

REPRESENTATION

**MAGNETIC NORTH:
THE ALASKAN CHARACTER**

VIC FISCHER



KINDLING CONVERSATION GUIDE

OUR PURPOSE

This Kindling Conversation Guide supports an intentional community conversation with a specific purpose: To explore the relationship between leadership and representation.

OUR GUIDING QUESTION

At the heart of this community conversation is a question that matters to everyone and that everyone can answer:

HOW DOES OUR UNDERSTANDING OF REPRESENTATION IMPACT OUR LEADERSHIP?

We all have a relationship to Alaska as residents or visitors, 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 about representation. The Magnetic North film about Vic Fischer offers a shared experience that everyone can respond to and explore together, whether or not they identify themselves as a community leader.

Community conversations like this one need a facilitator to keep them on track. You may act as the facilitator, or you may ask someone else to fulfill that role. The facilitator is not an expert on the subject; they are not there to teach or explain.

Instead, the facilitator works to ensure as many participants as possible feel welcome, included, and engaged in the discussion. The facilitator will use the structure provided below to keep the conversation on track and create a transparent flow.

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.

- Thank everyone for making the time to come.
- Review “**housekeeping**”: parking (if relevant), bathrooms, emergency exits, food... Ask everyone to turn their phones on silent if they haven’t done so already.
- Make a **land acknowledgment** statement. We encourage you to reflect and write your own beforehand.
- Describe the **Purpose** of the conversation:

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- Introduce the Magnetic North Project:

Magnetic North is a documentary film project produced by Alaska Humanities Forum in partnership with Rasmuson Foundation. The series explores the personality and character of six 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.

- Introduce the **Guiding Question** aloud:

Q: How does our understanding of representation impact our leadership?

- Review the **Four Agreements**

(be present, listen hard, honor vulnerability, embrace complexity).

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 what brought them to the conversation.
 - ◆ 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), and re-introduce themselves. Share a time you were called on to represent an entire group of people.
 - ◆ Give each pair 6 minutes to tell their stories so each person has 3 minutes to share their piece. 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.
 - ◆ 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 Vic Fischer 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.]*

- In case 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 makes representation in Alaska different from other places?
 - ◆ Vic says, "this is your constitution, this is your state, this is your community..." What does this mean to you?
 - ◆ Would anyone like to suggest a different perspective?
 - ◆ Vic says that the statehood movement was "a political issue but not a partisan issue..." What does that make you think of?
 - ◆ What do leaders in Alaska face that others don't?
 - ◆ How did statehood change the way Alaskans think about representation?

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 relationship between leadership and representation.

- Sit in silence for one minute to allow people time to reflect.
- Go around the circle one more time, with each person sharing one thing they will be taking away.
- Once everyone has shared, take a moment to **give thanks**:
 - ◆ Thank you first and foremost to Vic Fischer 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 our sponsors, the Alaska Humanities Forum and Rasmuson Foundation.
 - ◆ 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.
- Ask everyone to please fill out a quick survey before they leave. Their feedback is critical for improving future conversations and for ensuring continued support for community gatherings like this one. If nothing else, please answer the “zip code” question on the form, as submitting at least that piece is a requirement of the stipend.

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