PROJECT MOSAIC
CREATING CONNECTIONS

CONSENT ANALYSIS REPORT

AKMIN's Collective Vision on Consent in Hardrock Mining

For the Alaska Mining Impacts Network

July 30, 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Detailed Table of Contents:

SECTION 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a detailed analysis of the Alaska Mining Impacts Network's (AKMIN) vision for equitable and sustainable consent-based decision-making in hardrock mining projects across the state. Given growing concerns related to projects like the Palmer Project, Graphite One, Donlin Gold, and the proposed West Susitna Access Road, Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF) hired Project Mosaic LLC to facilitate research and dialogue among mining impact advocates. The goal was to define meaningful consent clearly from the perspectives of affected communities.

Key insights from this analysis highlight consent as a dynamic relationship, and an expression of Indigenous sovereignty, emphasizing communities' unequivocal right to accept or decline mining projects without pressure. The report identifies critical barriers, such as outdated legal frameworks (including the 1872 Mining Law), limited enforcement of Indigenous rights, resource disparities, restrictive timelines, and experiences of misinformation and coercion. Participants strongly emphasized grassroots advocacy, cultural continuity, intergenerational responsibility, and community-driven processes as essential elements for meaningful consent.

Based on these findings, the report recommends the following actions to enable meaningful consent in hardrock mining:

1. **Establishing legally binding consent standards** aligned with Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).
2. **Developing Indigenous-led and community-driven consent protocols** that reflect traditional communication styles, decision-making protocols, and relational accountability.
3. **Providing comprehensive financial, technical, and legal resources** to enhance community capacities and grassroots organizing.
4. **Strengthening environmental and cultural safeguards** through independent environmental and health impacts assessments, and by supporting community-led decision-making bodies and incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into environmental assessments.
5. **Redefining consent as an ongoing, transparent relationship.** AKMIN can "steer the ship" by redefining what consent-based decision making looks like in hardrock mining using the drafted values in this report.
6. **Enhancing early, transparent, and ongoing community engagement** during the mining project lifecycle, and educating governmental and corporate entities on appropriate Indigenous-informed engagement.
7. **Addressing historical harms through decolonizing practices** such as committing to address structural violence and legal barriers Indigenous communities face, and acknowledging consent as *sovereignty*.

These measures collectively aim to significantly improve consent practices, reinforce Indigenous sovereignty, and ensure equitable and sustainable outcomes for Alaska's communities affected by mining developments. The participants' experiences are the foundation of this study and emphasize consent as an *ongoing, transparent relationship, and exercise of sovereignty for Alaska Native communities in particular.* This analysis is not only a record of concern—it is a collective roadmap for change.

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF) is dedicated exclusively to conservation efforts in Alaska, with a mission to protect Alaska's unique landscapes and ways of life by supporting conservation leaders, organizations, and initiatives. Alaska Conservation Foundation envisions a future where Alaska's lands, waters, wildlife, and ways of life are sustained by and for countless generations. Recognizing increased interest in hardrock mining and related infrastructure, ACF facilitated the formation of the Alaska Mining Impacts Network (AKMIN). The Alaska Mining Impacts Network establishes a convening space for conservation, tribal, and community leaders to create and share resources, build relationships, foster collaboration and strengthen advocacy efforts focused on the impacts of hardrock mining in Alaska.

The purpose of this consent analysis report, commissioned by ACF, is to present AKMIN's collective vision of meaningful and equitable consent-based decision-making in mining projects. Specifically, the report examines critical components and processes necessary for effective community consent, emphasizing the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). By clearly defining consent and highlighting community perspectives, this report aims to inform policymakers, agency representatives, and broader audiences, contributing to policy reforms and practices that uphold Indigenous rights,

enhance environmental protections, and promote sustainable resource management across Alaska.

SECTION 3: ABOUT THE CONSULTING PARTNERS

In Gratitude

Project Mosaic LLC deeply respects Alaska Conservation Foundation's (ACF) mission and vision for Alaska, where land stewardship is prioritized and local communities can ensure that mining and associated development happen only with their free, prior, and informed consent. Everything Native people do is intended to benefit the next seven generations, and ACF's efforts will help ensure and protect Indigenous rights, as well as implement rigorous protective policies and practices that enable a future where the land, air, and water continue to provide traditional and cultural livelihoods for present and future generations. The work completed was designed to meet the core requirements of the proposal request, and we hope that it supports AKMIN's efforts to protect people and lands in Alaska.

About Project Mosaic, LLC.

Project Mosaic, LLC, is an Indigenous woman-owned consulting group founded in 2016 in Denver, Colorado. We are skilled facilitators with demonstrated success in assisting Tribes, nonprofits, and community groups with strategic planning, economic development, communications strategies, evaluation, research, and community engagement. Our clients primarily

include Native American nonprofits, tribal entities, and educational institutions, leveraging years of experience in Indigenous methodologies and best practices. Our diverse identities help us build relationships and support for people from different backgrounds.

Project Mosaic, LLC was contracted to facilitate and conduct consent analysis for the Alaska Mining Impacts Network (AKMIN) by Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF). The project included a 90-minute facilitated focus group discussion with over 100 participants focused on the topic of consent in mining projects across Alaska and subsequent in-depth interviews with 16 participants selected using a nested sampling strategy. A pre-survey was developed to inform the facilitated focus group completed by 34 participants followed by a post-survey completed by 66 participants which informed the recommendations in Section 8. This report synthesizes qualitative insights gathered from AKMIN participants, emphasizing their experiences and perspectives to establish a clear, collective vision of meaningful consent processes that aligns closely with the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). (See APPENDIX E: REPORT AUTHORS).

SECTION 4. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Definitions and Legal and Regulatory Context

Clear and consistent terminology is essential for understanding consent-based decision-making processes, particularly regarding Indigenous

communities affected by current or proposed mining projects. Key terms are defined below to avoid confusion or ambiguity throughout this report:

- **Consent.** Refers explicitly to Indigenous communities' authority to accept, reject, or conditionally approve projects that impact their lands and livelihoods. Unlike mere consultation, consent involves meaningful decision-making power.
- **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).** Defined by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), FPIC mandates that Indigenous communities freely provide consent without coercion, prior to project initiation, and informed through comprehensive, timely, and culturally appropriate information.
- **Community-led.** Refers to decision-making processes initiated, controlled, and directed by the community itself, reflecting local priorities, cultural practices, and traditional governance systems.
- **Indigenous sovereignty.** The inherent right of Indigenous peoples to govern themselves and manage their lands, resources, and affairs autonomously, reflecting their distinct political, cultural, and legal authority.

Within the United States of America, a critical distinction exists between consultation and consent processes. Consultation typically involves informing or engaging communities about developments without granting decision-making authority (Amnesty International et al., 2005). By contrast,

consent explicitly recognizes Indigenous peoples' right to approve or reject projects, thereby offering stronger legal and ethical protections aligned with their sovereignty (Hanna & Vanclay, 2013).

Federally, government-to-government consultation acknowledges Tribes' sovereign status but often lacks enforceable mechanisms for consent, frequently leaving Indigenous concerns inadequately addressed (Anaya, 2018; Papillon & Rodon, 2019). Similarly, the State of Alaska's consultation processes typically prioritize informational exchanges over substantive empowerment or enforceable consent mechanisms (Buxton & Wilson, 2013).

Internationally, UNDRIP clearly establishes FPIC principles, highlighting Indigenous peoples' rights to make informed decisions regarding developments affecting their territories without undue pressure (United Nations, 2007). The Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) integrates FPIC into voluntary certification standards, setting ethical benchmarks for corporate accountability in mining projects (IRMA, 2018).

Together, these frameworks illustrate the varied landscape of consultation and consent, emphasizing the need for clear definitions, strong enforcement, and authentic engagement to protect Indigenous rights and support genuine community decision-making.

SECTION 5: METHODOLOGY

This report employed qualitative research methods intentionally designed to align closely with the principles of consent, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), community-led processes, and Indigenous sovereignty. Our methodological choices explicitly centered Indigenous epistemologies, cultural safety, and participatory decision-making, authentically representing participants' experiences and perspectives.

A. Indigenous Research Approach and Six R's Framework

Our qualitative methodology was guided by the Six R's of Indigenous Research—Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility, Relationality, and Representation (Tsosie et al., 2022; Wilson, 2008; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Each principle shaped our methodological design, data collection, and analysis:

- **Respect.** We prioritized culturally sensitive and respectful engagement by ensuring research tools honored Indigenous values and participants' lived experiences.
- **Relevance.** Research questions and tools were co-developed with the AKMIN advisory committee, ensuring they directly addressed community-identified concerns about consent in mining contexts.

- **Reciprocity.** We validated participants' contributions by providing opportunities for input and feedback throughout the research process, ensuring shared ownership of outcomes.
- **Responsibility.** Ethical research practices were meticulously maintained, including safeguarding participant confidentiality, obtaining informed consent, and upholding tribal data sovereignty.
- **Relationality.** We emphasized meaningful relationship-building through participatory and collaborative processes, cultivating trust and mutual understanding with community participants and leaders.
- **Representation.** Indigenous storytelling methods, combined with Thematic Analysis, were explicitly selected to authentically represent Indigenous voices, ensuring that the findings accurately reflected participants' experiences, cultural contexts, and the core themes emerging from their narratives.

Reinforcement of Key Terminology in Methodological Design

- **Consent and FPIC.** Qualitative methods—including surveys, facilitated focus groups, and in-depth interviews—enabled participants to express their perspectives openly, aligning with the principles of FPIC by providing transparent, timely, and culturally informed engagement.
- **Community-led.** The AKMIN advisory committee, consisting of community advocates and Indigenous leaders, actively influenced the

development of research instruments, ensuring methods were culturally appropriate, relevant, and reflective of local priorities.

- **Indigenous Sovereignty**. Incorporating Indigenous storytelling with thematic analysis directly honored Indigenous sovereignty and epistemologies, enabling participants to define and interpret consent through their cultural lenses.

B. Data Collection Methods

- **Pre-Survey Design**. Conducted from March to April 2025, the pre-survey was collaboratively designed with AKMIN's advisory committee to gather community perceptions about consent processes in mining projects (See Appendix C: Survey Questions). A total of 34 participants responded to the pre-survey.
- **Facilitated Focus Groups**. A structured 90-minute facilitated focus group was held on May 7, 2025, and utilized community cafés and scenario planning to explore meaningful consent in depth, emphasizing equitable and culturally respectful participation. Three focus groups of approximately 33 people each (100 participants total) were completed. (See Appendix D Facilitated Focus Group Shared Values).
- **In-depth Interviews.** Employing a nested sampling strategy, we conducted 16 in-depth interviews from April 21-May 15, 2025, lasting approximately 30 minutes each, allowing for extensive narrative

exploration of participants' consent experiences (See Appendix A: Interview Questions).

- **Post-survey**. Conducted after the facilitated focus groups from May 8-16, 2025, a total of 66 participants responded to the post-survey. This survey focused on the one or two key recommendations that participants felt were most important in making the mining consent process in Alaska more fair, inclusive and culturally responsive. Respondents, comprising Indigenous community members, environmental advocates, nonprofit leaders, tribal representatives, and community stakeholders, provided qualitative feedback on their experiences during the facilitated focus groups. Their recommendations address actionable steps and potential improvements necessary to strengthen community engagement and decision-making authority in future mining consent scenarios.

C. Analytical Framework

Thematic analysis was particularly well-suited for this consent analysis project because it provided a structured yet flexible method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes directly derived from participants' narratives given in the pre- and post- surveys, interviews, and facilitated focus groups. Given the project's emphasis on Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), consent processes, community-led initiatives, and Indigenous sovereignty,

thematic analysis enabled researchers to prioritize and interpret these culturally significant themes systematically. Moreover, this method ensured that findings authentically reflected participant perspectives and cultural contexts, aligning closely with Indigenous research principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility, relationality, and representation.

D. Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality and Verbal Consent

Project Mosaic's team maintains high standards, protecting sensitive info and obtaining consent from stakeholders or Tribal Nations sharing non-public data. To ensure confidentiality, participants' identities were protected by assigning each individual a unique code name derived from an Alaskan plant or animal, such as "Salmonberry," "Blueberry," or "Flounder." Before participation, all participants received a comprehensive project overview and provided verbal informed consent, affirming their voluntary involvement and understanding of confidentiality measures. This approach safeguarded participants' identities while maintaining cultural sensitivity and respect throughout the research process.

The project collaborated with an advisory committee for guidance, cultural insights, and expertise throughout the research on additional ethical standards.

The AKMIN advisory committee comprised eleven members representing a diverse range of expertise, advocacy, and leadership roles related to the impacts of mining across Alaska. Four individuals within this group identify specifically as Alaska Natives, bringing critical cultural knowledge and Indigenous perspectives to the discussions.

The group includes several environmental advocates: a program manager focusing on mining impacts and energy issues in Fairbanks, especially the Manh Choh/Ore Haul project; an executive director dedicated to the conservation of the Chilkat Valley from the proposed Palmer Project; and an advisor who addresses transboundary mining concerns between British Columbia and Alaska.

The group also benefits from their substantial legal and technical expertise. It includes one managing attorney from a legal advocacy organization who provides statewide legal counsel and litigation support related to mining impacts. Complementing this legal support is a technical expert who serves as president of a science-focused organization; although based in Montana, this expert consults extensively on Alaska-related environmental and mining technical issues.

Advocates from Indigenous-led coalitions play a critical role within the group. Included are a director and an Elder, both actively involved in addressing concerns related to the Donlin Mine in the Kuskokwim region through tribal coalitions. Another Alaska Native advocate directs a group

dedicated to cultural and ecological protection associated with the Graphite One mining project in the Kigluaik Mountains. Additionally, an Alaska Native member co-founded an advocacy group focused specifically on opposing road construction into the Ambler Mining District, highlighting concerns about the impacts on Indigenous communities and ecosystems.

The group further includes an Alaska campaign director from a prominent national conservation association, who is heavily engaged in advocacy surrounding the Ambler Mining District and its potential ecological and cultural impacts.

Despite its broad representation across various mining issues and regions in Alaska, the advisory committee has acknowledged specific geographic and issue-related gaps. It particularly recognizes the need for more representation related to the Bristol Bay region, notably the Pebble Project, Johnson Tract, and the West Susitna Access Road and Estelle Gold areas. The group remains committed to addressing these gaps as it guides its collaborative efforts.

SECTION 6: FINDINGS & DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings from the pre- and post-surveys, facilitated focus groups, and in depth interviews. A thematic data analysis was applied to learn about the perceptions and recommendations regarding

consent-based decision making practices related to hardrock mining in Alaska. The findings examined three primary questions:

1. ***What does consent-based decision-making look like from an Alaska mining impacts advocate's perspective?***
2. ***What are the concerns about existing approaches to consultation and consent?***
3. ***What are mining impacts advocates' opinions about mining in the region that shape how meaningful consent should be approached?***

A. Pre-Survey Analysis

The pre-survey aimed to capture community perspectives on consent processes related to hardrock mining projects and associated infrastructure across Alaska. Conducted between March and April 2025, the survey informed the subsequent facilitated focus group sessions and the overall report. A total of 34 participants voluntarily provided insights based on their experiences, with confidentiality ensured. The complete survey instrument is available in Appendix C.

Participant Demographics

Participants represented diverse sectors and regions (see Table 1). Roles included Indigenous community members, activists, researchers, Tribal government representatives, and environmental advocates.

Table 1: Pre-Survey Participant Demographics

Category	Description
Participant Roles	Indigenous community members, advocates, activists, researchers, academics, Tribal government representatives, and organizational affiliates (many holding multiple roles simultaneously).
Geographic Regions	Urban areas: Anchorage, Eagle River; MatSu Region: Palmer, Wasilla, Talkeetna; Rural and remote regions: Bristol Bay (Naknek), Klukwan, Chisik Island, Southeast Alaska, Bethel, Sitka, Nome, other Alaska Native communities
Indigenous Participants	Roles linked to land stewardship, community governance, cultural preservation, Indigenous sovereignty; Personal motivations related to community health, subsistence resources, cultural heritage, environmental sustainability
Non-Indigenous Participants	Primarily environmental and conservation organizations; Roles include advocacy, policy analysis, negotiations related to resource management and environmental protections; Expertise in regulatory processes, environmental law, conservation science
Key Themes of Engagement	Intersection of community-based knowledge, scientific expertise, advocacy skills, and cultural understanding; Emphasis on inclusive, culturally responsive, geographically diverse decision-making processes

Understanding this diverse demographic context, participants' varying levels of involvement and familiarity with mining-related decision-making processes become particularly significant.

Involvement and Familiarity

Participants reported varying levels of involvement in mining-related decision-making, ranging from active engagement to minimal participation. Those highly involved—such as environmental advocates and Tribal representatives—often played key roles in advocacy, while others faced barriers to participation, including limited resources and restrictive timelines (Anaya, 2018). This variability in engagement was mirrored in participants' familiarity with consent frameworks. While there was broader recognition of Traditional Governance systems, the Federal Government-to-Government process, and the UNDRIP FPIC framework, there was notably less familiarity with multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) and the State of Alaska's consultation processes. These gaps in awareness underscore the need for increased education and transparency to support informed consent and strengthen community advocacy (Buxton & Wilson, 2013; Hanna & Vanclay, 2013). Bridging this knowledge gap through targeted education is essential for meaningful engagement (Papillon & Rodon, 2019).

Effectiveness of Current Consultation Processes

Respondents overwhelmingly described existing consultation processes as ineffective, citing issues like predetermined outcomes, insufficient transparency, and inadequate enforcement of Indigenous rights. Additional concerns included limited access to necessary financial, technical, and legal resources, as well as restrictive timelines hindering genuine community input. Participants emphasized the need for structural reforms, enforceable rights,

improved transparency, and adequate resourcing for authentic engagement (Buxton & Wilson, 2013; Hanna & Vanclay, 2013).

Essential Elements for Meaningful Consent

Key elements for meaningful consent, as identified by participants, included: early and transparent communication, legal recognition of Indigenous decision-making authority, integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), community-led environmental assessments, and the unequivocal right to reject projects without coercion. Economic benefits were seen as secondary to these fundamental rights and environmental stewardship (Papillon & Rodon, 2019; Lewis & Boyd, 2013).

Direct Impacts Experienced

Respondents reported negative impacts from mining projects, even at exploratory stages, including environmental degradation, social disruption, and loss of cultural heritage. They highlighted inadequate genuine consent, economic coercion, misinformation, and limited resource access as critical issues exacerbating these impacts. Addressing these impacts requires culturally responsive strategies and substantial investment in community resources and capacity-building (Keeling & Sandlos, 2015; Whyte, 2017).

Major Barriers and Challenges

Significant barriers identified included premature decision-making before consultations, weak enforcement of Indigenous rights, inadequate

community resources, restrictive timelines, and industry-driven misinformation. Effective consent processes necessitate transparent practices, robust legal frameworks, adequate resourcing, flexible consultation timelines, and mechanisms to address misinformation and coercion (Lewis & Boyd, 2013; Papillon & Rodon, 2019).

B. Facilitated Focus Group Analysis

Three facilitated focus groups of approximately 33 participants each (100 participants total) were held on May 7, 2025, which included community members, advocates, tribal representatives, environmental experts, and policymakers. The goal of the structured 90-minute facilitated focus groups was to gather diverse perspectives on consent and consultation related to mining impacts in Alaska. After an initial "Shared Values" exercise (See Appendix D), participants rotated through three rounds of small group discussions, each lasting around 20 minutes, allowing for focused conversations and comprehensive sharing.

Shared Values Activity

The session began with participants identifying core values guiding their advocacy and concerns about mining impacts. Facilitators shared their own values as examples, including a quote emphasizing ancestral connection to the land: “This is the land that we belong to, not the land that belongs to us,” and “We must lead with our heart and our intuition, and show others how to treat us, so they know we will not allow harm to continue in our communities.”

See **Appendix D** for the original list of identified values among groups.

Participants from three groups identified common values, summarized as follows:

Common Values Guiding Advocacy and Concern About Mining Impacts:

- **Intergenerational Responsibility and Stewardship**: Protecting resources for current and future generations, emphasizing ecological and cultural sustainability.
- **Respect for Nature**: Acknowledging the intrinsic rights of land, water, animals, and ecosystems, promoting harmony and balance.
- **Community and Relational Values**: Emphasizing empathy, compassion, generosity, and community cohesion, creating meaningful and respectful dialogue.
- **Cultural and Subsistence Practices**: Highlighting subsistence lifestyles, particularly fishing, as essential for cultural identity, community health, and food security.
- **Honesty, Integrity, and Accountability:** Advocating transparency, ethical communication, and genuine accountability in consultation and decision-making processes.
- **Learning, Humility, and Inclusivity:** Valuing continuous learning, humility, and diverse knowledge systems, especially Indigenous perspectives.
- **Health, Safety, and Well-being**: Prioritizing community health, safety, emotional well-being, and overall environmental justice.

Collectively, these shared values reflect a community deeply committed to cultural traditions, relational responsibility, ecological stewardship, and ethical integrity. Recognizing these values is critical for achieving meaningful, culturally responsive consent practices and sustainable resource governance outcomes. Building upon these foundational shared values, participants then engaged in structured discussion rounds to delve deeper into specific aspects of consent and consultation processes.

Focus Group Discussion Rounds

Round # 1 Prompt: What are the different ways you wish to approach consent (speaking from your perspective as a mining impacts advocate and/or frontline community)?

In the first discussion round, participants considered various approaches that advocates and communities prefer regarding consent processes. The group designated note-takers shared from their discussions highlighting—*participants' emphasis on* ***community-led environmental assessments***, ***legally enforceable rights to consent***, *and* ***prioritizing the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)*** *into decision-making.* Early and transparent communication emerged strongly, reflecting a shared commitment to proactive and informed community engagement.

Round #2 Prompt: What are your concerns about existing approaches to consultation and consent?

Participants then rotated to new tables, allowing for cross-pollination of ideas and perspectives. Facilitators briefly summarized prior discussions, enabling new participants to engage and contribute meaningfully quickly. The second round addressed concerns with existing approaches to consultation and consent. Facilitators captured significant concerns expressed by participants, particularly regarding ***predetermined outcomes that favor corporate interests***, the ***lack of enforceability in current frameworks***, ***short and inadequate consultation timelines***, and ***widespread experiences of misinformation and coercion from industry representatives***.

Round #3 Prompt: What are your opinions about mining impacts in your region, and how can these perspectives help inform future discussions about consent?

The third and final round of table discussions encouraged participants to share their opinions about the regional impacts of mining to inform future consent conversations. Participants clearly articulated concerns about ***environmental degradation, social disruption, cultural disconnection, and threats to subsistence livelihoods resulting from mining activities***. Participants also noted the significant ***stress and division caused within communities***, even during preliminary exploration phases, underscoring the urgency for meaningful and rigorous consent practices.

To conclude the session, each facilitator presented a brief synthesis of their table's key themes, which were collectively documented on a central

board visible to all participants. Overarching themes identified included a strong desire for ***legally binding consent frameworks, genuine empowerment of Indigenous communities, enhanced transparency and accountability in consultation processes, and sustainable long-term environmental and cultural stewardship.***

In closing remarks, the lead facilitator thanked all participants for their valuable contributions and clarified how these discussions would directly inform future advocacy, policy recommendations, and ongoing dialogues around mining consent processes in Alaska. Participants were encouraged to remain involved and to continue shaping these critical discussions to ensure that future resource development decisions authentically reflect community values, Indigenous rights, and sustainable stewardship priorities.

Synthesis of Focus Group Discussion

The facilitated focus group discussions highlighted key challenges related to consultation, consent, and community engagement processes concerning mining impacts in Alaska. Participants emphasized the need for meaningful, culturally responsive approaches that are guided by Indigenous knowledge and active community participation.

Participants identified current consultation processes as inadequate, primarily procedural, and lacking genuine engagement with Indigenous communities. The current interpretation and application of consent were

criticized for being passive, often misconstruing silence as implicit approval or using superficial methods to gain consent. Participants emphasized that mining activities significantly contribute to environmental degradation, health concerns, and community disruptions, often worsened by misinformation and lack of transparency.

Focus group participants drafted potential actions that could be taken to improve current processes around consultation, consent, and the social and environmental impacts of mining. These proactive strategies emphasize transparency, the integration of Indigenous knowledge, and robust community involvement in decision-making. According to the focus group participants, implementing these actions can empower Indigenous communities to lead transparent decision-making processes effectively, ensuring meaningful consent, thorough consultation, and true community engagement.

Potential Actions to Improve Consultation:

- **Indigenous communities can establish their own community-driven consultation protocols** prioritizing Indigenous leadership and perspectives.
- **Agencies and mining companies should formally document, publicly share, and explicitly incorporate community** feedback into project decision-making.

- **Advocates and educators can conduct training workshops** for governmental and corporate entities on culturally appropriate, Indigenous-informed engagement practices.

Potential Actions to Improve Consent:

- **Agencies should develop transparent procedures** for regular review and reaffirmation of consent at all project stages or upon significant new information.
- **Mining companies should implement clear, accessible mechanisms** for communities to withdraw consent promptly.
- **Mining companies should form tribal advisory committees** and technical panels to actively engage in co-management and impact assessments from project initiation through reclamation.
- **Tribes can develop and enforce their own tribal policies** requiring explicit consent prior to project initiation, clearly defining ongoing consent review and revocation procedures.

Potential Actions to Address Social and Environmental Impacts:

- **Mining companies should require comprehensive, independent assessments** of the environmental and health impacts that integrate Indigenous-led research and findings.

- **Local, State and Federal Governments should establish a publicly accessible database** documenting environmental and social impacts related to mining projects at the state- or regional-level.
- **Mining Companies should create community-based monitoring committees,** including Indigenous elders and knowledge holders, for ongoing oversight and transparent reporting. Graphite One is a potential model to look at further.
- **Collaborate with Consultants to utilize advanced technologies** (such as modeling) to clearly illustrate potential environmental impacts, enabling informed community advocacy and decisions.
- **Educational institutions should be supported to launch educational initiatives in local schools covering mining impacts,** Indigenous stewardship, and community rights concerning consent and consultation.

C. Interview Data Analysis

In-depth interviews with 16 participants-including Alaska Native leaders, grassroots advocates, legal experts, and community organizers across Alaska-highlighted several critical themes around consent in hardrock mining, emphasizing the need to strengthen Indigenous rights, governance, and

decision-making power. Participants repeatedly emphasized the need for legally recognizing Indigenous governance systems and sovereignty, aligning with international standards such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). They also emphasized the importance of meaningful, continuous community engagement and robust enforcement of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), stressing that consent must extend beyond singular events to ongoing, iterative processes throughout all stages of the project.

Participant Demographics

Interview participants represented diverse sectors and regions (see Table 2). Their roles included Alaska Native community members and Tribal representatives experiencing mining impacts firsthand (n=6), legal experts with a breadth of experience in hardrock mining (n=4), consent experts particularly in free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) (n=3), environmental advocates (n=2), and an Indigenous consultant providing technical assistance to Tribes (n=1).

Table 2: Interview Participant Demographics

Category	Description
Participant Backgrounds	Indigenous community members, tribal government representatives, environmental advocates, nonprofit leaders, community residents, educators, professors, administrators, attorneys, consultants.

Tribal or Indigenous Representation	*Alaska Native Villages, *Grassroots organizations, councils, and campaigns, Indigenous consultants. *specific names omitted for confidentiality
Environmental Organizations	Watershed coalitions, advocacy and policy organizations with a specialty on extractive industry accountability.
Legal & Technical Expertise	Practicing Attorneys and Legal Scholars with vast hard-rock mining experience, as well as consent experts in: Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC); United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); and the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA)

Cross-Case Thematic Analysis

Five primary themes emerged, reflecting shared experiences and recommendations: 1) *Consent as Sovereignty, Not Procedure; 2) Structural Violence and Legal Barriers; 3) Grassroots Power and Strategic Resistance; 4) Cultural Identity, Healing, and Intergenerational Responsibility; and 5) Redefining Consent through Tools, Protocols, and Practice.* Each one is explained in detail with supporting quotes below.

1) Consent as Sovereignty, Not Procedure

Consent was repeatedly described by participants not as a bureaucratic step or legal formality, but as a direct expression of Indigenous

sovereignty. For many, the ability to say *yes*, *no*, or *yes with conditions*—and to have that decision respected without negotiation or override—was the very embodiment of self-determination. As Participant Blueberry articulated, ***To have full access to consent is to have full access to sovereignty… and have that be taken and acted upon without question.***

This sentiment was echoed by Participant Hooligan, who emphasized that true consent is not diluted by pressure or manipulated through performative gestures: ***Consent… gives us the right to say yes or no and have that be heard… not adulterated by pressure.***

The importance of culturally grounded, Indigenous-led consent processes was central to Participant Flounder, who explained, ***Meaningful consent is being able to acknowledge who we are and what is ours… we have our own sovereign nations.*** For them, consent is rooted in ancestral responsibility and tribal identity, not merely legal frameworks or agency procedures.

Consent was also described as sacred land defense. As Participant Geranium stated, ***We don't want uranium in our backyard, period… watersheds are very unique, intricate systems.*** This quote underscores how consent is deeply tied to spiritual and ecological reverence for land and water.

Participant Halibut pointed to the need for consent to be unconditional, particularly when communities say no: ***That no… should be a complete***

sentence… and the answer. This insistence on refusal as a complete and respected act highlights the contradiction between Indigenous sovereignty and extractive industry practices. This sentiment was echoed by Participant Hooligan: ***Consent gives us the right to say yes or no and have that be heard, not adulterated by pressure.***

Some participants critiqued the current structure of engagement altogether, calling for a redefinition of power dynamics. Participant Salmonberry stated, ***You don't just want a seat at the table… you should be making the table and bringing people towards it,*** asserting that Indigenous communities should be the architects—not simply participants—of consent processes. Finally, Participant Herring underscored that consent means more than being consulted; it requires equality in governance: ***They just need to be treated as a partner, slash equal… that's not the way they're looked at now.*** This call to reframe Indigenous governments as sovereign equals reflects a broader push for structural change.

Thematic Summary (Consent as Sovereignty, Not Procedure): Together, these narratives reveal that consent, from the perspective of these Indigenous participants, is not procedural but profoundly political, cultural, and spiritual. It affirms their right to govern, to refuse, to protect, and to lead.

2) Structural Violence and Legal Barriers

Participants described how structural violence and entrenched legal barriers continue to obstruct the exercise of Indigenous sovereignty and meaningful consent. Several emphasized that despite the language of consultation or collaboration, the foundational laws and policies governing land and mining in the United States are fundamentally extractive and colonial in design. As Participant Starfish stated, ***There is no consent… outside of reservations. You'd have to change the law.*** This stark reality underscores the lack of legal mechanisms that allow Tribes to fully exercise their rights over public lands, even when sacred sites or treaty rights are at risk.

The 1872 Mining Law was repeatedly identified as a key legal structure that upholds corporate access to Indigenous lands and erodes community power. Participant Starfish referred to it as ***the last law of Manifest Destiny… and it's not going away,*** highlighting the law's enduring colonial legacy and its near-absolute prioritization of mining interests over Indigenous and environmental protections. Similarly, Participant Crowberry noted, ***Federal agencies feel their hands are tied under the 1872 mining law… mining is considered priority use,*** illustrating how agencies often cite this law to justify approving projects despite community opposition.

Beyond statutory frameworks, participants also reflected on how legal processes are weaponized to silence dissent or limit tribal influence. Participant Halibut critiqued tribal consultation as ***specifically geared to override consent,*** describing it not as a mechanism for inclusion, but as a

structure designed to manage and suppress opposition. Echoing this sentiment, Participant Trout stated, ***we don't really have consent as I would think about it and that the folks who are directly impacted... are not giving a real say in whether or not a project moves forward.*** This highlights how communities most affected by extractive development are excluded from critical decisions, despite claims of public participation.

Legal redress, when available, is often the last resort—and only marginally effective. Participant Crowberry shared that it, ***typically requires litigation in order to bring the mining company to the table... after the permit is issued,*** illustrating how communities are forced into adversarial and resource-intensive processes after decisions have already been made. As Participant Salmonberry explained, ***It's only helpful to rely on those federal jurisdictional hooks if you have a friendly federal government,*** pointing out how inconsistent political will can weaken even the most robust statutory protections.

Finally, participants noted the broader socio-political violence that results from these legal inequities. Participant Halibut argued, ***These were systems designed... to extract from Indigenous needs of people without consent,*** naming extractivism itself as a continuation of colonial systems of domination and exploitation.

Thematic Summary (Structural Violence and Legal Barriers): Together, these reflections portray a landscape where legal frameworks do not support Indigenous sovereignty but instead uphold extractive priorities. The structural violence embedded in these laws continues to silence Indigenous voices, restrict the right to say no, and reinforce deeply unequal systems of power and control.

3) Grassroots Power and Strategic Resistance

Across interviews, participants emphasized the transformative role of grassroots organizing as a critical force for Indigenous self-determination, environmental defense, and resistance to extractive development. Participants described how community-based efforts—led by those with direct ties to the land—serve as powerful tools for advocacy, accountability, and cultural resurgence. As Participant Cow Parsnip stated, ***That's the heart and soul of making meaningful change… they're the ones that can bring the human essence into the process,*** highlighting how grassroots actors, rather than external institutions, carry the moral authority and lived experience to shape ethical responses to mining.

For many, grassroots resistance begins with truth-telling and organizing in the face of corporate and institutional power. Participant Rose shared the challenges of activating shareholder bases and engaging in advocacy within Native corporations, noting, ***we're also trying to inform and activate the [the***

corporation] shareholder base to bring it to a vote but [the corporation] is pretty sneaky… they've been holding their regional annual meetings in very remote locations… hard and very expensive to get to. This quote illustrates the intentional barriers that undermine democratic participation and the persistence of grassroots actors working to overcome them. Participant Geranium shared how grassroots efforts can be effective in organizing amidst the power of corporations: ***"We got 50 other tribes… to sign on the same resolution… resolutions are very powerful tools."***

Others echoed the importance of sustained community pressure. Participant Blueberry described how years of organizing led to institutional recognition: ***They knew everything I was going to say… because grassroots campaigns made them listen.*** This reflects how long-term, community-driven advocacy can shift narratives, compel engagement, and challenge dominant power structures.

At the same time, participants acknowledged the spiritual and intergenerational dimensions of resistance. Participant Halibut affirmed, ***You are here with the singular obligation to be an ancestor… anything that you do today is something your children don't have to do.*** For many, grassroots advocacy is not just political strategy—it is sacred responsibility passed down through cultural teachings and spiritual duty.

This intergenerational lens was also apparent in youth-led organizing. Participant Flounder noted, ***Before the grassroots, it was like nobody was talking about it… then it just took off,*** pointing to how a new generation has reinvigorated movements through storytelling, social media, and community gathering. These efforts often draw strength from ancestral wisdom. As Participant Flounder added, ***My grandma said people will try to change the way I think… I think we're the ones they were talking about gathering,*** suggesting that current activism fulfills the visions and prophecies of Elders.

Participants also highlighted cross-community alliances as a strategic form of resistance. Participant Geranium shared, ***We learned a lot from communities in New Mexico and Canada… they showed us what could happen here,*** underscoring how Indigenous communities are learning from one another and uniting across geographies to resist similar threats.

Thematic Summary (Grassroots Power and Strategic Resistance): In a landscape often marked by exclusion, legal limitations, and corporate manipulation, participants asserted that grassroots organizing remains one of the most effective and culturally grounded forms of resistance. Whether by educating community members, drafting resolutions, engaging in direct action, or revitalizing cultural protocols, these efforts serve as both shields and catalysts for Indigenous resurgence and sovereignty.

4) Cultural Identity, Healing, and Intergenerational Responsibility

Participants described cultural identity, healing, and intergenerational responsibility as deeply interconnected elements of Indigenous resistance, survival, and sovereignty. For many, reconnecting with cultural practices and values was not only a personal journey but also a collective responsibility to future generations. Healing was described as a cultural process rooted in language, land, ceremony, and traditional knowledge.

Participant Hooligan shared how Indigenous healing practices have increasingly been recognized and legitimized, especially when communities assert their cultural frameworks within institutional contexts. ***We wrote into the grant… plant healers, language arts, carving, sewing… and the federal government listened,*** they explained. This intentional integration of traditional practices into formal programs reflects the power of cultural identity as both healing medicine and political tool.

This healing, however, is not limited to the individual; it reverberates across generations. Participant Flounder reflected on their responsibility to carry ancestral teachings forward: ***I think that was us they were talking about gathering… I literally have no choice. It is a responsibility.*** This statement captures a central theme repeated by many

participants—resistance and advocacy are not optional acts of defiance, but sacred duties to ancestors and descendants.

This idea was echoed by Participant Halibut and was also stated before but applies to the following argument as well when they stated, ***You are here with the singular obligation to be an ancestor… anything that you do today is something your children don't have to do.*** Such reflections frame community action as a legacy—every decision, protest, or cultural revival carries the weight of history and the promise of protection for future generations.

Participants also described how cultural knowledge systems, often passed down through Elders, serve as blueprints for current movements. Participant Flounder recounted, ***My grandma said people will try to change the way I think… I think we're the ones they were talking about gathering.*** These teachings, rooted in traditional values, are now being activated in political and environmental struggles, grounding movements in long-standing visions of balance, respect, and relational accountability. Participant Hooligan emphasized the importance of stories, explaining that they teach us how to live and help shape our identity. For Indigenous communities, stories are considered knowledge systems and have been identified as a vital component of Indigenous-led movements today. Healing was not described solely in emotional or symbolic terms; it was seen as materially connected to land, water, and subsistence. As Participant Geranium shared, ***Our***

subsistence economy… makes us healthy, mind, body, soul, and spirit. This quote highlights that Indigenous health is holistic and culturally defined, extending far beyond Western healthcare systems to include physical access to traditional foods, land-based practices, and environmental well-being.

Thematic Summary (Cultural Identity, Healing, and Intergenerational Responsibility): Together, these reflections reveal that cultural identity and healing are central to Indigenous resistance, and reflect dynamic, embodied, and deeply relational responsibilities to future generations. Indigenous-led efforts to protect lands and waterways from hardrock mining is deeply rooted in ancestral teachings, and activated through collective responsibility. Ultimately, the work of resistance is also the work of remembering, restoring, and reimagining cultural futures grounded in Indigenous strength and continuity.

5) Redefining Consent through Tools, Protocols, and Practice

Participants emphasized that true consent must be defined and enacted by Indigenous communities themselves, not imposed by outside institutions or agencies. Redefining consent involves not only resisting extractive frameworks but also developing culturally grounded tools, community-led protocols, and adaptive practices that reflect Indigenous values, timelines, and decision-making structures.

For many, consent was described not as a one-time event, but as a dynamic, ongoing relationship. As Participant Cranberry explained, ***They may agree to certain things. They may disagree and say no, they may say yes with certain conditions, and that is a dynamic relationship.*** This view challenges static interpretations of consent often used in legal or corporate settings, advocating instead for models that evolve with the community, the land, and the proposed project.

Several participants spoke to the importance of developing consent processes that reflect community-defined values and priorities. Participant Blueberry asserted, ***Every community will define [consent] differently… philanthropy must not come in with a pre-defined version of FPIC.*** This calls for a shift in power, away from imposed standards and toward Indigenous-led definitions of consent that prioritize spiritual, cultural, and relational aspects over administrative checkboxes. Participant Geranium highlighted that communities must take the lead in their own meetings, instead of conforming to the communication styles of mining companies. *The approach mining companies use for meetings doesn't align with their Indigenous communication styles and protocols. They should be in control of how meetings are conducted.*

Tools and frameworks like the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) were discussed as potentially useful mechanisms—but only when wielded by communities themselves. Participant Salmon clarified this

distinction: ***IRMA is a tool for communities who are exerting their rights to consent and their rights to be actively engaged.*** This quote reflects a broader sentiment that such standards should serve Indigenous goals, not replace them.

Community-developed strategies were seen as more effective in protecting lands and asserting sovereignty. Participant Crowberry emphasized that ***Consent is part being yes, no or place and conditions… not after there's been extensive exploration activities,*** pointing to the importance of early, community-led involvement in project planning. Waiting until a project is well underway to seek consent, as is often the case, negates the very principle of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC).

Participants also recognized the pragmatic challenges of implementing Indigenous-led consent processes in a legal and political environment that privileges extractive development. As Participant Herring noted, ***Mining companies… are even less informed on what informed consent means,*** signaling the urgent need for both education and enforcement of community expectations. Despite these obstacles, some participants pointed to examples of partial success—agreements and resolutions that required companies to submit to community oversight. Participant Cranberry shared, ***The Good Neighbor Agreement… had monitoring shared by the community… and watchdog funding,*** showing how consent practices can be institutionalized to protect community interests when led from within.

Thematic Summary (Redefining Consent through Tools, Protocols, and Practice): Ultimately, participants offered a vision of consent that is **relational, iterative, and grounded in Indigenous governance**. By building their own protocols, such as community-developed FPIC standards (see the Securing Indigenous Peoples' Right to Self Determination Toolkit), and reclaiming control over consent practices, Indigenous communities are not just responding to extractive threats—they are transforming the very frameworks by which decisions about their lands and futures are made. At the same time, existing standards and multidisciplinary initiatives like IRMA can help support communities especially when they are authentically involved in the process.

Collectively, these findings illustrate a clear call for comprehensive reforms that prioritize Indigenous autonomy, ensure meaningful consent, and empower community leadership. Implementing these recommendations is critical for achieving equitable, culturally responsive, and sustainable resource governance in Alaska.

D. Post-Survey Analysis

Introduction

This analysis synthesizes feedback from participants involved in the AKMIN facilitated focus group, specifically examining suggestions provided in a post-survey to enhance mining consent processes in Alaska. Participants include tribal members, environmental advocates, community leaders, and

representatives from various advocacy organizations (see Appendix C for the complete post-survey instrument). A total of 66 respondents filled out the post-survey. Data is analyzed using thematic analysis, highlighting prevalent themes and actionable recommendations.

The questions that this analysis was derived from are stated below:

1. Based on your experience at the focus group session, what specific changes would make the mining consent process in Alaska more fair, inclusive, and culturally responsive?
2. Reflecting on the discussions and presentations from the focus group dialogue, what is one actionable step you recommend immediately to enhance community involvement and effectiveness in Alaska's mining consent process?

Participant Demographics

This section describes the demographic characteristics of the approximately 100 individuals who participated in the facilitated focus group who completed the post-survey (AKMIN Survey, 2025). See Table 3: Post-Survey Participant Demographics.

Table 3: Post-Survey Participant Demographics

Category	Description

Participant Backgrounds	Indigenous community members, tribal government representatives, environmental advocates, nonprofit leaders, community residents, educators, professors, administrators, attorneys, consultants.
Tribal or Indigenous Representation	Native Village of Brevig, Native Village of Mary's Igloo, Norton Bay Watershed Council, Upper Koyukon Dene, Mother Kuskokwim Tribal Coalition, Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council, Chilkat Indian Village, Native Village of Fort Yukon, Native Village of Teller, Manokotak Tribe, Healy Lake, Tanana Chiefs Conference, No Ambler Road, Protect the Kobuk.
Environmental Organizations	Alaska Soles, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Trustees for Alaska, SalmonState, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Earthjustice, Alaska Wilderness League, Cook Inletkeeper, Earthworks, Defenders of Wildlife, National Parks Conservation Association.
Geographic Regions	Fairbanks area (Save Our Domes), Bethel region (Mother Kuskokwim Coalition), Southeast Alaska (Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, Chilkat Indian Village), Norton Bay region, Bristol Bay, Kobuk Valley. Participants represented both urban and rural settings.
Key Themes of Engagement	Culturally grounded perspectives, multi-sector expertise, diverse geographic representation, comprehensive stakeholder engagement, equitable mining consent practices, community-driven decision-making, and multidisciplinary dialogue.

In summary, the demographic profile of participants reflects an inclusive representation of Indigenous voices, regional diversity, and multi-sector expertise, all of which are integral to shaping a culturally responsive and equitable mining consent process in Alaska (AKMIN Survey, 2025).

Key Themes Identified

1) Enhancing Transparency and Early Engagement

Participants strongly emphasized the need for transparency and early community involvement. Suggestions included initiating public notices before project planning and ensuring continuous community dialogue throughout mining project phases. For instance, participant Birch explicitly noted, ***More transparency and honesty on the part of developers and state agencies and earlier involvement of affected communities (AKMIN Post-Survey, 2025).*** Participant Mussel further recommended ***the creation of an accessible online platform for updates to increase transparency and community understanding.*** These insights collectively highlight that meaningful transparency and early engagement are not just procedural improvements but essential practices for building trust, ensuring informed decision-making, and honoring the rights and voices of impacted communities from the very beginning.

2) Legal Enforcement of Consent

Participants recommended strengthening legal frameworks governing consent, reflecting frustration with current consultative mechanisms viewed as inadequate or symbolic. Multiple respondents highlighted a critical need for legally binding consent aligned with international standards such as Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Participant Kelp suggested ***new statutory laws/standards in Alaska and federally built through inclusive input (AKMIN Post-Survey, 2025).***

3) Empowering Indigenous Leadership

There was a strong consensus on empowering Indigenous communities to lead the consent process genuinely. Participant Badarki ***recommended that local community members lead advocacy efforts and integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into baseline data collection.*** Similarly, Participant Clam emphasized ***mandatory co-decision-making roles for Tribes, not merely procedural consultation, indicating community preference for meaningful decision-making power (AKMIN Post-Survey, 2025)***.

4) Financial and Resource Support

Respondents repeatedly called for adequate financial and technical resources to empower communities effectively. Participant Eagle specifically suggested ***providing funds for hiring tribal administrative staff, and consultants, and training community members to develop local expertise (AKMIN Post-Survey, 2025).*** This recommendation highlights the persistent disparity in resources between mining corporations and local communities.

5) Education and Awareness

Education emerged as a consistent recommendation for achieving greater effectiveness and responsiveness in consent processes. Participants identified the need to educate both the public and legislators about Indigenous sovereignty, the implications of mining projects, and the principles

of FPIC. Participant Crow succinctly emphasized the need to ***Educate, educate, educate!*** highlighting the role of social media and other accessible platforms to inform community members (AKMIN Post-Survey, 2025).

5) Recognition of the Right to Decline

Critical to genuine consent is the explicit right for communities to refuse projects without pressure or coercion. Participants Clover and Fireweed explicitly highlighted the significance of ***no means no,*** emphasizing a shift from the assumed inevitability of resource extraction to requiring companies to proactively secure genuine community consent prior to project initiation (AKMIN Post-Survey, 2025).

6) Creating Community-driven Consent Protocols

Multiple participants advocated for the proactive establishment of community-specific consent protocols. King Crab and Yarrow explicitly supported ***developing clear consent protocols aligned with community-defined criteria***. Such proactive measures ensure communities are equipped to engage strategically with mining proposals and protect local values and ecological integrity (AKMIN Post-Survey, 2025).

Potential Actions Synthesized from the Post-Survey Responses

Based on the emergent themes from the post-facilitation survey, the following actionable recommendations have been identified:

- **Establish legally binding consent protocols,** integrated with international FPIC standards.
- **Initiate early, continuous, and transparent engagement processes** that precede mining project approval stages.
- **Develop robust educational campaigns** targeting the public, policymakers, and Indigenous communities.
- **Provide comprehensive resource packages** (financial, technical, and legal support) to Indigenous and affected communities.
- **Facilitate the creation of standardized** yet community-customizable consent frameworks to guide local decision-making processes.
- Clearly recognize and uphold communities' **inherent right to reject proposed projects**.

SECTION 7: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

This cross-case analysis, in alignment with the insights from the AKMIN Pre- and post-survey, in depth interviews, and facilitated focus group dialogue affirms that Indigenous peoples and frontline communities demand a fundamental transformation in how consent is understood and operationalized in mining and development contexts.

Redefining Consent: Participants across sources emphasized that consent must be understood not as a checkbox, but as a **sovereign right**. As

Participant Cranberry stated, ***There is no consent outside of reservations… you'd have to change the law.*** This position was reinforced during the facilitated focus groups where participants voiced a desire for consent to be ***respected, revisitable, and conditional,*** advocating for its legal recognition as a veto power, not symbolic approval. Consent is a ***dynamic relationship,*** meaning that agencies and developers must commit to ***long-term, trust-based relationships*** that center healing, stewardship, and accountability, not transactional engagement.

Legal & Policy Implications:

1. **Codify Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):** Alaska state and federal agencies must take FPIC seriously as a non-negotiable standard, with clearly defined requirements for information sharing, ongoing community approval, and culturally relevant consent mechanisms.
2. **Enforceable Cultural and Environmental Protections:** As shared by Participant Trout they expressed concerns about mining companies' lack of accountability and responsibility for the environmental damage and financial burdens left behind when they stated, ***just leaving the community taxpayers holding the bag when smaller mining company doesn't have the money. actually restore or reclaim the area when they're done or have a big disaster and have and not be able to afford to actually make the community safe um you know i***

just i think that's wrong. The policy must require comprehensive cultural and ecological impact studies before any permits are issued.

3. **Indigenous-Led Review Boards and Protocols:** Echoing calls during the focus groups, ***tribal co-leadership in permitting is recommended.*** Therefore, governments should fund and defer to Indigenous-led review bodies that determine thresholds for approval or denial of development proposals.
4. **Transparency and Early Engagement:** Participants highlighted the importance of community education, outreach, and engaging with the Tribes to ensure meaningful consent. Legislation should require community notification at the conceptual planning stage, not after exploration is underway.

Practice Implications:

1. **Culturally Grounded Consent Processes:** As Participant Blueberry expressed, ***Every community defines consent differently.*** Agencies and corporations must abandon one-size-fits-all engagement methods and work with communities to co-design their own culturally grounded consent protocols.
2. **Strengthen Grassroots Infrastructure: Funding streams must support community-based organizations such as Chilkat Forever** that are

building platforms for education, legal strategy, and youth-led organizing.

3. **Sustained Capacity Building:** Tribes and rural communities require technical assistance, legal expertise, and translation services. This was clearly outlined in both the pre-survey results and participant interviews, where capacity constraints were seen as a barrier to exercising meaningful influence.

By embedding these recommendations into policy and practice, stakeholders can move away from colonial patterns of consultation and toward a future where Indigenous peoples and frontline communities define what development looks like on their terms. This analysis is not only a record of concern—it is a collective roadmap for change.

SECTION 8: OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the participants' lived experiences and narrative reflections across the pre- and post-surveys, facilitated focus groups, and in depth interviews, the following recommendations aim to guide policy and practice toward more ethical, sovereign, and community-defined consent processes in Alaska's mining context.

Note: While Project Mosaic LLC has developed these initial seven recommendations for AKMIN's consideration, the Network will need to meet to further develop, strengthen, and add to them. We recommend the network

work on developing actionable items towards each recommendation, and consider the feasibility of each in the short-, medium- and long-term. Lastly, there may be additional recommendations AKMIN can propose that are not currently reflected in this report.

1) Establish Legally Binding Consent Protocols

Participants stressed that consent must carry legal weight, not symbolic value. For Indigenous communities, consent should reflect Tribal sovereignty. This includes tribal veto power over mining proposals on ancestral lands. Consent processes must allow for rebuilding trust and collaboration across community, policy, and philanthropic stakeholders. Participants collectively emphasized the importance of amending the 1872 Mining Law and codifying Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) in state and federal policies.

Government-to-government consultation remains inadequate, as expressed by the research participants throughout this study. At the same time, it is unlikely for the U.S. government to codify FPIC on a large scale. Therefore, new statutory laws or in Alaska or federally-enforceable standards should be developed so that consent carries legal weight. In the short term, communities can also develop their own FPIC protocols and require agencies and mining companies to follow them (see #2 below) rather than waiting for governments or policy to change (a long-term, structural shift). Ultimately, short and long-term efforts are needed here.

2) Develop Indigenous-led and Community-driven Consent Protocols

Every Indigenous community should have the authority to define their own culturally appropriate methods for consent. As stated by Participant Blueberry, ***every community will define consent differently***. Agencies and developers must work with Indigenous leadership to co-create consent standards that reflect traditional communication styles, decision-making protocols, and relational accountability.

The Securing Indigenous Peoples' Right to Self-Determination Guide on Free, Prior and Informed Consent is an excellent resource for communities to start with. Such community-driven protocols should be developed to enforce tribal policies that explicitly require consent prior to project initiation, and clearly define ongoing consent review and revocation procedures. Advocates can work with communities to facilitate the creation of standardized yet community-customizable consent frameworks to guide local decision-making processes.

3) Provide Financial, Technical, and Legal Support for Grassroots Organizing

Grassroots power and strategic resistance remains the most effective and culturally grounded forms for holding agencies and mining companies accountable to their actions. Participants emphasized the importance of

sustained grassroots resistance. ***"We got 50 other tribes… to sign on the same resolution… resolutions are very powerful tools."***(Participant Geranium). To support sustained grassroots organizing, government and philanthropic bodies should provide long-term funding for legal counsel, technical assistance, and community-led research and data collection for affected communities. Most mining projects occur on ancestral lands in Alaska, therefore, Indigenous leadership should be empowered through financial, technical, and legal assistance. This can include providing funds for hiring tribal staff or consultants, and training community members to develop their own local expertise.

4) Strengthen Environmental and Cultural Safeguards

Participants spoke about the shortcomings of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and in some cases, noting the complete absence of required environmental and cultural assessments. ***They haven't done any cultural resource studies… and yet are already moving forward*** (Participant Salmonberry). When EIS are done, their review processes are flawed as most of the time they are inaccessible, difficult to interpret, have quick turnaround times, and may be impossible to change without litigation. Mandating full environmental and cultural impact reviews prior to exploration or permitting is recommended.

Forming tribal advisory committees and technical panels to actively engage in co-management and impact assessments from project initiation through reclamation is recommended. For example, integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into environmental and cultural assessments through creating community-based monitoring committees (including Indigenous Elders and knowledge holders) is essential for ongoing oversight and transparent reporting. As well, mining companies should require comprehensive, independent assessments of environmental and health impacts that integrate Indigenous-led research and findings. Third-party reviewers can utilize advanced technologies (such as modeling) to clearly illustrate potential environmental impacts of mining, enabling informed community advocacy and decisions.

5) Redefine Consent as an Ongoing, Transparent Relationship

Consent should be viewed as an ongoing process. Paraphrased as participant Cow Parsnip noted, **consent is more than just a checkbox; it is a relational process that is constantly shaped by cultural context, community values, and individual lived experiences.**

Agencies must commit to sustained relationships with Tribal Nations and frontline communities, incorporating mechanisms for periodic review, feedback, and the right to decline or withdraw consent. AKMIN can “steer the ship” by redefining what consent-based decision making looks like in hardrock

mining. AKMIN can begin with the common values that participants emphasized in guiding advocacy and concern about mining impacts including:

- Intergenerational Responsibility and Stewardship
- Respect for Nature
- Community and Relational Values
- Cultural and Subsistence Practices
- Honesty, Integrity, and Accountability
- Learning, Humility, and Inclusivity
- Health, Safety, and Well-being

Additionally, advocates can work with companies to develop 1) transparent procedures for regular review and reaffirmation of consent at all project stages or upon significant new information, and 2) clear, accessible mechanisms for communities to withdraw consent promptly.

6) Enhance Transparency, Early Community Engagement, and Education

Transparency: Many participants noted misinformation and lack of access to information about mining impacts in their community as barriers to meaningful consent. Community meetings should include language-accessible materials to ensure informed community participation

so that the tangible impacts of mining are well understood before a community is asked to make a decision.

Early Community Engagement: To support education and transparency, mining companies should initiate early, continuous, and transparent engagement processes that precede mining project approval stages, to increase the opportunity for communities to be informed. Once engaged, companies should formally document, publicly share, and explicitly incorporate community feedback into project decision-making.

Education: Governmental and corporate entities should seek out training workshops on culturally appropriate, Indigenous-informed engagement practices, and allocate funding to do so. Advocates can give these training sessions, and ask funders to invest in educating the sector. Furthermore, widespread education is needed across Alaska so that the general public, K-12, and affected communities are aware of the impacts of mining in their local area. Governments should establish publicly accessible databases documenting environmental and social impacts related to mining projects at local and regional levels. Educators and advocates are encouraged to launch educational initiatives in local schools covering mining impacts, Indigenous stewardship, and community rights concerning consent and consultation.

7) Address Historical Harm through Decolonizing Practices

A decolonial approach to consent includes honoring traditional governance, acknowledging past harms, and committing to structural redress. Multiple participants pointed to the intergenerational impacts of colonization and boarding school trauma. ***I have to decolonize you first... even as a Native person, I still feel I need to be decolonized and deprogrammed every day*** (Participant Iris). Elements of a decolonized approach to consent may include:

- Redefining consent is a dynamic relationship, meaning that agencies and developers must commit to long-term, trust-based relationships that center healing, stewardship, and accountability, not transactional engagement.
- Acknowledging the importance of cultural identity, healing, and intergenerational responsibility to Indigenous communities in the context of hardrock mining. Consent is *sovereignty*.
- Committing to taking steps to address structural violence and legal barriers that Indigenous communities face every day.

These seven recommendations reflect not only what participants oppose, but what they envision: a consent process rooted in relationship, culture, and collective self-determination (Smith et al., 2016; UNDRIP, 2007).

SECTION 9: CONCLUSION

This report presents an integrated view of hardrock mining from the perspective of advocates, grassroots organizers, educators, attorneys, and Alaska Native and Indigenous community members. We thank everyone for providing their perspectives on consent in the context of mining and extractive development. Drawing from survey data, facilitated focus group content, and in-depth narrative interviews, the findings collectively underscore the disjuncture between existing legal-consultation frameworks and the lived realities, priorities, and rights of Indigenous communities.

From the presurvey, participants made clear their dissatisfaction with current mining governance structures, particularly the lack of enforceable mechanisms for Indigenous consent and the overwhelming influence of corporate stakeholders. As one respondent explained, ***There is no transparency. There's no accountability. The power isn't with the community*** (Pre-survey comment). These frustrations were echoed during the facilitated focus groups, where community members repeatedly emphasized the need for respect, truth-telling, and lasting relationships in any engagement process.

The in-depth interviews expanded this picture with rich, narrative accounts, illustrating that consent is not merely about legal compliance. It is about recognition of sovereignty, intergenerational trauma, traditional

knowledge, and Indigenous futurity. As Participant Blueberry noted, ***To have full access to consent is to have full access to sovereignty.*** These accounts affirm that meaningful consent must be relational, revisitable, community-defined, and enforceable.

Broader implications for policy and practice include a clear demand for legal reforms that shift from symbolic consultation to binding, community-led decision-making. Additionally, state and federal agencies, philanthropic institutions, and private developers must realign their practices to reflect Indigenous priorities, which include ecological responsibility, cultural continuity, and intergenerational accountability.

Future processes around mining consent should not replicate colonial patterns of extraction, where knowledge is taken and decisions are imposed. Instead, they should be anchored in Indigenous law, guided by community values, and upheld through enforceable structures of accountability. As several participants emphasized, ***Consent is not a checkbox; it is a relationship.*** Ultimately, the vision articulated across this research points toward a future where Indigenous communities not only have the right to say no, but also the power to say yes, on their own terms, in ways that uphold their sovereignty, culture, and responsibilities to the land and future generations.

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APPENDIX A: REFLEXIVITY AND VALIDATION

As Indigenous researchers, we approached this analysis with the understanding that our position—both as academics and as someone external to many of the communities involved—influences how we interpret, prioritize, and represent participants' voices. To mitigate the impact of my positionality, we engaged in sustained reflexivity throughout the research process. This included journaling interpretive decisions, checking personal assumptions, and ensuring that the emergent themes were grounded in participants' words rather than our expectations.

Themes were derived inductively through iterative close reading, coding, and categorization of transcripts and facilitation session notes. As common patterns emerged—such as sovereignty, consent as a relationship, and cultural continuity—we engaged in peer debriefing and comparative coding with a small team of research advisors to test consistency and reduce confirmation bias.

While limitations remain—particularly in ensuring that the full diversity of Indigenous perspectives across regions is captured—this process was guided by a commitment to ethical representation, transparency in interpretation, and the centering of Indigenous voices in all stages of research design, analysis, and reporting.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & THEMATIC TABLES

Question	Prompt
Tell us about yourself and your involvement with Mining projects in Alaska?	If not previously answered in Q1, clarify their affiliation (i.e. org/job title, and if a Tribal member, which Tribe)
What does consent mean to you in the mining context?	If not previously answered, ask do you have any thoughts on existing approaches to consultation and consent.
Do you have a story of when a mining project went poorly or an example where it went well? What lessons did you learn?	What are the concerns about existing approaches to consultation and consent?
What role do you think grassroots organizing (community-led actions) can play in achieving consent?	For example, Tribally-led consultation guidelines, or ….
Have you witnessed Alaska Native communities being excluded from consent processes?	What would allow AN communities to have a more prominent seat at the table?
What does meaningful consent-based decision-making look like from your perspective in or for your community?	What are the essential components of consent?
Thank you and contact info	

Thematic Table – Each Participant

Participant: Cow parsnip

Theme Name	Description	Supporting Quotes
Transformative Journey: From Industry to Advocacy	Their personal trajectory reveals a shift from working within the mining industry for economic survival to engaging in justice-based advocacy, rooted in a desire to help communities impacted by mining.	"I saw an opportunity to be… a financial resource for my family… but my heart always wanted to help people that were impacted by mining."
Consent as a Relational, Cultural Process	Consent is framed not as a checkbox but as an ongoing, relational process shaped by cultural context, community values, and lived experiences.	"Consent… has to include their perceptions of time, space, society, language… at a balance with Western world views."
Grassroots Organizing as the Heart of Change	They elevates the role of grassroots movements and community members as central actors in driving ethical and effective change, especially those with strong connections to land.	"That's the heart and soul of making meaningful change… they're the ones that can bring the human essence into the process."
Misalignment of Consultation Practices	Critiques current consultation formats (e.g., PowerPoints, English-only materials, rigid timelines) as culturally inappropriate and exclusionary to Indigenous ways of communicating and deciding.	"It's a PowerPoint presentation… that's not the way that many Indigenous communities like to receive information… chairs set up in single file."

Language as a Site of Epistemic Injustice	The lack of Indigenous language accessibility is more than logistical—it erases cultural worldviews and participation rights.	"You go into Google… you'll find 200 languages… maybe one or two Indigenous."
Cross-Cultural Solidarity and Learning	points to meaningful collaboration between Indigenous communities in Latin America and North America as a way to build power and share strategies of resistance.	"There's currently a significant grant… matching communities in South America with First Nations in Canada."
Cautious Optimism in Voluntary Frameworks	supports IRMA's potential but recognizes that without enforcement, voluntary standards may replicate power imbalances or be met with skepticism.	"We constantly get the feedback that… this is too good to be true… we need to just be patient. It takes time to build trust."
Refusal and the Silencing of 'No'	Communities who say "no" are often not listened to, revealing deep structural disregard for Indigenous decision-making.	"After they say no, people stop hearing them… it's then faced with retaliation, it's then faced with aggressiveness by mining companies."
Consent as a Process Undermined by Structural Power	Even when processes are in place, consent is undermined by systemic forces—corporate power, government influence, and colonial structures.	"The enforcement is a bit clouded by a system that… has historic roots in colonialism."

Participant Rose

Theme	Description	Supporting Quotes
Connection to the Land and Subsistence Lifestyle	The participant's deep-rooted connection to the natural environment, traditional subsistence activities, and intergenerational knowledge transfer.	"I'm born and raised in *community.* um i'm the oldest of nine children i have one son and three grandchildren, and those are my my purpose for for what i do and my people um i think it, It started with just being close to the earth, having a grandma that lived close to the earth," 2-4 "Part of our DNA is fish. We've lived on fish for time immemorial. So it's part of us and we're part of it. So I don't ever remember a time when I was young that we didn't have fish." 6 "the tundra was always where I went to because it, living in a house with ten people, and seven of them are younger than you can sometimes get crazy, so I'd go to the tundra to just get away." 10
Advocacy and Civic Engagement	The participant's extensive experience serving on various boards, councils, and committees, where she has advocated for positive change and accountability.	"I worked for our people for most of my life in public service with non-profit. and advocating and being on council on boards that really made a big impact on my life I'm so glad that my first real board position was as a school board." 12 "Whenever I got on a board or council, I made it a point to make sure I always knew my material and ask questions and, you know, try to advocate for positive change." 18-19

Threats to the Environment and Subsistence Way of Life	The participant's deep concerns about the proposed Donlin gold mine project and its potential to devastate the local environment, salmon fisheries, and traditional way of life.	"The proposed *mine* is an open pit gold mine, would be the largest open pit gold mine country in the world, up in the mountains, pristine, healthy environment, right next to a salmon spawning stream." 26 "it would destroy the whole river, and our people don't realize how delicate, our environment, and fragile our environment is, and how connected everything is, because when you get down to the mouths of the two r*ivers*, in between are all of these connecting. streams and creeks and sloughs. It's like a sponge. So anything that happens there will, kill the entire river, and it won't take much." 30-32
Conflicts of Interest and Lack of Tribal Sovereignty	The participant's frustration with the complex power dynamics and conflicts of interest between the regional/village corporations, tribal governments, and outside mining companies, as well as the erosion of tribal sovereignty.	"The regional corporation president's CEO was an in-law to the tribal chief. that's like 5, 10 miles from the Mine. And *they* was part of the *Corporation* that got with the corporation without tribal consultation to go into partnership with the *Gold Company*." 50-51 *Paraphrased*: The tribal council is heavily influenced and controlled by the Village Corporation, which has members and relatives on the council, leading to concerns about conflict of interest and undue influence. 70-72

Erosion of Traditional Values and the Rise of Greed	The participant's lament over the loss of traditional values and the rise of greed, materialism, and corruption within the Native community.	"My house is bigger than your house and I have this title and I make this much money and this is how big my bank account is and I can vacation here and buy an airplane there. Yeah, and that's just capitalism. And suffering, yeah. And we're supposed to be above this. It breaks my heart that we've lost our connections to the divine." 76 "And our villages are in a fragile state right now. How many, how much do they have to pay for fuel? Yeah. And some months it's between fuel and food, because you've got going out to get to hunt and fish, the cost of gas, the *regional* village. They lost their fish last summer because of the generator going out in the village." 116-117
Challenges of Grassroots Organizing and Achieving Consent	The participant's experiences in grassroots organizing and attempts to achieve meaningful consent from her community, highlighting the significant obstacles posed by corporate influence, lack of transparency, and the fragmentation of Native institutions.	"We had to get it into their brains that, No, this is not what the drives directed you to do. You didn't have to go without... But we shouldn't have ever had to do that." 90 "we're also trying to inform and activate the shareholder base to bring it to a vote but is pretty sneaky. they've been holding their regional annual regional meetings in very remote locations in the region that are hard and very expensive to get to and they can charter in and out yeah do they offer call-in so you could call in everybody else does I don't know why they don't." 94-95

Participant Magpie

Theme	Description	Supporting Quotes
Tribal Identity and Ancestral Connection to Land	The participant's strong sense of identity as a member of the --Tribe, and the significance of the mining project's location within their ancestral homeland.	"I'm a member of the Tribe in Northern Nevada, so our lands sit right on the border of Nevada and Oregon on the very southern end of Oregon." 4-7 "The *area* is basically on our ancestral homeland. So it's in the middle of our ancestral territory." 14-15
Navigating Complex Consent and Negotiation Processes	The participant's definition of meaningful consent, the challenges the tribe faced in the initial community benefit agreement process, and their efforts to renegotiate and ensure proper consent.	"My definition of consent is basically that the tribe is aware of all activities that are going to be undertaken well prior to anything being touched on the land." 52-54 "The ACLU just came out with a report a few months ago saying that our tribe was not given free prior and informed consent during that process." 16-17 "we were able to go through the formal process, start really official engagements with BLM. In earnest, and so over the course of the past year. We've been able to start the process again, kind of revisit the community benefit agreement that was initially signed and make a series or go through the process of making some amendments to that." 20-21

Leveraging Expertise and Capacity-Building	The participant's background in the telecom industry and how that experience has informed their approach to the mining project, as well as the tribe's efforts to secure legal representation and grants to build their capacity to engage in the negotiation process.	"I have about 32 years in the industry, and that's kind of how I came into the, mining area through some work that we started in the *specific industry* side." 8 "we were able to, in about May of 2024, we were able to identify a lawyer. We were then able to go through Native Americans and philanthropy, and we got a grant to cover the legal fees." 18-19
Balancing Advocacy and Tribal Governance	The tensions between grassroots advocacy groups and the tribal government, and the need for coordination and collaboration.	"The People of *Area* that is an advocacy group that was formed to basically advocate in the absence of the tribe saying anything on the subject." 88-89 "you can do that as an individual you can do that as an organization as a tribal government you have a separate set of responsibilities in addition to that" 92-94
Historical Context and Intergenerational Impacts	The participant's references to their tribe's past experiences with mining and other extractive activities, and the acknowledgment that the current mining project will have long-lasting, intergenerational impacts.	"Our own reservation was impacted by the mine, mercury mine, and we had contamination and deaths and sickness." 66-68 "this is the work that we're doing to make sure that we're still here. And the piece that really gives me hope, and that I tell, you know, people in the community as well, is, you know, we all are survivors of one of the largest genocides that's ever taken place in the world." 146-148

Resilience, Adaptation, and Collective Action	The participant's perspective that their tribe, as well as indigenous communities in general, are "great at survival" and have a history of adapting to challenging circumstances, and the hopeful outlook that this mining project could be an opportunity for communities to come together.	"we are great at survival, so like, you know, if the world ends, we're still going to be there." 44 "this may be an opportunity for communities to come together for a purpose like this. And it is the most important purpose, which is what we've been doing this entire time, which is protecting our land and serving our land." 148-150

Participant Iris

Theme	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
Lifelong Commitment to Community	The participant's long-standing involvement and leadership role in the Village Tribal Council, spanning multiple administrations and governors.	"I'm of *Village Tribal Council*, and I do not know exactly how long I've been involved with this, but it's been years." 2 "I've been trying to nail it down, but I can't. I said, I know I've gone through quite a few administrations and a whole bunch of governors, and that's about the extent of it." 4
Grassroots Organizing and Community Empowerment	The participant's discussion of the *Community Working Group* and website, and how these grassroots efforts have helped to build community support and amplify the community's voice.	"I feel like we had the *Community Working Group*, and now we have *Community Working Group site* added to the foundation." 58 "Weeks later my wife and I were part of a panel that spoke at the *Community Center Lobby*. It was almost standing room only. You

		could hear a pin drop when it came to me. The *Community Valley* residents were waiting for some four o'clock ones." 61-62
Collective Strength and Unity among Alaska Native Communities	The participant's emphasis on the need for Alaska Native communities to come together, exercise their collective strength, and find better ways to be involved in decision-making processes.	"If there was ever a time for us all tribes to be together, it is now. I say, we have an unsourced source of strength that we don't even know we have. It's kind of up to us to get together and start exercising that." 72 "We need to just come together and not have to have roles like that. Just recognize we're all the same. For once, for space and time to work together for a little bit." 77-78
Lack of Meaningful Consultation and Consent from Mining Companies	The participant's frustration with the mining company's lack of outreach and engagement with the Tribal Council, as well as critiques of existing approaches to consultation and consent.	"They did everything currently the way I see it, except reach out to us and ask if we'd like to meet with them." 16 "They'll talk real loud and forceful. Yeah. We know what's at stake." 28
Importance of Knowledge, Wisdom, and Applying Traditional Ways of Knowing	The participant's emphasis on the significance of not just acquiring knowledge, but also having the wisdom to apply that knowledge effectively, and the need to balance technical or academic knowledge with cultural context and traditional protocols.	"Knowledge is powerful every time you put it. And then we had a kind of a group session towards the end, and I said, I keep hearing this gentleman. I'm saying knowledge is powerful. I like that. But I would like to add this to it. Maybe we have the wisdom to know how to apply that knowledge." 10-12 "If there was ever a time for us all tribes to be together, it is now. I say,

		we have an unsourced source of strength that we don't even know we have." 72
Decolonization and Addressing Historical Trauma	The participant's acknowledgment of the need to "decolonize" and recognize the impacts of historical trauma, such as the boarding school era, on the current generation's perspectives and approaches.	"I told all three of them, I have to decolonize you first. I mean, sometimes, like, I was talking with a gentleman before, and I was like, we are that generation. Like, even as a Native person, I still feel I need to be decolonized and deprogrammed every day." 82-84

Participant Salmon

Theme	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
Evolving Engagement with Mining Issues	The participant's transition from working on toxics issues to focusing on mining, both in Alaska and globally, reflecting a growing recognition of the need for a more comprehensive and proactive approach to mining-related challenges.	"I wasn't working on mining at that point, but I was working on toxics issues for a statewide environmental organization, and I worked for a number of years for that group, and then I worked on forest issues in Alaska. When I left, I started working on mining issues in the lower 48 and then globally." 11

Conceptualizing Consent as a Dynamic, Relational Process	The participant's emphasis on consent as an ongoing, adaptive "dynamic relationship" that respects the principles of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), rather than a one-time decision.	"We're talking, in Irma's own world about a dynamic relationship that respects the four words that are in pre, prior, informed consent that it is one where people have the time and the resources to understand what is being proposed on their lands, that they have the free ability to have access to that information, to participate and participate on terms that they set that aren't just imposed on them, and that they may agree to certain things. They may disagree and say no, they may say yes with certain conditions, and that that is a dynamic relationship." 19
Navigating Historical Exclusion and Power Imbalances	The participant's acknowledgment of the long history of systems that have excluded or marginalized indigenous communities from decision-making processes related to their lands and resources, and the need to address underlying power imbalances and systemic barriers.	"There's a long history and heritage of systems where people don't feel like there's an equal place for the free or the prior right is that, like how lands are managed right now make it even really hard, even if you're saying it's prior to this mining project." 27

Adopting a Holistic, Rights-Based Approach to Consent	The participant's emphasis on the importance of ensuring that mining projects "do no harm" to communities, beyond just providing benefits or compensation, and their understanding of consent as a means to protect the overall wellbeing and self-determination of affected communities.	"It doesn't free the responsibility of from the start, do no harm. How do we ensure that the mining operation itself isn't actively doing harm, even as so that you're not end up trading basketball uniforms for clean water, for example, or massive, you know, profits leaving with resources from that region, with the community getting a new playground, but not millions of dollars, which could have been a cut of the profits from that, from the resources that were on their lands." 27
Leveraging Tools and Standards for Community Empowerment	The participant's discussion of using tools like the Irma standard as a way for indigenous communities to "assert their rights" and engage in consent processes, viewing such standards as mechanisms for empowerment and the reclamation of indigenous sovereignty.	"Irma is a tool for communities who are exerting their rights to consent and their rights to be actively engaged in decision making on their lands and overseeing the impacts of their land. So I would not say Irma itself is consent. Irma is a tool as so and there's actually, I don't know if a Dan, my colleague, who was there last week shared it with you. There is a I'll see if I can attach it, but a resolution that was passed by the United British Columbia Indian chiefs, which describes how they are using it there in

		this and so they speak to their right to consent and that mines coming onto their territory should expect to need to do an Irma audit is one way they are seeking information on what will the impacts of the site be, what? How make sure they're heard, having independent verification of performance." 38-39
Navigating Contextual Complexity and Advocating for Nuanced Approaches	The participant's acknowledgment of the challenges posed by the lack of federal recognition of indigenous groups and the complexity of inter-community dynamics, suggesting the need for flexible, community-driven approaches that account for diverse local realities.	"There's the discussion that even when there is benefit sharing that involves money. It's difficult to say no, if the community is dealing with income insecurity or poverty of a range of types, that benefits may not be shared equally in different communities. Different communities may have really different feelings about it, and the complexity of that and that can divide indigenous communities all the more so you have even the impact of the of the debate and the argument around well, we can center, not and pressures between communities that are very difficult." 27

Participant Blueberry

Theme Name	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
Consent as an Expression of Sovereignty	Consent means the ability to say yes, no, or yes with conditions—and be heard and respected unconditionally.	"To have full access to consent is to have full access to sovereignty… and have that be taken and acted upon without question."
Co-optation of FPIC and Corporate Distortion	Companies adopt FPIC language while ignoring its principles, reducing community trust and legitimacy.	"It's the companies that come in and be like, 'Let's do an FPIC process,' and then roll right over the community."
Grassroots Movements as Sustained Influence	Grassroots efforts build long-term knowledge, pressure, and exposure to shift public and institutional engagement.	"They knew everything I was going to say… because grassroots campaigns made them listen."
Environmental and Gendered Violence	Extractive projects bring increases in domestic violence, trafficking, and social instability—without safety net infrastructure.	"The tribal leaders know what's coming… there's no increase in advocacy or shelter or even police officers."
Community-Defined Consent and Collaboration	Consent should be defined by each community based on cultural, social,	"Every community will define [consent] differently… philanthropy must not come in with a

	and spiritual priorities—not imposed from outside.	pre-defined version of FPIC."
Relational Justice and Healing Accountability	Consent processes must allow for rebuilding trust and collaboration across community, policy, and philanthropic stakeholders.	"We can build values and collaborate… and come up with our own ways of dealing with the external world."

Participant Starfish

Theme Name	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
No Legal Consent on Public Lands	Tribes cannot veto mining projects on federal lands—even when sacred sites or treaty rights are affected.	"There is no consent… outside of reservations. You'd have to change the law."
Consultation as Performative Process	Tribal views are collected but not meaningfully considered—outcomes are predetermined.	"They go, tough luck. Thank you for your views… this project is going in."
Litigation as Tactical Resistance	Only through environmental law or religious freedom cases can projects be delayed or modified.	"We stopped some mines… but it was the Endangered Species Act, not tribal rights."
1872 Mining Law as Colonial Legacy	The mining law grants near-absolute access to	"It's the last law of Manifest Destiny… and it's not going away."

	corporations—unlike any other extractive sector.	
Judicial Precedent as Hope for Change	Cases like Oak Flat raise possibilities for stronger tribal protections through religious freedom.	"If the court applies the law equally… Oak Flat should not be destroyed."
Executive Action and Monument Politics	Monument status can slow extraction, but protections are easily reversed by political shifts.	"Trump gutted Bears Ears… Biden restored it… now it's happening again."

Participant Hooligan

Theme Name	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
Consent as Sovereign Power	True consent is the ability to say yes or no and have it honored, not ignored through bureaucratic performance.	"Consent… gives us the right to say yes or no and have that be heard… not adulterated by pressure."
Consultation as Colonial Lip Service	Consultation often performs inclusion while ignoring tribal voices and violating sovereignty.	"They kept pretending to listen… but did exactly the same thing."
Healing Through Cultural Practice	Traditional healing and foods are not only therapeutic but valid forms of federally recognized recovery.	"We wrote into the grant… plant healers, language arts, carving, sewing… and the federal government listened."

Transboundary Sovereignty and Advocacy	Tribes on both sides of the border must have voice in shared environmental decisions.	"Our sovereignty needs to be recognized above and below the colonial border."
Subsistence as Livelihood and Infrastructure	Freezers, traditional foods, and gathering are redefined as essential infrastructure for survival and culture.	"Our freezers are facilities. They are our grocery stores."
Seven Generations and Intergenerational Care	Advocacy is for future generations and guided by ancestors' principles of balance and respect.	"I hope… those who come after me still have that same connection… we are protecting our lands."

Participant Flounder

Theme Name	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
Consent as Sovereignty and Mutual Respect	Consent must be Indigenous-led, culturally informed, and reflect true sovereign decision-making.	"Meaningful consent is being able to acknowledge who we are and what is ours… we have our own sovereign nations."
Youth as Agents of Healing and Resistance	Young leaders carry ancestral teachings and reshape activism through vulnerability, truth-telling, and vision.	"I think that was us they were talking about gathering… I literally have no choice. It is a responsibility."

Grassroots Advocacy as Power-Building	Community organizing is strategic, spiritual, and essential for amplifying Indigenous voices globally.	"Before the grassroots, it was like nobody was talking about it… then it just took off."
Challenging Misinformation and Co-optation	Consent processes are undermined by gifts, limited outreach, and manipulated narratives.	"They fund our dog mushing races… then come in like the good guy. It's weird."
Cultural Teachings as Movement Blueprint	Elder guidance and prophecy inform today's resistance, guiding the youth to fulfill a historical promise.	"My grandma said people will try to change the way I think… I think we're the ones they were talking about gathering."
Redefining Consultation Through Cultural Practice	Consultation must reflect Indigenous communication styles and protocols—not imposed colonial frameworks.	"They come to us, but we are running the meeting… It's our way of consulting."

Participant Geranium

Theme Name	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
Consent as Sacred Land Defense	Consent is grounded in cultural and spiritual	"We don't want uranium in our backyard, period…

	reverence for land—not merely a political formality.	watersheds are very unique, intricate systems."
Youth as Knowledge Carriers and Activists	Young people are central to advocacy, learning TEK and science to protect land and identity.	"Youth… looked under the microscope… said, 'we have good water'… they know how important camping is."
TEK and Science as Dual Advocacy Tools	Combining Indigenous knowledge with scientific methods creates effective, culturally resonant policy arguments.	"We use traditional ecological knowledge… and science as a diplomatic tool."
Resolutions and Testimony as Sovereignty	Strategic use of resolutions, storytelling, and direct action reinforces Indigenous voice and legal influence.	"We got 50 other tribes… to sign on the same resolution… resolutions are very powerful tools."
Collective Organizing and Learning Across Lands	Resistance is strengthened by alliances with Indigenous communities globally and shared experiences.	"We learned a lot from communities in New Mexico and Canada… they showed us what could happen here."
Environmental Identity and Wholeness	Connection to land is holistic—supporting spiritual, physical, emotional, and social wellbeing.	"Our subsistence economy… makes us healthy, mind, body, soul, and spirit."

Participant Halibut

Theme Name	Description	Supporting Quotes
Consent as Sovereignty and Autonomy	Consent must include the ability to say no without mitigation or override. True sovereignty respects refusal.	"That no… should be a complete sentence… and the answer."
Consultation as a Mechanism of Control	Current tribal consultation frameworks are built to manage dissent rather than enable self-determination.	"Consultation… is really specifically geared to override consent."
Grassroots Organizing as Sacred Responsibility	Community truth-telling and resistance are grounded in Indigenous intergenerational ethics and spiritual duty.	"You are here with the singular obligation to be an ancestor… anything that you do today is something your children don't have to do."
Community Fracturing Through Tokenism	Industry tactics tokenize Indigenous individuals to create division, causing harm that lasts beyond development fights.	"They tokenize incredibly and so loudly… pitting people against each other… you're still left with all of this damage."
Extractivism as a Colonial Design	The system was built to extract Indigenous land and labor; current	"These were systems designed… to extract from

	practices are extensions of those original intents.	Indigenous needs of people without consent."
Indigenous-Led Stewardship of Land	True co-management means Indigenous leadership in land use decisions—not inclusion, but authority.	"Those conversations should be entirely led and controlled by Indigenous people."

Participant Salmonberry

Theme Name	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
Consent as Sovereignty and Resistance	Consent means the power to say no and for Indigenous communities to set the terms of engagement on their land.	"You don't just want a seat at the table… you should be making the table and bringing people towards it."
ANCSA as Structural Fragmentation	ANCSA imposed capitalist values and divided Indigenous interests, weakening tribal sovereignty and consensus.	"It imposes this Western capitalistic approach on Tribes… splits interest between tribal governments and corporations."
Grassroots Power to Shift the Narrative	Community organizing disrupts pro-mining narratives and strengthens	"The narrative that mining creates jobs… has been debunked… grassroots

	tribal resolve to resist harmful projects.	organizing is important for raising public awareness."
Legal Tools with Conditional Utility	Statutory protections like NHPA offer leverage but are only as strong as the political context allows.	"It's only helpful to rely on those federal jurisdictional hooks if you have a friendly federal government."
Green Economy as a Colonial Continuation	Framing climate policy around mining perpetuates extractive harm in the name of progress.	"This unbelievable irony of putting the brunt of the green transition on the backs of Indigenous people."
Partial Victories and Economic Pressure	Wins include investor withdrawals and community development funds that create accountability or mitigation.	"We don't know exactly why that happened, but we can guess... maybe public pressure pushed the investor out."

Participant Cranberry

Theme Name	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
Consent as Relational Process	Consent is ongoing, evolving, and tied to Indigenous worldviews and dynamic community conditions.	"They may say yes with certain conditions... It may change as the project itself changes, or the impacts

		are revealed, or the community itself evolves."
Systemic Exclusion in Governance	Historical and structural exclusion prevents meaningful participation from Indigenous communities.	"Even if you're saying it's prior to this mining project… communities [may say] this is managed as public land, but we're not given rights to speak to it."
Voluntary Tools as Strategic Aids	Tools like IRMA can support—but not replace—Indigenous rights and community-defined protocols.	"I would not say IRMA itself is consent. IRMA is a tool… for communities who are exerting their rights to consent."
Economic Inequity and Consent Pressure	Communities facing poverty may struggle to assert consent freely due to power imbalances.	"It's difficult to say no if the community is dealing with income insecurity or poverty of a range of types."
Market Failure to Incentivize Ethical Mining	Capitalist systems reward noncompliance by offering no price difference for ethical practices.	"Company A spent more to satisfy a community, but if they sell at the same price as someone doing harm, it's all the wrong signals."
Partial Success and Legal Accountability	Success is piecemeal, often focused on monitoring or legal	"The Good Neighbor Agreement… had monitoring shared by the

	agreements rather than holistic consent.	community... and watchdog funding."

Participant Crowberry

Theme Name	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
FPIC as Core Ethical Standard	Consent includes the right to say no, with decision-making rooted in early, informed, and community-led processes.	"Consent part being yes, no or place and conditions... not after there's been extensive exploration activities."
U.S. Law as Barrier to Consent	Federal law, especially the 1872 Mining Law, prevents communities and agencies from rejecting harmful projects.	"Federal agencies feel their hands are tied under the 1872 mining law... mining is considered priority use."
Grassroots Organizing as Driver of Change	Local and tribal community advocacy is key to legitimacy and pushing governments to respect rights.	"Most effective when that effort is coming from the grassroots... supported by national organizations."
Social License as Manipulation	Companies simulate legitimacy by promoting benefits and securing support without true consent.	"Companies... try to secure what we call social license... talk about advantages of the jobs."

Litigation as Last Resort	Legal challenges are often the only way communities can influence mining outcomes after permits are issued.	"Typically requires litigation in order to bring the mining company to the table… after the permit is issued."
Lack of Timely and Meaningful Consultation	Consultation is often delayed or superficial, with agencies failing to honor obligations until after the fact.	"It took two years… to recognize they even had tribal consultation obligations… it was after the fact."

Participant Herring

Theme Name	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
Consent as Sovereignty and Equal Partnership	True consent means Indigenous governments must be treated as equals in decision-making—not just stakeholders.	"They just need to be treated as a partner, slash equal… that's not the way they're looked at now."
Failures of U.S. Permitting Systems	Permitting structures provide no real entry point for Indigenous voices, leading to litigation as the only recourse.	"There really isn't any direct entry point for most people, including Indigenous peoples… so we see legal challenges."
Grassroots Advocacy as a Prerequisite for Influence	Expert input only matters when backed by community concern—local	"If the voice doesn't represent someone, they won't pay any attention."

	voices drive legitimacy and accountability.	
Learning from Canadian and Voluntary Models	Canada's systems offer stronger tribal participation; IRMA provides global frameworks for informed consent.	"Canada... is certainly a step above what we have anywhere here in the US."
Consequences of Poor Planning and Oversight	Insufficient planning at mine start-up leads to long-term environmental and financial burdens for governments.	"Doing the quick and dirty thing at the beginning turns into massive public liabilities... 50 years afterwards."
Barriers to Informed Consent Implementation	Even well-intentioned frameworks like IRMA struggle with application and mining industry resistance.	"Mining companies... even less informed on what informed consent means."

Participant Trout

Theme	**Description**	**Supporting Quotes**
Lack of Meaningful Consent	The participant emphasizes the lack of true consent and meaningful involvement of local communities,	"we don't really have consent as I would think about it and that the folks who are directly impacted in their daily lives and otherwise by these projects are not giving a

	especially Alaska Native communities, in the decision-making process for mining projects in Alaska.	real say and whether or not a project moves forward" 8-10
Flawed Permitting and Approval Processes	The participant's experience with the failed Rock Creek Mine project highlights the systemic issues within the permitting and approval processes for mining in Alaska, including rushed timelines, lack of public awareness, and prioritization of corporate interests over community well-being.	"it was like, you guys are ready to go. Um, and to me that was just insane. This was a mining project. It had a tailing facility. Um, there were, um, drinking water wells and stuff were fairly nearby." 24-26
Lack of Corporate Accountability	The participant expresses concerns about mining companies' lack of accountability and responsibility for the environmental damage and financial burdens left behind.	"just leaving the community taxpayers holding the bag when smaller mining company doesn't have the money. actually restore or reclaim the area when they're done or have a big disaster and have and not be able to afford to actually make the community safe um you know i just i think that's wrong." 49-50
Need for Community Education and Engagement	The participant emphasizes the importance of community education and engagement efforts, either by the law firm or the	"we do our best to try to go to the community and have conversations, especially with the folks that we're working with directly, but to potentially have a kind

	mining companies themselves, to inform local residents about proposed projects and their potential impacts.	of community meeting about the project." 54-56
Potential of Grassroots Organizing	The participant discusses the potential for grassroots organizing and community-led actions, such as tribally-led consultation guidelines, to influence decision-making processes and push for more meaningful consent.	"I think the more outrage there is, the harder it is. I mean, in a lot of ways, *Mine* has been that way. The *Mine* fight has been, you know, we're just, we're not going to take it and we're not going to stand for it and we're just going to keep fighting." 66
Exclusion of Alaska Native Communities	The participant observes the exclusion of Alaska Native communities from the consultation and consent processes, particularly with the shift to virtual engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic.	"I think definitely from consultation. I don't think, it depends on the administration. administration with the feds on actually how how good they do consultation and I think it's just.gotten worse since covid because a lot of times i think now they're rather than spending the money to go to the communities and build relationships they're you know doing zoom calls or whatever and then when because you know when you have a bad connection and people can't actually get on to speak that that just is kind of a kind of a lot" 70-72

APPENDIX C: PRE- AND POST-SURVEY QUESTIONS

Note: The Pre-survey opened in March 2025 and closed in April 2025. Participation was voluntary and confidential; respondents were free to skip any question. A total of 34 participants completed the survey.

Pre-Survey Questions	**Options**
Timestamp	(auto-recorded at survey submission)
Primary affiliation	• Indigenous community member • Tribal government representative • Environmental/conservation organization • Researcher/academic • Community advocate • Other (please specify)
Region of Alaska	• Anchorage/Eagle River, • MatSu (Talkeetna, Palmer, Wasilla) • Other (please specify)
Level of involvement in decision-making processes related to mining projects	• Highly involved • Somewhat involved • Not very involved • Not involved at all
Familiarity with FPIC	• Very familiar • Somewhat familiar • Not very familiar • Not familiar at all
Effectiveness of community consultation about mining projects	• Very effectively • Somewhat effectively • Not very effectively • Not effective at all

Important elements of meaningful consent in mining projects	• Early and transparent communication • Legal recognition of Indigenous decision-making authority • Inclusion of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in assessments • Economic benefits and revenue sharing, Community-led environmental impact assessments • The ability to say "no" to a project without pressure
Familiarity/effectiveness of consent frameworks or processes	• Federal Government-to-Government Process • Consultation (U.S.)State of Alaska Consultation Process • UNDRIP + FPIC, IRMA FPIC • Traditional Governance and Community Consent
Direct impact of a mining project	• Yes, positively • Yes, negatively • No direct impact • Unsure
Participation in public hearings, consultations, or negotiations about a mining project	• Yes, multiple times • Yes, once or twice • No, but I am interested in participating • No, and I am not interested
The biggest gaps in the current consultation process for mining projects	• Lack of accessible information in Indigenous languages • Lack of enforcement mechanisms for Indigenous rights • Decisions being made before consultations happen

	• Insufficient financial and legal resources for communities • Short timelines that do not allow for thorough community discussions • False information and promises from project proponents Other (please specify)
Importance of legally binding agreements that honor consent in resource development	• Extremely important • Somewhat important • Neutral • Somewhat unimportant • Not important at all
Additional resources or support for communities	• Legal support and advocacy • Independent environmental assessments • Greater financial resources for community participation • Stronger government enforcement of FPIC policies • More educational workshops on mining policies and rights Other (please specify)
Contact information for gift certificate	(Optional) Name, phone number, email address

Note: The Post-survey opened on May 8th, 2025 and closed on May 16th, 2025. Participation was voluntary and confidential; respondents were free to skip any question. A total of 66 participants completed the survey.

Post-Survey Questions	**Options**
Timestamp	(auto-recorded at survey submission)
Primary affiliation	• Indigenous community member • Tribal government representative • Environmental/conservation organization • Researcher/academic • Community advocate • Other (please specify)
Based on your experience from the facilitated focus group dialogue, what specific changes would make the mining consent process in Alaska more fair, inclusive, and culturally responsive?	• Open ended response
Reflecting on the discussions during the facilitated focus groups, what is one actionable step you recommend immediately to enhance community involvement and effectiveness in Alaska's mining consent process?	• Open ended response

APPENDIX D: FACILITATED FOCUS GROUP SHARED VALUES

Group 1 Values related to the mining impact in Alaska

- Speaking for the Land and Future Generations
- Respect for all "voices" human and non-human
- Open with a smile and speak to anyone around me. Share love and happiness, respect and listen.
- Subsistence!
- The future- What's best for my children and future generations.
- Connected to animals.
- Clear Analysis of accurate information (not posturing or faking or manipulation)
- Hozho', (Balance & Harmony for all life).
- Land has rights.
- Honesty.
- Conversations in Good Faith.
- It's not just about humans.
- Compassion-We are all doing the best we can with what we have at any given moment.
- Native Connection, Grandmother who saw anyone with eyes of love.
- I value my family
- I value time-the time we may have to protect our land and future from mining that will distrust our land we live on.
- Fish
- Respect
- Build Common ground.

- Conversations in Good Faith
- Honesty, Fairness, Ethics
- Protection of nature (in all aspects)
- Intuition, facts, and land.
- Family, Safety, Children.
- Be True.
- Lead by example.

Group 2 Values related to the mining impact in Alaska

- Grandkids, way of life.
- Great grandparents, Grandfather, and Auntie Mary and my Parents, and all the others who were a big part of me growing up (acknowledgement of spiritual significance).
- Clean/healthy fish
- We are stewards of the land, not owners (in the broad sense) of the land, water, air and all that live in these spaces.
- Generosity of heart, truth, honesty, trust.
- Love, do everything with love and intent.
- Kindness
- Empathy
- What are we leaving for the future generations? Is there hope?
- Elder Voice
- Community
- Clean/healthy fish
- Clean air, clean water, living things
- Our first purpose is to steward the land and waters for future generations
- Care, Caring for myself and others. Physically and mentally.
- Peace

- Connection + Care-Authentically trying to know the community impacted and come to agreement about how to move forward.
- Respect and balance
- Listen, don't assume.
- Respect
- Be respectful in all you do.
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Diversity
- Trust
- Learning
- Come in as a learner
- Living in a society asks something of us.
- Human cohesion

Group 3 Values related to the mining impact in Alaska

- Service & Education
- Consider others, consider the future
- Those who know what a place smells like–this is encoded in deep memory–should define how the lands and waters are stewarded.
- Compassion, balance, inclusion.
- Generosity, empathy.
- Care-support for others
- My word.
- Emotional
- Our subsistence way of life
- Health and wellness for others
- Health and safety of communities
- Invest in people

- Start from basis of kindness
- Transparent about risks
- Listening
- Humility
- Value in a mining context: honoring your words/intention, accountability.
- Gentle, respect.
- Recognize and acknowledge Indigenous Land
- Listen with ears to listen, look for how to care for the other
- Truth- Keeping your word
- Silence
- Integrity
- Realistic, Resourceful
- Defending People

APPENDIX E: REPORT AUTHORS

Project Mosaic LLC

Gemara Gifford, MS, PhD Candidate, Co-Project Lead
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Role: Lead Facilitator (project concept, project management, facilitated dialogue), supporting researcher, co-author

Gemara is originally from Denver, Colorado, and has been providing supportive assistance to Indigenous-led conservation practitioners for over a decade as a professional facilitator, researcher, and advocate. She helps her clients develop and strengthen partnerships, and uplift the reality that Indigenous Peoples are and have always been leaders in fish, wildlife, and land stewardship, particularly in the Southwest, Mexico, and Central America. Gemara is currently a Doctoral Candidate at Colorado State University, and small business owner of Mending Mountains Collective LLC. Her family members helped form the United Mine Workers of America Union in Southern Colorado, making the project with AKMIN one that hits close to home for Gem and her family. With deep roots in the Southern Rocky Mountain region, Gem proudly acknowledges her Chicano and Native American roots (Tiwa).

Tara Christiansen-Stiller, MPH, PhD, Co-Project Lead
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Tara (Oswitusqaq) is an Alutiiq and Aleut from Old Harbor and King Cove, Alaska. She is a recent graduate of the Indigenous Health program with a

Ph.D. Program at the University of North Dakota. Tara is a mother of two and has been married for 19 years. She owns her own business, AK Indigenous Healing & Prevention, LLC, where she works as a contract Community Health Professional. Tara is passionate about helping communities develop their health frameworks. Her work integrates Western and Indigenous research to create evidence-informed health promotion and disease prevention models.

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Jennifer Wolf (Ponca/Ojibwe/Santee), Owner and Founder of Project Mosaic LLC, has worked with dozens of nonprofit organizations to define their needs and next steps. She is a Commissioner for the Denver Public Library, on the Racial Equity Board for the City and County of Denver, and the Denver Foundation's Advisory Committee for Community Impact. She has worked with dozens of Tribal Nations, Native nonprofits and communities, and recently received her PhD from the Indigenous Health Ph.D. Program at the University of North Dakota.