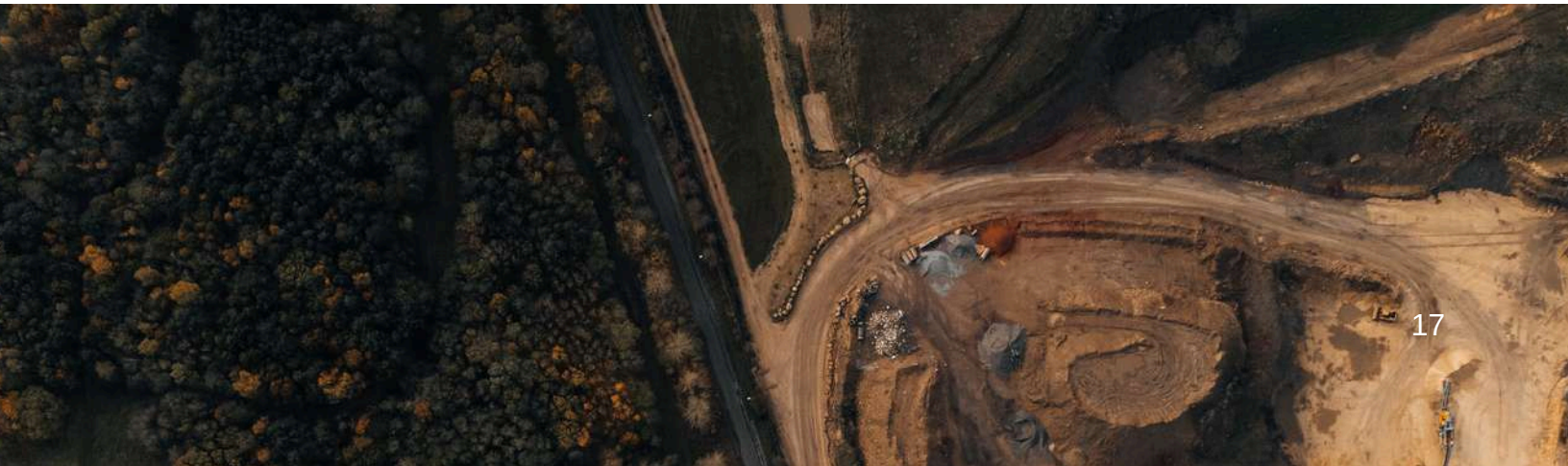
Ethical Use of Data

Establish guidelines for how data can be used, who can access it, and under what conditions. This includes considerations for data privacy and security, particularly for sensitive information.

3

Long-term Access and Storage

Determine how data will be stored and accessed in the long term, ensuring that it remains secure and that the communities involved can access it if needed.



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.

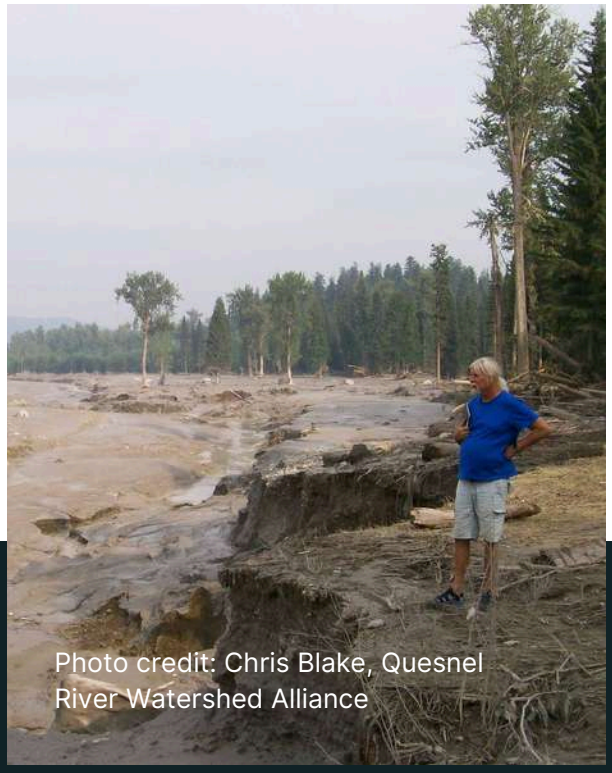


Photo credit: Chris Blake, Quesnel River Watershed Alliance

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.

Things to Consider

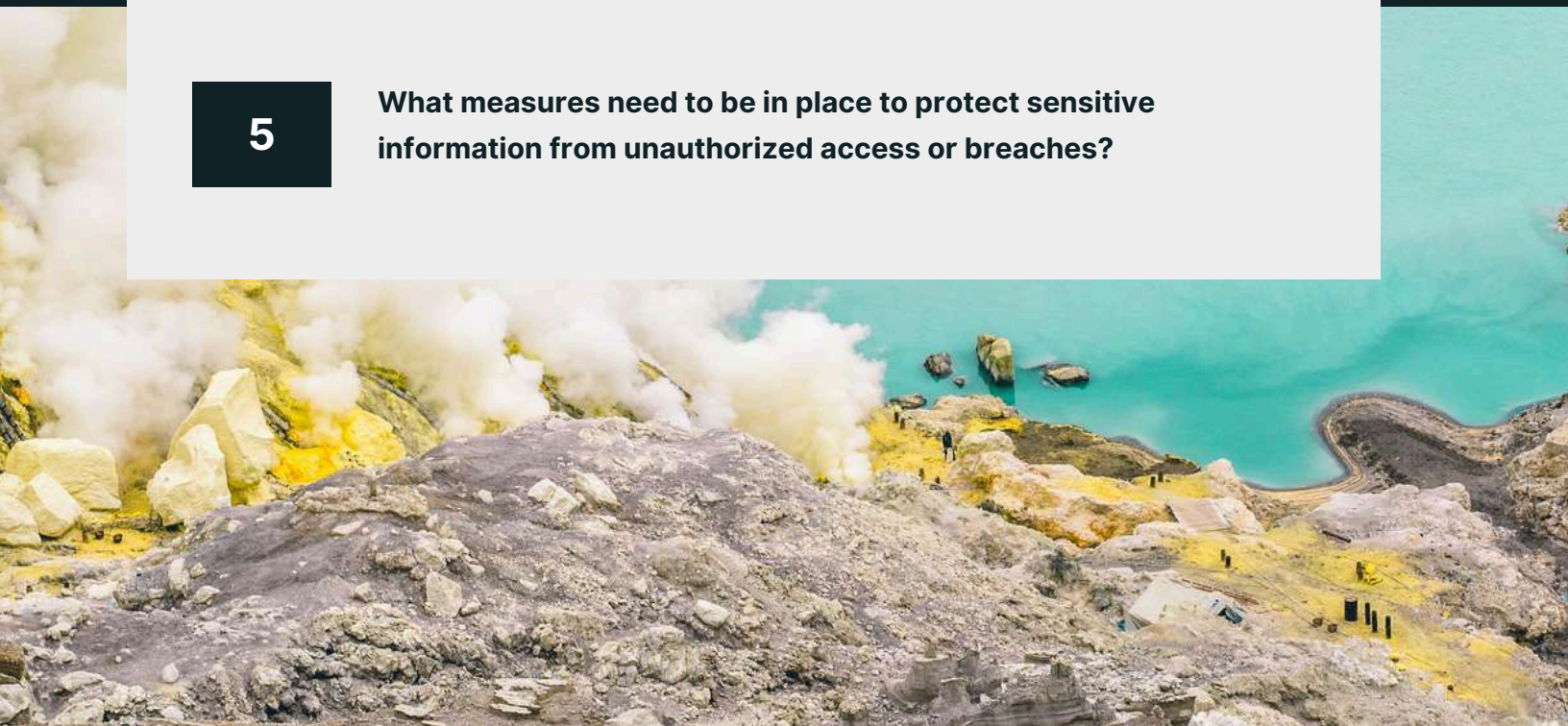
1. Can you use the data for future projects or are permissions project-specific?

2. How will you acknowledge or attribute data to its owners in your reports, publications, or any other written materials?

3. Under what conditions can the data be shared with external parties?

4. What are the protocols if consent is withdrawn by the data providers after the data has been collected?

5. What measures need to be in place to protect sensitive information from unauthorized access or breaches?



Learn more

Additional resources and information on effective collaboration with mining-affected communities 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