

Getting to Know the Igorots - Helping Those at Home
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Many come to Canada from East Asia to seek a new life and of course in time they become successful in that pursuit. Many also come from cultures in which the tradition is to support the family at home regardless of where you are. So in their new success the family members who remain at home are supported too making everyone win. Alas though things are not always this idyllic.

There are two fairly common issues in this relationship. One is a keen desire among those who left for everything to be preserved. The other is a tendency to dictate how things should be.

As we live our lives here we often reminisce about how nice it was as children to run around in the fields, how lovely it was to smell the smoke of the hearth as the dinner was cooking over the fire, how rustic the grass hut had been. So naturally with such nice memories it is our tendency to return home once in a while to again experience those moments and relive that youth.

Yet when we arrive things have changed. The grass hut is no more. The fields have changed. The hearth is gone in favour of a stove. "What have you done?" is often the cry from us as we look about in horror at all the changes. Alas that's the wrong cry. A better cry would be to congratulate them all for becoming ever more prosperous. We forget in Canada that the



ones we leave at home also want to better their lives and that it is their right to do so. Instead we often want them to preserve it all like a museum. Well people can't live in a museum.

The other issue, dictating how things should be done, is one I've experienced a number of times. After a few years of living here we tend to become ever more sophisticated. I recall one issue where a dam was being built. Those overseas were furious and tried to tell their families to oppose the project. What they didn't realize, since they no longer lived there, is that the folks at home know better what's good for them. We do not help our families at home by telling them what they should want or not want or what they should support or not support.

If you really want to help those at home there are two things to consider. The first is that it is their right to choose what they want or need, it's not our right. And secondly, instead of telling them what we feel is best, we need to simply ask what they need and accept this without judgement. Doing this we can help by providing what we can to achieve their stated needs.



Of course there is the question "what if they choose wrong?", after all sometimes we do know better in the West. Well if they are making the wrong choices let them. How do you think you discovered what were the best choices? Didn't you make mistakes too? So it is with those at home, let them make their mistakes too so that they can become sophisticated as well.



The next time, ask your relations at home what they need and how you might be able to assist in meeting their needs and when you return home for a visit, be proud of how they have prospered instead of being concerned about how everything has changed. Something to think about.