

An Indigenous Coordinator shares his experience

Tenurial security over our ancestral domain is important for us Manide. For the longest time, we have been dispossessed of our lands, moving from one place to another, living on other people's property in the lowlands. We never felt the security or freedom inherent to indigenous peoples because we didn't have land of our own. Land is our life, but because of our current situation, our traditional practices and way of life as Manide are limited and dependent on whoever owns the land we currently occupy.

Through our partnership with Sentrong Pagpapalakas ng Negritong Kultura at Kalikasan (SPNKK) and Voice, I have been given the opportunity to share the situation we face in relation to our ancestral domain.

A whole decade has passed, but our application for the legal recognition of ownership of our ancestral domain is still in limbo. In the beginning, as a young organizer I didn't know where to begin, I didn't know how I could speak for my community. But SPNKK organized a sharing session with other Aeta leaders in Capas, Tarlac. The leaders shared the strategies, approaches, and processes they used in completing the requirements for their ancestral domain claim, which are compiled in a "claimbook." To tell you the truth, I had no idea what a claimbook was and its importance in processing an ancestral domain claim. But through the sharing with other Negrito leaders, I gained a sense of direction and the drive to push for our rights to our ancestral domain.

Through the Voice project, the (land) issue that had been dormant for almost two decades has been revived. Finally, the process is moving and things are much clearer now.

Despite the challenges implementing the project, especially during the pandemic, the community is thankful for the continued guidance it has received from its support groups. We are very grateful for the support, which enables us to continue the process and advance the struggle to claim our rights to our ancestral domain.



RICKY NOBLESALA

Manide-Local Mobilizer

Boses at Ugnayan ng Lapihan at
Wastong Adhikain ng mga Katutubo
(BULWAK)