

# What is it in our Culture that We Want to Pass on to the Next Generation?

May 6, 2005 Aeschi, Switzerland  
3<sup>rd</sup> Igorot Cordillera Europe Consultation  
Theme: Our Igorot Cordillera Culture: Heritage and Social Integration

Group 1      *by Fred Labfayong*

## **Group members**

- Peter Agnaonao
- Angie Wunderle
- Helen Banban
- Rosemarie Madadsec
- Bartolomeo Aliten
- Henry Foken
- Fred Labfayong
- Susan Atakora
- Theresa Bangsoy
- Henry Pit-og (presider)

## Question about Igorot Identity

The group started the forum by discussing the Igorot identity or who are the Igorots?

As described by some old books and long-gone historians, many of the derogatory adjectives do not apply anymore to the present day Igorots.

Henry Pit-og explained this in his story. A simple soldier started his career as a sergeant in the army but was able to lift up himself to the top of the career ladder and became a general. This simple soldier is now a general; however, he was and is still a soldier.

Our Igorot identity is based on our ethnological classification. Genetically, we have the Igorot blood in our bloodstream; however, many of the adjectives surrounding our personality could be acquired, learned and improved. We are now part of the global society and we, in one way or another, should not have an inferiority or superiority complex towards others.

## Some Igorot Values and Traditions

We are gathered today to discuss some of the Igorot values and traditions that we want to pass on to the next generation. Luckily enough, I was not the first to submit this report and could read some of the other reports. It seems that we have discussed mostly identical values and topics. Rather than repeating and enumerating those values, I would like to discuss one value - how it is observed in the ili and also during the process of Igorot globalization.

This value is about Og-ugbo. I guess it is a word in the Kankana-ey dialect, which means a common community effort to reach one goal. This could be in the process of working together, contributing together or saving together. In the ili, in the olden times, many of the community work have been done by Og-ugbo (like building houses, work in the field, etc). Since people in these times have almost no monetary property, most jobs are being done by helping each other without receiving any monetary return. Instead, each one is aware that he/she owes a great favor from someone else and next time, when the other needs also help, it will be their part to repay by doing an unpaid job.

Og-ugbo is still being practiced by most of us Igorots. Just like in community gatherings, we, sometimes or most of the time, help each other. There is a pot-luck of food or sharing unpaid jobs just to reach a common goal.

## Conclusion

We discussed many Igorot values, and we conclude that we could pass some of our values by sharing them to the next generation. Angie Wunderle said that being a mother of a half-breed Igorot, it is her duty to explain to her son about our values.

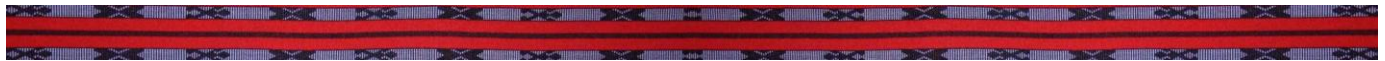
However, she lets her son decide what is right or wrong. Most of those in the other forum also encourage to bring their family often for a vacation back home, especially to coincide with the vacation or special occasions of the year, like Lang-ay, family reunions, etc).

We also concluded that there are some values that need some modification regarding the present situation. We are taught to respect our elders and most of the time, we are taught to listen, and time will come when we could also share our opinion. This means children are not encouraged to voice their own opinion.

In this case, many of us grow up to be shy “mango” - we are not able to develop our self-confidence in presenting ourselves to the public. Training is necessary and to be able to have training, it has to start at home. But how could this happen when being at home, we are told not to talk? This should change, and children should be encouraged to be vocal and share their own opinion.

Again to sum it up, the core values that we would like to pass it on to the next generation were already enumerated and also defined by the others. We conclude also that activities like this ICBE should continue. It is an opportunity for us to witness, exchange and cultivate our culture.

Thank you to all.



Group 2 by Elizabeth Omengan

### **Objectives:**

1. To conclude the discussion on Igorot cultural heritage by responding to the question: “What is it in our culture that we want to pass on to the next generation?”
2. To address the issues of Igorot migrant, and
3. To celebrate our Igorot culture with dances, songs and chants.

### **Group members**

- |                                 |                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| – Virgie Czesak                 | – Elizabeth Omengan - reporter |
| – Albert Bacdayan - facilitator | – Tita Schneider               |
| – Fely Bongalos                 | – Cesar Taguba - facilitator   |
| – Silvia Aliten                 | – Luz Tuazon                   |
| – Lolit Hafner                  | – Julius Banban                |
| – Martin Koller                 | – Hilda Banban                 |
| – Marjorie Lev                  |                                |

What are the core values and other aspects of the Igorot culture we hold dear and special, which we want to pass on to the next generation? This question follows the topics that were discussed in previous consultations, namely:

- a. Today, we face a process of cultural disintegration;
- b. All cultures have positive and negative aspects; and
- c. We, migrants, are instruments of change and are we conscious of our positive and negative impacts?

In a world that is changing, there are many aspects of the Igorot culture that we value and that we would want to pass on to the next generation. These aspects can be grouped into three meaningful categories as follows:

1. We value *bagbaga* or counseling/guidance from elders

*Bagbaga* happens during gatherings in the *dap-ay*, during weddings, and during rituals such as those related to the home, for example *senga*, *appa*, *mensaad*. *Bagbaga* during these occasions help promote values for mutual cooperative work, for example *ugugbo*, *galatis* and *bayanihan*, which are aspects of our culture that we value.

## 2. We value family gatherings

Through family gatherings, such as *ngilin*, *maki-appa* and *ag-aggong*, we remember family ancestors and members. Remembering our ancestors during these gatherings 'reawaken' our identity. Our social desire to perform *pinikpikan* during these occasions compelled us to discuss how to modify our practice of *pinikpikan* in our new adopted homes. This helps us to adapt and integrate in our new adopted home and still maintain our identity.

## 3. We want to "take the children home"

Taking the children home will encourage the new generation to learn about our roots. It will also allow the older generation to see how our culture is changing or not changing and reflect upon it.

During these changing times, several aspects of our culture are becoming a concern. One is tribal loyalty. There is news of tribal wars going-on back home. Should we as migrants get involved in these conflicts? Some members of the tribes accordingly have requested for assistance from migrants. We respect tribal loyalty so we took a step-back, to understand the conflict, in this case, water rights.

In our culture, there are tribal wars but there are tribal institutions to resolve conflicts, e.g. *budong*, *tong-tong*. Conflicts over water rights and their resolution have been documented in our culture. We can learn from what has been written and remembered about these traditions. In today's water conflict, there is the possibility that the conflict over water is due to diminishing water resources and changing use of resources. We encourage an honest review of the situation. We need to ask questions such as, "Is the need for water to maintain modern homes and home enterprises equivalent to the requirement for water to irrigate the rice fields?" Some have expressed, "We do not want old ways." Do statements like this reflect cultural disintegration?

The idea of *inayan*, an abstract concept that has guided our ancestors in conflict resolution, was mentioned at different points during the discussion. Ways in which the idea of *inayan* has helped temper conflicts can be derived from statements such as: "*Inayan* for you can become *kaising* (in-laws) in the future"; or "*Inayan nan memdadael es* (to destroy) property". To appreciate how the idea of *inayan* has provided guidance for behavior in view of future relations we need more examples.

The second part of the workshop topic begged the question of "how do we pass on these values to the next generation?"

In response, several of us would want our children to know our language. The issue of language was not thoroughly discussed. However, the role of language in passing our core values to the next generation need to be addressed.

Related to the loss of language is the recognition that the younger generations have new or different identities. What is the role of different identities in the transmission of cultural values?

Also related to language but in a different form is the fact that Igorot values has been transmitted orally. Ours is an oral tradition where many of our values are articulated through *ug-ugod* or story telling in different social and cultural venues, many of which are disappearing except for *pinikpikan* and *canao*. We need to encourage other forms of cultural transmission such as writing of family/children's journals and how to booklets about aspects of our culture that will give us glimpses of our values. Pamphlets about traditional clothes and how to wear them have been initiated and need to be encouraged.

Summary: During the workshop discussion, it became apparent that we were dealing with a process of recall. The idea is that in the process of recall, through “counseling”, “family gatherings”, and “going home”, we are attempting to promote cultural stability by maintaining aspects of our Igorot identity.



Group 3      *by Ric Cuyob*

**Group Members:**

- Mia Abeya
- Cristabel Bounggick
- Ric Cuyob
- Claire Koller
- Ruth Licay
- Julio Monico
- Nellie Pit-og
- Elizabeth Ut-utan
- Violeta Passerini

In our desire to preserve and pass on our Igorot culture to the next generation, we have to do something to safeguard it from being continuously ignored or not honored by the government. Our ancestor’s customs or practices like the bodong concept or the peace pact; the concept of respect that includes respect for mother nature, elders and humankind; the concept of land ownership; the passing of inheritance like the rice fields and many others have all proven to be viable.

One said that such conflict of our ancestral practices and the government’s administrative functions could be harmonized if the one in position in government is from the tribe and/or understands the values of our practices. Yes, but government administrative functions and laws often juxtapose or even undermine our valuable ancestral practices. One member of the group shared that her brother wore long hair because he has to do ngilin for the death of his brother but the military in that area accused him of being an NPA and was brought to the barracks for questioning, inspite of the insistent begging and explanation of the old folks in the “Ili” that this man is observing a traditional custom of the community.

Another one shared that she became more Igorot while abroad than when she was in the Philippines. However having stayed abroad for so long, she never knew that her father was a peace pact holder in their place. She regrets to have learned it only after her father passed away. So talking about passing, she thinks it should have been right if her father told them (his children) about these practices. Anyway, this has challenged her to do her best to learn more and participate in the preservation and passing on of our Igorot culture to the next generation. Much more, people of her town entrusted the responsibility of her late father to one of his brothers.

All members of the group agreed that there are a lot of our Igorot cultural values worth passing on to the next generation. Aside from those shared above, we have our personal experiences. To mention some, we have our ancestor’s concept of community holiday, and the strong adherence to the belief that the mountains, forests, rivers and trees are gifts from the Unseen, Kabunian. Thus the practice that has been held dear by the village old folks to “take only what you need” (i.e. from the forests or rivers) is a non-wasteful and effective conservation and management of our natural resources. Together with the other workshops in this conference, the list of worth passing Igorot cultural values will become longer.

Recommendations:

1. On the question of how to pass our cultural values, the recommended virtue needed is patience since passing has to undergo a process and therefore takes time. Besides, teaching our children to speak our native tongue facilitates their assimilation of our cultural values and easy integration into the “Igorot world.”

2. Encourage the documentation and research of deeper explanation on the materials, rituals and beliefs of our ancestors. The good values of our Igorot cultures could be passed on to the next generation not only through their visible expressions but also through their well-founded explanation and meanings (for example, the use of dog, chicken, pig, etc. for a particular ritual and purpose).
3. Encourage our youth to participate in our Igorot gatherings by involving them. Whenever there is chance, let them visit local museums be it in the Philippines or elsewhere, where the valuable Igorot artifacts and/or Igorot cultures are on exhibit.
4. As parents, it is our key responsibility to be models. Follow the popular motto, "Practice what you preach." Try to learn and know more deeply our own culture. A limited knowledge of our culture is a great handicap.



Group 4      *by Caridad Fiar-od*

**Group Members:**

- Julian Banban (Austria from Tadian, Mountain Province)
- Patrick Bounggick (Austria from Sagada, Mountain Province)
- Caridad B. Fiarod (Philippines from Besao)
- Lolit Monico Hafner (Switzerland from Buguias, Benguet and Pingad, Mountain Province)
- Teofila Hofer (Austria from Benguet)
- Rick Kilongan (Switzerland from Sagada, Mountain Province)
- Sabina Kuenzi (Switzerland from Kalinga)
- Rhino Oblas (Germany from Mankayan and La Trinidad, Benguet)
- Rebecca Risterar (Switzerland from Bokod, Benguet)
- Yvonne Belen (The Netherlands from Bontoc, Mountain Province)
- Dominga Webber (United Kingdom from Sagada and Besao, Mountain Province)

On the **strategy of presentation** of the report:

- a. Group Chant. The group with 11 members representing different countries unanimously agreed to present their output through an informative traditional chant in the tune of a *da-ing* of which a lead person gives the information or announcement or greetings and everybody in chorus sounds off in agreement every after a sentence or phrase.

(Chant:

Aheey!

*All Group 4 members come forward to be recognized.*

Julian Banban our father as an elder,  
 we have unity in the family,  
 eh eh eh eh eh eh eh,  
 unity in the family).

The group members held hands close to each other as they chanted to manifest unity as one of the Igorot values.

Narration:

What should be passed on to the next generation should be the different Igorot chants chanted individually or by group as means to communicate a specific or multiple purposes, either just to entertain, to inform, to express one's feelings, to respond to an issue, etc. Likewise, such Igorot values of unity, solidarity and social cohesiveness, as earlier implied in the *da-ing*. Foremost, we as

parents should be models to our children referred as the second generation. As it is said, "Values are more effectively caught and less of being taught." From the family, adherence to such value of unity expands to such community values like `og-ogbo' or other indigenous practices of solidarity or cooperativism.

- b. Traditional prayer expressed poetically by an individual. To manifest spirituality as a value, it was implied in Patrick Boungick's expressive poetic prayer in a traditional manner (sapu) in a real setting as this:

*"Kabunyan ad daya ay mang-iwanwanwan as maik-ikkan  
enka kad abuluyan/ di esa sumyaan  
nan inmali asna Switzerland  
... Nan nay enda nadagupan  
men-adal das paggawisan  
nan ili takoy kaigorotan."*

In English, 'Almighty God, the director and most powerful, may You bless all those who came to Switzerland ...In this gathering, may they discuss and learn for the good of Igorotland ...' All other members of the group as a way of saying "Amen" chorused in a sing-song tune "A-a-a-a-a-a-a -a-a-a..."

- c. Individual reporting. As usual, there is the individual reporting of one of the members as contained in this report.

On the contents of group output as highlighted:

From the diverse ideas of the group members, the values that should be passed to the next generation premised on the presentation of Mia Abeya and Rhino Oblas are as follows:

- a. Enforcement of discipline in relation to:

- health in order to have long life that includes advocacy towards the appreciation of indigenous food preparation or other Igorot culinary arts. This, to a certain extent may be a way of avoiding too much junk foods or Mc Donald, Jollibee, etc.; (On Igorot food recipes, *pinikpikan* was lengthily discussed but it surmised that it be practised on a case to case basis depending on the community/society where one belongs)
- community solidarity by respecting customary laws to maintain peace and order, environmental protection;
- managing resources to make the most of the least resources.

- b. Advocacy on spirituality as means to preserve such beliefs like:

- *inayan, lawa or paniyew or ngilin* (Godliness, no to ..., or feelings of assurances, local holidays, etc.) to preserve the environment.
- rituals that give impact or may convey meaning which could be applicable or acceptable in all Igorot tribes. This may include rituals with
- traditional prayers, *uggayam, ullalim, da-ing*, songs, chants, dances, etc.

- c. Preservation of the Igorot artifacts, symbols or technologies or indigenous knowledge as means to tell the history or lives of the Igorots in terms of their values, their creativity, ideology, innate potentials, cultural traits. Artifacts include the gongs, jars, beads, costumes, *solibao*, spears (*tufay or sibong*), musical instruments, etc. which are of value. Indigenous knowledge or technologies include among others, rice wine making, with rice wine sharing as means to bind friendship. While back strap weaving is replaced by loom weaving, the symbolic meaning of the Igorot designs or icons be taught to the younger generation.



Group 5      *by Ingerith Pooten*

**Objective:**

“What are the Core Values and other Aspects of the Igorot Culture that We Want to Have?”

**Group Members:**

- |                    |                              |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| - Judith Balangyao | - Airen Kalley               |
| - Frederick Baldo  | - Natascha Passerini         |
| - Cecille Cobcobo  | - Sarah Passerini            |
| - Jane Gavino      | - Ingerith Pooten - Reporter |

- Our group consisted of a mix of second generation Igorots... 5 had been born and raised in the Philippines and 3 of us were born and raised in another country.

From this, we were able to share our experiences and thoughts and were able to have a wide discussion on many issues surrounding the topic.

- We summarized the following:

Core Values We'd Like to Have

1. To instill the importance of EDUCATION within our youth. Including, to encourage the HARD WORK ETHIC within the Igorots.
2. The importance of CLOSE FAMILY VALUES and the SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE.
3. How important it is for us to take on the COMMUNITY SPIRIT by way of gatherings and social activities. This is so we can always provide one another with that SUPPORT SYSTEM and SOLIDARITY.
4. The CARING and NATURE and CONCERN for fellow Igorots. The characteristics of 'always wanting to help' 'never closing the door on another...'
5. RESPECT FOR ELDERS and the importance of listening and absorbing their wisdom.
6. The VALUES in PERFORMING RITUALS and understanding them.
7. Continue to learn more DANCES/MUSIC/ART from each different tribe, not just that of our parents.

**In conclusion, it is important for you, 1<sup>st</sup> generation Igorots, to ENCOURAGE us, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Igorots, to KNOW our culture, to UNDERSTAND it and to VALUE its importance.**

**This is important, so we know our identities and so that, should we meet any person ignorant of our culture, we know HOW to explain it, appreciate it and pass it on.**