

The Gongs Called and Vancouver Holds its Second Cordillera Day: *Entayo!*

Cordillera Day Organizing Committee
Vancouver, B.C. Canada

The Second Cordillera Day in Vancouver brought together at least 150 people from the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera, the different community groups from Vancouver and Victoria Island, friends and guests of the Filipino community. On April 17, 2010, the hall of St. Michael's Anglican Church once again rang with the sounds of the gongs and of dancing feet.

The celebration of the Second Cordillera Day was guided by the theme of *Indigenous Peoples, Unite, and Advance the Politics of Change*. The message was clear: It is imperative that indigenous peoples learn, work together and struggle together against their common problems. At this time also, in the Philippines, local and national elections are scheduled in May 2010. Dr. Claver also introduced the Katribu partylist, the partylist for the promotion and defense of the rights and welfare of the indigenous peoples especially amid the economic crisis, continuing human rights violations, climate change, and development aggression.

The short film, "Time to Speak, a Time to Listen," brought the voices and faces of the many tribal and indigenous groups in the Philippines who have witnessed the unsustainable development of largescale projects in their ancestral lands.

This was followed by strong messages from the event speakers: Dr. Chandu Claver, International Spokesperson of the Cordillera People's Alliance and Chair of BAYAN Canada, Bart Alatan of the BIBAK, Cliff Belgica, President of BIBAK and member of the International Igorot's Organization, and Michael Wandag who spoke for the indigenous youth. Padi Rex Reyes, who heads the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (and the first Igorot to head this national church institution) sent his solidarity wishes to the community which was read by Bootz Estella. Mable Elmore, the MLA from Vancouver Kensington, came to personally deliver her message of solidarity. Dominga Passmore and Randy Bentayan ably co-emceed the event.

Dr. Chandu, with daughter Samantha, sang several songs from the Cordillera, including a popular love song, to which the audience sang along. Jim Edmondson and the Vancouver-Kensington Community Singers, with their creative versions of well-known songs, also led the participatory singing. Jason Grey of the Cree First Nation and a member of the Whitefish Lake Indian Band shared a native prayer song he learned from local Chehalis Band of the Sto'lo Nation. and a travelling song which guides the spirits down to mother earth, to the beating of his drum.

The Cultural Group of Migrante BC did their interpretative choreograohy of the song "Babaylan" which told of the rising of the women indigenous healers in the farms, mountains and factories. With their woven skirts and G-strings, the Kalinga Dance Group and the Dancers from BIBAK stepped to the sound of the beaten gong music handed down through the generations. The community dancing was followed by the sharing of the food generously provided by members of the community and the guests.

The sound of the gongs echoed even after the program had ended. It is hoped that the theme of this year's Cordillera Day echoes for a long time as well.#