CREAM CITY CONSERVATION & CONSULTING LLC

Facilitation Triage Guide

Navigating Difficult Moments on Site

How to Use This Guide

This is a field reference and a training tool — not a script. Use it to build your own judgment, not replace it. Add your own notes, cross out what doesn't fit, and make it yours before you hit the trail.

PART 1: KEY CONCEPTS

In-Group and Out-Group: Working Definitions

These two concepts will come up repeatedly across these scenarios. Understanding them is not about assigning blame — it's about understanding why the same words, actions, or symbols can land very differently depending on who is involved.

IN-GROUP	OUT-GROUP
The group you naturally belong to — people who share your identity, background, or experience in a given situation. It's the group where you don't have to explain yourself, where certain language or humor makes sense from the inside, and where there's a shared understanding that doesn't need to be spelled out. People share your identity marker in this context. • A Black youth using the n-word among Black peers • Native youth making jokes about being Native • Spanish-speaking youths talking freely in Spanish • A staff member who has lived experience of ICE enforcement	Everyone outside that shared identity or experience. Being out-group isn't an insult — it just means you're on the outside of something you didn't live. And because you didn't live it, you don't get to decide whether something is okay within that group. People do not share your identity marker in this context. • A white guide responding to the same language • A white youth repeating a Native joke • A non-Spanish-speaking guide feeling excluded • A guide who has no personal ICE experience facilitating the discussion

Why This Matters for Guides

In-group and out-group dynamics explain why the same joke, word, or story can be healing in one mouth and harmful in another. As a guide, you are often navigating multiple in-group/out-group relationships at once — sometimes you are the in-group member, sometimes you are not, and sometimes the group itself is divided.

Three questions to ask yourself when in-group dynamics are in play:

- Is this an in-group moment — language or behavior that belongs to a community I am not part of?
- Is my discomfort about actual harm, or about being outside the group?
- If someone from outside this group repeated this, would it land differently? If yes — that tells you something important.

Reclamation vs. Appropriation

Reclamation is when a group takes back language or symbols historically used against them. **Appropriation** is when someone outside that group adopts those same elements without the lived experience that gives them meaning. Your role as a guide is not to police this distinction — it is to recognize it, so you know when to step back and when to step in.

PART 2: THE TRIAGE FRAMEWORK

The Four Moment Types

Before you respond to anything, **ask: what kind of moment is this?** Misidentifying the moment type is where guides most often go wrong. A trauma disclosure treated like a facilitation opportunity causes harm. A boundary that needs to be set treated like pastoral care enables harm.

MOMENT TYPE	WHEN IS THIS?	NOT THIS TYPE WHEN:	FIRST RESPONSE	DO NOT:
SAFETY	**When is this?** • Physical danger is present or imminent • Someone is at risk of harm • There is a medical or environmental emergency	**NOT this type when:** • The issue is emotionally charged but no one is in danger • Conflict is verbal and contained	**First response:** • Act immediately — follow camp emergency protocols • Remove youths from danger • Do not facilitate; direct	**Do NOT:** • Debate or discuss • Delay to gather consensus • Let the moment continue while you assess
PASTORAL CARE	**When is this?** • A youth has disclosed trauma or fear • A youth is visibly distressed • Someone shares news of a family crisis (ICE, arrest, loss)	**NOT this type when:** • The youth is processing loudly but not in distress • Multiple youths are raising a topic — not one individual in pain	**First response:** • Listen first. Do not redirect to group. • "That sounds really hard. How are you doing right now?" • Follow the youth's lead on what they need	**Do NOT:** • Turn the disclosure into a group discussion • Offer reassurances you cannot back up • Express your political views about the situation
FACILITATION	**When is this?** • The group is discussing a hard topic • Differing views are creating tension • A youth shares a controversial opinion	**NOT this type when:** • One person is in distress (pastoral care) • Someone's safety or dignity is being threatened (boundary-setting)	**First response:** • Name the dynamic: "I notice this conversation is getting intense." • Set or recall group agreements • Create space for multiple views without arbitrating a winner	**Do NOT:** • Pretend all opinions are equally valid when harm is involved • Shut down the conversation • Impose your own view as the guide
BOUNDARY-SETTING	**When is this?** • A comment targets someone's identity or dignity • Behavior violates camp values • Continued inaction would signal endorsement of harm	**NOT this type when:** • The comment is edgy or uncomfortable but not targeting anyone's identity • The group is handling it themselves effectively	**First response:** • "That's not something I'm going to let stand in our group." • Be direct — do not soften into a question • Address the comment, not the person's worth	**Do NOT:** • Shame the youth publicly if avoidable • Ignore it and hope it passes • Treat it as a facilitation moment when a line has been crossed

PART 3: THE THREE QUESTIONS

Ask These Before You Respond

These three questions don't always produce a clean answer. That's intentional. Their job is to slow down your reactive response and create space for a considered one. Practice them until they are automatic.

1 **Who is this moment for?**
Is this about the youth's needs, the group's needs, or your own discomfort?

2 **What kind of moment is this?**
Safety / Pastoral Care / Facilitation / Boundary-Setting?

3 **Am I the right person, and is now the right time?**
Would a director, co-guide, or private conversation serve better?

When Uncertain:

Saying "I don't know" to a youth is always better than performing certainty you don't have. You can say: *"I'm not sure what the right thing to do here is — let me think about it and come back to you."*

This also models something important: that adults sit with hard things, rather than rushing to resolve them.

PART 4: SCENARIO QUICK REFERENCE

Common Scenarios at a Glance

This table is a field reference, **not** full guidance. Use this to orient quickly in the moment.

Sample Scenario	Moment Type	In-Group / Out-Group Factor	Key First Move	Guide Self-Check
Youth shares that someone they know was detained by ICE	Pastoral Care	May be in-group experience for some youths. Do not assume.	Listen. Ask how the youth is doing — not about ICE.	Am I centering this youth, or the political issue?
Youth's family member was deported / incarcerated	Pastoral Care	This is a family crisis, not a policy discussion.	Private conversation. Connect to director or counselor.	Am I offering something real, or performing empathy?
Youth witnessed a school shooting	Pastoral Care → possible Facilitation	Witnessing trauma is different from having an opinion.	Acknowledge what they saw/experienced as real and serious.	Is the group ready for a conversation, or is one person in distress?
Pro-ICE youth in a group of critics — 2-week trip	Facilitation + Boundary-Setting on standby	Multiple in/out dynamics. No one group is fully in-group here.	Set group agreements on day one. Check in privately with the minority voice.	Am I protecting the space or one perspective?
Youth wearing a thin blue line shirt	Monitor → Facilitation if it becomes a flashpoint	Symbol means different things to different in-groups.	Do nothing until it becomes an incident. Then name the dynamic.	Is my reaction about the group's wellbeing or my own values?

Sample Scenario	Moment Type	In-Group / Out-Group Factor	Key First Move	Guide Self-Check
Staff member deeply involved in Operation Metro Surge / mutual aid / etc.	Guide Self-Management	Staff member is in-group with activists; may be out-group to youth.	Ask: why am I sharing this, and who does it serve?	Am I using this outdoor experience/youth program as platform for my political activism?
Staff member was arrested at protest and considers sharing with youths	Guide Self-Management	Personal disclosure that shifts the guide/youth relationship.	Talk to director before deciding. Draft what you would and would not share.	Does this build authentic connection or make me the story?
A Black youth uses the n-word	Monitor (usually) / Boundary-Setting if mimicked	In-group reclamation. Out-of-group guide should not intervene.	Watch the room. Intervene only if another youth mimics or if harm occurs.	Am I the right person to adjudicate this language?
Indigenous youths make a joke about being Native	Receive warmly (in-group) / Boundary-set if white/non-indigenous youth repeats it	Clear in-group moment. White youth repeating = out-group appropriation.	Receive it. Don't over-explain. If a white youth repeats it: redirect immediately.	Am I performing concern about something that doesn't need my intervention?
All youth in the group speak Spanish; guide does not	Self-Management / Facilitation if safety is affected	Youth are in-group in their shared language. Guide is out-group.	Continue building relationship. Don't ask them to stop.	Is this a safety issue or a discomfort issue?
Youth shares a widely controversial opinion	Facilitation → Boundary-Setting if identity is targeted	Depends on content. Assess who is harmed, not just who is offended.	Assess: is this edgy-but-fine or identity-targeting? Then triage.	Am I reacting to the opinion or the potential harm?

Sample Scenario	Moment Type	In-Group / Out-Group Factor	Key First Move	Guide Self-Check
Staff member says they'd be uncomfortable sharing sleep/camping space with a trans colleague	Boundary-Setting with the staff member + Facilitation for team	Trans staff are the in-group being discussed. Discomfort belongs to out-group.	Private conversation with staff member first. Then address any team pile-on.	Can I hold the line on values without shaming the person out of the community?
Co-guide code-switches into AAVE (African American Vernacular English) when around Black youth	Peer Accountability (guide-to-guide)	Co-guide is out-group adopting in-group language as performance.	"I've noticed you talk differently. I'm curious what's behind that."	Am I addressing this for the youth or because it bothers me?

PART 5: GUIDE SELF-INVENTORY

Know Yourself Before You're in the Field

Many of these scenarios put your own identity, politics, and emotional reactions directly in play. The goal is not to be neutral — it's to know yourself well enough that your values don't run the show unconsciously. Use the prompts below to do that work before the trip begins.

PROMPT	YOUR NOTES
What values and/concerns for political issues do I hold that are likely to come up in this program?	
Which of the 13 scenarios would be hardest for me to navigate and why?	
What is my own in-group / out-group position relative to the youths I'll be guiding?	
Is there a topic where I am likely to react rather than respond? What would help me slow down?	
What does "inclusive" mean to me — and what does it ask of me personally?	
Who in my leadership team can I debrief with if I face a hard moment?	

PART 6: COMMON THREADS ACROSS ALL SCENARIOS

What These Scenarios Have in Common

The guide's identity and politics are always in the room. You are never neutral. Your job is not to pretend otherwise but rather to hold space responsibly anyway. Know your own position before you face a youth with theirs.

Youths are often processing real, current-events trauma. Many of these scenarios are not abstract political debates. For some youth, ICE enforcement is a live family emergency. The first response is always pastoral care — not facilitation.

Who gets to say what, and who decides? Language, symbols, and stories mean different things depending on who is using them and in what context. In-group / out-group dynamics explain most of the complexity here.

Community rupture and the impulse to shame. Several scenarios are really about how a group handles disagreement without collapsing into exclusion. Inclusion sometimes means holding space for someone whose views challenge the group — while still holding the line on dignity.

Cream City Conservation Corps | Leadership Training

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The guide was created by
August M. Ball
CEO/Founder of Cream City Conservation and Creator of The Reset Lab Retreats
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For more information: **www.creamcityconservation.org** | **august@creamcityconservation.org**

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