



KALINAWA ART FOUNDATION

Question: Why is the *Kalinawa Art Foundation* focusing on the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines visual arts?

Answer: The answer to this question lies in answering two questions: why the focus on Indigenous Peoples' and why the focus on their visual arts.

- While absolute and unequivocal data may be absent about whether Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines are "disproportionately poor", it is widely accepted that the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines are among the most impoverished groups within the nation and face the greatest challenges in preserving their traditional ways of life while working on understanding and accommodating aspects of 'modernity'. This is not to say that it all Indigenous Peoples adopt the view that they are poor: "It is important to observe that Philippine indigenous notions of *poor* and *poverty* generally differ from western "modernist" concepts of these categories. Most Indigenous Peoples do not want to be labeled as poor mainly because of the negative and discriminatory connotations of this construct. Mainstream characterization of the poor includes images of sloth and ignorance, which are used by "development" agencies and corporations to justify exploitation of the development, and has changed through time. With the advent of "modernization" brought about by missions, formal education, construction of roads, the entry of migrants, and the introduction of television, transistor radios, and newspapers as well as other print media, new values have emerged., Indigenous values persist or are modified to adapt to the changing conditions. Indigenous peoples' views of poverty manifest the dynamics of continuity and change." The report goes on to note that " It is obvious that indigenous communities that have been relocated from their traditional communities and that have lost access to their land, natural resources, and other assets, are likely to bear the burden of material poverty as well as socio-cultural deprivation." (from Indigenous Peoples/Ethnic Minorities and Poverty Reduction: Philippines, Asian Development Bank, http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Indigenous_Peoples/PHI/default.asp#contents)
- A vibrant visual arts community can serve to enhance the understanding of diversity, to improve livelihoods by creating different possibilities for

sustainable income generation, to preserve existing traditions and outlooks, and to strengthen the sense of identity, place and belonging. At the National Gathering on Aboriginal Artistic Expression held in Canada, Marrie Mumford, Artistic Director, Aboriginal Arts Program, Banff Centre for the Arts "spoke of how culture gives Aboriginal people back self-esteem, how visible Aboriginal artistic role models, such as Tom Jackson and Graham Greene, give hope to Aboriginal youth, and how the arts can be a source of economic development. She expressed how art is the manifestation of a culture, and that without it; Aboriginal communities lose their sense of identity." (from Final Report on the National Gathering on Aboriginal Artistic Expression, Department of Canadian Heritage <http://www.expressions.gc.ca/documents.htm>)

- There is a need to focus on visual arts. While other areas of Indigenous Peoples' art in the Philippines receive support, their visual arts are less well supported. Much of their visual art has been manifested in the craft industry. The craft industry does provide livelihood, it does not necessarily lead to a wider appreciation and celebration of the different cultures, nor towards building a greater sense of pride through the opportunity to express and sustain different views in a wider and more diverse environment.
- By focusing on the visual arts of Indigenous Peoples in the design of the program, the *Foundation* is striving to avoid the difficulty of trying to sustain support for too many activities as well as the difficulty of not being able to expand the opportunities should outcomes permit. In an extended essay on management and culture, a former director of the National Commission on Culture and the Arts, Jaime C. Laya wrote that, "Social cohesion and thus economic development is enhanced by greater mutual understanding among the country's numerous cultural communities. Experience in other countries has shown that a strong social infrastructure enhances networking and cooperation and thus contributes to development. Other countries have demonstrated that active culture and arts organizations and activities are an important component of social infrastructure. Appreciation of local culture likewise enhances the effectiveness of government in infrastructure projects, peace and order, and generally the provision of basic services. In economic terms, the arts - performing, literary, visual, and traditional - generate goods and services that form part of the national product while providing income and employment to artists and cultural workers and the many support personnel that work in the culture industries." He went on to conclude, "The traditional arts, being practiced by and for the cultural communities themselves, continue (such as they are) as part of the way of life of the people concerned, with negligible income generated from the commercialized crafts. Cultural literacy and demand for culture and arts products and services are low." (from Jaime Laya, "Management and Culture", http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about_cultarts/articles.php?artcl_id=31)