

## Handout 13: Conflict Like Fire Model

Session: *Conflict Like Fire*

### Gathering flammable material (firewood)

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### The outbreak of fire (the spark)

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### Fire kindling

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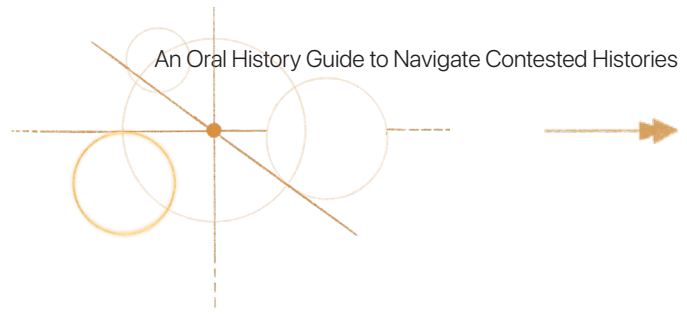
### The coal and embers

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### Putting out the fire (extinguish)

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During this stage, the conflict ends with an agreed upon solution with the consent and to the satisfaction of all parties who pledge their commitment to the solution. The conflict is resolved. We can then say that the conflict was an opportunity to create a new reality better suited to deal with the current context than the old reality that was beset with problems leading to the conflict in the first place.

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Pouring oil on fire is the stage where new factors are introduced that increase the severity and dynamic of the conflict. The conflict may reach new dimensions and develop into a wider conflict through, for example, the instigation or escalation on the part of one or more of the parties.

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This stage immediately precedes the outbreak or eruption of the conflict, when the conflict is not actualized and is still relatively hidden from some, or all, of its parties (i.e. old grudges, complaints and grievances that were never resolved).

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During this stage, the intensity of the conflict decreases, but this calm could be deceiving if the conflict is only resolved superficially, without addressing its true causes. One may think that the fire has died down, when in reality the embers are still burning under the ashes, awaiting their chance to reignite and return to previous stages.

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This is the event that triggers the conflict. It might be a minor event but because of the build up of tensions in the previous stage, it becomes an opportunity for one of the conflicting parties to initiate full-on conflict. In other words, the event is "the straw that broke the camel's back" where one simple issue brings down the whole weight of the problem. Another apt analogy is how a match thrown at a pile of flammable wood could set light to a massive fire; or how an altercation between two children could lead to a conflict between the parents; or a seemingly insignificant government decision can cause a popular uprising.