

- Don't change your mind simply to avoid conflict or reach agreement. When agreement seems to come too quickly, be alert: Explore the reasons and be sure that everyone truly accepts the solution. Yield only to positions that have objectively or logically sound merits.
- Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as majority voting, averaging, coin tossing, and bargaining. When dissenting members finally agree, don't feel that they have to be rewarded or accommodated by having their own way on some later point.
- Seek out and value differences of opinion; they're natural and expected. Disagreements can improve the group's decision. With a wider range of information and opinions, there's a greater chance that the group will come up with a more satisfactory solution.

For more information on building consensus in a group, check out this link from ACT UP, a New York-based AIDS coalition:

<http://www.actupny.org/documents/CDdocuments/Consensus.html>.

## ACTIVITY: ROCK ACTIVITY FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

Whatever issues the group chooses, we've found it helpful for the group to create a collaborative definition of that issue. Big Creek People in Action sites used this "rock activity" to define, in a written and visual manner, the community issues on which they chose to focus.

The activity itself is simple: Place a large rock in the center of your workspace – a table, a circle, etc. On that rock, write the words your group is going to define (e.g., community change). Give smaller rocks to all the participants as tablets on which they'll write a word that describes community change (or whatever you've chosen to define). Give all participants time to read their word aloud and explain why it relates to community change. You should reevaluate the definition at different stages of your group's efforts. Bring out the rocks and discuss whether the words written to describe community change still hold true, or whether group members would choose to change their definition in any way.