

Bread & Borders: Exploring Fears, Facts & Impacts about Refugee Claimants

Conversation Process for Unpacking Fears, Facts & Impacts of Common Myths/Misconceptions

Purpose:

To provide a respectful space in an informal setting (living room, dining table, etc.) for participants to explore common myths about the recent Refugee Claimant arrivals in Manitoba; and to enter into dialogue with people of differing views.

Pre-Conversation Preparation:

Assemble 8-12 people including the Host; print (a) Agreements on one page (located near end of toolkit), (b) each of the eight Myths/Misconceptions on a separate sheet of paper and in large font (located in next section of toolkit), (c) the handout with the Fears-Facts-Impacts questions, and (d) enough copies of the *Common Myths/Misconceptions About Refugees* handouts for each person; and select a timing device (going through all myths/misconceptions may take up to 2hrs). The duration of the activity can be shortened by reducing the amount covered.

Conversation Process:

As a general introduction explain that you, as Host, will guide the group through the conversation. Clarify that your role is not to provide answers or be an expert, rather to facilitate the process.

1. **Opening - Group Introductions/Check-in:** Go around room and invite people to say (a) their name; and (b) something they love about their community (however they define this).
2. **Agreements:** Point to and read over the Agreements, acknowledging that these are simply a guide to help all feel safe and respectfully engaged. Remind people that this is intended to be a group conversation (i.e., no side conversations).
 - **Open-mindedness:** Listen to and respect all points of view.
 - **Acceptance:** Suspend judgment as best you can.
 - **Curiosity:** Seek to understand rather than persuade.
 - **Discovery:** Question assumptions, look for new insights.
 - **Sincerity:** Speak from your heart and personal experience.
 - **Brevity:** Go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.
3. **Process:**
 - a. **Round 1:** Select one of the accompanying Myth/Misconception handouts to explore, read it out loud, and then place it where everyone can see it. As you pose each of the following questions, place the corresponding question sheet where all can see...
 - **What FEARS do you think are at the root of this myth/misconception?*** Allow a maximum of 10 minutes for conversation.
 - **What "FACTS" appear to support this myth/misconception?*** Allow a maximum of 10 minutes for conversation.
 - **What do you think are the IMPACTS of this myth/misconception, for you personally, and for society?*** Allow a maximum of 10 minutes for conversation.

***Note that the Fears-Facts-Impacts handouts each include two clarification questions to help participants better understand what's being asked, and to help them dig deeper into their perspectives. Be sure to read these out loud.**

To close the round, the Host will read the information associated with the Myth/Misconception in the *Common Myths/Misconceptions About Refugee Claimants* document. (Do not provide participants with this until the very end.)

- b. **Round 2:** Select another Myth/Misconception to explore, read it out loud, and then place handout where everyone can see it. Repeat the Fears-Facts-Impacts questions/process.
- c. **Round 3:** Select a final Myth/Misconception to explore, read it out loud, and then place handout where everyone can see it. Repeat the Fears-Facts-Impacts questions/process.

4. Closing:

- a. Read out the remainder of the Myths/Misconceptions that were not explored.
- b. Hand out the *Common Myths/Misconceptions About Refugee Claimants* document.
- c. Go around the room and ask each person to respond to the question, “**What is one thing you are taking away from this conversation (A new understanding? Something you want to learn more about? Something you will commit to doing to address this issue?)?**”
- d. Share resources in *Bread & Borders: Exploring Fears, Facts & Impacts about Refugee Claimants in Manitoba*, as appropriate.

Here are some ways to stay at ease, curious, inviting and keep the conversation flowing:

- **Tell me more about...**(If your curiosity is piqued)
- **This is what I heard you say... is it what you meant?** (If your instinct is to counter another’s statement)
- **What led you to this point of view?** (If you are with someone who begins advocating for a fixed position)
- **What is most important you in a leader?** (If you are with someone who begins championing/criticizing a leader who has taken a position on this issue)
- **I notice your passion on this issue; what makes this so important for you?** (If someone begins lecturing and intellectualizing)
- **What if the opposite were true?** (If you are with someone who always agrees with you)
- **Can you say that in another way?** (If you suspect you don’t understand)
- **I’d like to offer another point of view...** (If you hold a different opinion)
- **I’m wondering if you have some thoughts or feelings about what you’ve been hearing...**(If someone has been silent)
- **If what you are proposing came to pass, how would things be different?** (If someone’s ideas are very abstract)

Adapted from:

Conversation Café: *Basic Resources for Hosts* (<http://www.conversationcafe.org/for-hosts/>)

United Way Winnipeg, *How to Host a Red Table Dinner*. (<http://unitedwaywinnipeg.ca/red-tables-a-meal-with-a-message/>)