

# ***Gabriola Talks: A Community Charter for Dialogue***

## **i. Vision**

*Gabriola Talks* seeks to reflect the many different views and ideas that exist in this island community, and to strengthen the capacity of islanders to work together to address difficult issues by building understanding of one another's perspectives and wisdom. Through a series of discussions, we aim to provide a safe space where divergent thoughts can be expressed, different ideas are respected, commonalities are embraced, and our collective values as islanders are prized. We value diversity in views and opinions, and work toward understanding and empathizing with one another's perspectives, because each person's experience contributes to our collective understanding of the issue.

The heart of every *Gabriola Talks* event is to encourage active participation, productive dialogue and effective deliberation. Discussion questions are framed in such a way as to include a diversity of perspectives, and participants are supported with as much relevant information on the topic as can be reasonably gathered by organizers ahead of a *Gabriola Talks* event. Each encounter will be designed to encourage participants to identify goals and outcomes for each discussion, in order that participants can measure success in attaining those goals. Every individual choosing to participate in *Gabriola Talks* shares a responsibility for cultivating respectful, engaged, thoughtful and productive dialogue among peers.

## **ii. Core Values**

### **1) Equality and inclusivity**

- a) Organizers will create an inclusive space where all participants will have the possibility of being heard on the issues under discussion.
- b) Participants are willing to help other participants be active in the dialogue.
- c) Organizers provide alternative participation methods for those not comfortable speaking in public.
- d) Participants welcome the richness of different views and ideas, recognizing that "everyone has a piece of the truth", as the Quakers say.
- e) When the participants seek inclusive solutions that integrate not only the quick, the influential, and the articulate speakers, but also the truth held by those who are shy or disenfranchised or who think at a slower pace, wisdom emerges.

### **2) Responsiveness & Listening to Understand**

- a) Dialogue is based on a principle of give and take, or two-way discourse, not one-way communication.
- b) Participants strive to understand and accept the legitimacy of others' needs and goals. This basic recognition enables participants to think from other points of view and becomes the catalyst for developing innovative ideas.

### 3) **Commonalities over Compromise**

- a) The participants strive to work from an awareness of our shared, or common values as islanders, while respecting the particularity of each person's experience.
- b) Participants are encouraged to bring new ideas, research, and practices being tried in other communities – particularly those with similar geographical or demographic challenges and characteristics – to the table for discussion.
- c) On some matters, participants may simply agree to disagree.

### 4) **Personal Experience over Abstractions**

- a) Participants speak from their own personal experience and particularities, rather than conjectures or hearsay.
- b) Participants speak for themselves, not for others..

### 5) **Creativity and Vision**

- a) Participants look for new ways to approach old problems, striving to find new avenues for success and keeping an open mind about all ideas brought forward.
- b) Participants choose to trust the creative process, remembering that it is not always linear and may be messy.

## iii. Charter Core Principles

### 1. **Discussion questions are framed so as to include a diversity of perspectives.**

**Participants are supported with as much relevant information on the topic as can be reasonably gathered by organizers ahead of a *Gabriola Talks* event.**

- a. The organizing group will frame the topic as a question in such a way that the discussion will include diverse perspectives, and not just support a prevailing viewpoint.
- b. At the start of a discussion, organizers will check in with participants about the topic question: "will this get us to where we need to go?"
- c. The organizing group will prepare an overview with relevant information, in order to ground the discussion in balanced information. It will be made available before the *Gabriola Talks* event.

### 2. **All stakeholders are invited to develop discussion topics in a partnering role alongside *Gabriola Talks* organizers, whenever possible.**

- a. Community groups, elected officials, Islands Trust staff and any other groups that have already been working on a particular topic will be consulted well in advance of any discussion event.
- b. Organizers and stakeholders work together as partners in framing the discussion and bringing previous work or research on a topic to the forefront.

### 3. **Protocols and Guidelines are established to encourage and deepen participation at *Gabriola Talks* events.**

Protocols and guidelines that encourage participation and limit redundant processes are clearly established and agreed to by all at the start of the discussion. These may include:

1. Time limits on discussion periods;
2. The choice of small or large discussion groups;
3. The choice of activities;
4. A facilitator or mediator whose authority is respected;
5. A clear, focused agenda;
6. A set of guidelines for acceptable behaviour.

**4. Facilitators for each *Gabriola Talks* event are responsible for shaping and holding space for the discussion, while participants are encouraged to take responsibility for supporting the approach and process.**

- a. Facilitators will be offered the opportunity for training and facilitation resources to help them run a successful, productive discussion.
- b. Each person participating in the discussion also has a responsibility to offer any assistance they may be able to provide.

**5. The Objectives and Measurable Outcomes are clearly established ahead of *Gabriola Talks* events by the organizers**

- a. Each discussion event will be limited to 2 hours maximum.
- b. Success in achieving the outcomes can be evaluated at the end of the discussion.