

Welcome Messages

By Rick Kilongan

Hello and welcome everybody.

Allow me to say a short message before I will hand over the floor to our MCs (emcees).

We are happy to see friends from previous meetings and to meet and welcome new ones. To those attending for the first time, who may not be familiar with us, a very warm welcome too.

As we go about our program, we hope that each of us will not just focus on the serious discussions, but will find time to bond and enjoy each other's company. We can mix serious talks with pleasure for all of us in this meeting. Some of those we meet will be lifelong friends, but whatever terms of relationship may develop, we have always something to share, teach and learn from each other. For most of us, this time is a unique opportunity to meet and bond with fellow Igorots/Cordillerans in and outside Europe and overseas. We meet not only to discuss and deliberate on issues affecting us, Igorot migrants, but also to show our common tribal music and dances. It is a cultural fellowship to represent our rich tradition and customs and an event to celebrate and enjoy life.

In behalf of BIBAK-Switzerland members and supporters, I welcome you all and sincerely hope that we will have a productive and informative meeting. May you find both the program and activities, which we have prepared for you interesting. Likewise, we do hope that during the course of the meeting, we will find time for informal discussions as they can be as important as the formal sessions we have planned. We then expect an interesting exchange both in terms of speakers/talks and fun entertainments.

Friends and kaka-i-lians, we wish you all an enjoyable and fruitful consultation.

By Alfredo Labfayong

Thank you Henry! Thank you Rick Kilongan! Again, I would also want to express my delight and gratitude, that: you were all able to be here to join our 3rd ICBE meeting. Also my gratitude to all of us who were behind in the preparation of this event and I guess that includes mostly all of us.

We are again gathered here today to discuss and to experience our Igorot culture. Tomorrow we will be then speaking and sharing our opinions during the workshop discussions on, "What is it in our culture that we want to pass on to next generation?"

What is culture ? I suppose every group of individuals or so-called community of people have their own culture. Some could be more advance than the other, but no matter what; each group of people needs their own culture to be able to be identified differently from the other. Culture however is not immune to changes, as we live in a globalized world and a society that follows the modern trends of modern culture. The so-called old values and traditions are endangered to be overcome by the influence of modern trends. Culture for me: I define it as our roots. We have our Igorot roots at the same time being part of the global world we also take global culture as part of our roots.

There is a story that I like to relate to you. I came to Switzerland some 26 years ago. I started to work in a small village near the border to Austria. That is Teufen in Appenzell Ausserrhoden. Actually the people in that region are traditionalist, strong and deep Catholic believers and mostly farmers for many centuries and were able to keep that old tradition of the Alpine folks farming. The region and their houses are very traditional and also they practice many traditional feast and beliefs. They have also a dialect of themselves to be able to be called as Appenzeller.

The story that I like to relate to you is: One day Sister Mia, a nurse from Holland approaches me and requests me to sketch a tree. Which I did. I sketch a tree with almost no roots. Just a trunk and beautiful branches and leaves. Sister Mia, of course notices the failing of the roots.

She says, "Where are your roots?" Then she adds, "Most of you Filipinos sketch the same kind of tree. It just shows that your foundation in life is very weak. From the outside you could be radiating in grace but when a problem occurs, you will easily fall because you have no roots to hold on to."

I agree with her opinion. First of all, culturally, Filipinos have a weak foundation, just like that tree without roots. We have a weak cultural foundation because many of our culture were not documented and also sometimes we, Filipinos, don't appreciate our own culture, which is one of the bad influence of the 500 years colonization and also being told upon that our culture is inferior to that of the colonizers. I therefore conclude that: Appreciating, sharing, learning more about our roots will make us, Igorots, have more self-confidence and proud about ourselves.

Thank you very much and again, welcome to all of you.