

The ICBE Consultation: An Impression

By Caridad B. Fiarod

The ICBE consultation will always be memorable in my life for many reasons. In summary, it was a conference at the right place, at the right time with the right theme focused on an issue, participated by the right number of participants of all ages with right disposition. Having been all right, the attendees left happy and contented with their active participation in the workshops, tours, social presentations, etc. As each one has her own tendencies and imperfections, such were taken as challenges and opportunities that made everything in smooth sailing. For us from the Philippines, we will be missing the 101 different kinds of cheese and chocolates. Our amusement and excitement included the train, boat and bus rides around the cities and within the snowy Alps mountains, the comfort and hospitality accorded to us by every family who invited us in their chalet, homes or apartments. Our souls were lifted by the accommodating and generous Igorots and Swiss we had met in the street, church, park, chateaus, toilettes, etc.

In a scale of ten, if I were to rate the degree of success of the ICBE consultation, it was a resounding success with a rating of 11 above the scale. It was more than what I expected. With the theme "Our Igorot Cordillera Culture: Heritage and Social Integration," the conference in its real sense was well defined by the cultural integration of the Swiss cow-bells sound with the Igorot gongs to produce music that Igorots and Swiss could dance with, either as a group or with a partner. The roses given by the Swiss children and mothers to all of us, Igorot mothers, on Mother's Day last May 8 made it very meaningful and symbolic that I will always treasure. My experience was really amusing.

The organizers deserve to be congratulated for their collaborative efforts from the excellent planning to the execution evidenced by the "no hassles and puzzles" and a balance involvement of the mind, body, and soul. There was the workshop to activate the mind; the dancing, walking and eating for the physical need; the ecumenical service/mass for the spiritual need. The service, per se, integrated folk singing and praying without disregarding the global common practice of any church service. It was also an honor that the Honorable Ambassador Rora Tolentino gave priority to the Igorot Gala Night over all her scheduled engagement. The more I felt as proud as an Igorot when the Ambassador expressed her admiration to the Igorot organization with ethnic linguistic identity moving towards global momentum for solidarity.

Specifically, if I were to ask myself what was ICBE consultation for me, aside from all the things mentioned earlier, I am very happy that the youth with Swiss-Igorot parentage or British-Igorot parentage were much interested in learning about Igorot culture when they have to interview me about Igorot culture. I was approached by one student if I could enrich her University report about the Igorot culture. The ICBE activity also enriched my forum paper which I presented to the Department of Human Geographics at the University of Zurich. Hence, with sincerity, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the organizers for inviting me to participate in the ICBE that would surely mean so much in my life.

In so, as I breathe freely, I say, "It's the real thing and how I wish I was an Igorot-Swiss." I look forward to attending the next ICBE consultation. Kabunyan is Great!!!

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By Marjorie Lev

My impression of the conference was "No Comments". It was well presented, well organized and most they were united, always smiling and you can see them without pressure but a little bit nervous.

The wives of our gentlemen, husbands of our women and their children were all very active and you can see there eagerness to participate in every way they could. You look around and see those happy faces of the children still unaware of what is going on, but with a deep sigh, you tell yourself wow! What an interesting second generation we will have.

More half breeds are coming .We have made in the Phil, in the USA. Europe, Canada, Australia, name it, we are international. Thank you! Very much to the first generation that through their patience and hard work some impossible were made possible.

I also thanked the staff of Friedegg Hotel. They are very friendly, good service, good food, and the atmosphere is like you are home away from home.

But most I enjoyed the cultural night and the sightseeing.

The participation of the Swiss yodeler group, their big and heavy bells with them and their round red cheeks that reminds me of the people in the mountain trail, especially

In Sinipsip every time I go home to Sagada. (Joking)

To Bibak Switzerland, long live I salute each and every one of you, keep up the good work, and see you again in Australia next year.

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By Albert Bacdayan

It is a good bet that everybody is extolling the superb organization, programming of content and siting of the conference and the hospitality of the host group, the Switzerland Igorots. They deserve our deepest gratitude for a job done well and our best wishes for God's continuing blessing on them of grace, health, prosperity and happiness. I was most impressed by the enthusiasm, the support and the hard work of the Swiss Igorot in-laws and by the presence and participation of the young ones. It is no idle hope to wish that they will grow knowing who they are and proud of it and be a credit to their forebears of both sides and to themselves and the world.

My wife, Carolyn, and I stayed one more night after the conference. It felt empty and lonely with everybody gone. Only the good memories cheered the day. When I went to the office the following morning to bid good-bye and thank the staff for all they did to make the gathering a memorable experience, they remarked that they enjoyed hosting the Igorots and would welcome having them back. One, seeming to speak for all of them, said that they enjoyed seeing people who enjoy seeing each other. It was clear from the gestures and facial expressions of those present that they were unanimous in that sentiment. That impression on their part speaks very well of all of us. We were a very happy and loving group, indeed! And our enjoyment of each other was as palpable as it was genuine. Long live the Igorots and the ICBE!

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By Fred Labfayong

I was not expecting that our meeting will really have that memorable end result. Especially during the gala night, taking into account that: we have very little time to prepare, we were still able to make that presentation I guess we are also a master of improvising. The participation of the Jodler group was indeed very professional.. I've heard comments, "That: it is a pity that the Swiss TV did not make any report on it."

At the beginning of the organization of the 3rd ICBE, we from Switzerland are really much concerned about the question, "Can we fulfill the expectation of our future participants ? Also, we are not so much enthusiastic about the advertising of that event.. specially.. because of the high cost of the event." but in the end I guess we were able to satisfy the expectation of our guests. We, ourselves have the same feeling of satisfaction. Proud that: The organization, the presentation, the decoration etc.. seems to have functioned professionally.

Just my opinion: I guess, one point where this meeting was different from the others is that: The Swiss mentality of perfection when it comes to organization, presentation, hospitality etc. Since our group is also a Swiss- Filipino, we are being influenced by those positive traits of perfectionism. It is indeed good to enrich our culture thru mixed marriage. A positive asset indeed.

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By Judith Balangyao

ICBE..such event is really inviting, not merely because of having the chance to visit a new place but especially because of having the opportunity to once again meet up with our “kailians,” to hand-and-hand enliven the culture we thought we could only find at home. Another exciting thing about it is the idea of meeting some strangers whom we actually share the same thoughts, beliefs, conduct, dialect etc....which means that there will be no space of any sort of shyness or awkwardness....and that's exactly how i find the 3rd ICBE consultation.

And a big Thank You to BIBAK-Switzerland group who really welcomed us with their open arms. They really made our stay as comfortable as we less expected. I'm pretty sure that their preparation for the whole occasion had taken a lot of their time, effort, patience, etc...as evidenced by the success of it...WELL DONE EVERYONE!!!!

I'm also grateful for the tour which brought us around Aeschi, a place any one would wish to visit. Not to forget...always listen to your tour guide just in case a surprise quiz is waiting for you at the end of the day....that is if you want to win a prize...thanks for the swiss knife.

Lastly, the memorable visit to the alps especially to Gornergrat is incomparable. It's just so amazing and fabulous that i promised myself to visit again sometime. It's really worth staying another extra day(s). Thanks also for the lovely little chalet where we stayed in Grimmelalp...it's small but was able to accommodate at least 10 people...how was that possible???? ask the Igorots.

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By Cesar T. Taguba

On the whole, the 3rd ICBE consultation achieved its objectives and my personal expectations. This is to be attributed to the excellent preparatory work, participation of many in formulating the program, in taking part in the various consultation activities. The superb organizational work of BIBAK Switzerland contributed to the smooth flow of the activities. It is important for BIBAK Switzerland to share their valuable experiences and insights in playing well their role as host in a highly organized and efficient way (ala the famous Swiss watch).

There was warm camaraderie between the young and old, new participants and those in the previous consultations, those coming from outside Europe and the European participants, the foreign guests and partners with the participants. The women played an outstanding role, which speaks very well of the advances of the Cordillera women's movement. The program was well balanced. Roles and responsibility were shared. Consensus on the program content and procedure were easily reached, avoiding unnecessary lengthy and divisive debates. While the focus was on the Cordillera (particular), there was recognition of being a part of a larger entity - the Filipino people and nation and the migrant community or diaspora (general). The output was substantial and relevant to the consultation theme. It was a joyous consultation with lots of laughter, informality and spontaneity.

The impressive cultural evening highlighted the importance of cultural art forms (dancing, singing, chanting) as a source of identity, instrument for inter-cultural exchange and to establish solidarity.

In future consultations, we may have to be multi-lingual to enable more to participate in a language they are most familiar and comfortable with. Command of the main consultation language bestows an element of power, which may unconsciously make others feel inadequate or inferior, thus affecting their participation. We should also devise our program to achieve more focus on key issues and do adequate work to ensure output (i.e. circulation of discussion papers and main reference reading materials long before the consultation, etc). Moreover, we should make plans to make consultations affordable so more can attend.

It is fine that provisions for continuity are made through the publication of the Proceedings, opening up of additional web site and formation of a Consultative Committee to work with BIBAK Ireland for the 2007 4th ICBE Consultation. BIBAK Switzerland may have to take the initiative to get proposals for the theme of the 4th ICBE, as soon as possible.

Our loose, consultative and consensual method and leadership structure are serving us well, giving us much room and space for initiative and creativity. Next ICBE consultation, we may have to decide on a structure and method to correspond to the gains we made, realities on the ground and to give substance to our Europe-wide character.

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By Ric Cuyob

The big improvement in terms of preparation, organisation of activities and active participation of delegates in this 3rd ICBE consultation impressed me. With the moral support and assistance of certain individuals, BIBAK-Switzerland has made well in the preparation of the venue and organised the fetching of arriving delegates from the station to the venue.

The planned series of activities have been executed smoothly from the point of arrival until the closing of the consultation. There was an active participations of delegates in almost all the activities except some confusion on the first workshop where some did not know what group they belonged. The topics for discussion were tackled and the question, "What is it in our culture that we want to pass to the next generations?" was clarified.

The sightseeing and the cultural evening gave a lasting imprint in my memory. I have realized the importance of being rooted to his/her own culture for it makes him/her behave well and attentive to the presence of the other culture. It is my impression that this rootedness in one's proper culture makes one interested and respectful of the other. This could be verified as BIBAK-Switzerland maintain and initiate further the cultural interaction with the yodellers and their families in the community of Aeschi.

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By Yvonne Belen

When I left the consultation, I was happy for many reasons.

BIBAK Switzerland hosted the conference in an organized manner. They prepared meticulously for the day-to-day and hour-by-hour activities. They overcame the obstacles of planning a conference, foremost was the far distance of the members from each other.

We were a bunch of energetic participants, eager to share our thoughts and experiences on the aspects of our culture we want to pass on and to have; we had serious moments and many occasions filled with humor. The jokes never seemed to end, even after the conference, when we went to Grimmialp.

Our speakers prepared their talks and made it interesting with audio-visual materials. Workshop facilitators saw to it that discussions went on smoothly. And our moderators for some sessions, who were requested to take the place of those absent or had to leave earlier, willingly did their part.

I enjoyed the cultural evening with the presence of the Swiss yodellers. It was my first time, and hopefully not the last, to see yodellers with cow bells. I always thought that cow bells were hung only around the neck of cows. What I didn't know was there were huge cow bells, up to 15 kilos and more in weight, which could be hung on a person's waist. And when several of these persons sway the cow bells, the musical sound reverberates in the hall.

During the tour, we had more views of the mountains and lakes - Thun and Brienz. From the mountains where we viewed nature's breadth, we went to Aareschlucht, a gorge where we saw its depth.

For someone who lives in a country with mainly flat land, seeing mountains (this time, in Switzerland) was like going home to the mountain provinces in the Cordillera. Of course, there are differences like the snow, architecture of houses, cow bells, to mention a few, which we don't have back home. But how delightful it was to wake up in the morning, glance out of the window and see the towering mountain in front of Hotel Friedegg. I felt I was in Bontoc.

Finally, I saw the Matterhorn from Zermatt and Gornergrat. I have seen the Matterhorn only in picture books and travel guides on Switzerland. When the opportunity came to have a view of the mountain, I grabbed it and invited other participants who could stay one day more. It was a crisp sunny morning when we went and we saw the Swiss side of the mountain.

For me, it was quality time at the conference and two days afterwards. I lived through those days from one memorable experience to another.

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By Peter Agnaonao

My impression is that this was a wonderful consultation brought about by the fact that hosting the ICBE has helped the Swiss-BIBAK to work hard and cooperate with one another. The big improvement in organising our European consultation is very noticeable. All throughout the duration of the consultation, I observed a good sense of equality among the delegates. I have the impression that this practice of hosting a consultation can become a good venue to develop future organisation managers.

Bravo to BIBAK-Swiss and to all delegates for this memorable consultation.

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By Cristabel Olat-Bounggick

Indeed, Patrick and I were impressed! It was a long journey by car from Vienna, approximately 10 hours and a few kilometers away from the venue, we nearly got lost. Ruth, who was resourceful in providing us with a walkie talkie, facilitated the easier communication of our two pilots, Patrick and Julius (considering that phone calls are not possible). Thereby, we arrived just on time at Hotel Friedegg. Upon arrival, we were met by the welcoming smiles of other participants and the hospitality of the host accompanying us to our assigned rooms. The well-decorated surrounding was unique and very ethnic, so it was a homely atmosphere.

We missed Rose and Agpad Nabert for not attending the consultation. They wired us in Vienna, when they were in Salzburg, of their flying back immediately to Canada because of the health problem of Agpad's mother. Later, we learned of her death. For this, we join Rose and Agpad and the Igorot community in mourning, "Even as we mourn this loss, we know within our hearts that those we love are never really gone, and may our Kabunian bless her in peace."

The Consultation achieved its concept. The ICBE is moving in terms of organization, planning and implementation. It was a hard task of the BIBAK Switzerland considering the geographical situation yet it did work successfully. The motivation was strong and everybody was involved that no hindrances for the old and young participated in one way or another during the affair. The support and assistance of our speakers contributed in attaining our objectives; mentioning a few such as Mia Abeya for her leadership in organizing the instant dancers the night before the cultural presentation and Marjorie Lev, who joined our group during our presentation even without rehearsal. Julio Monico was quite resourceful making "magic" supplying our needs at the last minute for our group presentation. Yvonne, our forever initiator, was full of diligence and enthusiasm gathering us for the pre-conference, etc. designating our particular assignment. The participants were really flexible and cooperative with each other and determined to fulfill one common goal.

The affair for us was so exciting, memorable and most of all enriched our experiences and interest. It was also an opportunity to meet old and new friends as well as relatives. I also consider it a break from our routine daily activities, which is worthwhile for having the chance of seeing other places.