

CONTRIBUTING TO COMMUNITY

MAGNETIC NORTH:
THE ALASKAN CHARACTER
ED RASMUSON



KINDLING CONVERSATION GUIDE

ALASKA HUMANITIES FORUM

OUR PURPOSE

This Kindling Conversation Guide supports an intentional community conversation with a specific purpose to explore the **experiences that shape our understanding of leadership and community in Alaska.**

OUR GUIDING QUESTION

At the heart of this community conversation is a question that matters to everyone and that everyone can answer: **What responsibility do we have to contribute to our community?** We are all connected to a community, so we will all have valuable information to share.

OUR SPRINGBOARD FOR CONVERSATION

The Kindling Conversation Toolkit provides a springboard to help launch a conversation. The Magnetic North film about Ed Rasmuson offers a **shared experience that everyone can respond to and explore together**, whether or not they identify themselves as a community leader.

1. WELCOME



INTRODUCE THE DISCUSSION AND SET EXPECTATIONS. [*~5 MINUTES*]

Before people arrive, prepare the space and any handouts or posters you plan to use.

1. **Thank everyone** for making the time to come.
2. **Review “housekeeping”:**
 - a. Parking (if relevant), bathrooms, emergency exits, food... Ask everyone to turn their phones on silent if they haven’t done so already.
3. Make a **land acknowledgment** statement:
 - a. We encourage you to reflect and write your own beforehand.
4. Describe the **purpose** of the conversation:
 - a. This Kindling Conversation Guide supports an intentional community conversation with a specific purpose to explore the experiences that shape our understanding of leadership and community in Alaska.
5. Introduce the **Magnetic North** project:
 - a. Magnetic North is a documentary film project produced by Alaska Humanities Forum in partnership with Rasmuson Foundation. The series explores the stories of Alaskans whose actions and ideas have shaped the history, spirit, and values of our state. Collectively, they challenge preconceived notions of the Last Frontier, promote a richer understanding of its unique identity, and speak to our shared experience of life in contemporary Alaska.
6. Introduce the **Guiding Question** aloud:
 - a. What responsibility do we have to contribute to our community?
7. Review the **Four Agreements**:
 - a. Be present, listen hard, honor vulnerability, embrace complexity.
 - b. Ask if anyone wants to add another agreement, and if not, if everyone is OK with these four.

2. CONNECT



GET COMFORTABLE AND GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER. *[TIME VARIES BY NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS. WE ESTIMATE (60 SECONDS) X (# OF PARTICIPANTS) FOR INTRODUCTIONS.]*

Introductions: Go around the circle and have everyone introduce themselves with their preferred name, their gender pronouns if they feel comfortable sharing, and an answer to the prompt: **what are three words that come to mind to describe a community they are apart of.**

Ask people to keep their answers brief (30 seconds or less). We'll have plenty of time to get to know one another better.

Pair and Share: Next, ask everyone to turn to someone next to them (to make a pair), re-introduce themselves, and share **a story of a time they contributed to their community in a meaningful way.**

- Give each pair **6 minutes total** to tell their stories, so each person has 3 minutes to share. If there is a group of 3, they'll each have 2 minutes. You may want to call out at the half-way mark.
- Once time is up, ask if anyone would like to share a **feeling or phrase** that stuck out to them from their partner's story. Remind them not share the whole story or personal details—just a few words, phrases, or feelings that stood out.
- Open up larger group space to discuss by asking: **what are some of the themes that came up in the stories they shared?**
- After space for answers, thank everyone for sharing and transition to the shared springboard experience.

3. EXPERIENCE

FIND COMMON GROUND THROUGH SHARED EXPERIENCE. [*~30 MINUTES*]

- All participants will share the experience of **watching the Ed Rasmuson Magnetic North film**.

4. DISCUSS



EXPLORE DIFFERENT RESPONSES AND PERSPECTIVES. *[TIME VARIES. MAKE SURE TO LEAVE AT LEAST 10 MINUTES FOR THE CLOSE, AND 20 MINUTES FOR A GROUP OF MORE THAN 15 PEOPLE.]*

If you have a group larger than 15, break them into two smaller groups with one designated facilitator in each space. Otherwise, let everyone know that the rest of the conversation will be as a whole.

- Take a moment to **review the Four Agreements and the purpose** of the conversation.
- Before launching into the discussion, encourage the group to **talk to one another**, not just to you. Let them know it is ok for them to throw out questions, and there is no need to raise hands before speaking.
- Ask if anyone would like to **share a scene from the film that particularly resonated** with them.
 - Why did it resonate? Ask if anyone else felt similarly.
- Let the conversation go from there. Don't be afraid of silences! Count to 20 in your head before jumping in.
- If you want people to **dig deeper** into an idea or story, you might consider these questions:
 - Does that resonate with anyone else? Why?
 - Can you tell a story to illustrate that?
 - What do you mean when you say _____?
- If you want to **shift to something new**, you might ask:
 - What influences your contributions to your community?
 - How do you know when your community needs help?
 - Would anyone like to suggest a different perspective?
 - What responsibilities do we have to each other?
 - What does collective responsibility mean to you?
 - How do you balance giving with self preservation?
 - What does your community give to you?
- The conversation may naturally begin to address the guiding question, but if it doesn't, ask them directly!
 - **So what responsibility do we have to contribute to our community?**

5. CLOSE



REVEAL INSIGHTS FROM THE CONVERSATION. [*~10 MINUTES WITH GROUPS OF 15 OR LESS, ~20 MINUTES FOR GROUPS OF MORE THAN 15*]

- To transition out of the discussion, **summarize** what has happened so far:
 - Today, we explored the guiding question: What responsibility do we have to contribute to our community?
- Sit in silence for one minute to allow people time to reflect.
- Go around the circle one more time, asking **each person to share one thing they will be taking away.**
- Once everyone has shared, take a moment to **give thanks:**
 - Thank you first and foremost to Ed Rasmuson and his family for their contributions to this film. A thank you to Marla Williams for directing this film and the Magnetic North film series.
 - Thank you to the Alaska Humanities Forum and the Rasmuson Foundation for supporting this film.
 - And thank you to all of you, who came to this conversation today, who listened generously, and who shared your stories. When you make time for events like these, you make time for your community.

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