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ETHNOECOLOGY FOR A CHANGING WORLD

A NEW HOPE FROM IS'UE & S'BKAL ROOTS: DUMAGAT-ALTA ICCA DECLARATION

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"Our time will come and we will depart this world. And when this happens, we want you, our youth to continue of what we have started. We fought for this land. We fought with all our strength, with sweat and with blood. Do not lose what we have gained, you have to stand and protect our Ancestral Domain".
-Dumagat Tribal Elder



The Future of the Dumagat and Alta community

DAY OF INDIGENOUS & COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA (ICCA) DECLARATION



Offering Ritual before
the start of the event

It was a clear sky and the moon shines brightly on the eve of the one of the most anticipated events of the Dumagat and Alta communities for 2019. It was a momentous gathering coming from all settlements of the tribe across the municipality of San Luis to celebrate the declaration the Is'ue and S'bkal as a new Indigenous Community Conserved Area or ICCA. Is'ue for Alta and S'bkal for Dumagat means sacred grounds and represents the entire ancestral domain as a whole.

The ICCA Declaration started on the evening of December 13th with an offering and bonfire gathering at Brgy. Dibut San Luis. The offering was performed by one of the eldest to acknowledge and seek blessings from the deities of the tribe. Soon after the offering, a safe space was opened for discussions regarding the ancestral domains headed by the Aurora Provincial Officer of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Ronie Caanawan. One of the highlights of the gathering was a call to action and inspiring words from one of the elders of the tribe. His words, in translation said: *“Our time will come and we will depart this world. And when this happens, we want you, our youth to continue of what we have started. We fought for this land. We fought with all our strength, with sweat and with blood. Do not lose what we have gained, you have to stand and protect our ancestral domain.”* His words resonated to all the tribe present on that night and to all of us who are also sharing efforts for the protection of the ancestral domain.

The municipality of San Luis, Aurora is endowed with rich natural resources teeming with wildlife. And embedded on these are magnificent cultures formed into stories, songs, dances and traditions of the indigenous peoples of Dumagat and Alta. The ICCA is an approach for our indigenous communities for the protection and conservation of their ancestral domains while ensuring that their customs and traditions are still intact and passed down to younger generations. With the presence of threats to biodiversity inside and outside of their ancestral domain and the decline on functions and benefits from ecosystem goods and services, the effective implementation of the ICCA is crucial to reverse the trends of degrading ecosystems.

Commonly, the language used in communities in the Philippines (aside from their indigenous language) is Filipino. As such, it would be appropriate to discuss the development of a community in Filipino. It can also be seen as paying respects to the country in which Daluhay currently operates.

Ang mga proyekto na isinasagawa ng Daluhay ay nakatuon sa pagpapalakas at pagpapatibay ng ugnayan ng mga tao sa kalikasan. Napapaloob dito ang mga pagsasanay at seminar kasama ang mga tagapag-salita na mayroong sapat na kaalaman at karanasan ukol sa iba't-ibang paksa. Ngunit matapos ang mga training, mga seminar, mga open-forum, ay isang komunidad na nagsasama sama upang makatulong sa kanilang kalikasan, pamilya, at sunod na salin-lahi. Ang mga Dumagat ng San Luis ay isa sa mga nakakasama ng Daluhay para sa pagsasanay na ito. Matapos ang isang araw na pagsasanay, noong Enero, nagsagawa ng munting interbyu ang ilang miyembro ng Daluhay. Imbes na tanungin ang mga natutunan sa araw na iyon, tinanong ang mga kalahok kung ano, sa tingin nila, ang magiging epekto ng pagiging Bantay Gubat nila. Iba-iba ang kasagutan nila. Ngunit, sila'y nagkakaisa sa isang parte ng interbyu – ito ay ang pasasalamat dahil sa pagkakataon na dinala ng Daluhay upang maging parte ng isang samahan na magbabantay sa gubat na kanilang kinalakihan at pinagmamalaki. Makikita mula sa kanilang paniniwala at sinasabi ang sigla at pakikisama sa mga ipinapagawa ng Daluhay.

The IPMR congratulating the Chieftains for the ICCA Declaration

December 14th, the second day of the event formalized the ICCA with the signing of the resolution from all of the chieftains from the settlements of Diteki, Real, Dibalo, Dibut, Dikapinisan and Dimanayat. The signing of the declaration of the Is'ue and S'bkal as an ICCA was conducted on the presence of the NCIP Provincial Officer and the Municipal Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) Cipriano dela Torre. This was also witnessed by the President and Executive Director of Daluhay, Dr. Paul Watts and Dr. Marivic Pajaro. Messages of support were delivered one by one from different representatives coming from tribal councils, elders, women and youth of the community. The declaration was sealed with the sharing of “mama” as a sign of the communities’ cooperation and complementation towards protecting their ancestral domain.



We try to understand community by seeking to capture members’ experience of it. Instead of asking what does it look like to us.
Anthony P. Cohen

The celebration continued showcasing the traditional songs, dances and games of the Dumagat and Alta culture. Traditional songs called “*Ilde*” and dance called “*Poray*” were performed by the elders. The *Ilde* is a type of traditional song which starts from soft voices getting louder and louder. The *Ilde* is always accompanied by a dance. The “*Poray*” is also a type of traditional dance where dancers sway their hands in the air while looking at the trees or the leaves of the trees. This dance is a simple gesture for celebration and for weddings.

“*Pagbu*” the traditional game of wrestling was played by men. “*Mali*” is also a traditional game of wrestling by both men and women modified with a game of ball catching. *Pagbu* is a game of strength and strategy on pinning down the opponent on the ground. The *Mali* is also a game of catching the ball first from the opponent and then pinning the opponent on the ground.

“*Pagpana*”, the traditional archery was also played by the men of the Dumagat and Alta. *Pana* is used for traditional hunting of wild boars and deers inside the ancestral

land. These traditional songs, dances and games rejuvenated the community and sparked the joy and pride of being of a Dumagat and Alta of San Luis.



Elder women singing the *Ilde*



Group of Dumagat doing the *Poray* dance



Mama used as a symbol of cooperation and working together of the Dumagat and Alta communities



Dumagat women playing the *Mali*



Dumagat men playing the *Pagbu*



Dumagat playing the *pana*

With the Is'ue and S'bkal as ICCA, a community conservation and protection plan (CCPP) was formulated to specify strategic action plans and management zones for

protection and conservation. The CCPP also emphasized the traditional governance of the tribes, the indigenous knowledge, systems and practices and documented the current situation of the ancestral land in terms of flora and fauna and the how biodiversity is being assessed and monitored.

The ICCA for San Luis Dumagat and Alta is a huge leap for indigenous communities in Aurora province and in the Philippines as a whole. This shows that they are able to protect and conserve their domain and natural resources with their own traditional systems and practices. Their strong connection to the environment makes them the most suitable stewards given that they gather support from other stakeholders.

THE TEAM AT DALUHAY – SABANG, BALER, AURORA OFFICE

The team wishes former Community Development Assistant **Mr. Kim Zyrus R. Leander** great success in his law studies and look forward to the next time seeing him once again around the Daluhay table!

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