

# Cordillera Day 2010 in Toronto

April 30, 2010



Part of the audience and some members of Filipino-Canadian Association of Ryerson, Namnama ti Ili, Gabriela Ontario, Independent Workers' Association, Pilipinong Migrante sa Barrie, members of Metro Toronto BIBAK Association, Ifugao Association, Community Solidarity Response-Toronto (CSRT), Canadians Against Mining in El Salvador (CAMES) and representatives of Bayan Canada and Migrante Ontario.

Some 70 people gathered April 24 at the Ryerson University's Student Centre to celebrate Cordillera Day - this year with the theme Celebrating Land and Life. The event was co-sponsored by the Filipino Canadian Association of Ryerson (FCAR), Migrante-Ontario Youth, Gabriela Ontario, Namnama ti Ili (a group of cause-oriented Cordillerans and friends) and Bayan Canada.



BIBAK members dance at Cordillera Day 2010 in Toronto.

The event featured indigenous dance numbers from BIBAK and the Ifugao Association in Toronto; an interpretative dance from the Independent Workers' Association; and mini-play presentations from Gabriela Ontario. A solidarity message was delivered by BIBAK president Isidro Payaket. Presentations were made by the Canadians Against Mining in El Salvador and the Community Solidarity Response of Toronto, formerly the Mining Awareness Coalition. Members of the Pilipinong Migrante sa Barrie also came to join the celebration.

Cordillera Day 2010 in Toronto was highlighted by the videotaped presentation of Dr. Constancio "Chandu" Claver - chairperson of the National Organizing Committee of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan in Canada and member of the International Commission of the Cordillera People's Alliance; and an inspiring message from Fr. Rex Reyes, first Igorot priest to become secretary general of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines.



Members of Gabriela Ontario with friends at the Land and Life Celebration at Cordillera Day in Toronto on April 24, 2010, Ryerson University. They are joined by Rathika Sitsabaiesan (front, center), federal NDP candidate for Scarborough-Rouge River.

Of the Cordillera Day event itself, Dr. Claver said: “The Cordillera Day event is a uniting activity - in the home country or here overseas. And in these yearly events, it would serve us well to look back in time ... in order to be able to arrive at where we are today.” He recalled that because of the dictator Marcos’s World-Bank-funded Chico River Dam project and establishment of the Cellophil Resources Corporation, “the Cordillera people rose up in protest to register their desire to be left alone to chart their own course of development and defend their ancestral heritage.” And this “protest and defiance gained support and admiration from communities and countries in different parts of the world.”

Padi Rex Reyes, referring to the Katribu party list group and other progressive party lists like Bayan Muna, said, “Cordillera Day is ... a celebration of the hope now turning into reality. The emergence of a new breed of principled politicians and credible party list groups is something to celebrate. Principled and credible because they serve the people and have been maligned and vilified for doing so.”



Isidro Payaket, current BIBAK president.

In closing he said “Cordillera Day has a face - it is the face of every Igorot who loves peace and justice, freedom and abundant life for all. It is the face of every Igorot who resists those who would trade our birthrights for a pair of shoes. It is the face of every Igorot very much concerned with the welfare of future generations and who is not afraid to declare: “WE ARE THE STEWARDS OF THE LAND!” (PRESS RELEASE)



Pinky Paglingayen of Gabriela Ontario as one of the emcees.



BIBAK members perform a native dance at the Celebration of Land and Life at Ryerson University in Toronto. PHOTOS: MG



Members of Gabriela Ontario play roles in a skit about Cordillera people’s cultural practices focusing on the collective and community spirit.