

# Overview of the 4<sup>th</sup> ICBE Consultation Planning

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In May 05 of year 2005, Jane and I arrived in Switzerland @ 6pm to attend the 3<sup>rd</sup> ICBE Consultation. While on our way to the venue at the Friedegg Hotel, excitement started to summon up as we knew that we will be meeting a lot of acquaintances and new people, who share the same culture and perhaps the same upbringing as ours. After the opening ceremony, Yvonne Belen approached and invited us and some others to go through the conference program. When we reached the part regarding the next consultation, some of those around the table directed their eyes on us with smiles, which implied only one thing. Jane and I looked at each other and after few moments of eye-conversation, we reached a joint decision to say "yes" in hosting the next consultation. Such decision, however, was coupled with a little hesitation on our part as there were some factors that needed to be considered, i.e., capability, willingness and most importantly, readiness of BIBAK Ireland organization. Nevertheless, later that night while we were already in our room discussing the matter, our excitement had exceeded such worries in hosting the same.

Such excitement even grew stronger when, during the turn-over ceremony held on the last day of the consultation, BIBAK-Switzerland passed on to us (as representatives of BIBAK Ireland) a banner that symbolized responsibility for the 4<sup>th</sup> ICBE Consultation. Thus, when we left the hotel for Grimmelalp to spend more time with some others, who like us, decided to stay for more "is-istorya ad dap-ay," Jane, some aunties and I were actually already working on the proposed program. So, even before we reached home, Jane had already written a draft along with a couple of suggestions and ideas.

On May 28, 2005, BIBAK- Ireland had a general meeting with two main agenda: 1<sup>st</sup> - Independence Day which will be celebrated soon that time; 2<sup>nd</sup> - ICBE. With the second agendum, Jane and I were eagerly looking forward to breaking the astonishing news. Later, when we were given the chance to stand up, we first talked about our great time and experience in Switzerland, how it felt to see people whom we got acquainted with when we first attended the consultation in Austria two years ago, the cultural facts we've learned and how remarkable the whole affair was, followed by the announcement that "we BIBAK Ireland were fortunate to have been nominated as the next host." As we expected, they were greatly surprised and had the same worries we had back in Switzerland. Nonetheless, after a few moments, most of the organizational bodies responded positively and verbally expressed their willingness to actively support the group in going through the preparation of the activity. Hence, planning then commenced on such day.

Although we haven't formally completed anything until after a year, the consultation had always been a part of any conversation amongst the group, be it in big parties or small gatherings.

It was in April of 2006 when we started searching for a suitable venue for the conference, taking into consideration the following factors: price, accessibility, attractiveness of the place and its surrounding area and most especially its safety for everyone. We first found a place run by missionaries, which we booked temporarily as assurance can't be given since the person in-charge was on holiday at that time. Unfortunately a month later, we got a call saying that the place was actually catering to an affair with a purpose of greater priority on the same dates that we needed it. As a result, we continued searching but this time with more perseverance from everyone.

While searching for a venue, the group was divided into different committees. Although each one was entrusted with duties and responsibilities, support and help from one another was made available whenever required. Efforts were likewise made to get together at least once every other week at the start, which eventually progressed into a weekly meeting as the preparation got tougher especially for those with kids or babies.

In addition, we talked with the “Manongs” and uncles in Tipperary about having a “mini-kanyaw” in their place after the conference for those who wanted to stay behind for more sightseeing. They happily said “yes.” Thus the announcement made through the net for the inclusion thereof in the itinerary of those who were interested.

By early September of 2006, we spotted a place called Marino Conference Centre that caters to different kinds of gatherings. We instantly booked a meeting with the man in-charge to see the place ourselves. The price was very reasonable despite its location which is just ten minutes from Dublin city center; the bedrooms looked comfortable; the gardens surrounding the building was great for morning or evening walks; the hall they showed us looked perfect for what we needed except that it was being renovated at that time. The man in-charge made a definite commitment that it will be finished before the scheduled date of our affair. We reported the above-mentioned details during the next group meeting and after few more visits, and a lot of discussion and computation, we booked the Marino Conference Centre.

Regarding the program, it wasn't easy to come up with the right theme as we had to base it from what was earlier proposed and agreed upon. Many parts were a continuation of previous consultations. Worth mentioning are the other suggested themes, to wit: 1) Appreciating the past and planning for the future. 2) Treasuring our Igorot Cordillera cultural heritage. 3) Integration with our new adopted home and other Filipino communities. 4) Discussing social and migrant issues for old and new generations to come.

As to the other parts of the program, despite some changes and adjustments done every now and then for varied reasons, it went smoothly with the many suggestions that came from other BIBAK organizations all over Europe.

For the Saturday tour, the group chose the Wicklow tour since it is a nearby county of Dublin, meaning less time in the bus and more time in wandering around the tourist spots. Likewise the views are fabulous and so green which somewhat reminds the views in Besao... anyone who comes from same hometown as mine will agree with this...except for its rocky road.

On the succeeding days from March 2007 until the day of the conference, the group had been meeting at least three times a week, and sometimes even more when needed, as merely talking thru the net or phone wasn't enough. Sometimes I had to ring-in sick for work just to be available, and the others did the same the following meeting. We had sleepless nights and restless days for a couple of days due to worries attached to the excitement of the coming conference. But mind you, despite all the work, we didn't lose weight. And how could we when, whichever house we had the meeting, there was a separate table of tasty food. No wonder we always worked in the kitchen. The best was the coffee maker at Dave Aragon's or Tim Umayat's using a real “barako” (it might be a product of Bontoc, I actually haven't asked since I was always busy sipping it, too busy to ask.) We could have not survived the long nights without it.

The last week before the consultation was spent re-touching the work done just to make sure everything was all organized (but I guess nothing is perfect in this world as proven in the actual conference, there's always some error or shall we say a space for improvement.) Some of us spent a whole day shopping with a long list on hand... I thought a day shopping was not always enough for a lady, but it was actually possible if you have a list and if you go for the not so interesting stuff like A4 pads, folders, paper plates, paper bags, a couple of bin bags, hundreds of pens and thumbtacks. Dave used the next day, after the shopping, to make a design for the name tag. He finalized it by putting the BIBAK Ireland logo, part of European Union logo, and some Igorot design. One thing I learned from him while we were working on this was the importance of putting some personal touches in the things you do.

Finally the long wait was over. On Tuesday, May 15, 2007, we started fetching delegates from the airport. With exchanges of greetings and welcoming hugs, the 4<sup>th</sup> ICBE Consultation commenced.