

CONFERENCE REPORT

11th Igorot International Consultation Bontoc, Mountain Province April 6-8, 2016

By Yvonne Belen

The Igorot International Consultation (IIC), a biennial gathering of Igorots the world over, is sponsored by the Igorot Global Organization (IGO) International. It has been held in various places worldwide like Australia, Austria, Canada, Philippines, the United Kingdom and the USA. The event is alternately held in the Philippines and outside the country. An Igorot or Cordillera organization in the country hosts the event and they determine the theme.

The 11th IIC in Bontoc, Mountain Province

The IGO Philippines and Local Government Unit (LGU) of the Mountain Province (MP) hosted the 11th IIC. It was held at the Teng-ab Retreat House from April 6-8, 2016 with the theme, “Understanding Each Other, Celebrating Together.” The event was to coincide with the Mountain Province’s Foundation Day activities and would highlight the province’s “Lang-ay” festivities. Governor Leonard Mayaen, governor of the Mountain Province, was to lead the Lang-ay activities. Mr. Gary Pekas acted as liaison between the Mountain Province and the IGO; he was also the project leader of the 11th IIC Souvenir Program. For the IGO, the persons-in-charge were: Ms. Mia Abeya, president of the IGO International and Mr. Manuel Ano, president of the IGO Philippines.

Prior to the event, Ms. Mia Abeya had been communicating with Provincial Governor Leonard Mayaen. Aside from the Provincial Government, Congressman Maximo Dalog of the Mountain Province actively participated in the 11th IIC and hosted some of its activities.

On March 31, 2016, news of Governor Leonard Mayaen’s sudden death cast its shadow on the 11th IIC and Lang-ay. “What is going to happen to the ‘Lang-ay’ activities? Will it go through?” These were some questions that participants and residents of Bontoc, Mountain Province were asking. Later on, the participants learned that the schedules would change from minute to minute. In the end, the organizers decided to cancel the Lang-ay activities such as the “Parade” on April 7 and “Street Dancing and Cultural Presentations” on April 9. The Katagowan caravan on April 6 was also later cancelled and replaced with another activity. The IIC schedule remained as is though, with all of the activities being held at Teng-ab Retreat House. This venue was suited for conferences because of its isolated location---it being located three kilometers along the road going to Maligcong-overlooking Bontoc, the Chico River and Samoki.

Golf Tournament as Fundraising for the ISP

For the pre-consultation activity, a “friendly” Golf tournament was held at the Lepanto Mines Golf Course in Mankayan, Benguet on April 5, 2016. Mr. Edwin B. Abeya coordinated the activity aimed at raising funds for the Igorot Scholarship Program (ISP), the IGO’s flagship project.

Those in charge of the tournament were: Engr. Rufino Bomas-ang, Lepanto Mines Resident Manager Engr. Tomas Consolacion, Engr. Richard Solang and Mr. Edwin B. Abeya.

Months before the 11th IIC though, Mr. Edwin Abeya was already soliciting for donors of the golf tournament. In his final report, he said that Php. 600,000.00 was raised for the ISP.

Katagowan Caravan

The Katagowan Caravan is a project aimed at raising funds for Mountain Province dialysis patients and is sponsored by Congressman Maximo Dalog. It would have been held on April 6, 2016 with a motorcade tour going through the interesting sites of Bontoc, Sabangan, Sagada, Bauko, Mount Polis and Barlig and other places.

This year though, the Katagowan Caravan was replaced with a tour of the Bontoc Museum and Bontoc Ili. It took place in the morning of April 6th and ended with lunch at Grace Pit-og's Heritage Site. Mr. Patrick "Potlik" McDonough, CEO of the IGO International and Mr. Gary Pekas coordinated the activity. It was meant only for young participants. However, since many adult participants were already present, they also wanted to join. The adults attended the tour of Bontoc Museum only and decided to proceed to Grace Pit-og's place while the young people continued with the tour of Bontoc Ili.

There were two components of the Bontoc Museum tour, one inside and an open-air museum. Mr. Patrick McDonough was the tour guide. Being the person who initiated the setting-up of the Bontoc Museum during his Peace Corps days in Bontoc in the 1970s, he ably explained the museum's components.

Registration

On the afternoon of April 6, 2016, the delegates registered at the Teng-ab Conference Lobby Hall. Those at the registration table were: Ms. Ursula Daoey, Ms. Salma Martin, Ms. Helen Stewart, Ms. Pureza Egmalis and Ms. Mia Abeya.

The delegates were from Australia, Austria, Canada, Israel, The Netherlands, Philippines, Russia, the United Kingdom and the USA. Earlier, a delegate from Germany and Spain registered online. Unfortunately, they were unable to attend.

Aside from the conference kit and name tag, each participant was given a small nice-looking bag with toilet articles. Ms. Mia Abeya and members of IGO Philippines helped to put together the articles in the bags.

Igorot Scholarship Program (ISP) Night

In the evening of April 6th, there was a reception dinner "al fresco" at the Teng-ab Outdoor Chapel grounds.

After dinner, Ms. Ursula Daoey and Ms. Mia Abeya gave an orientation on the IIC-11.

Later on, the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the ISP took over. Dr. Gaston Kibiten presented a 10-year summary of the ISP and conclusions on the program. He enumerated two challenges: to increase the number of scholars and increase financial support per semester for each

scholar. The ISP resolved to have a moratorium on accepting scholars for the academic year 2016-17 and 2017-18 in the context of the K-12 program of the Department of Education.

Later on, Dr. Yvonne Belen shared details on the “Cordillera Folklore Project.” Six articles for reading were chosen and placed on tarpaulin. Volunteers from the audience read the stories and everyone applauded as each story was read in the vernacular. The audience had a taste of some tales that is intended to be published in future with the aim of having a reference material for Cordillera schools and raising funds for the ISP.

Among those from the BOT who were present were: Dr. Gaston Kibiten (Chairperson) and members: Dr. Yvonne Belen, Ms. Pureza Egmalis, Atty. Ingerith Pooten-Masferre and Ms. Ursula Daoey. There were also around 10 ISP scholars who were present.

Mountain Province Foundation Day

The IIC delegates attended the Mountain Province Foundation Day Program held at the Bontoc Plaza from 10:00 until 12:00 noon on April 7, 2016. Congressman Maximo Dalog and General Benjamin Macli-ing Losad were the main speakers.

Lunch was served at the Mountain Province Multipurpose Hall. Incidentally, “Carrot Man” who hails from Bayyo, Mountain Province, was present. He became the star during lunch time with different groups and individuals taking turns having a photo with him.

Movie showing “Walang Rape Sa Bontoc”

The movie, “Walang Rape sa Bontoc” was shown in the afternoon at the Teng-ab Social Hall.

Opening Ceremony

At around 5:00 pm of April 7, 2015, the 11th IIC opened with the entrance and acknowledgment of participants. Emcees were Ms. Ursula Daoey, Vice-President of the IGO Philippines, and Ms. Alpine Killa of the Mountain Province Information Office.

They called on the delegates from: Australia, Austria, Canada, Israel, Philippines, Russia, United Kingdom and USA. The delegates came in with their organization’s streamer and/or flag of their country.

Atty. Richard “Stone” Pooten, Mr. Manuel Ano and Ms. Mia Abeya were in charge of the traditional opening ceremony. The Episcopal Diocese of Northern Philippines (EDNP) gave the invocation.

Congressman Maximo Dalog delivered the keynote message. In his speech, he focused on the question: Who are really the Igorots? He traced the origin of the word Igorot from the Spanish colonial period until the American regime. The other question he asked was: Is it right to deny one’s origin? In reply, he said:

In our case, we were born Igorots so Igorots we are, Igorots we shall be and Igorots we shall remain. No artifice we employ can conceal, much less expunge, our Igorot identity.” He also said, “To me, there is only one thing to do: accept that we are

Igorot, by birth and by culture, and face the implicit and explicit consequences of being one. There is no shame in being an Igorot.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Trauma Center

The moderator of the morning session on April 8, 2016 was Dr. Yvonne Belen.

Before the main session on EMS and Trauma Care, The Rev. Canon Steven Saxby, Vicar of St. Barnabas, Walthamstow, United Kingdom shared his reflections. In his talk, he provided meaning to the letters in the word, IGOROT: I for Indigenous community in the Cordillera, G for Globalized, O for Outstanding, R for Resilience, O for Organized and T for Transforming.

Dr. Rodolfo Lopez was the main presenter on EMS and Trauma Care. The other speakers were: The Rev. Geoffrey Dongalen (Australia), Rose Bawing Nabert (Canada), Conchita Pooten (United Kingdom), Edwin Abeya (USA), Dr. Nenita Dines Lizardo and Dr. Diga Dirige Gomez (Philippines).

Dr. Lopez discussed the reasons for setting up an EMS in the Philippines. These are: lack of state of the art on trauma care and no reliable trauma care. These reasons are by-products of inattention. According to him, the way to start is with community-wide involvement, and EMS and trauma care can start in Bontoc and other places of the Cordillera region. He enumerated the six components of EMS in the community: early detection, early reporting, early response, on-scene care, care in transit and transfer to definitive care.

The Rev. Dongalen enumerated three components of EMS in Australia: ambulance service, flying doctor and state emergency services. In closing, he said, “Perhaps we can begin developing an emergency number and teach our people young and old to call that number in an emergency.” He was referring to the Philippines.

Ms. Nabert discussed the “Trauma Care Road Map” of Canada. This is made by calling a number, 911. Immediately, the EMS, police and fire department respond. There is a trauma leader who mobilizes the trauma team, operating room and intensive care unit; and links are made with other agencies for further management and rehabilitation.

For the United Kingdom, Ms. Conchita Pooten said that patients needing EMS either visit the Accident and Emergency (A & E) unit within a National Health Service Hospital (NHS) or dial 999 from their telephone. In summary, she mentioned the Pros and Cons of the NHS. The Pros are: “Efficient, effective, safe, co-ordinated, patient-centred; Fully-funded and Equipped and responsive.” The Cons are: “Response times are delayed in rural areas or remote environments and when demand is high; and Expensive i.e., requires robust system (communication/IT infrastructure) and resources (equipment, vehicles, helicopter.)” The NHS spends around 47% of its budget on acute and emergency care.

Mr. Edwin Abeya talked about EMS and Trauma Care in the USA with focus on “Vehicular Accidents.” He discussed the “Golden Hour” from trauma to medical intervention. In preparing for the golden hour, the following should be considered: Telecommunication, stakeholders link, response time (fire truck, ambulance, police), assessment and/or stabilization and transport to a medical facility.

Dr. Nenita Dines Lizardo, Provincial Health Officer II of the Mountain Province presented an overview of the health situation of the Mountain Province.

For Dr. Diga Dirige-Gomez, who is the physician at the Rural Health Unit (RHU) in Bontoc, she recalled the Florida bus accident in Bayyo, Bontoc in February 2014 and the RHU's response. She said that the Provincial Health Office of the Mountain Province use the "HEMS" (Health Emergency Medical System) for disasters. They have an acronym "DISASTER" which stands for: Details, Inform, Safety, Assess, Staging Areas, Triage collection, Evaluation and Report, Rehabilitation.

Atty. Cyphrine Maxcel Y. Dalog, daughter of Mountain Province Congressman Maximo B. Dalog, Sr., represented her father, Congressman Maximo Dalog, and presented through power point an overview on: PROPOSED MEASURES ON IMPROVEMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND TRAUMA CARE. Her presentation included: Bills pending in the 16th Congress, Purpose of the Proposed Measure, History and Status.

Kate Chollipas Botengan was the moderator of the afternoon session.

There were five discussion groups. Each group answered two questions: (1) What are the good things from the speakers' presentations that could be components of an EMS and Trauma Care project in Mountain Province and (2) What are your ideas of a good EMS Trauma Center?

Kate Chollipas Botengan collated the reports of the five discussion groups. In her report, she gave a summary of suggestions for an EMS in the Mountain Province. These are:

1. Legalization of the EMS, inclusive of a Regional, Provincial, and Local Plans.
2. Government support and funding, with community participation.
3. Communication access to a common "hot line" numbers, e.g., 911.
4. Availability of transportation in terms of ambulances (ground and air) fully equipped with medicines and trained staff and volunteers.
5. Trainings at the barangay levels for staff, volunteers, and public at large for general information.
6. Standard policies on EMS.
7. Standard patients' records.

Philippine Migrants and Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) Concerns

This part of the program followed the EMS and Trauma Center session. Dr. Deby Babis, a sociologist and anthropologist from Israel, spoke on "Philippine Migrant and OFW Concerns."

In Dr. Babis's presentation, she mentioned the agreement of the governments of Israel and the Philippines on Filipino citizens going to work in Israel as nannies, their tenure and that they may not become Israel citizens except in a few exceptional cases, one example of which was a child born in Israel and returned there. She mentioned activities the nannies did to help their families back in the homeland or rally among themselves in organizations as is the common denominator where we all are. She highlighted her presentation with some pictures.

IGO Business session

The Council of Elders of the IGO took charge of this session in the latter part of April 8, 2016.

Closing Ritual

The closing ritual was held after the business session. The highlight was passing of the IIC gong to the next host. Present at the stage during the passing of the gong were: Mr. Ceasar Castro, Atty. Richard Pooten, Mr. Manuel Ano, Vice-Governor Bonifacio Lacwasen and Ms. Mia Abeya. Atty. Averil “Wendy” Pooten-Watan, representative of the Hawaii host, accepted the IIC gong.

Congressional Dinner

Congressman Maximo Dalog sponsored the Congressional Dinner held from 6:00 until 10:00 pm.

The participants and guests were first treated to a program. Fine dining followed.

Departure

On April 9, 2016, the delegates left Teng-ab Retreat House. Many participants still spent some time taking pictures in the premises. Patrick and Gary saw the delegates off.

And so ended the 11th IIC with everyone looking forward to seeing each other in Hawaii, USA for the 12th IIC in 2018. Aloha!

IIC-11 Souvenir Program

One of the important materials of the 11th IIC is the Souvenir Program. Mr. Gary Pekas is the person behind its conceptualization and production. The magazine narrated previous IICs and featured some MP municipalities and its tourist spots. ©2017YvonneBelen.

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