



# PAMULAAN CENTER FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' EDUCATION

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*"Pamulaan is an education institution created for indigenous peoples. It is one of a kind in the Philippines, maybe in Asia. Its main task to create culturally appropriate and relevant pathways in training and formation of the indigenous youths. It aims to produce graduates equipped with knowledge and skillful but still rooted in their own cultures. We see ourselves globally competitive but still rooted in our culture."* Pamulaan Students

Pamulaan is an indigenous Matigsalog word meaning 'seedbed'. The term is used to show the programme's commitment to root the development of students in the realities of their life and culture.<sup>1</sup> Pamulaan is a tertiary college for indigenous peoples based in Davao, Mindanao, as part of the University of South Eastern Philippines. The college opened in 2006 with indigenous students from 19 tribes from all over the Philippines, and had already graduated over 200 alumni by 2018.

Pamulaan was founded by Ben Abadiano, a sociologist who had already helped to found the Tugdaan Training Center for the Mangyan tribe in Occidental Mindoro province.<sup>2</sup> He consulted community leaders all over the Philippines. Pamulaan came about as a response to the elders' dream of an educational programme rooted in indigenous peoples lives, cultures and aspirations. It offers culturally appropriate and relevant pathways of professional training and formation for indigenous youth and leaders.<sup>3</sup>

The college offers degree programs such as

- BSc in Indigenous Peoples Education
- BA in Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development
- BA in Peace Building and Multi-Cultural Studies
- BSc in Indigenous Agriculture<sup>4</sup>
- BSs in Social Entrepreneurship

### Student Selection

The students are high school graduates. They must be nominated by their community and a local organisation and pass an entrance exam and interview. They must be from an economically disadvantaged family, and show that they are at least one quarter indigenous, as certified by their community leaders. Families are expected to make a small contribution to medication and food, while Pamulaan covers all other costs including their tuition, board and lodging.

*"We are the bearers of the dreams of our elders"* Pamulaan Student

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.usep.edu.ph/Campuses/Mintal/index.php/2012-05-10-02-46-23/administration/campus-guidance-office/2-uncategorised/67-pamulaan>

<sup>2</sup> Tugdaan, which also means seedbed, focuses on high school and livelihood training and is now run by the Mangyan themselves. A similar school is planned in Bukidnon: a secondary general high school together with the Department for Education with the 8 tribes of Bukidnon. Doyo, Ma. Ceres P. (2006) *Human Face : A college for indigenous peoples*. Web: <http://pamulaan-center.blogspot.co.uk/> Accessed March 2013.

<sup>3</sup> This section is based on interviews with Norma and Myrna from PRIME, interviews with Pamulaan students, and Doyo, op.cit

<sup>4</sup> Doyo, op.cit

## Integrated Indigenous Learning

Community elders from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao collaborated with academics and NGOs to develop the Pamulaan curriculum. The courses all emphasize leadership development and critical thinking.

*“We can be a leader anywhere, in the community, within ourselves. This is our concept of leadership ... It's ok to be globally competitive but still rooted in the culture. Here in Pamulaan we are advocates of ... sustainable development, promoters of our own cultures.” Pamulaan Students*



### Graduates of the PAMULAAN Centre of Indigenous People's Education<sup>5</sup>

Students are expected to learn their own culture first. English is taught, but only once students have mastered their own mother tongues. The course follows the university curriculum but also integrates indigenous peoples' own subjects. Where standard universities offer world literature, Pamulaan offers indigenous peoples' world literature.

Students have to follow all of the modules but they are also encouraged to take up experiential learning through extracurricular activities such as learning to manage their budgets, growing part of their own food, and sharing skills with each other. This helps them to think holistically. After two years the students receive a certificate from Pamulaan. They can then choose to go on to the four-year diploma course from the University. The diploma exams are the same for Pamulaan students as for all the other university students.

<sup>5</sup> <http://ascottystollower.tumblr.com/post/6282060785/these-kids-are-graduates-of-the-pamulaan-center-of> [this doesn't seem to be the original source but I couldn't find it... probably best to ask Pamulaan for permission.]



## Cultural Heritage Centre

The heritage centre is a museum about indigenous peoples, and it is the soul of Pamulaan. Students act as guides to non-indigenous students and other visitors to Pamulaan. Each room in the heritage centre covers the history of many of the tribes in the Philippines; the IPRA law and how it came about; artefacts used in hunting, music, weaving; traditional attires of various tribes; a herbal area with examples of natural medicines. One area shows the challenges faced by indigenous communities: mining, plantations, militarisation, and big dams. Also on display are the responses by NGOs and communities: sustainable agriculture, education, peace-building, water systems, and the preservation of ancestral domains.

## Partnerships and Funding

Pamulaan is the fruit of the partnership of various government and nongovernment agencies such as the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples, Assisi Development Foundation, Cartwheel Foundation, Hope International, the Office of Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr., and Ilawan Center for Volunteer and Leadership. When the project started it had no funding, but soon many groups contributed including Misereor and the World Bank-sponsored Panibagong Paraan. Pamulaan's link to the government-run University of South Eastern Philippines provides a certain amount of security and sustainability.<sup>6</sup> For instance the land where Pamulaan is sited belongs to the university. Pamulaan students also raise funds by selling coffee, handicrafts and museum admissions.

## Putting Learning into Practice

*Pamulaan employs a theory-reflection-and practice system wherein they attend formal sessions in the university while practical trainings and implementation are done in IP communities.<sup>7</sup>*

In this Freirian approach, students work with their 'endorser', community elders or NGO representatives, who help them apply the skills they have learnt back in their communities, during weekends, summers and after graduation. For instance, they might document their community's cultural beliefs to make them available to future generations; teach the children; or support the development of a new community enterprise. After they graduate, students commit to two years of service in their communities.

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<sup>6</sup> PAMULAAN Centre for Indigenous Peoples Education. Web: <http://pamulaan-center.blogspot.co.uk/>  
Accessed March 2013.

<sup>7</sup> ibid