

4th Igorot Cordillera BIMAAK Europe (ICBE) Consultation

Place: Marino Conference Centre
Marino Institute of Education
Griffith Avenue,
Dublin, Ireland

Date: 17-20 May 2007

Theme: Preservation and Promotion of our Cultural Heritage and Addressing our Issues in Society

Host: BIBAK Ireland

The 4th ICBE Consultation: Story and Impressions

Yvonne Belen

BIBAK Ireland hosted the 4th Igorot Cordillera [BIMAAK] Europe Consultation held from 17-20 May 2007 at the Marino Conference Centre in Dublin, Ireland. Dave Rulite Aragonese, president of BIBAK-Ireland headed the Steering Committee with members - Judith Balangyao, Jane Gavino, Brenia Capuyan-Calawen and Carmen Malidom-Umayat.

A few days after the consultation, participants sent letters of congratulations and gratitude. Henry Foken wrote, "Well done BIBAK-Ireland. Thank you for your hospitality and caring for us when we were there," while Ric Cuyob said, "The Cordillera community in Belgium (Cordi-Bel) thanks BIBAK-Ireland for hosting this 4th ICBE consultation successfully and also all the participants that made it so." And Claus Nabert conveyed, "BIBAK-Ireland is to be applauded for their organizational skills and for the warmth with which they welcomed us and led us through the entire experience."

Dave later replied, "We are very happy that all the delegates are pleased with their stay here in Dublin. It was a beautiful, informative and memorable experience for all of us here in Ireland... We are overwhelmed here in BIBAK - Ireland with the heart warming messages and feedback from all of you. I would like to thank you all for your support and guidance, the success of the event is not only credited to BIBAK-Ireland but to all of us who made their contribution in various ways."

Forty eight persons attended, with 24 coming from Austria, Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom (England, Scotland and Wales), Canada, USA, and the Philippines; the other half were from Ireland, including four miners from Tipperary.

In Dr. Caridad Fiar-od's letter, she disclosed, "What was very impressive... aside from the usual features of any conference were the participation of the Igorot migrants in Ireland and Belgium...attended by families...like the Cuyob family, Agnaonao family, from Belgium, the Aragonese, the Umayats, the Calawens..." Fred Labfayong added, "What amazed me more is the spirit of responsibility among these younger groups. How nice really to see group of young Igorot family growing together."

The theme was "Preservation and Promotion of our Cultural Heritage and Addressing our Issues in Society," which Dr. Fiar-od, guest speaker and resource person, expounded in a power point presentation. Towards preserving and promoting our cultural heritage, she recommended: 1) Documentation of tangible and intangible heritage should be copyrighted as

the Igorots' intellectual property before they are pirated by other artists or authors; 2) There should be continuing advocacy and promotion of the Igorot culture through conferences, symposia and other forms; and 3) There should be an aggressive continuing education among the youths on the dances, chants, indigenous technologies for them to understand their implication for development.

Afterwards, the participants discussed the recommendations in workshop groups. Members of the first group, who talked of the documentation of tangible and intangible heritage, stated, "We must learn and be very assertive with proper education through seminars, consultations, videos, flyers, DVDs, CDs to protect IPR to control exploitation and piracy."

Afternoon workshop group discussions were on: Leadership and Volunteerism; Aspects of Organizing a Conference; and Cordillera Issues and Migrant Concerns. The second generation, who also had their workshop, presented their report in a cultural performance.

During the sightseeing tour, with Mark Calawen and Timothy Umayat as guides, some participants went to Glendalough (in the Wicklow Mountains), a valley of two lakes, and known for its early medieval monastic settlement. What remained of the 6th century monastic city were the gateway, round tower, cathedral, churches and cemetery.

In a consultation heavy with rituals from beginning to end, one part was the turnover ritual. Dave passed on to Severino "Rhino" Oblas of Germany, the Irish art craft - a symbol of hosting the ICBE Consultation in 2009.

Claus expressed, "I suspect that our next gathering will indeed be much of the same for it isn't just the host that creates such a lovely atmosphere, it is all the participants too. So while the host may change from one gathering to the next, the participants remain the same and they come with the same warmth for each other each time."

And Rose Nabert affirmed, "We reprocessed our past through the prism of recollection and linked the Irish and Igorot oral tradition of story telling, song, gong playing and dance with the hope we have a better understanding of what these may mean. The occasion was provided (thank you, ICBE) not only to celebrate our past and present but also to plan the future...looking ahead. What can we do for others, ourselves, our earth, etc? The discussions were vibrant and sensitivities were put aside for the greater collective good. I was impressed. The younger and older generations took counsel from each other. There is hope indeed!"

After the closing activities on 20 May, many delegates went to Tipperary to visit seven Igorot miners. The participants were served three chicken menus - *pinikpikan*, chicken stew and chicken *adobo*. Everyone went for the *pinikpikan*. After dinner, there was a *karaoke*, which enticed many to show their singing talent. Outside, others were learning to beat the gongs. Even Kai Barner, 17- year old son of Elizabeth Omengan, couldn't resist joining.

I find it fitting to end this story with Elizabeth's letter and poem. "Thank you for a stimulating, informative and useful gathering! Here is my tribute:

HERITAGE ...GONGS

A gathering recalled
 ...back home
Gongs of different families
 are assembled, and
 are arranged by sound.
Men discern the beat
 Women and children dance
 To the rhythm of gongs forged in China.

At ICBE-Ireland,

Gongs...

Brought to Europe

Journeyed to Tipperary.

Happy migrant Igorots danced

To a set of gongs forged at Lepanto.

Hardwood sticks made resounding ring.

Softwood, the practiced ears desire

For there are more tricks to sound techniques

Including the soundless beat of the apprentice.