

SUMMER ISSUE 2024







EDITORIAL



Filipino-ness is complex. The term "Filipino" itself is colonial. The Spanish colonizers named the archipelago of 7,000 islands (most with their own datus, kingdoms, cultures and languages) after King Philip II of Spain. Historian Xiao Chua, in one of his videos, mentioned that a Filipino cannot be identified by blood or race but as a nation based on a national sentiment; when we can identify each other as one people, when we share a common culture, a common history - we can choose to be Filipino.

Even when we choose to be Filipino, there's still this nagging disconnect felt by many second-generation diasporic Filipinos - the children of Filipino immigrants (more than we'd like to acknowledge). Maybe it's this gap, an inter-generational repair that needs to happen collectively, intentionally - inside and outside the home. And what better way to attempt this than through food! No matter where we come from, food brings us together; it nourishes our souls and bodies.

When we eat good food in good company, it brings us *ginhawa* (relief, satisfaction, ease of living). Preparing, eating and sharing food is a common ancestral practice that we don't often think about today.

Kapwa (seeing ourselves in others) is shown throughout Filipino history: when Filipinos provided refuge to Jewish people, the Russians, the boat people of Vietnam; to fighting and dying for the citizens of other countries. Kapwa is why Filipinos greet each other by asking if we've eaten yet, kumain ka na ba?

In this issue of *ILAW* we highlight food, and the strength and resilience of Filipinos. As exemplified in this year's *Mabuhay* celebrations, Filipinos came together in *bayanihan* - the spirit of community and cooperation to achieve a shared goal.

We hope you enjoy reading as we enjoyed putting this Summer issue of *ILAW* together. - *Sheila Alonzo, Editor*

Marilynn (Meyen)
Quigley is a poet and
writer from the
Philippines. She wrote
for her college paper
when a student at the

University of the Philippines. She left the Philippines in the 1980s, living in Africa, Pakistan and Turkey and working as a teacher for migrants and refugees, government officials and university students before coming to Canada with her husband Kevin - who is Canadian - and children Gabe and Megan in 2007. She worked as a writer for the provincial government and now works with adults with developmental disabilities.

ILAW Editorial Team



Lani Domaloy is a Filipino-Canadian writer, poet, photographer, and digital creator. She lived in the US before migrating to Canada in 2005. She left

Toronto and settled in Victoria in 2014.

Alongside her career in procurement with the federal government, she loves to write and has found her way into blogging since 2015. She spills her thoughts on life and draws inspiration from her love for outdoor adventures, nature, travel, and the arts. Most of her work centers on sharing her lived experiences, focusing on self-development, spirituality, love, and relationships. Currently, she is writing her first book. Explore more of her work at dimpledjourney.medium.com.



Sheila Alonzo is a writer by accident. She started as an art editor for a quarterly newspaper to learn about her new neighbourhood. Within a few months, she started writing for it too.

Thirteen years later, the newspaper is still using the same layout design that she created. In 2011, Sheila could not afford to go to art school. She attended over 400 gallery openings & art exhibitions in five years to get hands-on experience. She became a contributing blogger for Exhibit-V and landed a job at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. Sheila left the Philippines in 1983 and grew up in Palestine (Israel). She holds a BA, MA (-abt) and lived in six countries before finally moving to what is now called Canada.

The Philippine Bayanihan Community Centre, with its affiliate organizations, honours and respects the lak^wanan peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, as well as the WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional territories the centre stands and operates. As an organization of Filipino Canadians on stolen lands, we commit to continuously learn about Canada's colonial history and the ongoing impacts of violence on Indigenous peoples as well as recognize our collective role in advancing truth and reconciliation.









WHAT PEOPLE THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU MENTION THE PHILIPPINES

Beaches, Tropical Fruits and People Power

BEACHES. Yes, yes, yes, we have plenty of those! As early Siargao Island in Surigao was voted by Conde Nast as 2012 Boracay was awarded Best Island in the World by Travel and Leisure Magazine. Tourists from the included in Time magazine's list of greatest places in Philippines and abroad make repeated trips to enjoy its 2021. El Nido in Palawan was a Readers' Choice Awardee white sand beaches, breathtaking sunrises and sunsets, and a range of places to stay, from luxury hotels to more 2020. Apart from natural beauty, Philippine beaches budget-friendly accommodations. In 2016 it was on offer breathtaking natural wonders like pristine coral Conde Nast's Top Ten Destinations to Watch and in 2021 ranked 12th in Trip Advisor's Traveler's Choice Awards for the 25 top beaches in Asia.

readers as the Best Island in the World in 2019 and was for Conde Nast's 25 best island beaches in the world in reefs, caves and unusual rock formations, lush mangrove forests, tide pools and opportunities to do a variety of water sports.









TROPICAL FRUITS. Yes those too! It would be hard to find someone who was born and grew up in the Philippines who has not tasted *aratiles*, *chico*, *atis*, *guayabano* and *caimito* or star apple.

Filipino children love to climb the *aratiles* trees, common in many Filipino backyards, even in the city, for their small, sweet berry-like fruit.

Chico, or sapodilla in Spanish, is native to Mexico and Central America, and likely came to the Philippines by way of the Galleon Trade with Mexico in the 1600s. It has brown fuzzy skin, and sweet orange flesh.

Another import via the Galleon Trade is the *atis*, a small, spherical fruit with a thick green rind, made up of knobby segments. The *atis's* white flesh is sweet and creamy like custard. No surprise that it is also called the "custard apple."

The *guayabano* is cousin to the *atis*. Its skin is green, not as thick as the *atis* and not segmented, with small spikes. It has thick, juicy, white flesh that is slightly acidic and makes for excellent smoothies.

The *caimito* is also called the "star-apple" for the starshaped pattern formed by its seeds. It is a deep purple or green fruit, with seeds coated by a rich, thick, white pulp that is sweet and jelly-like.

These are fruits commonly found in Philippine markets, and coveted and missed by Filipinos abroad. There are many other tropical fruits, notably those from the region of Mindanao, that *ILAW* will bring to you in future issues!

Aratiles - Source: EVLearners.com | Atis and Caimito - Source: insanelygoodrecipes.com





Chico - Source: aboutfilipinofood.com | Guyabano - Source: insanelygoodrecipes.com

PEOPLE POWER. Overnight, Filipinos became known worldwide in February 1986 when they staged nonviolent protests in Manila and other cities that culminated in the departure of then President Ferdinand Marcos and the inauguration of Corazon Aquino as the 11th President of the Philippines. It was, in the words of Jack Epstein of the San Francisco Chronicle, the "revolution that surprised the world."

Aquino and Marcos ran in the national elections of February 7, 1986. On February 15, the Commission on Elections and the *Batasang Pambansa* (National Legislature) declared Marcos the winner despite reports of widespread tampering of ballots, violence, and vote-buying by Marcos's ruling party.

All 50 opposition members of the Legislature walked out in protest. Aquino called for strikes and the boycott of businesses owned by Marcos and his cronies. The people responded to her call and took to the streets from February 22 to 25. His departure on February 26, 1986, ended two decades of Marcos's authoritarian rule.



Photo from atlasobscura.com



Photo from Tatler Asia



Photo from Rappler



Photo by Roger Buendia/Presidential Museum and Library via esquiremag.ph.

CULTURE

RAMBAK: AN EVOLUTIONARY CELEBRATION

by Lani Domaloy



At our village named Agat in the town of Sison in Pangasinan, about 210 kms north of Manila, locally known as the "barrio," a remarkable tale unfolds—a narrative of a community celebration that, despite facing initial resistance from certain church members, flourished due to a revived communal spirit and the leadership of then Brgy. Capt. Vinah Stephan.

It was originally called "barrio fiesta." The reference to the word "Fiesta" however, was met with resistance from some church members. Thinking creatively, Vinah renamed the celebration *Rambak*, making it more inclusive and non-sectarian. Word spread quickly, and soon ignited excitement in the village.

Rambak means "celebration" in Ilokano and later, one guest speaker, Dr. Ramir Austria, dubbed it as an unofficial acronym for

R - Respeto (respect)

A - Asenso (progress)

M - Markado (leaving one's mark)

B - Bibo (bubbly)

A - Alisto (alert)

K - Kalmado (calm)

The first *Rambak* was celebrated on December 30th, 1992. With the support of the Barangay Council, a resolution was put forward to name *Rambak* as an official annual celebration culminating on December 30th.

Rambak extended to a week long festival from its initial single day celebration taking place during the last week of December.

This resurgence sparked vibrant festivities that highlighted community members' untapped creativity and resourcefulness. Like the parade of gowns made only from recycled natural materials such as corn kernels, mussel shells, tree bark, anahaw leaves, and more. The gowns came out stunning!

The youth particularly shone. They showcased their skills in pageants, gown-making, communal meals, and a sports marathon featuring basketball, volleyball, and parlor games. The contests received entries from each *Purok*. Awarding the winners and championships of the sports league was also a highlight of the *Rambak* event.

Since 1992, *Rambak* has evolved, cultivating diverse themes that showcase the community's creativity. Over the years, this initiative has enhanced communication and collaboration among the villagers. It has not only fostered a culture of active participation but also established a robust framework for ongoing advancement and sustainability even after the culmination of specific *Rambak* events.



This evolution has heralded an era of strengthened bonds among the villagers. Each *Purok* had to work among themselves for their own entries. Witnessing the community rise in this way, former residents now scattered across the globe as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and immigrants in foreign lands, were ignited by inspiration. Their hearts were set aglow, prompting them to unite and generously contribute resources to bolster *Rambak*. Through sponsorships, cash prizes, and a medley of enticing incentives, they fervently rallied to fuel greater community engagement and participation.

Rambak has evolved from a simple festive gathering into an annual spectacle, with sports, food, art installations, contests and pageants. This transformation has shifted the community's attitude from one that hesitated to participate in similar events, to one that embraces them wholeheartedly.

Beyond mere festivities, propelled by contributions from former residents who now live overseas, from being just an annual celebration *Rambak* has become a powerful symbol of shared heritage and collective spirit, weaving a legacy that resonates with both nostalgia and the promise of a vibrant future.







Gowns made from dried leaves, seeds, tree bark, etc.

CONSUL GENERAL MAGNO VISITS VICTORIA



Members of the Filipino community in Victoria availing of consular outreach services at the Bayanihan Centre in May, 2024.

On May 25 and 26, 2024, the Filipino community in Victoria had the privilege of hosting **Philippine Consul General Arlene Magno** and officers of the Philippine Consulate in Vancouver as they conducted an outreach visit, one of several that they hold each year to provide consular services to Filipinos in different parts of British Columbia. We had the opportunity to chat with Consul General Magno about the visit and other programs and initiatives that the Consulate has undertaken.

For two days the Consular officials assisted Filipinos and Filipino-Canadians in Victoria with passport renewals, notary services, dual citizenship applications, civil registration, and even overseas voting and updating of Social Security System (SSS) accounts and Overseas Employment Certificates.

"It is more practical for Consular officers to travel to meet Filipinos in need of assistance than for them to come to Vancouver," Consul General Magno said.

The Consulate General does 4-6 outreach visits every year, to Victoria, Kelowna, Prince George, Fort St. John, and/or Dawson Creek. In Victoria, Annette Beech, president of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregivers and Temporary Workers Association took the lead in welcoming Consul General Magno and her group.

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Consul General Magno has a degree in AB Economics and Master's in Public Administration, both from the University of the Philippines. She is married to Edwin Lester Magno, an economist with the International Monetary Fund. They have two children, Jen David and Kira Gwendolyn. Apart from the home office in Manila, Consul General Magno has worked on assignments in Brunei and the United States.

Consul General Magno assumed office in March 2023, succeeding Her Excellency Maria Andrelita Austria who served as Consul General in Vancouver from 2018 to 2023 and is currently ambassador of the Philippines to Canada. The Consul General makes sure to point out that this year, 2024, marks 75 years of strong and friendly relations between the Philippines and Canada.

The partnership between the two nations started in 1949, but the very first Philippine foreign service post in Canada was not established until May 1956, in Vancouver. The Vancouver Consulate General covered all of Canada for 15 years. To mark this milestone, a Thanksgiving mass was celebrated at the Holy Rosary Cathedral in Vancouver on January 16, 2024. On April 11, 2024, the Consulate General held a memorial celebration at Vancouver Mountainview Cemetery honoring the life and legacy of Benson Flores, Canada's first known Filipino immigrant. Other events are being planned for the rest of the year.

The Consulate General already has an impressive array of programs and observances that promote the Philippines and support Filipinos living in British Columbia. Its flagship programs are what the Consul General calls "economic diplomacy." There is, for example, the "Proudly Philippines" festival every June 1 that promotes Philippine products, trade and tourism. Businesses owned and operated by Filipino Canadians or selling Philippine products are able to display their products and services at Robson Square, at no cost. Airlines and travel agencies join to advertise Philippine destinations. Then from early August to September, food trucks selling Filipino food may be found at Canada Place, where the Consulate General is also located. Then there is the Maligayang Pasko and parol-making every Christmas usually held at St. Patrick Church in Vancouver.



Consul General Magno with Catherine Holmes, who donated lunch for the consular outreach in Victoria, May 2024.

The Consul General is proud of a mentorship program that the Consulate General has been sponsoring for migrant workers and international students, in partnership with the UP Alumni Association in BC, where resource persons with successful careers in different industries share their experiences and expertise, providing support, inspiration and guidance to Filipinos seeking to find a foothold in Canadian society.

Consul General Magno expressed particular concern for Filipino students in Canada. "They are quite vulnerable because as students they do not have the protections given to overseas workers by the Department of Migrant Workers. They are also burdened by the high cost of living in Canada, especially when it comes to housing."

Another cause dear to the Consul General's heart is the advocacy for the recognition of credentials of Philippine-trained professionals by the Canadian government, such as nurses. "Filipino nurses are required to go back to school for something they have already taken and are already practising in the Philippines, and then they are faced with the high cost of education and having to support their families at the same time. Hence, they end up accepting work that has

nothing to do with their academic preparation and that forces them to lose out on the recency of practice required for foreign trained nurses to get licensed in Canada. Granted, our nurses may need some skill upgrading in the use of modern medical technology and training on cultural differences but certainly not the entire program."

As part of its cultural diplomacy efforts, the Consulate General has been hosting quarterly exhibits by Filipino-Canadian artists, allowing them to showcase their works at the Consulate premises for free. Currently on display are the works of Mr. Leo "Jun" Cunanan. Recently, the Consulate also sponsored "Heritage Talks," where scholars and experts share their research and insights into Philippine history, society and culture. On July 23, a lecture on Apolinario Mabini by Dr. Ambeth Ocampo was live streamed, and on July 24, Dr. Norma Respicio gave a talk on "Itneg Textiles, Design and Meaning."

Consul General Magno is going to a new assignment before the end of 2024. We thank her for taking the time to visit Victoria, along with her staff, and provide much-needed services to our community. We congratulate her on a most successful tenure at the Philippine Consulate in Vancouver and wish her every success.



Consul General Magno with members of the Filipino community honoring Benson Flores at his gravesite.

A CALL FOR YOUR INPUT

by Elaine Abanto Wong

The Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society (BCHS) established the Building Committee in 2017 to expand, modernize and finally achieve the BCHS's objective of providing housing. The committee has intensified its efforts ever since the City of Victoria purchased the adjacent properties – at 1703 Blanshard [the former Romeo's] and 1745 Blanshard [the former Urbana Kitchens] for the development of an urban park.

BCHS was incorporated in 1991 after a resolution was approved by the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association members to "put up a Filipino Cultural and Housing Centre in Victoria." Over the next decade, our community rallied together around this shared vision and raised enough funds through donations, revenue from food sales, and a \$215,00 provincial government grant to purchase a building downtown for our first community centre.

The Bayanihan Community Centre (the Centre) opened on November 3, 2001. A short five years later, through our community's unified bayanihan spirit, hard work and dedication, a major milestone was achieved yet again when the Centre became mortgage free. The Centre continued to grow and thrive over the past two decades such that it is now the epicentre of culture and community outreach.

Fast forward to today where more than 170,000 Filipinos now reside in BC, with nearly 10,000 in the Capital Region. This population is expected to more than double by 2041. With the growing Filipino population and expanding need for programs and services we are at an exciting point in our journey.

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The creation of a provincial Filipino cultural centre has been included in the Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport Lana Popham's mandate letter from Premier David Eby as a priority. On June 7, Minister Popham visited the Centre to discuss the proposed provincial Filipino cultural centre. She was very impressed with our Centre and is now considering regional Filipino cultural centres, including ours, rather than a single provincial centre. She feels that it is important that Filipino cultural centres are developed in a way that meets community needs.

To that end, the provincial government is taking the first steps on a multi-year journey to advance this mandate and is **seeking input on a vision for the Filipino cultural centres**. For this we need your help. Please take a few minutes to complete a survey and make your voices heard. Encourage your friends, family and colleagues to ensure efforts to respond to the needs of all Filipino Canadian communities in BC. This is really important. The survey can be found at <u>Engage BC</u> and is open until December 2024.





We already have proven to be successful; we are that rare community that can boast of having its own centre. Let's build on this to create a modernized, expanded new Centre together.

As you complete the feedback section of the survey, advocate for provincial funds for the Bayanihan Community Centre in Victoria. It is the only such centre in the province that has been in existence for 23 years in the provincial capital. It is owned and operated by BCHS, it is mortgage free, and its financial management is the envy of others as it has always been based on appropriateness, accountability and transparency.

Most importantly, the Centre is supported by the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA), the Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors Association (VFCSA) and the Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregivers Association (VFCCA). It is the unity of these organizations, all represented on the BCHS board, that has impressed governments, funders and the Centre's supporters and volunteers.

Kababayan, let's do this!!!



The Honorable Lana Popham, MLA for Saanich South, and provincial Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport (centre, in black), with VFCA, BCHS and VFCCA officers at the Centre.



MLA Grace Lore (Minister of Children and Family Development] and Victoria-Swan Lake MLA Rob Fleming [Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure) with BCHS President Dominga Passmore, building committee members Elaine Abanto Wong, Ben Pires and Mike Gonzales. Other committee members are Sid Emmanuel, Josh Rubis, and Chris Lee.

TULOY KAYO SA AMIN

The Bayanihan Community Centre as a Home for All

by Clarissa Cecilia R. Mijares

The Filipino-Canadian community in Victoria has much to be proud of. To date, the **Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA)** is the only organized Filipino community in British Columbia that has its own community center.

The VFCA established the Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society (BCHS) in 1991 and ten years later, BCHS was able to acquire a physical space that came to be called the Bayanihan Community Centre.

Set in downtown Victoria, close to the bustling heart of the city, and a mere two blocks away from the oldest Chinatown in Canada, the Philippine Bayanihan Community Centre is a two-story building with spaces that can be used for a variety of functions. In 2020, the BCHS received a grant from the City of Victoria that allowed for the renovation of the Centre to better serve the Filipino-Canadian community and to help fulfill the vision and mission of the VFCA and BCHS.

Spaces for all reasons and seasons

The Centre has been a primary venue for meetings, workshops, and fundraising events. It boasts of multipurpose spaces that can cater to different needs.

The ground floor is a modular space with a skylight. Floors are laminated wood; one side of the room is lined with floor-to-ceiling mirrors. The space can be used for activities such as dance/fitness classes, meetings, small performances, and workshops. The room is equipped with a sound system, an LCD projector, and retractable black curtains.

Foldable chairs and a few foldable tables are available upon request. The space is highly accessible with automatic doors and restrooms that comply with mobility and disability requirements.

The second floor of the Philippine Bayanihan Community Centre is a podcast room that can also be used as a meeting room for up to 10 people. It is fitted with industry-grade audio and video recording equipment that makes it perfect for recording content as well as meetings of a hybrid nature.

By the podcast room is a storage space for the costumes and props used by the Sampaguita dancers, the resident dance group of the VFCA, and other productions.

It is said that the heart of every Filipino home is its kitchen. The Bayanihan Community Centre is unique in having its own commercial-grade kitchen. The commissary is compliant with local health and safety regulations. It has equipment and provisions for food production and storage and an L-shaped center island that gives ease to food preparation.

Our spaces – now yours, too

Up until recently, these spaces were used mainly only by Filipinos, their families, and friends. Not very many people know that the facilities of the Bayanihan Community Centre are available for the use of the larger community.

This was demonstrated when a Community Services Recovery Fund program of United Way Southern Vancouver Island (UWSVI) allowed BCHS to promote the center as "A Home For All." A Home For All – Open Access (AHA-OA) is a resource-sharing program that was open to interest groups located on Vancouver Island from November 2023 to June 2024.

Through the AHA-OA program, the BCHS and its affiliate organizations extended critical support to various groups by providing the physical venue for their events. With generous support from UWSVI, BCHS was able to collaborate with over thirty formal and informal organizations in Victoria, letting them use Bayanihan's spaces for free!



The African Community found a home in the Bayanihan Community Centre.

Sharing is caring

The rewards of the AHA-OA program did not go just one way. The BCHS also benefited while welcoming other groups to the Centre. These are the key learnings from our implementation of the AHA-OA as funded by United Way Southern Vancouver Island (UWSVI):

- 1. (Re) acquaintance with the community at large. The program allowed the BCHS to foster new relationships and strengthen existing ones with members of the Greater Victoria community, not limited by association with Philippine heritage. The Centre became familiar and accessible to members of a bigger community.
- 2. Improved processes related to resource access. AHA-OA pushed the BCHS to revisit its processes related to usage of the Centre's facilities. Communication was streamlined, facility turnover was made more convenient, and other services such as promotion were provided, furthering the collaboration with partner organizations.
- 3. Greater understanding of community members, programs, and activities. AHA-OA paved the way for the BCHS to get to know the different members of the Greater Victoria community, ranging from individual persons to registered civic organizations, and the projects and programs they are engaged in as well as their requirements for their various activities. The information will serve as guidance in the promotion of the Philippine Bayanihan Community Centre's facilities in the future.

The BCHS initially listed only 224 hours of venue use for the AHA-OA but we exceeded the promised number of hours due to demand. We logged over 250 hours of venue use and shared our space with 39 organizations.

As we assert the importance of the Philippine Bayanihan Community Centre in light of the City of Victoria's recent purchase of the adjacent lots, the AHA-OA helped to emphasize that the Centre is a critical resource that many, not just Filipinos, can benefit from.

The sense of *bayanihan*, of cooperation and community, transcends ethnicity and culture. We are grateful to the many institutions that have allowed us to share our spaces with others who need them. Our home is your home, too.

Tuloy po kayo sa amin!



The Centre was turned into a Free Stuff Shop by Plenty Collective, a mutual aid organization.



The Migrant Workers Centre had their Rise Level Up Leadership Course graduation rites at the Philippine Bayanihan Community Centre, Nov 2023.

Editors' Note: The Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA) was incorporated on February 10, 1969, with the vision of celebrating culture within Filipino Canadian mosaic and making a positive contribution to Canadian society. The first president of the VFCA was Marcelina Bolanos Baldauf. Marcelina is widely credited as the individual who, in shepherded 1960s. Filipinos in Victoria to form a fully and formally recognized organization. The VFCA evolved from informal gatherings in several homes and public spaces to become a vital and dynamic organization that was to make its mark in the city. In 1971 the VFCA joined the first Folkfest organized by the Intercultural Association in Centennial Square, and since then it has not stopped staging events and performances in the public sphere that showcase Philippine culture and traditions. Here is the story of the friendship between Marcelina and Charles Au Lavoie, an author who has written extensively about the Philippines. Charles notes Marcelina felt "controlling." People who knew Marcelina say she was "bossy." But perhaps it is this quality of assertiveness that enabled Marcelina to push a fledgling organization to the forefront to become the vibrant organization that it is today.

THE BLESSING OF A FRIENDSHIP

by Charles Au Lavoie

"Nowadays, I eat with my eyes." The words that begin my novel, *Legacy of a Filipina*, marked a time when my relationship with Marcelina Baldauf was drawing to a close. She was referring to how cancer had taken away even her appetite. She had already passed away when the book, loosely based on her life, was published in 2017.

I first met Marcelina at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church in Esquimalt two decades earlier and we were on speaking terms, but that was all. She was too controlling for my taste. My mother had died twenty years before; I wasn't looking for a substitute.

Then things changed unexpectedly. While in Vancouver for some medical consultation she got hospitalized. I went to visit her and was about to enter the hospital room (I had offered to bring her mail and the weekly parish bulletins), but saw a man standing at the bedside, so I waited outside. When I went in, she said a doctor had just told her she had cancer. She asked me not to tell anyone.

When she came back to Victoria several weeks later, I was soon drawn into her private life. I would go to her house to make her smoothies, combining veggies and fruits and always, a mango. I would get her prescriptions refilled, kept track of her appointments with the oncologist and other medical professionals.

She regaled me with stories of her childhood, how the family had moved around during the Japanese occupation, and how much her father had loved her mother. She became part of my life, and I, hers. At first I felt under attack and saw her as an intruder, but she wouldn't take no for an answer. Slowly I opened up and she taught me how to do so. I became her chauffeur; accompanying her to weddings, social gatherings and birthday parties. I attended a performance by the University of Philippines Madrigal Singers with her. That event was followed by photos of the artists on stage, with Marcelina holding a bouquet of flowers and me, dressed in a dark suit, seated at the centre of the group.

I was like a younger brother, a brother she said she had never had. When I mentioned that I was writing a book about her, she suggested that I go to the Philippines in January for the fiestas.

We travelled. Together we attended a wedding in New Brunswick for the daughter of a parishioner from St. Andrew's Cathedral in Victoria.

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One year she was in the Montreal area for a religious gathering, while I was vacationing northeast of Quebec City in the house I had grown up in. She asked whether she could stay there. I laughed and said my private quarters there would be too small for her. Not taken aback, she asked me to find her another place to stay. I booked a room in a small hotel in the town centre, and she met my family.

She knew the names of all my relatives and spoke with tenderness of my mother who had died long before she and I had met, and was dear to me. My great nieces who were quite young at the time loved Marcelina who wore colour-coordinated clothes and matching jewels and was curious about everything around her. She talked incessantly, going in all directions and changing conversational lanes without warning. I rented a car and drove her around. When, several years later, my godson came to Victoria, his wife asked to visit her, together with their children.

The day she shared with the oncologist her intention of going to Hawaii to visit friends, the specialist approved the trip, but only if someone went with her. So she and I went to Honolulu for Christmas and stayed at a friend's condo. We went to Saint Philomena church for the first early morning mass, the *Misa de Gallo*. She attended all nine days of the mass but I didn't. With a coffee, I sat on the balcony of the condo, writing and watching people walk their dogs and the compound staff cleaning the pool and tending to the grounds.

Later, under a morphine protocol, she could no longer answer my questions. I simply listened to her. When her condition became worse, she was hospitalized and then transferred to Mount Edwards Care Home, where staff from the Philippines treated her with a great deal of respect like the elder that she was.

This was where I went the morning after I arrived from the Philippines, in February 2015 with photos of the places I had visited, places that she had mentioned to me over the years: Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur, and Atimonan and Calauag in the province of Quezon.

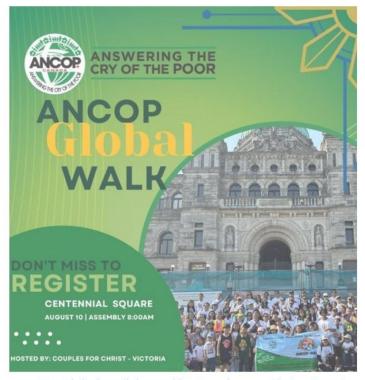
I had also visited her *alma mater*, Santo Tomas University where she graduated in 1956 and when I showed her a picture of a carabao, she smiled.

One day, years earlier, while unloading a dozen plastic bags of groceries from the trunk of her car, I had complained, "I'm a beast of burden." She giggled and said, "Carabao". The Tagalog word became my nickname.

I have teary eyes, remembering those years.



Photo of Charles and Marcelina provided by author.



ANCOP Global Walk hosted by Couples For Christ Victoria on August 10, Saturday at 8:00 am in Centennial Square, Victoria, BC. (Submitted by an ILAW reader)

CELEBRATING PHILIPPINE HERITAGE MONTH

Photos by Lani Domaloy and Sid Emmanuel
Text by Meyen Quigley

Philippine Heritage Month kicked off in style on June 1, 2024, with an Open House at the Bayanihan Community Centre, where the Filipino community hosted officials at all levels - municipal, provincial, and federal at a program and lunch. Sid Emmanuel, President of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association, welcomed the honored guests. BC's first Filipino MLA Mable Elmore presented the Heritage Month declaration to Dominga Passmore, Cristeta Araquel, and Annette Beech, presidents of the Bayanihan Community and Housing Society, the Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors' Association

Temporary Workers Organization, respectively. Elaine Abanto Wong, representing the Building Committee, made a presentation on the options regarding the Bayanihan Community Centre, whose future is under review. Jean Graciela Peñola, Clarissa Mijares, Ruby Tiburcio and Francis Matheu, representing the Bayanihan Creative Collective, presented a number integrating song, dance and spoken word. Josh Rubis and Leia Elaine Grace Unarce emceed, and volunteers led by Rosemarie Empig made sure the guests were well-nourished.

and the Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregivers and



Officers of the BCHS, VFCA, VFCSA, VFCCA, and the Bayanihan Creative Collective with guests from the federal, provincial, and municipal branches of government at an Open House on June 1, 2024.

Less than two weeks prior, the community wowed Victorians with a record-breaking 200 person strong representation in the Victoria Day Parade. The Filipino presence was bolstered by the participation of members of the University of Victoria Philippine Community (UPC), the Victoria Filipino Canadian Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Coastline Church, the Vancouver Island Cordillera Association and BCHS's own Sampaguita Dancers. Ara Davantes, Shirley Ronco Willson, and Shanley Reyes were the muses representing Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Philippine clothing, dances, and musical instruments were on proud display.















And then on June 8 and 9, Centennial Square beside City Hall was transformed into "Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao" with the launch of *Mabuhay* 2024. For two days visitors were treated to a variety of food offerings and a packed program showcasing the songs, dances, colors and costumes of the Philippines. Emcees Jessica Somera, Vincent Malazo, Marco Ogen, Polo Aquino, Finest Summer and Lani Lopez kept the program, coordinated by Jinky Apayo, going at a brisk clip.









Dances ranged from ethnic Filipino to Spanish-influenced to hip hop, zumba and Hawaiian. The music likewise ranged from Tagalog love songs, to Ilocano, and English, from hip hop to Original Pilipino Music (OPM).





There was something in *Mabuhay* 2024 for everyone - for the young, for the old, and for people of all ethnicities. Indeed, a hallmark of *Mabuhay* is its outreach to other cultural groups. Korean, Indian, and Latin American dancers performed; visitors danced along to singers Poncho from Ghana and Mama Kaffe from the Ivory Coast. African beans and rice were on offer, apart from Filipino fare, as well as French crepes and Persian kebabs.











Nonprofit groups and businesses big and small had tents and tables where they informed the public about their goods, projects and services.



Mabuhay 2024 transformed Victoria's Centennial Park to a mini Philippine exposition.



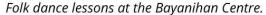
Behind the scenes, volunteers and officers of BCHS and its partner organizations made sure the food flowed to the VFCA's tables, vendors were happy, visitors were informed, and garbage was collected. The Seniors, fresh from their cruise, danced and enjoyed the show. They had served on Victoria Day, cooking for the over a hundred participants in the parade.





But wait, there's more. For the rest of June, the Filipinos conducted cooking lessons, Filipino (Tagalog) language lessons, dance lessons, and a culminating activity on June 30 of a food market, *a salu-salo* (or gathering) where the star of the show was the Philippines's traditional festival food, the *lechon*, or roast suckling pig. June was indeed a great month to be Filipino in Victoria!







Keem Herrera with Salu Salo's roast pig (lechon).



DIRECTING MABUHAY

Much of the success of *Mabuhay!* Celebrating Philippine Culture 2024 can be attributed to the work of **Melvin "Cobb" Carbonel**, Project Director. His planning skills, organization, networking, attention to detail and crisis management proved a boon for the Bayanihan Community and Housing Society (BCHS) the second year in a row. The jeepney cutout that

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was unveiled at the Victoria Day Parade on May 20 and was the main draw for people wanting souvenir photos That Mabuhay? was Cobb's idea - as were the 6 foot-high panels with information on Philippines, the **BCHS** and the VFCA, reproduced from the souvenir program.

Designating exhibition and vendor areas as Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao? That too was Cobb's idea - an idea that also governed the Filipino participation in the Victoria Day Parade, with different groups exhibiting the costumes, music and dances of the Philippines's three main regions.

These were two more creative aspects of a job that required everything from making sure the event would have the needed tables, chairs, tents; audio and video equipment; sanitation, security and medical services. Putting all these in place required coordination with the City of Victoria and other agencies; Police Departments were also involved.

There was also promotion and publicity: a logo to be designed, posters made and posted, a program put together with advertising and sponsorships. If Cobb had had his way, buses and bus shelters in Victoria would have had "Mabuhay" plastered on the sides, but the sponsors' confirmation passed the deadline for that particular ad.

And then there was the person to person contact with the dozens of people and groups who wanted to be vendors, exhibitors, or recruiters, and all who wanted to volunteer. In all, 55 groups participated, selling food or introducing services or merchandise. Twenty-four (24) posted advertisements in the program, 17 generously gave sponsorships.

Fifteen (15) signed up to be included in the *Mabuhay* food and business guides. These numbers were almost twice the number of participants for *Mabuhay* 2023.

There was no room for slacking off. A few weeks before *Mabuhay* the stage decorator begged off. Cobb scrambled, devising the glittering blue backdrop that appeared on stage on the day of.

Seven other events were happening around the city on June 8, stretching resources, delaying the flow of electricity to *Mabuhay*. Cobb had to soothe nervous vendors and exhibitors while keeping the City on fast dial Saturday morning. The Bayanihan Centre kitchen was overbooked. CFAX, Chek TV, and CTV News came knocking for interviews. Volunteers were needing tags, shirts, and food vouchers.

Through all this, Cobb was all smiles at Centennial Square. It is easy to dismiss Cobb as a fresh graduate working on a summer job.



Cobb setting up information panels at Mabuhay.

In truth, Cobb has an Electronics and Communications Engineering degree from Mapua University under his belt, as well as two Master's degrees in Applied Business Analytics and Applied Business Economics from the University of Asia and the Pacific. No wonder then that he knows a thing or two about strategic planning!!! To top it all off, he has a Business Administration diploma and Business Intelligence and Data Analytics certificate from the University of Victoria.

Cobb believes he honed his skills in organizing events when he worked for Fujitsu Ten in the Philippines, where he was union president and the head of the Corporate Planning and Management Section. He also looks back to his student council days in high school and in college.

Mabuhay! Celebrating Philippine Culture was made possible with the financial support of the City of Victoria and the BC Ferry and Marine Workers' Union, and various sponsor organizations.

Cobb's combination of his academic training, work experience, creativity and networking skills have proved to be a winning combination for BCHS. Cobb was backed by a collaborative group of volunteers and officers of all organizations under the umbrella of the BCHS. Sid Emmanuel, Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA) President was in charge of food preparation. Dominga Passmore, BCHS President, dealt with Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) permits and supervised logistics, and Laila Pires, BCHS Treasurer facilitated all transactions and supervised the volunteers. Annette Beech. Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregivers Association (VFCCA) President solicited sponsors for the event. Cristeta Araquel, Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors' Association (VFCSA) President, joined the seniors in dance and Leia Grace Elaine Unarce, VFCA's Public Relations Officer, kept the public updated on social media.

GIVING BACK: KEVIN LEE OF BCFMWU

Kevin Lee is a member of a very exclusive alumni group - the Sampaguita dancers of the 1970s, children who, along with their parents represented the Philippines in local cultural events, including the Folkfest organized by the Intercultural Association of Victoria, first launched in 1971. In one performance, he famously fell off the stage!

Kevin's mother, Patria, was a nurse from the Philippines, one of the early Filipino immigrants who settled in Victoria.

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Patria married Clifford Lee, who was Chinese, and who worked as a chef for BC Ferries. Today their son Kevin is a Third Officer on *The Spirit of BC* of BC Ferries, and the Provincial First Vice President of the **BC Ferry and Marine Workers' Union (BCFMWU)**, a union serving more than 4,800 members working in 39 vessels and 47 ports of call in the west coast of Canada.

This is his third term as Provincial First Vice President - a testament to his accomplishments and the esteem of his peers.

BCFMWU membership includes a diverse group of trades, ships' officers, commercial services drivers, workers who deliver goods transport people to communities along British Columbia's coastal highway. For several years now, the BCFMWU has been a strong and reliable partner for the activities of the Bayanihan Cultural Housing Society, the Victoria **Filipino** Canadian Association, and Victoria **Filipino** Canadian Caregivers and Temporary Workers' Association, notably the Mabuhay celebrations held Centennial Square.

Giving to the community is part of the union's DNA. They have supported the Filipino organizations' Feed the Needy program, as well as social activities like Valentine's Day. They contributed to relief efforts during natural disasters like typhoon *Haiyan* in 2013, and assisted sailors on the stranded vessel *Hanjin* in 2016.

For its own members, the BCFMWU has scholarship and training programs and support programs for members in need, and represents members vigorously in contract and benefits negotiations. They work for the protection and safety of workers, including from abusive passengers.

Kevin has also served as Secretary-Treasurer of the BCFMWU. As the union's First Vice President, Kevin is very much focused on the union's future needs, strategic planning, and effective communication. He cites the need for delicacy and care in representing the organization in negotiations that affect the lives and work conditions of union members. He credits his Filipino upbringing with teaching him the values of neighborliness, community spirit ("bayanihan") and generosity. He would like more union members take more active part in community activities.

We wish Kevin Lee well in his work with the BCFMWU, and look forward to continued collaboration with the union for the benefit of Filipino Canadians and the larger community.



Kevin Lee with friends from the Bayanihan community.

UPC'S MIKE CAPARAS AN INTERVIEW

Over 200 Filipino Canadians showed up on May 21, 2024, to join the traditional Victoria Day Parade that wended its way from Mayfair Mall to downtown Victoria. The turnout was historic not only because this was the largest Filipino-Canadian group to ever participate in the parade, but also because the Philippines contingent had representatives from several groups and together they presented to the community a diverse and yet unified presence, showcasing Philippine symbols, costumes, and dance.

One of the groups with a strong presence in the parade, and the Mabuhay festival of June 8 and 9, was the **UVic Philippine Community Club (UPC)** from the University of Victoria (UVic). First organized in 2021 by a group of international students from the Philippines, the UPC was recognized by the University of Victoria Student Society (UVSS) as a campus organization in January 2022. In December 2023, UPC members chose Mike Caparas to be Chairman of the organization. ILAW interviewed Mike recently about the UPC and about his experiences as an international student in Victoria.



Mike Caparas, with his wife Lee and son Leigh.

ILAW: Tell us about yourself, Mike, and your journey up until your arrival in Victoria.

MIKE: In December 2022, my family - my wife Lee and my son Leigh and I arrived. With the help of friends we found a place to stay. We spent that Christmas in Winnipeg with my wife's sister and her family. I began school at UVic in January 2023 after living and working in Dubai for over 15 years.

ILAW: What kind of work did you do in Dubai? What was your life there like?

Mike: I worked as Sales and Logistics coordinator for a communications technology company. My wife Lee, an architect, was also working. Our son Leigh is now 13 years old. We had a very good life there. It was very easy to get the services you need in Dubai, and affordable, from plumbing to food and other needs.

ILAW: What are some of the biggest adjustments you have had to make since you arrived?

MIKE: It is not easy to get services here, as they are expensive. Many things require a "do it yourself" approach. The first three months were challenging. It was a period of adjustment where we had to find a place to live, and had to tighten our belts. We did not have the luxuries that we enjoyed in Dubai. Our friends, especially those from Couples for Christ, were a big help. Additionally the UVic Philippine Community (UPC) provided support during the transition.

ILAW: Tell us about the UPC.

MIKE: The UVic Philippine Community (UPC) is the Filipino organization of the University of Victoria. The UPC is mostly composed of Filipino international students enrolled at the University of Victoria, their spouses, UVic employees of Filipino descent and some Filipino-Canadians. UPC's main goal is to promote Filipino culture at UVic and to have a community of shared values that we can call "our home away from home".

ILAW: What activities have you undertaken so far this year?

MIKE: The activities organized by the UPC have varied depending on the officers sworn in. For 2024, our team of UPC officers began working at the end of December 2023 to ensure a smooth transition from the previous administration. Starting from January 2024 to the present, we have welcomed two intakes of Filipino international students and their families to Victoria - one in January and another in May 2024. We organized several online and in-person events including UPC *Kumustahan* and welcome orientations,

UVic campus tours, Job-hunting webinar series, potluck parties, and a tax filing info session. We have also had an insurance webinar, a Sportsfest, a UVSS course and Clubs' day, We collaborated with MAP Entertainment for the Joey Albert/Odette Quesada concert, participated in the Victoria Day parade and in the *Mabuhay* celebrations. We also collaborated with different religious communities by hosting a graduate service blessing and Baccalaureate Mass for graduating students. Additionally, we recently concluded a Parliament tour with MLA Mable Elmore and celebrated our 3rd anniversary last April.

ILAW: What are some of the challenges that international students face when they come here?

MIKE: Finding housing is the first challenge when first arriving in Canada. Fortunately, friends can be very helpful by offering guidance and assistance. Adapting to Canadian culture is another significant adjustment, involving getting to know local facilities, understanding academic integrity, and recognizing the importance of avoiding plagiarism and upholding ethical standards in academic work. In addition to housing and cultural adjustments, challenges include finding a job, establishing work-life balance, building a social network, understanding the healthcare system, exploring opportunities, and navigating the Canadian immigration process.

ILAW: What is it that you like the most about being in Canada?

MIKE: People are generally friendly and there is law and order. Victoria is a safe and beautiful city. There are many opportunities, and the environment is ideal for raising a family.

Mike has several more months to his term as UPC President; we will doubtless be hearing more about the UPC's activities in the months to come. Canada has updated its rules and regulations governing foreign students, which may make incoming students' experience different from Mike's. Some highlights are the following:

- The Canadian government has issued a temporary two-year limit on the number of new study permits, with only 364,000 study permits to be approved for 2024. The cap for 2025 is yet to be determined and will be decided at the end of the year. This does not affect students pursuing master's or doctoral degrees. International students already studying in Canada and renewing their study permits will not be affected.
- Starting January 1, 2024, the Guaranteed Investment Certificate (GIC) requirement for international students applying for a Canadian study permit has doubled. Students now need to show they have access to at least CAD 20,635, up from CAD 10,000, to cover their living expenses, excluding tuition fees.
- Starting from January 22, 2024, along with the Letter of Acceptance (LOA) and proof of funds, obtaining an Attestation letter from the specific province or territory becomes mandatory for study permit applications.
- Students can work up to 20 hours per week until September 2024. In September, students may work off-campus up to 24 hours per week. Students remain able to work unlimited hours during breaks and summer holidays.
- Starting September 1, 2024, graduates of study programs offered by public-private partnership (PPP) institutions under curriculum licensing agreements will no longer qualify for the post graduation work permit (PGWP) upon graduation. The PGWP is an open work permit for international students completing eligible study programs

- in Canada. Previously, most students who completed Canadian study programs longer than eight months were eligible for PGWPs.
- As of March 19, 2024, the Canadian government has modified the eligibility criteria for the Spousal Open Work Permit (SOWP) program. Now, only spouses and partners of international students enrolled in master's or doctoral degree programs, or specific professional undergraduate programs like law and medicine, qualify for the permit.

Information as of July 2024. For the most updated policies please <u>consult your international student</u> <u>advisor or this Canadian government website</u>.







UPC members at a tax filing information session at the Bayanihan Centre.



UPC officers and members with MLA Mable Elmore at the Legislature.



Thank you to all who contributed to the success of **Mabuhay 2024**.

This wouldn't have been possible without you: volunteers, vendors, exhibitors, advertisers, sponsors, program participants, emcees, and all who supported Philippine Heritage Month in Victoria. Maraming salamat po!

VICTORIA PRIMARY CARE NETWORK COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS



WHAT IS A PRIMARY CARE NETWORK?

A Primary Care Network (PCN) is a geographic area where family physicians and nurse practitioners, nursing and allied health providers, and health and community organizations work together to plan and deliver primary care services.

WHAT AREA DOES THE VICTORIA PRIMARY CARE NETWORK SERVE?

PCNs operate in defined geographical boundaries. The Victoria PCN serves patients and populations across Urban Victoria including James Bay, Fairfield, Oaklands, Fernwood, downtown Victoria, Vic West, Oak Bay, Gordon Head, Shelbourne, Interurban, Tillicum, Quadra and Swan Lake.

WHO IS A PART OF THE VICTORIA PRIMARY CARE NETWORK?

There are 50 primary care clinics (also known as Patient Medical Homes) with over 140 family physician and nurse practitioner members participating in the Victoria PCN. Victoria PCN healthcare providers collaborate with patients, families, caregivers and community services to design and provide comprehensive, patient-centered, culturally informed healthcare. PCN healthcare professionals enhance patient care using a team-based approach.

JOIN THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP FOR THE VICTORIA PRIMARY CARE NETWORK (VPCN).

Primary Care Networks must include a Community Advisory Group made up of members of the public.

We are looking for members of the public to join the Community Advisory Group for the Victoria Primary Care Network (VPCN). The group will meet 4 times per year minimum (this one will probably meet about 8 - 10 times per year).

This is a volunteer position for an entirely new Advisory Group, as mandated by the B.C. Ministry of Health. We hope to begin meeting this Fall, and the first cohort will establish its structure. It is an informal group, with 2 co-chairs who also sit on the Steering Committee for the Victoria Divisions of Family Practice.

Learn more about the Victoria Primary Care
Network at <u>Victoria Primary Care Network |</u>
<u>Divisions of Family Practice (divisionsbc.ca)</u>
Applicants are asked to provide a short biography with their reasons for wishing to join the group.

Contact: Amanda Wilson, Community Engagement Lead e-mail amanda@sparkstrategicgroup.com

VFCSA TAKES A CRUISE TO ALASKA

by Cristeta Araquel



Photo of cruise ship from Wikimedia, Creative Commons, by Gillfoto - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0.

The Seniors' group departed for a 7-day cruise to Alaska on May 29, 2024. We hopped on a bus for Vancouver to board our ship at the Vancouver terminal. Some members opted to find private transportation to the terminal. The day started with pouring rain which tapered off as the day progressed.

The Zaandam was ready and waiting for us at the port. We had to go through Customs and Immigration before boarding the ship. We were then led to our assigned rooms and got ready for the voyage.

The next day, May 30, was spent mostly sailing. Passengers spent most of their time sunbathing, or doing what indoor mermaids do: swimming at the indoor pool or soaking in the tub. A Ping-Pong table was set up close by and there were merchandise displayed for ardent shoppers. Some joined the line dancing exercises, some played games such as scrabble, chess, puzzles or pursued their dreams of winning at the casino.

On May 31, we arrived in Juneau, the capital of Alaska. Juneau is an island city with a rugged terrain. For the adventurous, helicopters were available to take them to remote areas where they could experience dog sledding. For the city folks who were less inclined to ride on a sled, it was a chance for us to walk from the ship to the town core and discover what excitement Juneau had to offer.

There was a line of stores all trying to gain tourists' attention by offering free pendants, free this, free that. Most of the stores offered jewelry for sale. Longing to take a sip of a well-brewed Tim Horton's coffee, we tried to look for a coffee shop but we did not find one except one that sold coffee from a stand. We walked farther and saw a food stand that was manned by Filipinos.

They directed us to Manila Square in downtown Juneau where we saw a bronze bust of Jose Rizal. I was in awe at the presence of a memorial to such an esteemed Philippine hero finding its place in the midst of a distant American city.

Digging farther, I found out that Filipinos played an important role in the growth of Alaska.

In 1788, it is believed that a Filipino sailed on a galleon named *Iphegenia Nubiana* from Manila to Juneau. Many more like him followed. They worked in canneries or worked in mines like those of the Alaska Juneau Gold Mining Co.

Today, Filipinos are the largest Asian group in Alaska. The adventurous, persistent, hardworking Filipinos have earned their rightful place as important and valuable members of the Alaskan mosaic and are deserving of an honourable place for their national hero in a prominent park in their adopted home of Alaska, USA.

On June 1, 2024, the *Zaandam* anchored at Skagway, the "Garden City" of Alaska. In the Gold Rush of the 1890s Skagway was the place to be. Its population grew overnight from only a handful to a whopping 10,000. People heard of gold in the area and their dreams of prosperity and a good life necessitated a move to Skagway.

With the influx of mostly men, bars flourished and with them came ladies of comfort for the lonely miners. At one time, there were 80 saloons lining the streets of Skagway. Today, the Mason, one of the saloons at the time, still stands as a testament to the rough beginnings of the town and is now a museum.

We made our way to town and browsed in the small shops lining the streets. Jewelry shops all wanted to give us pendants or small trinkets in hopes of bigger sales of bling blings. We navigated successfully out of the store without any jewelry purchase then ventured out to see more of Skagway. What caught my eye was the presence of rhubarbs along the pathways, in alleys or gardens.

The preponderance of this sourish vegetable could be traced to a farmer whose land had to be expropriated. He was the main supplier of rhubarbs in the area and instead of leaving the plants to be bulldozed and buried, he took them and planted rhubarbs here and there in hopes of propagating the plant and supplying the community with this useful plant. It was a noble idea. Now residents can have rhubarb pies whenever they want to bake one.

The following day, June 2, was "scenic cruising day." We passed by Glacier Bay where one can actually witness global warming* by watching pieces of glacial ice drop to the ocean in a process called *calving*. When this happens the ice eventually melts down and drops to the ocean, resulting in a rise of the ocean level.

Meanwhile, inside the *Zaandam*, guests basked in the sun, swam in the pool, played table tennis/ chess/ scrabble or line danced while others tried their hand at the casino. Staged shows for guests preferring live entertainment and photographers everywhere documenting one's every mood; the pictures were later displayed for purchase.



Bronze bust of Jose Rizal at Manila Square, Juneau (Alaska).



Glacier Bay calving - when pieces of glacial ice drop due to global warming.

There were small shops set up for browsing. Some of them held draws to advertise their wares and one lucky member of our group won a prize, which made her day. Aware that people doing all these activities required food for energy, the ship almost always had food available. It had restaurants to cater to everyone's fancy. Pinnacle Grill was the formal restaurant requiring a reservation and dress code. Another, was the Italian restaurant Canaletto. The Dive In located near the pool served the regular American fare of hotdogs, burgers and fries.

Busiest was the buffet style Lido Market which served a good variety of food and non-alcoholic drinks. One evening, we decided to dress up and show our beautiful Philippine attires. We dined at the best restaurant on the ship, the Pinnacle Grill. We ate lobster, steak, and fish. Looking our best and dining on good food at the impressive restaurant made the night special.

Serving us were young people from different nationalities employed by the cruise ship. Workers from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and others all trying to earn and help their families at home. As Filipino Canadians understanding the economic barriers faced by people from these countries, some of us gave bigger tips than usual.

I have nothing but appreciation for the efforts of these young people.continues





The next day, we docked at Ketchikan*, a small town with a population of about 8,000. It is said to be the rainiest town in Alaska and indeed it was raining that day we docked. It is also known as the largest maker of totem poles boasting excellent carvers and artists. It is also the "salmon capital of the world."

The town was very accessible to the passengers as it was located close to the disembarkation gates. There were small shops here and there that carried the usual souvenir items (magnets, coin purses, Alaska-printed shirts, jackets, hats, etc.). However, there was a store that carried impressive life size carvings of animals such as bears and eagles and I was intrigued by the quality, workmanship and masterful execution of these art pieces.

*Southeast Alaska's Native Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian peoples have imbued **Ketchikan** with a profound and palpable legacy—despite more than two generations of acculturation that forbade tribal arts, languages, and ceremonies. Thanks to the elders of the time, who worked hard to keep the embers of their Native traditions burning, SE Alaska's Native culture is growing and thriving today.

*There are many things that each of us can do as individuals to address climate change, go to: www.un.org/en/actnow



All in all, the trip was enjoyed by most of us. For the first time tourists, it was an eye opener to the grandeur of Alaska, its wildlife, its serenity and its majestic mountains. This may be a trip of a lifetime as future tourists may not be as lucky to see or witness the same sights that we have seen. The vast expanse of ice that we saw will soon become part of the ocean. The gradual disappearance of these glaciers will impact not only Alaska but also Canada and the whole world. It was a privilege to have visited Alaska.

*Editors' notes: Cristeta Araquel is the President of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors' Association (VFCSA).



ILAW IS YOUR MAGAZINE

Do you have news, a story, a poem or an announcement that you want to share with the community?
Send it to us by email: meyenkev@yahoo.com



HEALERS OF THE HOMELANDS

by Jessica Somera

In ancient groves where spirits dwell, The *albularyo* and *babaylan* cast their spell, With roots that stretch through time and soil, To heal with wisdom, care, and toil.

Ancestral voices softly sing, In whispers through the herbs they bring, Guided by our sacred homelands, A lineage of healing hands.

In harmony with nature's flow,
They heal with what the earth bestows,
Ancestral ties, unbroken, strong,
Through healing hands, they pass along.



A FILIPINA IN THE ANDES

by Sheila Alonzo

In June 2024, I packed my bags with winter clothes and headed south to the Andes Mountains. The purpose of my trip was to interpret (Spanish-English) for a doctorate student.

I am not a language expert by profession. I learned languages in places where I lived, worked and went to school. The process of learning a language is both a humbling and powerful experience. After all, language is a manifestation of a world view.

This article endeavours to draw connections between two worlds: Tagalog-Philippines and Quechua-Peru based on my point of view and some research.





Images from the Pisac archaeological park built in mid-15th century.

Peru and Philippines - technically - share a common colonizer, Spain. The predominant religion in both countries, is Roman Catholic. Topics that I will cover in this article are:

- agricultural terraces
- warrior-chiefs
- · hybrid spiritualities

After three days of travel (with a couple of stops in Mexico), I arrived in Lima at 11:00 pm on a Friday night. I stumbled into the hotel room and found the doctorate student asleep. The next morning we embarked on our journey together.

First stop: Cuzco, a city in the Andes Mountains at 3400m above sea level. The city of Cuzco is dubbed as the navel of the universe during the Inca Empire (15th-16th centuries).

It took my body three days to acclimate to the high altitude. Breathing less oxygen, I got tired easily and found it hard to sleep at night. Drinking coca tea helped.

Our final destination was a small town called Pincheque. We stayed the first half of the trip in Pisac, the first town on the way to the Sacred Valley or Valle Sagrado. Our host, Mama Maria, is a community leader who also manages two artisanal shops. She first appeared in my life as a character in a book called Hospicing Modernity by Vanessa Machado de Oliveira. Dean of Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. Two months after reading the book, I was on a plane to visit Mama Maria in person.



Sheila Alonzo at Machu Picchu, Cuzco (Peru)

Inca Terrazas and Rice Terraces

Whenever I saw Inca terraces in the Sacred Valley, I kept seeing the Banaue rice terraces in the Philippines (carved by the Ifugao peoples 2000 years ago). We were at high altitude in winter (1-20°c) not the hot tropics where rice grow. My mind was playing tricks on me, seeing terraces from two different worlds at once.

"It is very labor-intensive and timeconsuming to farm," says Willian, our taxi driver. He pointed at the lnca terraces on the mountainside of Apu Linley (4228m alt). Neglect, improper use and maintenance of the terraces were causing erosion so the City of Cuzco banned farming them.



Quintos are three coca leaves offered to the apus or spirits.

Other Inca terraces are still used today in the Sacred Valley, but it was winter in June and I saw resting terraces where crops such as corn, potatoes and quinoa grow.

Warrior-Chiefs: Tupac Amaru II and Lapu-Lapu

On our first night in Cuzco, we stayed at the Amaru Inca Hotel at the San Blas neighbourhood, also known as the art district. Waiting at the lobby, I chatted with the receptionist who told me the story of the hotel's name - after the last ruler of the Inca Empire - Tupac Amaru II. I heard what he said but somehow 2Pac registered in my brain (i.e., Tupac Shakur, the American rapper whose mother named him after).

Tupac Amaru II, the Inca ruler, organized the first large-scale armed rebellion in the Spanish colonies to end forced labour - the m'ita system, and other oppressive practices by the Spanish authorities. Two years into the rebellion, Tupac Amaru II was captured by the Spaniards, tortured and executed publicly along with his wife, children and other followers at Plaza de Armas in a brutal display of power. His death was meant to quell further rebellion but instead, it inspired the revolt of many indigenous peoples across the Andes and beyond. The Tupac Amaru Rebellion raged across the Andes from 1780-1783.

196 years before Tupac Amaru II was born, at a beach across the salty waters of the Pacific Ocean, a datu (or warrior-chief) named Lapu-Lapu fought Spanish sailors attempting to colonize the island of Mactan in April 1521. At this battle, Lapu-Lapu vanquished Portuguese colonizer Ferdinand Magellan and his men. This was the first resistance to Spanish colonization in the history of what is now called the Philippines. I'd like to believe that what Tupac Amaru II is to Peru, Lapu-Lapu is to the Philippines both legends who fought against injustices. They inspire activists like 2Pac who said:

I'm not saying I'm gonna change the world, but I guarantee that I will spark the brain that will change the world.

Hybrid spiritualities: Indigenous beliefs, Spanish influences and nature

I mentioned earlier that I drank coca tea to overcome altitude sickness. Coca leaf is a medicinal plant that is a mild stimulant like coffee - it suppresses hunger, thirst, pain and fatigue. Coca leaf is also used in sacred ceremonies. Quintos or three coca leaves arranged as a fan are offered to the apus or spirits of the mountains, winds, and each other any time there's a chance to during the day.

Animism is the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Pachamama in Quechua is Inang Lupa in Tagalog. Both cultures have ceremonies in calling the aid of the land, making offerings. Filipinos may ask permission from their ancestors or spirits or anitos or diwata of mountains, rivers, fields by respectfully saying "tao po" before proceeding.

Even though the predominant religion is Roman Catholicism in both countries - a consequence of Spanish colonialism - there's evidence of hybrid spiritualities in religious practices today.

For example, when our Filipino ancestors accepted the faith of colonial Christianity, they saw the saints, the statues, as a continuation of their own culture. The common practice of wiping handkerchiefs on these statuesaints go back to the ancestral custom of wiping the dead (of their power) after the body was fumed as part of burial custom.

There is knowledge that can be known and described, there is knowledge that can be known but not described, and there is knowledge that cannot be known or described.

- Quechua people





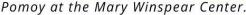


Photos provided by the author. Image of Sacred Valley map from ticketmachupicchu.com

HONORS

ILAW joins the Victoria Filipino Canadians community in applauding individuals and groups who have brought honor to the community.





Meet the rancis Matheu Artistic Producer/ Asst. Director

Francis Matheu, of the Bayanihan Creative Collective and actordirector of "Pepe," was co-producer of the Greater Victoria Shakespeare Festival's "Much Ado About Nothing." It went on stage from July 15-20, 2024. Congratulations Francis!

Marcelito Pomoy - Filipino musical artist sings in soprano and tenor, switching instantaneously with ease and precision. Abandoned by his mother at a young age and his father incarcerated, Marcelito was adopted by a police officer. He did odd jobs for some time living on the street. A victory in the Philippines Got Talent singing contest changed his life and paved the way for singing engagements - including being a guest at The Ellen DeGeneres Show! Now, he tours the world doing concerts and inspiring audiences with his story. Members of the Filipino community in Victoria cheered him on when Marcelito performed at the Mary Winspear Center in Sidney on June 15, 2024.



City 2024: Best Local Band / Musician. Congratulations!





Gabriella Rubino (age 14) - known for her early start in dance at age 5 Sampaguita with dance group, learned traditional dances like Tinikling and Batik from mentors such as Daisy Breuer and Agie Myhre. Before dance, she excelled in figure skating, winning multiple medals before transitioning to ballet at age 9.

In her second year of competitive dance, Gabby showcased her resilience by overcoming a knee injury and achieving first place in several regional competitions. Her dedication led to her selection by the Greater Victoria Performing Festival to compete in the BC Provincial

Performing Arts competition in Fort St. John, a significant milestone in her dance career.

Besides her dance and figure skating accomplishments, Gabby was featured in The Hero's Journey: Tales from Humanities 9 anthology at Pacific Christian School for her narrative titled 'The Search for Answers.' She also participated in various school activities and works towards lifeguard certification, balancing her time between swimming, modern dance, singing, and theatrical interests. Gabby's achievements and dedication reflect her remarkable talent and perseverance. Congratulations and best wishes for future successes!

FOCUS

SERVING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH FILIPINO MART

ILAW's FOCUS section highlights people and businesses who are raising the profile of Canadians Filipino in Victoria and/or represent the community in notable ways. ILAW does not endorse businesses featured here; rather, we put a spotlight on their work and services so that the community may be informed. We hope that the community can draw from lessons the the experiences of individuals and businesses we focus on, and that they inspire members of the community in their own work and goals.



At **Christine Kimayong**'s Filipino Mart on 2012 Douglas and Discovery Streets, you can find fresh fruits and vegetables, remittance services, and various and unique dry and frozen Filipino foods. There's free parking and the BC Transit bus stops just a few steps from her store. Whether you're doing your Pinoy grocery run or looking into investment opportunities in the Philippines, Christine can assist. She is an accredited marketing partner for SMDC, Robinsons, and Ayala Land. At her store her warm presence and genuine care make every visit a pleasant experience. She is approachable, quiet, and her wholesome demeanor has earned her the trust and respect of the community.

But Christine's success story didn't come without its challenges. Hailing from the province of Benguet, Philippines, Christine grew up with nine siblings. She left behind her family and career as a product representative for an insecticide company to seek new opportunities in Canada. With the support of her older sister, Andrea Johnson, who had already settled in Canada, Christine made the move, eager to build a better life.

In 1988, Christine began her journey in Canada as a live-in caregiver. Realizing the vast opportunities and options available to her, she pursued further education, attending night school to study computer and a Medical Office Assistant program. After completing both programs, Christine transitioned to a full-time medical office assistant role while continuing part-time caregiving work. She started working at Lansdowne Medical Treatment Centre and Mayfair Medical Walk-in Clinic.

In 1991, Christine returned home to marry her Prince Charming, Sorel Kimayong. A year later, Sorel joined her in Canada, and they soon started building a family together. Christine's career continued to evolve. She worked at Summit Rehabilitation Centre for a couple of years before she joined Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (now Service Canada), as an employment unit clerk and later finance clerk in 1996.

In 2000, she moved to the Canada Revenue Agency for a permanent position, initially working as a General Service clerk - cashier for tax payments, then as an Individual Services agent for personal taxes for a couple of years. Christine also worked in different departments as Collections Agent for a year.

With her children growing and Sorel enjoying a stable job with the Vancouver Island Health Authority, Christine took a long-term leave from CRA to support her family and venture into business. In 2005, she opened her first Filipino Mart on Quadra Street, across from Glad Tidings Church. The store quickly grew, leading her to relocate to a larger space on Douglas Street. In 2009, she officially resigned from CRA to focus full-time on her business.



....continues

Years of hard work and sound financial management allowed Christine to run her business independently, without needing support from the government or anyone else except her husband and children, whom she trained to help at the store. Thanks to her background with the government, Christine has become a reliable resource for her customers needing guidance in accessing government programs and services, as well as a supportive ear for Filipinos dealing with the challenges of being far from home.

Today, both of her children are adults with stable jobs. When asked how she relaxes, Christine says she enjoys gardening, taking walks, just going for a drive, reading, and travelling when she gets the chance.

When she is travelling locally or abroad, her son Kerby steps in to manage the store, allowing Christine to enjoy her well-deserved holidays. She also adds, "I still enjoy managing the store so I'll be around for as long as I can." She also wants to thank the community for their trust and support for so many years.

Christine's journey is a testament to her resilience and determination. She has consistently transformed challenges into opportunities, and her unwavering commitment and success continue to inspire those around her. Her story of perseverance and dedication not only highlights her role as a reliable fixture in the community but also positions her as a beacon of hard work and achievement.



Christine Kimayong at Filipino Mart.

Editor's Note: Filipino Mart is located at 2012 Douglas St., Victoria. The store sells frozen foods from the Philippines including fish, longganisa, tocino and hot dogs; Filipino staples like rice, monggo beans, and sardines, sauces, snacks, baking goods, sweets, and products from Vancouver stores like Goldilocks and Newtown.



FILIPINO PROVERBS

When I was younger, I moved from one job to the next very quickly. It caused concern for my grandmother. In one of our conversations, she said, "A rolling stone never gathers any moss." She meant to slow me down so that I would not miss the gifts of my current affairs. It stayed with me to this day as an anecdote and to remember her by.

Like any other, the Filipino culture is laden with beliefs and customs. Some are steeped in superstition that precludes logic. These proverbs are wisdom passed on by our elders over generations and time-tested by their rich experiences. Here are a some of them:

- "Matibay ang walis, palibhasa'y magkabigkis."
 (A broom is sturdy because its strands are tightly bound.) This proverb emphasizes strength through unity.
- "Hangga't makitid ang kumot, matutong mamaluktot." (While the blanket is short, learn how to bend.) Adaptability and contentment are key—make the most of what you have.
- "Mahirap gisingin ang nagtutulog-tulugan." (It is hard to wake up someone who is pretending to be asleep.) Some people choose not to see what's in front of them.
- "Pag may tiyaga, may nilaga." (If you persevere, you will reap the fruits of your labor.) Hard work pays off.
- "Kung may tinanim, may aanihin." (If you plant, you harvest.) Your actions today shape your future.
- "Walang naninira sa bakal kundi sariling kalawang." (Nothing destroys iron but its own corrosion.) Even strong individuals can harm themselves through their actions.
- "Pagkahaba-haba man daw ng prusisyon, sa simbahan din ang hantong." (Even though the procession is long, it will still end up in church.)
 Some things are inevitable.

- "Ang tunay na kaibigan, nakikilala sa kagipitan." (You will know who your true friends are in times of difficulty and despair)
- "And bayaning nasugatan, nagiibayo ang tapang." (a wounded soldier is oozing with courage)
- "Ang buhay ay parang gulong. Minsan nasa ibabaw ka, minsan nasa ilalim naman." Life is like a wheel. Sometimes you are above, sometimes you are below.
- "May pakpak ang balita, may tainga ang lupa."
 (News has wings, while the ground has ears.) This old Filipino proverb is a fair warning to all: Gossip travels fast. Interestingly, it also gives us insight that our Filipino ancestors may have peddled gossip long before the birth of mass media.
- "Lahat ng gubat ay may ahas." (Every jungle has a snake.) This old Filipino adage offers another nugget of wisdom about being wary of your surroundings, environment, or the people around you because they could betray you or they might not have your best interest.
- "Ang taong gipit, sa patalim kumakapit." (A
 desperate person will cling to a knife.) This is the
 Filipino proverbs' version of the Western adage,
 "Desperate times call for desperate measures."
 This simply means that people in dire situations
 may do terrible things to survive and get
 themselves out of trouble.
- "Ang sakit sa kalingkinan ay ramdan ng buong katawan." (The pain in the little finger is felt by the whole body.) This is one of the Filipino proverbs that teaches us about the importance of family or community. It means that the problem of a single member often extends and impacts the whole family.

Text by Meyen Quigley
Sources: esquiremag.ph and pinoycollection.com

A PINOY PRIMER

FINDING FILIPINO FOOD IN VICTORIA

with permission to reprint from Cinda Chavich

Victoria has a thriving Filipino community and there are great spots to enjoy a Filipino meal or shop for ingredients, from *ube* to crispy pork belly!

If you're new to Filipino cuisine, don't despair — there are several city spots to explore Filipino flavours, from simple street food to traditional family fare.

According to restaurant industry watchers, Filipino food is "the next big thing" so new restaurants and bakeries in Victoria are right on trend, along with the local grocers offering imported Filipino products and take-away specialties.

The Bayanihan Centre downtown, run by the non-profit Victoria Filipino Canadian Association, is a social and cultural hub for the Filipino community. Look for their Filipino food cart at outdoor events and occasional homestyle take-out meals, especially during Filipino Heritage Month events in June.

MODERN STREET FOOD AT ATE*A RESTAURANT

Downtown diners can take a seat at the small bar at Ate*A Restaurant, to learn about Filipino food from Jonna Deutscher and Keem Herrera, the chefs behind their ever-changing menu.

It's a modern fusion of Filipino flavours, nose-to-tail Filipino street food, with a local twist. Beyond the purple *ube* buns for sandwiches and *lumpia* burgers, there's *kinilaw*, a Filipino *ceviche* with smoked sablefish, and *Pancit Ramen*, homemade alkaline noodles with









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side stripe shrimp, summer squash and chives. They also celebrate the Filipino love of all-day dining at Ate (AH-tay), with breakfast and brunch dishes featuring *ube* pancakes and eggs with their pork patties, longganisa sausage, fried rice and atchara, the pickled green papaya served with many meals.

FAMILY FRIENDLY BENJAMIN'S CAFE

Friendly Benjamin's Café in Esquimalt is the place for authentic, all-day Filipino fare. Chef Ervin Maliwanag and his wife Lorian opened Benjamin's (named for their son) in 2023, building on a business catering to the local Filipino community and Ervin's experience as a chef in Singapore.

Now it's the largest Filipino restaurant on the island and attracts diners from as far away as the prairies, he says.

Benjamin's serves *silog* breakfasts featuring garlic rice with eggs and beef, pork or chicken, and purple *ube* pancakes, topped with their own rich purple yam jam and strings of tender coconut *macapuno*.

Don't miss their perfectly crispy Pork Lechon, served on its own or in their Kare Kare peanut curry sauce, with bok choy, green beans and eggplant, and signature dish, chopped pork or tuna sisig, with onions and spicy aioli. Chicken Adobo and Beef Kaldereta stew are other traditional faves and, as Lorian reminds me, their crispy lumpia appetizer goes with everything.

Photos by Sid Emmanuel.

To finish your meal, there are airy Brazo de Mercedes meringues, filled plain or ube-infused custard, sweet Halo-Halo and Royale dessert — a kind of OTT Filipino sundae — made with layers of purple ube ice cream, banana, jackfruit, tapioca pearls, jellies and crispy cereal. Ervin is a baker of lovely Filipino cakes, egg custard pies and leche flan, too, and you'll find their freezers filled with house made atchara, lumpia, ready to fry at home, Pinoy Lasagna, soups plus other family-style takeaway dishes.

GROCERIES, BAKERIES AND MORE

Several Filipino food stores combine groceries with take-out food, so a tour of these small shops is a great way to try some imported Filipino products and homestyle specialties.

The ABR Store downtown on Blanchard Street offers an array of groceries, from fresh fruits and vegetables to breads, frozen meats, canned goods, sweets and snack foods. You might find fresh malunggay (moringa) and taro leaves, fresh purple yam tubers (ube) or powdered ube and artificial ube extract for baking vivid purple pastries. The aisles are packed with other imports, too, whether jars of sweet purple yam jam (halaya), boxes of ube polvoron (a Filipino shortbread cookie) or the rather addictive vegetarian "chicharon" chips made from dehydrated green peas and flavoured, Filipino style, with palm vinegar.

On Douglas Street, you'll find **Casa Philippine Cuisine**, a tiny takeaway and convenience store with a menu that ranges from *Bopis* or minced beef heart and BBQ pork skewers to fried smelt with calamari, and a few tables among the grocery shelves.

Filipino Mart is further down on Douglas, another popular grocer for dry and frozen goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, and other Filipino fare. Or try *Inasal* House, a small grocery and take-out spot in Saanich, for char-grilled Chicken *Inasal* with yellow rice, Beef *Caldereta* Stew, or rice noodle *Pancit* to go.

There's a small selection of imported Filipino products at **Jempoy's Lechon**, too, but the real draw here is the tender Cebu-style pork belly, marinated, rolled with lemongrass and roasted with crispy crackling, sold by the piece or the pound to take away with traditional gravy, vinegar sauce and green papaya pickle on the side.

Tinapay Atbp bakery café is right next door, offering Spanish bread, tender *pandesal* bread rolls (some made with the addition of *ube* or cheese filling), *ensaymada* (sweet buns topped with cheese), purple egg custard pies, or nutty Sans Rival cakes.

You'll find a similar selection of Filipino pastries and desserts at **Friends & Family Bake** in Chinatown, including *kababayan* muffins, twisted *bicho* doughnuts,

ube ensaymada buns frosted with purple *ube* cream and *leche flan*.

And for a treat from the freezer, look for Keem Herrera's **Ice Keem**, a line of Filipino ice cream flavours (purple *ube*, durian, Madagascar vanilla). Find tubs at city grocers or meet Keem at summer festivals, peddling her Ice Keem cart.



Cinda Chavich is a freelance journalist, photographer and cook reporting on the tastiest, timeliest stories on the world of food. Based on the west coast of Canada, she contributes regular food, lifestyle and travel features to YAM, Douglas and EAT magazines. She was the head judge for the Best Restaurants Awards in Victoria for the YAM July/August 2024 Issue. Her work has also been published in many major newspapers and magazines including the Globe and Mail, Canadian Living and Maclean's. She is the author of seven cookbooks including the bestselling duo, The Girl Can't Cook and The Guy Can't Cook. A longtime advocate of sustainable, local cuisine and eco-tourism, Cinda travels the world to uncover new stories. Learn more about Cinda's adventure on her blog, TasteReport.com or on Twitter @TasteReporter.



STREET FOOD

by Lani Domaloy

For Filipinos going home as *balikbayans*, and for those visiting the country for the first time or simply revisiting, in the bustling streets of the Philippines where vibrant cultures converge one can find a culinary treasure trove in the form of street foods. These tasty treats not only excite your taste buds but also reveal the country's rich history and diverse influences.

The tradition of street food in the Philippines goes back centuries, intertwining indigenous flavors with colonial influences. Before the Spanish colonization in the 16th century, Filipino cuisine was already thriving with a variety of dishes made from local ingredients such as fish, rice, and tropical fruits. The Spanish introduced new culinary elements, including meats like pork and beef, as well as cooking techniques like frying and stewing. This fusion of indigenous and Spanish flavors laid the foundation for many iconic Filipino street foods.



Isaw: Grilled chicken or pork intestines skewered on bamboo sticks, marinated in a flavorful blend of spices. *Photo source: Ihaw Kamayan Taytay*



Banana / Plantain *Turon:* Ripe bananas and jackfruit wrapped in a crispy spring roll, deep-fried to perfection. *Photo source: Kawaling Pinoy*

For many Filipinos, street food is not merely a quick meal but a nostalgic reminder of childhood memories spent roaming the busy streets, sampling savory skewers and sweet treats. Philippine street food isn't just about satisfying hunger; it's deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of the nation. Street food vendors, locally known as *maglalako* play a vital role in communities, serving as purveyors of not just food but also stories and traditions.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Philippine street food is its sheer variety. From savory snacks to sweet delicacies, there's something to cater to every palate. Some popular choices include:



Taho: Silken tofu topped with sweet syrup and sago pearls, a beloved breakfast or snack item. *Photo source: NumuTV*



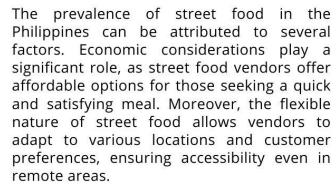
Balut: A fertilized duck embryo boiled and eaten straight from the shell, often sprinkled with salt or vinegar. *Photo source: yummy.ph*

Fish Balls: Deep-fried fish paste formed into small balls, served with a tangy vinegar-based dipping sauce. *Photo source: iamthecook.blogspot.com*



Banana Cue: *Saba* bananas caramelized in brown sugar and skewered on bamboo sticks, a delightful combination of sweet and savory flavors.

Photo source: Pinoybites.com



In the Philippines, street food isn't just about convenience; it's a culinary journey through history, culture, and flavor. From humble beginnings rooted in indigenous traditions to a thriving street food culture that continues to evolve, these roadside delights are a testament to the ingenuity and resilience of the Filipino people.



So the next time you find yourself wandering the lively streets of the Philippines, indulge in the array of savory and sweet treasures offered by its vibrant street food scene.







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Word Search - Filipino Values

I M A L A S A K I T M W J M T B F N W K A R A N G A L A N I A P G J C N K X I G U K J J Y Y M A S A G A N A V Z V S P A A S Y L C Y T Y C Z W A B W G N P A G K A K A I S A T Z Y A I O O K Q K A P A Y A P A A N H U B C P A K I K I L A H O K A P A K I K I S A M A X X G M N N H Y R O V L P P O K G A W S K A L A Y A A N W M P M E K W F L E K A T A R U N G A N A Z F A W C X I N T Y Q M O Z P R V N H I J W N C G U Y V Y W A P A H P T C J T T K Q M Z A

Pakikilahok Karangalan Malasakit Bayanihan Kapwa Pagkakaisa Kapayapaan Kalayaan Bahala na Pakikisama Katarungan Masagana Tiyaga



Image of the Kapwa card, Tarot Deck by JL Umpig submitted by an ILAW reader.



ILAW is the magazine of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA). Published at least three times a year, it is our goal to keep the Filipino Canadian community updated on what is happening in and around the community. *Ilaw* means light in Tagalog. It is in this context that the original newsletter was named after and continue to inform and shed light.