

# Reflections on ACG's Second Decade and Our Momentum

By Peg Tileston, Current and Founding ACG Board Member

Alaska Common Ground (ACG) launched into its second decade with enthusiasm and energy. Relying on our knowledgeable, hard-working board of directors to plan and produce forums and other issue responses, we continued to address Alaska's fiscal morass and took on several other major projects.

ACG sent board members to the annual Center for Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington DC for several years. The conference brought together participants to examine various states' budgets, the variety of revenue opportunities, as well as how each dealt with difficult public policy issues. From contacts made at the conferences, ACG worked with the Institute of Taxation and Economic Policy to produce two publications dealing with Alaska's budgetary problems: "Hard Choices" and "The Impact of Three Revenue Options for Alaska".

Encouraging dialogue continued to be a major component of ACG's efforts during this period. We joined with Out North Theater and the Anchorage Interfaith Alliance to develop *Understanding Neighbors*, funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation which supported the use of art to encourage dialogue on difficult public issues. The theme was "The Role of Same Sex Relationships in Our Community". Over 100 Anchorage participants were engaged and organized in groups with trained moderators leading sessions. Artists produced a series of videos that were shown at the start of each session to encourage thinking about the topic in a different way. *Understanding Neighbors* successfully deepened the way participants were able to talk about an uncomfortable issue and ACG received high praise for its role in the project and its outcome.

Our *Let's Talk Alaska* and *Deliberative Democracy* initiatives brought citizens together in informal, respectful settings to share ideas and concerns on issues of importance to them. And with funding from the Atwood Foundation, and in conjunction with KTUU, ACG produced a series of public service announcements "We Are Alaskans" that emphasized the importance of Alaska's diversity and the need to work together. All told, between 2001 and 2010, ACG presented over 18 forums on a variety of subjects.