

Philippine Ambassador Robles Visits the Philippine Bayanihan Community Center

10 December 2021, Victoria - Philippine Ambassador to Canada, Rodolfo D. Robles, visited the Philippine Bayanihan Community Center. He travelled from Ottawa to Vancouver on December 8th along with his wife Mrs. Nora Robles, Mr. Francisco Noel Fernandez, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Mr. Rodel Bendicio, Attaché, for a series of engagements to meet leaders of Filipino organizations. Accompanied by Consul General Andrelita Austria and Mr. Ryan Macas from the Vancouver Philippine Consulate, Ambassador Robles, his wife, the DCM, and Attaché made a day trip to Victoria to pay a courtesy visit to Lt. Governor Austin and to visit the Bayanihan Community Centre.

An intimate luncheon event for the Ambassador and company in compliance with Covid-19 safety protocols was served in the newly renovated Philippine Bayanihan Community Center. The guests were treated to some of the more popular Filipino delicacies - *kare-kare*, *dinuguan*, *lumpia shanghai*, *chicken relyeno*, *pancit bihon*, *ginataang gulay*, steamed rice and *pan de sal*. For dessert, everybody enjoyed *puto* and *ube* cake, specially made for the ambassador. The *salabat* (ginger tea) was also a hit among the guests.

After lunch and prior to heading out to meet Lt. Governor Austin, the Ambassador and Consul General graciously gave their time to offer the certificates of appreciation to the retiring long-time volunteers, Leonor Santos and Norma Duy, who have contributed so much to the growth and development of the Bayanihan Community Center as custodian and rental person, respectively. Citations were read by the Bayanihan Cultural Housing and Society President, Dominga Passmore.

Other members of the Filipino community to welcome the visitors were Agnes Myrhe, president of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association; Annette Beech, president of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregivers Association; former honorary consul of Edmonton now residing in Victoria, Esmeralda Agbulos and her husband, Virgilio; Mike Gonzalez, Meyen Quigley, Sid Emmanuel, Nathi Orticio, Jean Penola and Laila Pires.

Both the Ambassador and Consul General expressed their admiration for all the board members and volunteers who are the pillars of the Bayanihan Community Centre and its affiliate associations. Consul General Austria said "You are a model that other Filipino associations across BC or Canada can aspire to achieve." In his brief message, Ambassador Robles also acknowledged the great work of the board members and volunteers in acquiring and establishing a community center. He emphasized that the Bayanihan Community Center is truly an example of what a center should be – "a gathering place for people who are united".

He further shared that one of his priority agenda is establishing a principal advocacy, the Credentials Recognition in Canada (CRC) Project for Filipinos knowing that Filipino professionals who migrate to Canada face difficulties in working in their profession. He is aware and understands that there is no easy fix because there is no standard accreditation across Canada. In order to achieve this mission, he said that he has to work and engage with every leader of each province and Territory. With a clear path towards accreditation, Filipinos can pursue their profession on the same footing as their Canadian counterparts.

The Ambassador ended his message by wishing everyone "*a Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon.*"