

## Culture Unites Everyone

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KAPWA 3-an international the conference with the academe, artists and indigenous people which was held in Baguio at the fifth floor of La Azotea building, session road start on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June until the first day of July. Wherein we, the members of Anak di kabiligan/ Children of the mountain were invited to join and had the opportunity to engage with other tribes from the cordillera, Visayas and Mindanao in the Philippines, Indigenous people of Ainu from Japan, Karen tribe from Thailand and Mongols from Mongolia. That the aim of this activity is to strengthen the view that traditional culture and wisdom must be preserve through Schools of Living Traditions (SLT).

The First time to attend the conference so was curious to join the event and also exiting to present our piece about our place in Cordillera. The first attempt to enter Vocas where the event was held. I didn't expect that there's a place on top of a building that has a beautiful scene 'A paradise' a replica of a little village in my town.

Meeting Mr. Dennis Banks, an American Indian whom he shared us his story on how did he stay as an Anashanabe though in many circumstances that came in his life. That while he is sharing his story all the listener were crying maybe they felt how pain it is, even me that felt I was the one in his shoes I felt how hard it is. At a very young age he already tried to be tortured with the soldiers because they want that he will forget his tribe, his religion. He's a hero. It did not make a difference to the heroes of a country. He fights for his tribe and make stronger.

Encountering with the natives from different tribes in Visayas was so unforgettable which i was overwhelmed with their cultures and traditions on how they live in their village special mention with the Ati group, Ms. Veronica whom she shares how they live as a family and as a group in their village and so with the others.

To the Ainu from Japan we get together on the 3<sup>rd</sup> night during our dinner just after our play in VOCAS and they taught us one of their song eventually I did not get the english translation and the most was their last day in Baguio before the travel in Manila was, They came in our room and gave some gifts some of their products in their tribe I got the owl necklace made up of bones a very nice necklace. That is one of traits of Japanese which I could not forget that they always give "Pasalubong" or a gift from their place when they arrived in another place. And also they shared us their handmade musical instrument that made up of bamboo. Though we also have it but it is another strategy on how to produce its sounds. At last the Ainu were trying to invite the member of the Anak di kabiligan to visit also their place in Hokaido. Hopefully it will pursue.

Together with the other tribes we share our talents in dancing. Many different musical instruments used the gongs from the Cordillera, solibao from Palawan and others that I can't give their names. It only shows that the natives can also produce sounds, either modern or tradition using our own traditional instruments.

Meeting the Karen tribe from Thailand was so different because when we are guiding them at the market place, I could not understand what they want except for the couple because they don't know how to speak our English language. And so we make actions for communication.

Socializing to the other tribes make us more knowledgeable to their culture, customs and tradition. And I am very much thankful to them because they came and shares their talents and also to Mr. Kidlat Tahimik for organizing the event and inviting us to join and learn trough Ma'am Mariko Sorimachi whose always there to support us and give us-the member of Anak di Kabiligan the opportunity to explore. I have learned so much from them that I could not express how glad I am because I gain friends with other tribe.

## Celebrating Life amidst the Diversity: Some Insights on KAPWA

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Indigenous Peoples - this is the name that carries in itself a powerful assertion of one's identity as well as a story of grandeur. I was born and raised by people who have instilled in me the pride of being who I am. They have made me realize that the blood which flows on my veins is the same blood which has empowered my ancestors for their quest and search for their place in the society. Yet, young as I was, I took in the realization that there are other people out there living out my comfort zone which essentially requires me to analyze the world from a different light and not to accept the idea that the world is defined in black and white. I had always been the social type of person and at an early age, I was exposed and soon got used to interacting with different people which nurtured the idea that indeed, life offers a salad bowl of identity. For more than a century now, my family has been an active host to Japanese students of Rikkyo University who are part of the Philippine Relationships Club. I learned from this experience that although we all belong to Asia and are sharing a particular identity, natural differences still exist which has to be acknowledged and respected. We are different indeed, but we all got along and I formed a particular relationship with them which will always be with me. I found a family, a sister, a brother, a friend and a mentor. These are possible because we haven't allowed geographical and cultural differences to define our roles and the grounds by which we interact. When we are with each other, we are equals. This is what KAPWA taught me.

It had always been a great feeling to know that you are a part of the great family of indigenous people. Yet, confrontations still exist, and this is something I personally think we cannot avoid. Typical stereotypes of who an indigenous person is, how an IP looks like, how s/he speaks and act are still going on in the streets and are even magnified in the interactions we have each day. This is very sad. I have thought that the era when, we, indigenous peoples were considered marginalized groups, that we were considered barbarians and savages has long been gone but I got myself wrong. Joining KAPWA and meeting people from all parts of the world has been an overwhelming experience for me but it also made me realize that discrimination is still very prevalent, and even it has undergone a period of evolution. It was painful to hear the lamentations our fellow indigenous peoples have as they share their experiences of discrimination. But behind those tears are silent messages of gratitude for KAPWA because it is where they experienced to be treated the way they deserve to be and it gave them a sense of hope. That is what *kapwa* is all about. This is not only limited to being a part of various social groups because more importantly, it entails being able to form connections to people of various origin expressing a tolerant recognition of somebody else's nature or situation, because it is only by making a connection through you "inner self" can one achieve the meaning of *kapwa*. So essentially, *kapwa* is not only about being able to talk to the other, but it heralds the power of understanding shared between people and essentially treating them as a part of you, no less than that. As Rem Tanauan puts it, *kapwa* radiates a psyche and philosophy of noblest intention of being human, of becoming one with the other". *Kapwa* then means LOVE, love that is more than what is shared by couples, but a love that is far greater and holds more meaning.

More importantly, KAPWA made me see through the diversity of cultures and taught me how to appreciate and celebrate life midst the diversity. In KAPWA, we did not have dialogues like "I" but rather, we explored the essence of "WE" and how powerful this could be as we go on with our quest for self-determination. It made me realize that I belong to the race of the gallant warriors, and through it I became so proud of my cultural heritage. I am an inheritor of a glorious past and I can stand to assert that I am an Igorot, I am an Indigenous Person, a true daughter of the Earth and no one can simply take that away from me.

Let me end by sharing this quote:

"I am an Igorot (an Indigenous Person in this case). Let me be treated as I deserve – with respect if I am good, with contempt if I am no good, irrespective of the name I carry. Let the term , Igorot, remain and the world will use it with the correct meaning attached to it." – Dulnuan