

MAGAZINE FOR THE WELLINGTON FILIPINO COMMUNITY

KABAYAN

Summer 2017 • Issue No. 20

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Kabayan's Cover story



editorial

My house, my castle.

As we build our new lives away from the Philippines, one of our main concerns is finding the right house for ourselves and our family. Whether we are renting or buying a house we want a house in the right location and at the right price. They may not be mansions but our houses will always be our castles where we will be the kings or queens.

In the midst of the housing crisis in the country are the Pinoy OFWs who are building these houses. You will find their stories in this issue. We offer some advise relating to renting or flatting that could be useful to you. Have you ever considered having a homestay student live with you? Johnny Celeste shares his family's experiences with homestay students. Remember Ben? Well, he is back with another conversation with his beloved Ma about his flat.

We also feature the first Philippine Youth Ambassador of New Zealand, Ralph Zambrano. Read about his journey and experiences so far. Read the article on the report made by Dr Rebecca Townsend about the Wellington Filipino community.

There are heaps more to read in this issue so sit back and read on kabayan!

Enjoy the holidays. From the Kabayan team, Merry Christmas everyone!

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Talk to us:

How do you think we are going? How can we make it better? Any story idea you'd like to see featured in the magazine? Tell us your thoughts about the articles in this issue. Email us on kabayanmag@gmail.com. We'd love to hear from you.



Your next
social event?
Sige!

Hay! what a year!

The reception that the Filipino Community Centre has had from various groups of various backgrounds has been nothing short of amazing!

Thank you for all your support thus far - let's keep our community growing!

Visit www.bulwagan.org.nz to find out how you can help out.

VUW elects first Filipino to VUWSA Executive

By: Rj Robrigado



Geo (front row, left) and the rest of the newly elected 2018 VUWSA Executive in their first group photo following their proclamation on 13 October 2017. Photo courtesy of Ed Reilly.

On 13 October 2017, Filipino student Geo Robrigado was elected to the VUWSA Executive for Academic Year 2018 as its campaigns officer. Geo, who is doing a conjoint Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts (International Relations and Political Science), garnered 2,344 votes – the most votes received by any candidate in this election. He ran unopposed after his two original opponents dropped out of the race. Geo's fellow law student Marlon Drake will serve as president for 2018.

Geo ran on the platform of advocating and campaigning for student rights and welfare (STRAW), including advocating for issues such as mental health, sexual violence, LGBT rights, and the rising cost of education.

The VUWSA Executive is Victoria University's equivalent of a university student council. Past members of the VUWSA Executive include Labour Party MPs Andrew Little and Chris Hipkins.

Vic uni Fil Students Assoc

By: Geo Robrigado

Finally, Filipinos studying in Victoria University of Wellington now have a club to call their own!

After three years of planning, the VUW Filipino Students Association was formally launched on 18 July 2017 during Victoria University's Club Week. The club, first organised in 2014 by Geo Robrigado, Arla Fontamillas, and Bianca Benavidez, is the first-ever organisation of its kind in Victoria University and in the Greater Wellington region.

Planning stages for the club's formalisation started as early as February 2017. During the first trimester of the year, the club organisers gathered fifteen Pinoy students as per the university requirements. VUW Students Association, led by its president Rory Lenihan-Ikin helped the club organisers then.

Currently, the club is in its final stages of preparation for formal registration and recognition with the University, including the ratification of its Constitution. An eight-member executive council will lead the club in 2018.



There are currently more than 30 members and the club is still accepting memberships. Any student or alumnus of Victoria University Wellington who is of Filipino citizenship, descent, or heritage can apply for membership by emailing vuw.fsa@gmail.com.

Building from the ground up

By: Alice Lozano

Filipino builders in New Zealand are part of the millions of OFWs – known as the Overseas Filipino Workers scattered throughout the world. OFWs are Filipinos who are living abroad indefinitely and contracted to work in their respective fields as nurses, IT specialists, factory workers, teachers and most recently, builders.

This concept of OFW begun as early as the 1970s when employers from the Middle East countries began recruiting professionals and other highly skilled foreigner-workers to help them with their booming economies. This started the long-standing employment opportunities for Filipinos in countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Filipinos are recognised for their professionalism and strong work ethic and so the trend of working overseas has rapidly extended to other parts of the world like the USA, Dubai, Singapore, United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) records show there are over 10.4 million Filipinos living abroad. Over 2.2 million are OFWs. OFWs are often called modern day heroes not just because of how they contribute to the Philippine economy but because of the sacrifices they make for their families and the mark they make on the world as Filipinos.

Wherever they decide to go, most OFWs have one thing in common. They all have the desire to make a difference. Their major aim is of course to provide a better future for their families. What they probably don't realise is that they are making a difference in the world. Coming to New Zealand is no different.

The influx of Filipino migrants in New Zealand began in the 1990s. Nurses and IT specialists were dominant in the Occupational Priority list – the immigration pathway used at the time. By 2003, the policy changed to the Skilled Migrant Category. Many other skills were considered Essential Skills. Building and other construction related work had since been included to the list.

In 2011, when Christchurch was hit with a massive 7.8 earthquake, the heart of the city became unrecognisable. Many residents were displaced and businesses were severely affected. Many buildings were damaged and had to be torn down. As Cantabrians slowly got back on their feet, they demonstrated their resilience and their determination to rebuild Christchurch. This opened the gateway for many Filipino builders.

There were thousands Filipino builders contracted for the Christchurch rebuild. Six years on, you can see the result of their hard work. You can see that in every corner of the city and every building, Filipino builders have been part of that reconstruction.



But it was not only Christchurch that needed workers in the construction industry. The housing crisis and economic development throughout Aotearoa continued to attract Filipino builders to work in many different cities including Wellington. Recently we had the opportunity to mingle and speak with some of these OFWs.

We found them working at a reputable company in the construction industry, Alpha Interiors Limited. They have branches in Tauranga, Hamilton, Auckland, Rotorua, Christchurch and Wellington. They employ close to a hundred Filipino builders nationwide. It is one of the big companies involved in the Christchurch rebuild and has



Our Pinoy builders hard at work on the stage for the Filcom Centre

Kabayan had the privilege of meeting Alpha Interior's builders. With so much media attention about Filipino builders, we tried to dig deeper into their fascinating experience of coming to New Zealand. In Wellington, Alpha Interiors Limited has hired 16 Filipino builders. We spoke to some of them.



Reynaldo Arango is their spokesperson. He is a native of Bicol – a place famous for coconut dishes flavoured with lots of hot chili. He has worked in the Middle East mainly in Doha, Qatar for more than six years. Rey started working for Alpha Interiors in April 2015. He is a gypsum board installer by profession but like many other skilled workers, he is multi-skilled. For Rey, working in New Zealand is a dream come true. He never thought that he would one day come and work here. He had heard so much about New Zealand from other friends he had worked with in Qatar. They had already moved to Christchurch and they encouraged him to apply too.

He explained that working for the construction industry anywhere in the world is almost the same. The most challenging part of the job is the different standards used by different countries. *"I find that the New Zealand standard is quite strict especially with compliance in the building codes and health & safety. We do not have a problem with that because we know it is for our own good and for the good of the business."*

What he likes about his job? Rey says he is overwhelmed at how approachable their employers are something they never experienced in the Middle East. There *"we were treated simply as workers, nothing else. Here you can mingle and have a laugh with your boss. This kind of experience makes our life here in New Zealand easier."* Rey further explained that they like the pay system. *"We get paid fortnightly and it arrives on time. We do not need to worry anymore if our pay will come or not. This became a factor for OFWs to come to New Zealand."* This means that they can regularly send money home to their families.

Rey lives with four other OFWs in the same house. They worked together in the Middle East and all have the same impression of New Zealand. Manuel (Awe), Roger (Lakay), Jay (the youngest), and Herson are all doing the same line of work for Alpha Interiors Limited.

When asked about challenges about working here in New Zealand, their answers are pretty much the same. The accent and the way most Kiwis talk – they find it too fast. However, they do not regard communicating with locals as a major stumbling block. It is a challenge they have accepted and are working to overcome. The good thing about builders is if words fail them they can always use gestures at work. Besides, they can read and understand master plans very well. That matters a lot.

But it can't be all good, can it? We asked them if there is anything they think is bad about working or living here in New Zealand. So far, they are enjoying their lives and their work in New Zealand so they cannot think of anything bad. Everyone is positive and optimistic.



More hands make light work. Thanks for helping out at the Filcom Centre!

If there was anything they were sad about it was when we asked them about their families and the possibility of seeing them soon. Everyone tried to avoid the question and we sensed some homesickness. This is the reality of the life for OFWs. While the job brings so much hope for a better future, it is also a big sacrifice to be away from your family and loved ones.

But while in New Zealand they have found ways to be connected with other Filipinos. It is commendable that despite their busy schedules, the Alpha Interiors Limited builders built a platform (stage) at the Filipino Community Centre in Petone. The Filcom Centre is a hub for many Filipino migrants and workers in Wellington. Their contribution shows how strong the spirit of 'bayanihan' has remained with each one of



Finally, we asked the boys if there is any advice they can share with other OFWs intending to come to New Zealand. All they have to say is "Come prepared".

Enrico

Enrico is the father of four. He is not just working overseas to meet his family's needs but to cover the medical costs for one of his children who is undergoing chemotherapy. But his cheery disposition hides all these problems. He's a real trouper!



Ryan

Ryan is the youngest in the group. This native Cebuano worked in the Philippines for a couple of years and Japan for over three years before coming to New Zealand. He likes working here because he said the people are nice, the working conditions are fair (Ryan works for a different company).



Manuel

Manuel is in his 30s and he has been in New Zealand for a few months. He is originally from Albay but has moved to Manila. He regularly calls his wife and one-year old son to stay in touch with them and to somehow ease his homesickness. Like many OFWs he is working in New Zealand to support his family. Manuel intends to go back home after his contract because he says "masaya ang buhay doon."



Rey

Among the guys we talked to, Rey has been in New Zealand the longest. With his experience he supports the other Pinoy builders in Wellington who have come to join him. But he is also very supportive of the wider Filipino community and will readily lend a hand. Salamat Rey!



Do's and Don'ts of renting

By: Judith Balaes Salamat

I used to rent a room (flatting is the term here) and graduated to renting a house when my family lived with me here in New Zealand. With the help of a friend who's also renting a house and with some tips here and there, I was able to gather a few tips to consider when you plan to rent a room, i.e., staying with others in an apartment, a flat or a house.

These tips are obviously from the side of the tenant/flatmate, not the landowner.

We have different situations and circumstances, but those who are facing the same as ours, the following might be of help.

When renting a room or flatting with someone else:

1. Visit the room/flat before you decide to live in it. It's good to feel the ambiance (or the lack of it) when you do so.
2. Ask whether the amount to be paid each week includes any amenities: toilet rolls, kitchen soap, etc., internet, electricity, water, etc. At least, you know what to expect and what not to expect.
3. Know from them (the prospective flatmates or housemates) whether you can cook some 'comfort food'/a.k.a. smelly food like "tuyo," "dilis," etc. Most likely, flat mates or prospective house mates might not allow you to cook strangely-smelly food, if they're not used to it.
4. (Related to number 3) Know their background or culture as they might also cook extra-smelly food, the smell of which, you yourself, cannot tolerate. Or other flatmates might be smokers and you are not --- which will put you into an unfavourable adjustment or situation.
5. See whether the place is close to bus stops, to shopping centres, church, parks, and other significant areas. Prioritise a place which ticks off most, if not, all of these.

DO's

1. Visit the room/flat before you decide to live in it.
2. Be prompt with your rent payment.
3. When you are about to leave the rental property make sure to leave the place clean.
4. Be sure to check the required advanced payment

Any addition to these do's and don'ts? Share your thoughts on kabayanmag@gmail.com We'd love to hear from you.

DON'Ts

1. Plant big fruit-bearing trees when you're just planning to stay for 6 months or so.
2. Invite family members or friends to stay for one month if not within the contract. Otherwise, you need to inform your landlord.
3. Forget to treat the place as if it were your own.
4. Fail to report to the owner/landlord any damage in the house or outside.

Homestay

By: Juan Celeste



In 2002, my wife Rose and I welcomed our first homestayee -- a schoolteacher from Beijing, who came for a special course at the Teachers Training College. The experience was quite educational -- for "Heather" (her chosen English name) and, serendipitously, also for ourselves. Since then, we have hosted countless foreign students endorsed either by Victoria University or by an English language school. Some stayed with us for two weeks, others for a month or more. Two stayed with us for around a year, with home vacation breaks.

Most homestay hosts accommodate only one student at a time, but we have had a maximum of three at the same time: from teen-agers to middle-aged. They have come from China, Hongkong, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Spain (Catalonia), France, Germany, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Russia, New Caledonia and Tahiti.

More than simply providing board and lodging, we treat our homestayees like family to make them feel at home. We teach them how to go to school, show them around Wellington, and take them on road trips up the Kapiti coast or across the Rimutakas. To help them gain confidence in speaking English, we encourage conversation during dinner, emphasising that perfect grammar is not necessary. We also help them with their written homework. If they come from the same country, we request them to speak only in English even among themselves. It is rewarding to notice the improvement in most of them at the end of their stay.

Most homestayees appreciated the meals we provided, including Filipino dishes. A Korean said that she did not like carrots, but nevertheless ate the carrots that we served ("Not the same taste", she said, so we wonder how carrots in Korea taste like). Indonesian Muslims insisted on halal food. A Chinese expressed surprise at the bright orange yolks of free-range eggs (he was used to pale yellow ones). A Frenchman dipped croissants in warmed milk. Two Chinese schoolteachers spent hours making delicious dumplings from scratch. To prepare the dough, they used a tiny rolling pin which they gifted to us afterwards. A Japanese prepared chirashizushi, and Koreans cooked japchae, ddukbokgi, and bulgogi. A German made an authentic, 'to die for' black forest cake.

South Americans expectedly talked about football, except for a Colombian who was a rugby winger.

A Japanese who had studied in Gisborne knew quite a lot about NZ rugby, the All Blacks and Super Rugby players (he even had selfies with some of them).

A Mexican had us transfixed as he sublimely played classical guitar pieces. A sister and brother accompanied themselves with guitar as they introduced us to bouncy New Caledonian songs. We were mesmerised by a Chinese lady with haunting music from her erhu (a Chinese 2-stringed fiddle).

We also learned some amusing aspects of our homestayees' cultures. To find out for yourselves, ask people from different countries to imitate the sounds that common animals make (dog, cat, cow, etc.), and also to count on their fingers (you must definitely ask a Chinese).

Many former homestayees have become our friends, and keep in touch by email and Facebook. A few have come back as guests, alone or with a parent, a sibling or a friend. We now look forward to welcoming more homestayees next year.

"We learned some amusing aspects of our homestayees' cultures."

Home sweet home

By: Meia Lopez

I have lived and stayed in several houses throughout my life but I have a few favourites. I thought I'd share them with you.

The first is the house I grew up in. My parents built a bungalow back in the 70's so it had the signature jalousie windows and parquet wood floors. It had three bedrooms – one for my parents, a girls' room (which I shared with my sister) and a boys' room. We had a yard full of fruit trees and ornamental plants because my parents were keen gardeners. We grew mangoes, *atis*, bananas, *kamias*, *guyabano*, avocado, *camachile*, *aratis* and *sampaloc*. We had *santan*, *sampaguita*, *rosal*, *kampupot* (the multi-floral sampaguita) and sanggumay orchids. Kataka-taka and makahiya grew anywhere they could. We had dogs, cats, doves, quails, rabbits, turtles and fish at some stage but not all at the same time. That would have been like a zoo. My older siblings would climb the trees, walk along the concrete fence around the house and go on the roof so I did that too. Oh what joy!

The second is my lolo and lola's bahay na bato in the province. As a child I found it totally different from the house our family lived in. It was stone on the ground level and all wood on the upper level. It was quite impressive and very mysterious. Whenever our extended family visited my grandparents in the province my cousins and I would play on the wooden staircase. This was flanked by the balcon (balcony) where my lola grew succulents. *Bougainvillea* vines with their cluster of flowers draped over the *barandilya* (wooden rails). The wooden floors throughout the house were wide, long and didn't have iron nails, just wooden pegs that have been hammered into the wood. My cousins and I would watch the musiko (marching band) pass by through the open capiz windows during the town fiesta. We drank cool water from the clay banga and took *tabo showers* (we used dippers) in the *batalan*. We played habulan in my lola's garden and peeped through the windows at the silong. It was used as *bodega* (storage) for the harvested coffee, rice and corn but we weren't allowed there. We thought there was more to it though because we saw an old soldier's helmet from the war – that, to little children, was intriguing. An uncle thought there might be some buried treasure under the house. I don't think he ever found anything.

The third is the house I live in now. It is a small unit with a nice view and what I thought was a small garden. But it seems like I have been spending a lot of my time there – weeding, watering the plants and pruning the trees and shrubs. Inside the house I'm constantly trying to limit the things that go in there. It is amazing how I have accumulated so many things over the years. My brother once told me – “Don't buy any more stuff. If you really have to, put one thing in and but take one thing out.” Such sage advice especially when space is a premium.

I don't now if this will be my final house but I have grown to love this place. It is private, in a quiet location and right now, growing in value (I hope).

But just in case I change my mind, I will continue designing my dream house on The Sims®.

Bahay na bato

By: Meia Lopez

You may not have been to *Calle Crisologo* in Vigan, Ilocos Sur but you are likely to have seen it in a Filipino period movie. *Calle Crisologo's* streetscape is straight out of 19th century Philippines. The houses that line the cobblestone street called bahay na bato are over a hundred years old and there are no street lights or electric cables that will reveal its modern day existence. The clip-clopping sound of the horse-drawn calesas that ply the street complete the picture. Perfect for a location shoot.

If you look at the open windows of the houses you would almost expect a young *Maria Clara**-esque lady to be looking at you (whether you actually see a lady in costume looking at you is another story).

The houses on *Calle Crisologo* are examples of Spanish era architecture found not just in homes but also in schools, hospitals and government offices. It has evolved from the original types of houses that Spanish explorers found in the islands.

Before the Spaniards came, the inhabitants of the group of islands that would become the Philippines lived in bamboo huts that stood on stilts, elevated for maximum ventilation and protection against floods. There were several variations of these houses later called *bahay kubo*. Generally a cube (hence the word kubo), the original bahay kubo had only one room that served as the living, cooking, dining and sleeping area. The occupants of the house would sometimes keep their chickens in the silong (under the house).

During the Spanish era, western and Chinese influences brought about changes to the design of the bahay kubo. The changes made the houses stronger, more permanent and less susceptible to damage from floods or earthquakes. Tiles or tin replaced the *nipa* or *cogon* grass roof. Wooden floors and walls were used instead of bamboo floors and *sawali* (woven bamboo mats). A lower level with walls made of bricks, stone or adobe replaced the open area underneath the *kubo*. Partitions were added to create bedrooms. This mixed architecture called *arquitectura mestiza* came to be known as the *bahay na bato*.

The lower level was often used as storage, a place for the calesa or a waiting area before being asked to go up to the main living area upstairs. The floors on the upper level of the house would have long and wide wooden planks, and the windows are inlaid with capiz shells. Under the windows are the ventanillas (small windows) that also slide across for more ventilation. The ceiling often had intricate patterns carved on them. The furniture are wooden or made from rattan.

Sadly many *bahay na bato* have not also survived to this day. But if you would really like to see clusters of these buildings go to Intramuros (Manila), Vigan (Ilocos Sur) or Taal (Batangas). If you are touring the Philippines you might be lucky to see some private houses scattered throughout the country that have been turned into museums. While in Vigan, go to the Syquia mansion. This is where former Philippine President Elpidio Quirino used to live. If you are in Laguna, visit the Rizal shrine in Calamba. And if you are in Intramuros, dine in at the fancy *Ilustrado* restaurant.

Visiting a *bahay na bato* will show you not just the architecture of a bygone era but also a glimpse of the life the people in those days. Let yourself be transported back in time.

**Maria Clara is a character in Jose Rizal's novel Noli Me Tangere. She represents the young Filipino mestiza of the 19th century*

9:31 am

< Messages

Mi flat, es su flat (My flat, is your flat)

Details

humour by John Gutierrez

"Ben and his Ma" is a humorous depiction of parenting and growing up in the 21st-century Pinoy household in New Zealand.

"Ben," his "Ma," and other characters in the story series are purely depictions and the stories depicted are completely fictional.

Ma, I'm home na. Yes, I've put the rice in the fridge na so it doesn't sweat.

Today 9:10 am

Son, ur dad and I are coming over later

MOM WAIT the house isn't ready yet

Y? DID U GET DRUNK AGAIN LAST NYT?

NO MOM just because we had a party doesn't mean I got drunk

I gotta let Connor know as well

Y do u have to let Conon know?
It's ur house as well

It's called courtesy mom. He lives here too. He'd do the same.

Does Conon want pinakbet as well?

Pinakwhat?

D one with all veges

Nah I think he's good

Y, wats wrong with it?

Nothing mom, it's not really a caucasian taste yet

OH could you please bring the flan! :)

Sorry, we r outside ur house na

MOM WAIT

Wats wrong?

I'm still in my briefs

IT WOULD BE FUN LIVING IN A CAMPERVAN, WOULD IT NOT?

By Matilde Tayawa Figuracion

There is no doubt that New Zealand has some of the most beautiful and enviable scenery. Time and time again, it gets the nod of different rating bodies and international surveys, often ranked highly compared to other developed countries. When we toured the family around the country in 2009, my sister-in-law described the scenery as 'like being in heaven'. That is true. There is no visitor or local who would dispute that this country is so blessed with picturesque scenery be it the alps, the rivers, mountains, gorges, waterfalls and rolling hills. What is great about New Zealand is that you don't need to travel far to experience its beauty. You can fly to any part of the country in an hour or less. Or you could drive around the country via a caravan or a motorhome. Or you could go tramping or camping on the many family-friendly camping sites. There are many great walks to choose from. But wait, this article is not about New Zealand scenery or the different modes of travel. This article is about living in a motorhome or a caravan or perhaps in a tent. This article is about living permanently in any of these 'housing units' as your place of abode - your house, your home.

Housing affordability was one of the issues much debated on at the recently concluded national elections. It was heart wrenching to watch reports of families with young children living in cars braving the cold winter nights. I also watched a documentary on families living in tents located in the bush just outside Auckland. As a former mountaineer back in the Philippines, I know how it feels to sleep in a tent. Temporarily, it would be fun, would it not? But permanently, in the middle of New Zealand winter? That is a different story.

About two months or so ago, my husband and I did a leisure drive to the Kapiti Coast. We saw the campervans for sale so we stopped by to admire those on display. We met an older couple who were checking out the campervans too. They told us they recently sold their family home and are buying a campervan so they can travel the whole of New Zealand and park wherever their wheels will take them. I was green with envy. Not too far away, I will be thinking about retirement too. I always fancied buying a luxury campervan to travel around the country. That would be fun, would it not?

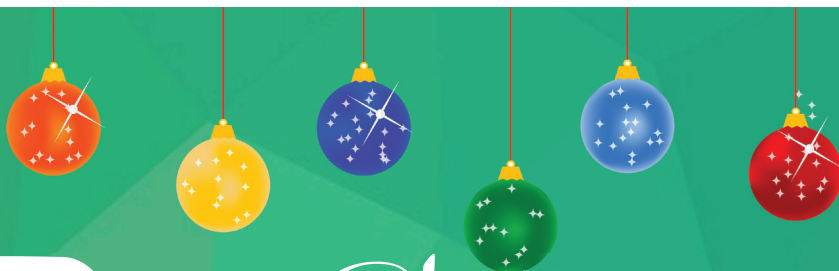
I figured selling the family home to live in a campervan is a lifestyle choice. But living in a car or pitching up a tent in a bush because there is nowhere else to sleep in is just not acceptable. It is unsafe and a real health risk. There just isn't enough protection against the elements.

There are different stories for different scenarios but one thing is for sure, living in a luxury campervan can be desired; living in a tent or even a campervan in the middle of winter, certainly not.



House Hunting





Christmas Pinoy Style

By: Judith Balares Salamat

It's that time of the year when Filipinos (fondly called 'Pinoy's') reminisce memories of Christmas back home. Reliving them may replicate only 50% of the actual events, but doing so puts warm smiles on faces of Pinoys abroad, Pinoys in New Zealand included. Where else can someone celebrate Christmas the longest time possible? When the -ber months starting in September set in, all malls, radio channels and TV stations already play Christmas songs on air and do the daily Christmas countdowns. Malls are bedecked with Christmas decors. Most houses are being decorated with Christmas tinsels, trees, and wreaths too. "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas..." is usually played, a concept of "white", snowy Christmas amidst the tropical heat in the Philippines. Quite ironic but understandable, what with the big influence of Americans in our culture. But then, December (and January/February) would be the cooler months as the Siberian breeze wafts in the air.

When the actual month of December comes, Pinoys would start the Christmas celebration on the 16th. This is the time when early-morning or pre-dawn masses are held in almost all churches. Dubbed "*Misa de gallo*" (literally translated, mass of the rooster), these dawn masses signify the welcoming, nay, anticipation of the Jesus Christ's coming (or birth). Also called *Misa de Aguinaldo* (roughly translated as Mass of gift), these masses are also held as a form of gifts to Jesus Christ's arrival. These nine-daily masses culminate on the 24th of December.

But what is Christmas without food? During these nine-day masses, Pinoys can easily buy speciality food (fondly called 'kakanin') outside the church patios. Coconut-laden, sugar-coated, and colourful rice-made products (hence the word 'kanin' in 'kakanin') and hot drinks like ginger ale may be had. Various names such as, 'puto bumbong', 'puto', 'latik', among so many other variants, attract the palate and fill the stomachs right after the mass.

On Christmas Day, as we celebrate Jesus' birthday, we spend time with our family and friends and share food as if it was a *fiesta*. This is also the time when the younger generation kiss the hands of their elders not just to show respect but to signal their Christmas present to be handed in. The young children queue up to their elders who will present them with money or gifts in fancy festive wrapping. The value of the gift or the actual money does not matter; the joy and fun of this activity do. Eating, dancing, drinking and talking from morning until the wee hours of the next day could all be part of the merriment.

Considered to be the longest Christmas celebration in the world, Filipinos celebrate this season until after the Epiphany is held (before, it was celebrated until the 6th of January the following month, but now, it has been changed to first Sunday of January based on the Catholic calendar). The New Year's celebration is another big celebration. Everyone seems to have a license to play something loud. There is a belief that the louder the noise, the more luck it brings to you and your family. At midnight, children (and adults too) would jump high so they'd become taller than they are. Of course, what is a celebration without more food, merriment and noise! All three are a perfect combination to welcome the new year.

Pinoys abroad tend to replicate the Christmas celebrations they were accustomed to back home but nothing can outshine the gastronomic smell of food available from morning, lunch, supper and dinner at the dining table, and the banter and laughter of all guests and family members back home during Christmas and New Year festivities.

I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

This is our time

By: Ralph Zambrano

As an ordinary 17 year old Filipino from St Patrick's College, Kilbirnie I never expected the opportunity and responsibility that would be presented before me.

Born and raised here in New Zealand, my parents emigrated from the Philippines in 1996. My mum Lisa is from Quezon City and my dad Roz is from Las Pinas. I am proud to be both a Kiwi and a Pinoy embracing the similarities and uniqueness of each culture which defines who I am. Growing up, my parents and wider family spoke Tagalog at home and wherever we went. This allowed me to speak and learn Tagalog from a young age. It has been a real advantage knowing how to speak the tongue of my family as it anchors me to my Filipino roots. Traveling to the Philippines often to visit my Lolo and Lola has opened my heart and mind to what being Filipino means. I've grown up with a strong understanding of why respecting and caring for elders is crucial, to be hospitable to everyone I meet as well as why it is important to be proud of my family, background and who I am.



My first meeting with Ambassador Gary at the Philippine Embassy when he offered me the position



I co-chaired the ASEAN New Zealand Youth Conference for 2017 at St Patrick's College, Kilbirnie



I delivered my maiden speech during my official introduction at Pistang Pilipino in Christchurch

My journey started with a speech. A speech about the role of nuclear weapons in today's world.

On August 6, I was invited to deliver my speech at the Wellington Hiroshima Day Memorial in front of distinguished guests and the public. Philippine Ambassador, Jesus Domingo was one of the distinguished guests in attendance and to my luck I had impressed him with my speech and was invited to privately meet with him in the Philippine Embassy. This meeting would lead to an unexpected offer from the Ambassador - to become the Philippine Embassy's very first Youth Ambassador of New Zealand.

Being appointed the very first Youth Ambassador for the Philippines by Ambassador Jesus Domingo has been a life changing experience.

It has allowed me to make a real impact to the wider society and to provide a voice for young Filipino-New Zealanders in the political and diplomatic world. The past two months have been a whirlwind. Since my appointment I have been privileged to meet and create ties with numerous political and diplomatic figures, chair and attend conferences, speak at numerous events and travel around the country to meet Filipinos with amazing stories and backgrounds.

Giving back, participating and advocating in my community and wider society have always been important to me. I believe that everyone deserves an equal and fair life. More so, I believe that the opinions and voices of young people, such as myself, need to be greatly considered and heard in the political and diplomatic world as all decisions affect our lives and our futures. I believe that youth are the future and that it is our duty to invest in them. Facilitating the development of youth

most important to me as I serve as the Youth Ambassador. I have been granted an opportunity like no other and I am committed to using my position to grant other young people similar opportunities.

A huge responsibility has been thrust upon me but I am ready and excited to represent both young Filipinos and all young people in New Zealand. For me, the hard work begins now. The future for young people is bright and I am ready to help them along their way.

This is our time.



With Ambassador Gary in matching barongs during the Miss Philippines-New Zealand beauty pageant

Asia Foundation's report about Filipinos in NZ

by Janryll F. Fernandez

A report commissioned by the Asia New Zealand Foundation about Filipinos in Wellington was launched during an event at the Foundation's Wellington offices recently.

Written by Foundation researcher Dr Rebecca Townsend, the report looks at the experiences of Filipino New Zealanders in Wellington and how these differ from the experiences of Filipino migrants in other countries. It provides a demographic profile of Filipino Kiwis compared with other Asian migrants in New Zealand and explores the challenges around building a community.



Above: Dr Rebecca Townsend (left) listens to Hutt City Multicultural Council President Anita Mansell share her organisation's efforts to promote Filipino culture and heritage during the launch event



Along with Dr Townsend, the event featured Wellington-based Filipino interior designer Flora Muriel-Nogoy and Hutt City Multi-Cultural Council President Anita Mansell who both spoke about their experiences settling into New Zealand.

The Foundation's director of research and engagement, Pip McLachlan, says the report helps build an understanding of Filipino Kiwis – the third largest Asian ethnic group in New Zealand representing around one percent of our population.

She says the report contributes towards the Foundation's mission to build New Zealanders' knowledge and understanding of the peoples and cultures of Asia.

"We know from our Perceptions of Asia research that knowledge of and experience with Asia and Asian peoples go hand in hand with more positive attitude towards Asia," says Ms McLachlan.

The Asia New Zealand Foundation is New Zealand's leading authority on Asia. It is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation, set up in 1994 to build New Zealanders' knowledge and understanding of Asia.



PINOYS IN WELLINGTON MORE SETTLED, STABLE - RESEARCH

by Janryll F. Fernandez

NOT USUAL OFWS

The report 'Making a Community: Filipinos in Wellington' recently published by the Asia New Zealand Foundation finds Pinoys living in the capital flip the usual narrative of overseas Filipino workers elsewhere in the world.

It is estimated that more than 10 million Filipinos work or live outside the Philippines, many of whom are low-skilled workers on contracts who face unsafe working conditions without the possibility of gaining residency.

Report author Dr Rebecca Townsend says the policy by which Filipinos are allowed to enter New Zealand means Pinoys tend to arrive with high skill sets and often with a job already arranged. They bring their families and raise their children here and because of this, Wellington's Filipino community is more settled and stable than is typical in other countries.



EDUCATION



According to the report, Filipinos in New Zealand are more likely than either the general Asian population or the New Zealand population to have a bachelor's degree or higher.

INCOME



In 2013, incomes of Filipinos were roughly equivalent to European New Zealanders (\$30,600 compared to \$30,900) but higher than the general Asian ethnic population.

COMMUNITY BUILDING: A CHALLENGE

The report reveals that the Filipino community in New Zealand is not as tight-knit as some other Asian ethnic groups, largely due to the great diversity of the many ethnicities and cultures of the Philippine archipelago.

Although Filipino is the country's national language, there are over 100 dialects, which means Filipinos in New Zealand do not grow up speaking the same language.



For a full copy of the report, visit asianz.org.nz

Our Lady of Fatima

By: Tiza Sison

On October 21, the Centre for Marriage and Family (CMF) organised a talk to explore the role of Mary in the history of salvation, the message of Fatima for today, and the gift of the Rosary as a powerful instrument for Peace. The talk was held from 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. at Our Lady of Fatima Church, Tawa, Wellington. It was presented by Maximilian Fuhrer who spoke about Mary by means of typology, a way of studying Scripture that was used by the apostles and Fathers of the Church



Though many would reduce Mary's role as less or equal to the saints, Mary is central to the history of salvation, since it was through her Fiat that God became man. In the Old Testament, God appeared to his people veiled but in brilliant light as in the case of Moses who saw God face to face and was transformed in appearance. In Mary's case, the King of the Universe especially chose her to carry within herself the Holy of Holies. Mary is the Tabernacle of God in whom God's light shines with the brilliance of the Son.

This image of Mary is attested by Lucia, one of the children at Fatima who described her as "a Lady dressed in white, more brilliant than the sun..." Mary had appeared to her, Francisco and Jacinta Marto six times at Cova da Iria asking them to pray and offer sacrifices for the conversion of sinners and for Peace in the world.



In her last appearance, she had promised a miracle which became known as the Miracle of the Sun seen by more than 70,000 people, including witnesses up to twenty-five miles away from the place of the apparition.

Revealing herself as the Lady of the Rosary, her plea to be reconciled to God and to pray the Rosary everyday for Peace is as relevant today as it was 100 years ago. As her children, may we follow our Mother's requests, so that we may ever be united to her Son and God's peace may reign in the world.



Photo source: i.ytimg.com

Forget about the spoon and fork, let's eat with our bare hands

By: Matilde Tayawa Figuracion

Eating with your bare hands is not something that we often do. But in a boodle fight feast, it is highly recommended. The fun is in eating with your bare hands standing around the table with food.

Boodle Fight is possibly one of the funniest terms to describe a way to eat a meal. It is a traditional kind of eating where you eat with your bare hands (kamayan) from a communal mound of rice surrounded usually with grilled meat and seafood, and steamed veggies spread on a bed of banana leaves. Usually, no utensils are allowed. Traditionally, everyone has to eat on the boodle feast table. This way of eating originated with the military in the Philippines where cadets would roll up their sleeves and dig in to eat together. They eat with their bare hands standing on the boodle feast table blindfolded and they were timed to finish the food, usually for only a few minutes. With restaurants adding their own twist, boodle feast has now evolved. But one thing remains, the food is served on a bed of banana leaves buffet-style without serving spoons.



Filipinos in New Zealand (and I'm sure Filipinos abroad) love to gather together in the lead up to Christmas Day. Food, exchange gifts and games are the order of the day. But food is usually the centre of it all. Not the morning tea-type of food that we are usually served at work. It is real food, and food galore. Our group of friends is no exception. We celebrated our annual Christmas get together before others travelled back to the Philippines to celebrate Christmas the real Pinoy style. For the first time, we had a boodle feast. While we did not do the traditional way of everyone eating around the table standing and with our bare hands, everyone enjoyed each other's company. Some of the kids tried eating with their bare hands (in gloves). Others used plates and utensils. But no matter how they ate the food, everyone enjoyed the camaraderie and friendship. Laughter filled the air. The spirit of Christmas was definitely there.

Food that is usually served in a boodle feast include grilled meat like pork BBQ, chicken, liempo; steamed vegetables like okra, eggplant and kangkong; seafood like grilled fish, squid, prawns, crabs and mussels; and salted egg with tomatoes and green mangoes.

Next time you get together with your friends and family, try the boodle feast and try eating with your bare hands. Food is yummy and eating is more fun!

SALAWIKAIN

“Kung may isinuksok,
may madudukot”



Similar to “A penny saved, a penny earned”.

A salawikain that reminds us of the value of saving for the future. It tells us of the importance of consciously putting aside surplus money so that in an emergency there will be money.

The cartoon shows a kid trying to get the money he has saved. He is thinking of what he can buy from what he had put aside.

This can also be expanded to anything that you can invest in. For example, when you look after your health you are investing in a future where you can enjoy life even as you grow older.

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**Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year
from the Kabayan
Team!**



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