



Chamorro Cultural Values Workshop

Summary Workshop Report



Saturday, March 12, 2016
Guam Community College
Mangilao, Guam

Written and presented by

Guampedia.com

Sponsored by:





12TH FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS

"What we own, what we have, what we share – United Voice of the Pacific"

'Håfa Igo-ta, Håfa Guinafå-ta, Håfa Ta Påtte – Dinaniña' Sunidu Siha Giya Pasifiku"

GUAM 2016

Summary Workshop Report

**Chamorro Cultural Values Workshop
Part 1**

**Saturday, March 12, 2016
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
The Guam Community College
Multi-Purpose Room
Mangilao, Guam**

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Welcome	2
Presentation: Chamorro Cultural Values	3
1. The Stress of Representing Guam	4
2. Attitudes	6
Break	7
Presentation Continued	8
3. Cultural Taboos	9
4. Stereotyping	10
5. Appropriate Dress	10
6. Divisions Among Us	11
7. Loss of Sense	13
Closing	15

Introduction

A four-hour workshop on Chamorro cultural values was held on 12 March 2016 at the Guam Community College Multi-Purpose Room, located in Mangilao. Participants from the local arts community of Guam attended the workshop, which was facilitated by Pale' Eric Forbes, OFM Cap. Targeted specifically for Guam's 12th Festival of the Pacific Arts (FestPac) delegation, this workshop was designed to be repeated on different days to eventually accommodate all the hundreds of delegates representing Guam. This workshop is sixth of a series of workshops organized by the Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency (CAHA) since 2013 in preparation for the 2016 FestPac, which Guam is hosting.

The goal of the Chamorro Cultural Values Workshop was to provide information to the Guam delegates about the various cultural values that are important in Chamorro culture. Workshop organizers believed that as Guam welcomes delegates from 27 island nations and territories from across the Pacific region to participate in the two-week long arts festival, it is imperative that Guam's representatives conduct themselves appropriately and with cultural sensitivity and respect towards the other delegations. Through discussion and skits, the workshop was also designed to help delegates consider the many challenges, potential issues and problems that may arise from such close interaction and apparent (and perceived) cultural differences. Delegates who have participated in previous FestPacs were also able to provide perspectives and possible approaches for dealing with any situation that may arise, and to promote cultural understanding by falling back on the core Chamorro values that emphasize respect, cooperation and treating others with kindness, generosity and dignity.

Participants: About 150 FestPac delegates.

Facilitator: Pale' Eric Forbes, OFM Cap.

Hosted by: Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency (CAHA), a division of the Department of Chamorro Affairs and the Guam Visitors Bureau.

Workshop Summary Report: Guampedia Foundation, Inc.

Welcome

Workshop facilitator **Pale' Eric Forbes, OFM Cap.**, a Chamorro priest, historian and scholar, began the workshop session with a group recitation of the Inifresi pledge. Forbes asked the audience to remember the name of Bernadita Dungca, author of the Inifresi (who recently passed away).

Forbes then explained his role as facilitator, emphasizing that FestPac will be a rewarding and exciting experience, perhaps even a life-changing experience. Delegates can expect to learn a lot as people from 27 island nations and communities gather for the festival. The differences participants will find will both fascinate and challenge them to see themselves and the world around them in a different way.

Forbes pointed out that although he himself has never been to a FestPac celebration, he does have experiences of traveling around the world and being both fascinated and challenged by different people. He, therefore, would rely on the insights and wisdom provided by the “veterans” of FestPac, people who have been to one or more over the years, to make this workshop successful.

Presentation: Chamorro Cultural Values

Forbes stated as the goal of the day to increase the potential for a positive experience. Positive, in some cases, is an understatement. There are all kinds of challenges—like a rose one wants, but to get to the rose, you have to get past the thorns. He stated, “Becoming an expert in handling the thorns make you all the wiser and more capable.”

Forbes also encouraged people to think of ways to “handle the thorns well,” and then look to Chamorro cultural values because the Chamorro people throughout history have faced all kinds of challenges. He stated, “Let’s learn from the wisdom of our *manaina*.” He then pointed to an image of Tan Elena Benavente, a master weaver, as one of those *manaina*. In fact, she was the last Chamorro lady he knew to habitually wear the full *mestiza* dress. Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency (CAHA) Board Chairperson Monica Guzman added that Benavente was one of the first participants in one of the first FestPacs that took place in the 1970s. She was, in fact, the lone representative from Guam to attend the festival. Benavente passed away in the early 2000s.

Forbes listed out the Chamorro values that would be discussed in the workshop. Posters of the values were displayed on both sides of the multi-purpose room. Participants were asked to volunteer and share their understanding of these terms. The terms are derived from the list of Chamorro values provided by the Guam Department of Education. They are:

<i>Akseptasion</i>	<i>Inafa’maolek</i>	<i>Mana’ayuda</i>
<i>Mina’tatnga</i>	<i>Inagofli’e</i>	<i>Gineftao</i>
<i>Maolek Kotdura</i>	<i>Minagâhet</i>	<i>Minesngon</i>
<i>Respetu</i>	<i>Responsapbilidât</i>	<i>Hulat Maisa</i>

Some of the responses are below:

Akseptasion: willingness to accept and understand qualities in others.

Inafa’maolek: requires more than one person—getting along together, sharing, to be at one with having the same mission and goals; also, to be able to show ways of doing good so that others can see the good reflected from you. *Inafa’maolek* is also compassion, caring and trying to understand how others feel, and to act on those feelings of care and concern. Forbes pointed out the original meaning is for reconciliation—two warring parties make peace; for example, the out-of-court mediation organization *Inafa’Maolek*, and also, in the cathedral before the 1980s, the confessional had a sign over the door, “*kuatton inafa’maolek*,” meaning, the reconciliation room.

Mana’ayuda: to assist, to help. Forbes pointed out in this workshop, the participants are helping him. *Mana’ayuda* also means cooperation, working willingly with each other for a common goal.

Mina’tatnga: courage; to stand strong for beliefs and do what is right even when others disagree.

Inagofli’e: friendship; watching out for each other, “having each other’s back.” Forbes explained he loves the word *gofli’e*, because while we usually think of the word *guaiya* for love, *gofli’e* means to watch or look intently—he joked, “...to be so in love with someone you cannot help but stare at them!”

Gineftao: to be giving, to give more, or be generous.

Maolek kotdura: having good judgement, to make wise choices on what you know is right.

Minagâhet: honesty; to trust each other, be sincere, truthful, loyal and trustworthy in all you do or say.

Minesngon: perseverance; to keep working hard to reach goals even when it gets difficult.

Respetu: to show respect to others, admiration and honor.

Responsibilidât: responsibility; to always be someone others can depend on.

Hulat maisa: to conquer oneself; to have self-control; work hard to control your thoughts, to watch one's own behavior.

Forbes emphasized we need to keep these values in mind when talking about the real challenges of getting some 3000 delegates from 27 island nations together for two weeks.

Forbes then reiterated he would like to hear from the delegates themselves, particularly the first timers, people who have never been to FestPac before: "What are your expectations? What do you envision your experience to be?" A participant volunteered that he expects it to be like the "Olympics of Cultural Values"—not as a competition, but rather, to show what each community has, and the pride for their nations. Another participant explained that as an older person, he is looking forward to learning from the other islanders, how do they do things, what are their thoughts and philosophies and experiences, whether their experiences and philosophies about life are like his (as he expects they probably will be).

Forbes then wanted to ask the others who have been to FestPac, based on their experiences, what was the best thing of all the festivals they have attended. A participant replied, having been to eight festivals herself, it was realizing that she was not as different from everyone else, but yet, she still had something that was only hers and nobody else's. Another participant stated he enjoyed meeting different peoples and finding out how different and how similar we all are, sharing and exchanging life and cultural experiences, and learning more about the Pacific.

Forbes then asserted that the participants are headed for a great experience but not without bumps, which they should educate themselves about and prepare to handle well.

These "**bumps**" came from discussions from people who have experienced FestPac.

1. The Stress of Representing Guam

With an image in the background of Joe Taimanglo, a mixed martial arts fighter, wearing a flag as he represents Guam, Forbes explained this is a stress factor because "people will be observing you, and for better or worse, what you do during FestPac reflects on the whole island delegation: Are you friendly, welcoming, respectful, helpful?"

Forbes also pointed out that people will ask questions of you as a host, including where things are, where to go, and how to get there, knowing you are a Guam delegate. They will expect you to know the answers, or that you can at least direct them to someone who can help.

The stress of representing Guam is also because you are carrying your fellow delegates' burden of representation—perhaps you are acting well but maybe someone in your group is not, and some of their bad behavior or comments are seen and heard by other delegations. This leads you to have to make excuses for one of your own, or apologizing for them or being embarrassed by them. Their behavior casts a shadow—good or bad—on you. As an example, Forbes offered that, at the friary, there was a landscaping volunteer who had put a lot of work in landscaping and maintaining the yard. His work was ruined, though, by one of the friars who had not asked for permission or any opinion about altering the man's work. The volunteer was upset by the friar's action and stopped coming to the friary. Forbes became aware

of what had happened, and when he saw the volunteer, he had to do some kind of “damage control,” to help appease the situation and the hurt feelings.

Another stress about representing Guam is that people are curious about the island. People will ask questions about Guam, the island, culture and language. Some Guam delegates, however, will be stuck and unable to provide an answer or valid information. Forbes suggested that when you cannot answer the question, do not leave without providing a response—admit you cannot answer the question, or you don’t know the answer, and instead, offer that you will try to find out or find someone who can answer the question and get back to the questioner. This will help you continue the conversation.

A participant shared that, as a delegate, one has to be on their best behavior. As an example, she said that people need to be mindful of the curfew imposed on delegates because it is important to rest. It does not look good if the participants are yawning during performances or demonstrations. She stated it is also stressful when you are doing your best to rest up, but others in your delegation are partying. As much as one might want to go out, too, delegates have a duty as representatives, to put their best foot forward and to be responsible for their behavior.

Forbes added that this participant brought up something not directly related to representing Guam, but it is a stress factor because of the interaction people, or humans in general, have with each other. He was referring to the fact that delegates from different islands “sometimes fall in love.” He joked that people may engage in behaviors during this carousing and curfew breaking which may lead to other “issues.” Fortunately, the leaders [among the different disciplines] will help to keep the delegates in-line.

A younger participant stated that their “damage control” were the values of *minagãhet* and *geftao*. During previous FestPacs, he had attended as a young person, it was pointed out to him that the young delegates do not know “how to close their mouths,” meaning, they do not know the proper way to act, especially when encountering delegates who may be dressed or appear in a way that is unusual or weird [to people from Guam]. For example, seeing women walking around or performing without bras, some young delegates may start whistling and yelling at them. Or they may laugh at some of the other delegations for whatever reason because they are different. They fail to remember that sometimes their comments may be understood by these other delegates. In fact, he pointed out, many of the Chamorro delegates do not speak fluent Chamorro so they make their comments in English which can be understood by other visiting delegates, even though English is not their first language. The participant mentioned, though, a lot of the older delegates were able to control the younger ones with their facial expressions and stern looks. So, he suggested, for the older delegates they should “practice ‘the look’ especially because our language [skill] is not strong. The younger ones, too, need to remember they are representing Guam. It does not matter if they are young.” The participant then noted his best experience in FestPac was toward the end of the whole festival as he was able to see that all the islands seemed to have the same values—they may not understand each others’ languages, but they share similar customs. He closed, “As different as we are, we also the same in that sense,” and that understanding will “fill your heart—unifies us that way.”

Forbes added that just because the Guam delegates are speaking English, they must not think the French delegates do not understand what they are saying. In fact, about 25% of the participants will be French-speaking, from French Polynesia, New Caledonia, etc., but many actually may understand your English, and they may also know your facial expressions. He reminded them of the value *hulat maisa*: watch yourself, watch your speech [because people will be watching you].

Forbes reiterated, if you follow our cultural values and study them well, they will help you deal with the challenge of this burden.

2. Attitudes

Attitude is everything. Forbes explained, “You can be the smartest or brightest, you can be whatever, but if you have a bad attitude, no one will want to be with you.” For Forbes, attitudes are either wall-building or bridge-building. They either invite people in or chase them away. For example, when Forbes travels off-island and another priest takes over, there might be someone who will complain about the attitude of the priest at mass and attendance will go down. The priest may be smart but because of his attitude, he is “not bringing in the sheep.”

Forbes repeated, attitude is everything. Some of the “wall-building attitudes,” could be a sense of superiority, coldness or indifference towards others. People respond to that: “love me or hate me, but just don’t ignore me.” These are times for us to reflect on ourselves, to look at the person in the mirror, because sometimes our negative attitudes are masking our insecurities. Forbes pointed out that it is okay to have insecurities. But we should embrace them, name them, acknowledge and deal with them. Forbes provided the example of his own insecurities about facilitating the workshop for 150 delegates when he himself has never been to FestPac, so he had to come up with a strategy to overcome that attitude.

He pointed out that perhaps negative attitudes that build walls come from negative past experiences. It is only normal that once our hearts have been stabbed, we would want to protect ourselves. But by building that wall we invite more attacks. There is usually a better way to handle this situation. Another reason may arise from our natural tendency as human beings to fear the unknown—to stay away, fear of the new, untried and strange, and so we build walls. Forbes said he found that out as a new priest in Saipan in 1990, where there were older Chamorros who did not speak English and he himself was not very good at speaking Chamorro. But he embraced his insecurity and dealt with it. In his first Sunday mass, he tried to apologize about the way he spoke Chamorro, but found that with every mistake the parishioners would try to help correct him, and he accepted their help. He reiterated, attitude makes all the difference in the world.

A participant shared that, a lot of times, one may not realize they may be insulting someone, for example, using particular gestures. For her, one of the most commonly misunderstood gestures was pointing. With Asian tourists on Guam, one should not point—use an open palm instead. She added, while living in Europe and having dinner one night, the waiter asked how the food was. She was going to compliment the food by giving the “all right” symbol, but found that that particular gesture means something entirely different in Europe. So she advised the audience to be very careful, because while you may not intentionally have an attitude issue, you might come across like you do have one.

Forbes gave another example of how he was once at a store, a lady he knew got mad at him for not acknowledging her. What the woman did not know was that Forbes was not trying to ignore her, but she was not looking at him when he looked to her. It was when he turned away, that she noticed him and thought he was ignoring her. They had missed each other. She had become upset with him over this perceived snub. But when Forbes saw her again, he was compelled to apologize to her even when he knew he did not do anything wrong because he believed it might help make things right between them. And he found that his apology was enough to make her happy. Forbes repeated, attitude is everything. But, he pointed out, sometimes he does have a lot on his mind and because of that, sometimes people misunderstand his moods.

Forbes said this example demonstrates some Chamorro values: *respetu*; *minagâhet*—to be honest about it. He had apologized and said sorry; *akseptasion*. In addition, because the lady had a minor grudge against him, they shared the value of *inafa’maolek* and made things right between them. Likewise, he said, it takes a little *minatatnga* to face someone who is upset with us, and encouraged the group to continue to learn from the wisdom of our elders.

A short skit dramatizing the importance of attitudes was presented by three volunteers. It also demonstrated the problems with stereotyping other cultures, as well as watching one's words because although others had not intended to hear them, they may still understand their meaning.

After the skit, a participant commented about her experience attending the festival in Samoa in 1996 as a young delegate. The conditions, especially the shower situation, were not ideal—the location of the shower room was far enough you got dirty again walking back after washing. People complained about having their toiletries and other things taken by others. There was also the shock of people using the shower area as a toilet, or not keeping their shared spaces clean. She warned that these kinds of things will cause people to get mad and show a bad attitude. But delegates should learn how to adapt. She expressed, being able to adapt makes one stronger.

To this, Forbes added that “Attitude is everything and perception is everything.” The festival situation may challenge people's comfort zones, but they should remember, perception is everything. He reminded them, no one is asking them to endure these conditions forever—only for two weeks.

A participant who has been to FestPac several times pointed out that the delegates coming to Guam are probably going to be exposed to “more concrete” than they have in their own nation [i.e., exposed to more modern conditions and more development]. There will be differences and inconveniences for everyone, but, she added, Guam's delegates can choose to either be “part of the problem or part of the solution.” For her, she found she needed to consider more the needs of the festival over what she wanted or what was inconvenient for her. Despite the inconveniences, she always sees FestPac as a way to travel to the other nations for two weeks. She encouraged the audience to come to the festival with a good attitude, practice these Chamorro values and hopefully gain something from the values the other delegates will share with them. She pointed out that it is important to remember that many of the other delegates competed in their home nations to have a place at FestPac, to represent their communities—that is why FestPac is referred to as the “Olympics of Pacific Arts.” Each nation sends their best of the best to represent them. It is an honor to be able to represent your nation, and Guam's delegates should treat these delegates honorably.

The participant further added that the festival is a “gathering of survivalship.” Whether we are from here or elsewhere, as indigenous people we have dealt with sharing or defending or [accepting something we may not have wanted]. For herself, she has had to explain Chamorro experiences of balancing western or American influences, laws, lifestyles and amenities with indigenous Chamorro influences and lifestyles, mindful of the suffering that indigenous people in Guam and elsewhere have had to suffer historically. That is why the festival is a gathering of “survivalship.” She encouraged the audience to consider the two weeks at FestPac as a very cheap way to go to 27 other nations and meet as many people as possible, to see how simply they get to live their lives, and feel fortunate for what we have.

Forbes agreed, stating that what we have in Guam is a blessing, but also pointing out that it was not too long ago that Guam's people were living in wood and tin houses that were also vulnerable. And we survived. Another example of Chamorro attitude: he recounted how back in 1990 after a couple of typhoons there was a lot of damage to the island, especially in Umatac. But he laughed when he saw the destruction, especially at the church. Attitude was everything because he knew that the people of Umatac would simply figure out what needed to be done to fix the damage. That was how things were when he was growing up—when hardship struck, we did not fall apart.

Break

Presentation Continued

After the break, Forbes opened a discussion to hopefully guide the delegates about how to understand and interact with the different cultures that will be present during FestPac. Showing a slide with an image of an iceberg, he pointed out that only a small portion of the iceberg is visible on the surface of the water. When we meet the other delegations, we will see some of the apparent differences, such as food, languages, music, performing and visual arts, certain customs, flags, or games—and we only get to know them at that level. However, the arts express what is deep inside one's psyche or soul that cannot be seen directly—that is at the lower, much larger portion of the iceberg. These are things like the nature of friendship, values, notions of beauty, religious beliefs, body language, learning styles, norms, rules and expectations, gender roles and leadership styles. All the things above are trying to express what is beneath the water.

He gave as an example, the act and meaning of a smile. Some may have the mistaken notion that certain people from a particular country are not friendly because they do not smile openly. If we think of what is our experience [in Guam or in the US] of a smile, we see that everywhere we go, generally people smile. We associate smiling with friendship. But in other countries where they do not automatically smile, it does not mean that they are not open to establishing or at least exploring the possibility of being friends. The nature of friendship, body language, values, expectations, etc.—these are at the deep level that we do not always think about.

Forbes added, we do not always think about how we are supposed to behave today because it is almost automatic, conditioned by the day before and the years before that, etc. When he walks around in public, he is conscious of what and who he is and how he looks because on Guam, it matters. But if he travels to the States, for example, he does not care as much because he is not likely to see anyone out there again. In Guam if you give someone a dirty look, even unintentionally, "You never know," he joked, "they could be the teller during your next visit to the bank from whom you need to ask a favor."

Forbes continued, in Guam, we are conditioned to behave a certain way because those deeper things matter and they get expressed in the things above. He encouraged the audience as they come in contact with these other cultures, to not "just stay on the upper level," and try to remember the deeper things that are going on that are not always or immediately visible. Or if you ask them questions or for explanations, remember that sometimes words are hard to come by, so be patient and always leave that door open for communication.

Forbes then offered "10 Tips for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication," from The Bridge Management Development, Inc.:

- **Be honest.** "I'm sorry, I didn't understand you." "Can you help me understand you."
- **Be flexible.** Put your judgments on hold.
- **Listen actively.**
- **Respect differences.**
- **Ask questions.** For example, Forbes said, if one has met another person for the first time, and you are only 10 seconds into the conversation, and you're already tempted to ask personal or deeper questions—be careful how you ask them. In some cultures it might be fine to ask odd or private questions, but in his experience, it helps sometimes to ask first if you can ask more specific questions: "Is it ok if I ask you about this or that?"
- **Build self-awareness.** Be aware of your own thought processes, judgements, biases, fears, etc.

- **Avoid stereotyping.**
- **Distinguish perspectives.** Appreciate that another might be looking at the same thing in a different way.
- **Think twice**—especially before you open your mouth—choose your words as prudently as possible.
- **Recognize the complexity.** Forbes noted that one can go through all these steps and the result still may be awkward and intense. That is just the complexity of life; sometimes we just need to accept that.

Another “bump:”

3. Cultural Taboos

With 27 island nations coming to FestPac, there may be many different cultural taboos that delegates can make themselves aware of or learn about which they can look up on the Internet. But, Forbes also gave some broad examples of taboos that delegates might encounter:

- **Touch:** Sometimes, you cannot touch certain people or certain body parts—even patting a child on the head, depending on the culture, may be frowned upon because it is taboo.
- **Body exposure:** In some island cultures, a woman’s breasts may be fine to show uncovered, but bare thighs are not.
- **Personal space:** Some cultures respect a certain amount of personal space between people, while others may get so close they are in your face.
- **Taboos regarding food:** Who eats first (for example, should you finish everything or leave a little food leftover on the plate, that could be an insult in one culture or what is expected of you in another culture).
- **Male/female roles:** Forbes gave as an example a professor from the US mainland at the University of Guam who shared their experience of great shock when five minutes into a class they were teaching, a student from the outer islands came through the door, got down on her hands and knees, and crawled all the way to her chair across the room. After class the professor asked her about it, and the student replied that her uncle was sitting in the room and that she, therefore, had to be in a physically lower position than her male relative. A similar example occurred when Forbes was in Saipan, where 20% of the population is Carolinian (Refaluwasch). While attending a party, he noticed a woman continually sitting down, then standing up, over and over, but was not going anywhere. Confused, Forbes asked a friend who explained the woman was in the presence of a male relative. She could never be taller than he, so when he moved, she had to move, too.
- **Photography:** Delegates should also be careful about taking pictures, some may welcome it, others may not—for example, in Yap, one should ask permission if they are going to photograph people.

4. Stereotyping

Try to avoid stereotyping. Because of the sharing of cultures that takes place at FestPac, stereotyping seems to happen less and less. Previously, delegates from Guam were stereotyped as not really being Pacific Islanders, but since FestPac, they have been able to explain Guam's history and why we are who we are. Even being from Guam, however, we can be the victims of stereotyping as much as we are guilty of doing it to other peoples and cultures.

Chamorros are often stereotyped as being Americanized ("brown on the outside, white on the inside") or Hispanicized—especially when some of the dance groups are dressed in *mestiza* or dance the *batsu*. They are sometimes called materially spoiled, that they "melt in the heat because there is no air conditioner." The Chamorros are also criticized as having lost their indigenous language.

Forbes offered that the best response is honesty about ourselves. Our history of colonization, our parents who bought into the notion that Chamorro language was not important to learn, our inability to communicate in our language—these have contributed to our sense of loss. But also tell others we are working on learning our language and learning our culture. These criticisms are a problem only if you want them to be a problem.

5. Appropriate Dress

Sometimes, what is appropriate dress in one place may be inappropriate in another. Forbes pointed out, for example, that if one goes to Yap, they may be surprised at women who go around with no tops on, revealing their breasts. For them, that is appropriate. What is not appropriate is for a woman's thighs to be exposed. He explained how in the 1950s there was a Jesuit missionary who said it took him a while to get used to seeing the women exposed, and he would even give communion looking at the floor. Forbes said, it is all about conditioning. The more exposed one is to seeing it, the less shocking it becomes, in fact, it becomes normal.

Because we are not conditioned to these things, we find it shocking. However, our chuckles and smirks and comments at FestPac get heard and reported and can make the delegation look very bad. So Forbes placed a slide of beautiful Yapese women in traditional costume to help condition the delegates to what they will see. To emphasize his point, he added that we behaved in similar ways in our own history not too long ago. He included an image from the Spanish Era, when the missionaries still allowed some nudity among the Chamorro people, especially if they were working the fields. Farming was very hot, as well as cooking and baking and so a woman would want to take off her blouse. This went on into the 1800s, according to descriptions of the time. Forbes said, if Chamorros are going to look at people from other cultures that way, they should understand that their own ancestors were topless, too.

For the men, Forbes used the example of the penis gourd or *koteka*, used by Melanesian men from the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. The men may perform dressed with the *koteka*, and afterwards continue to walk around wearing them. It should be noted that this is normal and appropriate for them in their country, but it actually may be more shocking for us here than a woman being topless. In any case, we should treat each other with respect and do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

To dramatize the need to respect other people's cultures and not laugh, one of the young participants had attached a penis gourd to his pants and walked around during the break. He shared some of the responses he had observed, mostly that people's eyes looked down at it and were shocked or surprised. Forbes pointed out that, again, if one is curious about the delegates or something about their culture, it is okay to ask them about it respectfully; it might help to approach them by first asking permission (May I ask you a

question about ____?): for example, “Why do you wear it? How old were you when you started wearing it?”

A participant added with regard to the *koteka*, the size and shape of the gourd sometimes indicate rank. So when addressing a man, one needs to be aware that they may be speaking to someone of high rank.

6. Divisions Among Us

To discuss the divisions that exist among us as people, Forbes reiterated that a problem is a problem only if you see it as one. Forbes said he sees things more as a challenge than a problem—one should name it for what it is, and be honest about it. Even among the delegates, not all may agree with each other about language, dance, music, what happened in the past, or where we as a people should go in the future. As the adage goes, there are three people, but five opinions. That is just human nature. Forbes also pointed out that people’s opinions may change, too, over time.

Forbes declared that what is sad about divisions among us is that the separation goes beyond just two sides. Even people who are on the same side may be divided, broken down into subgroups. These divisions, though, are perennial, eternal, and part of the human experience. What we need to do is to keep trying to build bridges across these divisions.

Forbes offered that sometimes what causes these divisions are our *personal history*—the bad or hurtful experiences in our lives that sometimes make it hard to let go—and *philosophical divisions*. However, philosophical divisions sometimes can be good things. He related the story of the the elephant and the five blind people, who upon touching a different part of the animal, are asked to guess what kind of an animal it is. Each person described what they felt: the individual who grabbed the tail believes the elephant is a long and slender animal that is hairy on one end; the person at the trunk thinks the elephant is fat and spongy with two large holes, etc. The people were only able to see different parts of the truth of the elephant but unable to grasp the whole. The seeing person who knows the truth of the elephant pulls the people together, tells them they are each right and that they all together make up more of the truth. Likewise, differences in philosophies make people say one thing about this or the other, but Forbes believes they should all be allowed to talk and that we all should learn from every single one of them and see how we can “put these pieces together.” Putting these pieces together can help explain why we are the way we are.

For example, the arguing over whether it is “CHamoru” or “Chamorro”—on the surface of it, this argument is superficial—“Why are we fighting over spelling over a language that is losing speakers every day?” Forbes asked. He likened it to a bomb falling in the middle of a village, which is then scattered into pieces: this is what has happened to the Chamorro people over several hundred years of conquest, the introduction of different cultures, disease, massive death, constant burying and the reduction of the people to 3000. This is like the initial shock after the bomb was dropped.

Then, what happened? With ears ringing, everyone feebly tries to get back on their feet and see what else is going on, but the chaos continues—“Should we do this or that? What should we do now?”—everyone has their own opinion, but in effect, there is chaos. Forbes explained, “We as a people are in a state of recuperation from a social disaster, a cultural disaster. There is going to be division and difference of opinions about what we do and where do we go—and it is OK.” He added that people can decide they can learn from each other and put the pieces together, otherwise they will repeat the disaster and not be able to recover. Forbes continued, “I see us Chamorros drowning in self-doubt and uncertainty, and we are grabbing like a drowning person. So we grab onto what we can get—dance, poetry, etc.—but [the chaos] won’t last forever because at some point, we will calm down and listen to each other and put the pieces together.”

Forbes went on to explain that these divisions have been apparent in the past—there is always an interplay between this and past topics like attitude, giving someone the cold shoulder, indifference, etc. He gave as an example the division he sees in the Roman Catholic Church on Guam today, and that he chooses to try not to worsen the situation. If people ask his opinion about the controversy affecting the diocese, he tries to be diplomatic. He acknowledges there is a division, and that is because people are not wanting to learn from each other. People are filled with biases and prejudices, but talking about it makes it worse unless people try to address each other one on one. Instead, everyone is firing verbal missiles at each other when they should really calm down. For Forbes, his way of handling division is to calm down, listen and pay attention to different perspectives.

As another example, he explained how he felt he had really “stuck my neck out with that DVD [about Chamorro identity and history entitled, *I am Chamorro*].” He said, “I won’t fight anyone, but I will talk to anyone with open ears—but make sure over coffee and *merienda*. If we are going to fight over Chamorro culture, let’s fight the Chamorro way—over *kafé* and rolls.”

A participant concurred with Forbes, but added that the “bombing” continues by those who “keep their thumb on” Guam’s people. To counter this, she encouraged the participants to be resilient, stay strong, keep doing what they are doing. Speak Chamorro, practice it every day, try to learn from the elders.

To this Forbes offered a suggestion to “handle the federal government:” embarrass them—not by testifying at the Senate, but imagine 10,000 of Guam’s Chamorros making a statement at the Plaza de España with the world press. That, Forbes believes, will be heard in Washington. India’s Ghandi is a good example of this kind of action: provoke them [the British] to treat them [the Indians] more terribly, and eventually the world will take notice. The challenge, though, is getting 10,000 Chamorros to fill up the plaza, and so that is why there is a need to talk about trying to fix the divisions first.

Another participant recalled how during the FestPac opening ceremonies in Samoa, she realized that the delegation from America Samoa was very proud of their change as an American territory. She also saw that there was tension between the American Samoans and the [Western] Samoans, and that it was hurtful because these were people of the same bloodline that were not getting along. The people from Samoa were put in a place that confined them for their protection. Now that the festival is in Guam, her hope is that there is some consistency in “What is Chamorro?” because even now, it is inconsistent.

Reiterating her earlier point of her need to be a part of the solution, not the problem, she stated she is a representative of the Chamorro culture, as are the other delegates in whatever discipline. Chamorros are survivors, but they need to take responsibility for the choices they make. She brought up an example of stereotyping of the Guam delegates in her experience in Samoa, where one of the country delegates made a comment, asking if the Guam participants were actually from Hawaii because they were wearing Roxy brand matching shirts and pants, expensive sunglasses and were very stylish. She realized she did not want to be thought of as different from the other Pacific Islanders, but that she needed to be responsible, too, for her appearance. The festival opened her eyes to many different things, including what and how she conveys to others her identity as a Chamorro person. She needs to ask for help when she does not know the answers, and to share what she does know. She added that the *manamko*, the war, or the federal government cannot be blamed for everything, “because,” she said, “it rests on us now, the values we have and share.”

Forbes pointed out we need affirmation. Despite all our differences we need to affirm each other. For example, he said, “The music that we bring to the festival: imagine if our song was one note; imagine a song with different notes but no harmony. There is a difference between division and differences; between disharmony when different notes clash, and two notes that sound beautiful together... We need to respect people’s rights to live the way they used to live for hundreds of years.”

Forbes added that when he lived in Sinajana, it was like a suburb of Agana. Then he moved to Merizo, which was very different, and he loved it. Then he moved to Saipan, which was also very different, and he loved it there. Having seen different Chamorros from different islands, and different parts of the islands, and of different ages, etc., he could see that there is a foundation that unites us: our language and our customs—“There are differences, but we understand each other.” He added, when we ask questions, we increase our vocabulary. When we learn about the differences between us, we learn more about each other. He declared, “Our differences are beautiful, they make us more attractive and unique...There is not just one way to think, sound or act. For example, in a family with five kids, each child is different, but they are all united as a family.”

Two participants then acted out a skit to demonstrate how Chamorros “come in different flavors, and the more the better.” After the skit, Forbes explained how in Rota it was hard not to laugh but as he was hearing confessions, the differences in pronunciation of certain words was something to get used to.

7. Loss of Sense

Forbes explained that “loss of sense” happens when we do the things that we know are Chamorro, but we have forgotten why we do it or why it is important. To demonstrate this, a participant offered her insights on the Chamorro practice of *nginge'*.

Having several of the audience members demonstrating the proper way to do it, the participant explained the way Chamorros show respect to their elders, with nose to hand: it is the [usually] younger person who takes the hand of the *saina* until the nose touches the backside of *saina's* hand and sniffs it. The *saina* then offers a blessing to the younger person. She pointed out, however, that there are now new gestures of showing respect to the elders that have replaced the old ones. She gave, for example, a person preferring a kiss on the cheek because the hand-sniffing makes them feel old. Among men, they prefer to bump fists than shake hands. The participant asserted that when people change out traditional ways of doing things, the children watch them and believe it is okay to do them, too. The bad thing about this is that sometimes these gestures, for example, the fist bump, may derive from aggressive or prison culture. This teaches children to value less the proper way of showing respect to elders. Even the words of blessing, “*Dioste ayudi* (God help you)”—have changed.

The participant emphasized the need perhaps to reeducate the *sainas* that it is an honor to teach kids to *nginge'* properly—to hold the *saina's* hand gently (don't squeeze, because their hands are hard working but fragile); to inhale the “essence” of that *saina*, all that that *saina* is. When people see it done properly, they will see that it is a beautiful practice. Also, the participant added that they should not be quick to release each other's hands. She said, “You want time for that connection, that energy, that blessing to pass on to you.” Finally, she added, the form of address—*Ñot* for men, and *Ñora* for women, which are derived from Spanish—also includes *Tun*, *Tan* and *Nan*, which are Chamorro titles of respect. For the *saina*, the blessing flows in a full circle from the heart of the elder, to the hand of the other individual.

Forbes stated that he loves the Chamorro kiss: “Kissing on the lips are for your romantic partner, but Chamorros kiss with the nose. You don't *chiku*, you *manginge'*, because the sense of smell goes right back to primitive brain. Many animals sniff and know the world primarily through their sense of smell.” He added that when you think of someone you love deeply, sometimes it is their smell that has the strongest memory for you. People may change physically, but the scent of a cologne, for example, can trigger memories of special people in our lives.

Forbes also explained that the practice of *nginge'* is not about chronological age but about status. A 15 year-old nephew, for example, will *manginge'* his 14 year-old auntie. It is also a sign of respect between people of higher and lower power, or between a provider and a dependent. It is not judgmental because it

is a two-way street. He recounted how as a young priest even the old ladies would kiss his hand. It was a way of managing established relationships or connections. It is about reciprocity. Just as the image that he had on the slide of a group of people placing a roof on the house—people are putting their resources together to fix this house because two months later they will do the same thing for the next house that needs their roof fixed. The old woman who kisses his hand is acknowledging his status as a priest, but he, also, as a priest, has obligations. The *saina*, as well, has obligations to the younger person. Forbes stated he would rather see *manginge'* than the kiss on the cheek, but he believes once it is explained to them about why they do it, about the notions of reciprocity and mutual obligation, they will understand and continue to practice it.

What does it mean to be Chamorro?

Forbes then wanted to address what it means to be “Chamorro,” emphasizing that this is open to interpretation.

- **Pride and competition**

Forbes asserted these are not exactly dirty words but we should be competing against ourselves. He explained, “I don’t have to have you get to the bottom in order for me to be at the top.” Drawing on his experience during marriage counseling, where often couples complain to each other saying, “I am right and you’re wrong,” Forbes said he advises them that they can have it their way, beat their partner in this argument, prove their point that one is wrong and that the other is right. But, what has been accomplished? Both are bruised and bleeding, and neither is happy they won at the expense of the other. For Forbes, the kind of pride and competition one should engage in is pride that you do the best you can, be all you can be, do better tomorrow, and only compete with yourself.

- **Commitment, responsibilities and expectations**

Forbes then wanted to emphasize the sense of commitment, as well as the responsibilities and expectations of the delegates as representatives at FestPac. There are practical aspects, some of them explicit: for example, the curfew and the prohibition of alcohol. He pointed that the participants need to be honest about this....in some cultures it is integral to the ceremonies or rituals, in others they only drink to get drunk, and for some it only brings out the worst in them. But all the participants need to be careful with acting out, or using mood-altering substances.

Before the closing, one of the participants accompanied the whole group in singing a song of Chamorro identity and pride entitled, “Chamorro Yu.”

Closing

Forbes asked the audience for a quick response to the question, “What did you get out of this workshop?” One participant replied they learned a lot about respect, and another stated they became more aware of the differences throughout the whole Pacific.

With that Forbes wished the participants a safe and enjoyable FestPac.

Monica Guzman thanked Forbes for facilitating the workshop. She also thanked Guampedia for producing a summary report to be placed on guampedia.com, the CAHA staff for providing refreshments, and the Guam Visitors Bureau for their sponsorship. She then reminded the delegates that there will be another workshop on March 26, and two more in April for the FestPac volunteers. Forbes added his thanks to the participants who shared their thoughts and performed in the skits.



12TH FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS

"What we own, what we have, what we share ~ United Voice of the Pacific"
"Hāfa Iyo-ta, Hāfa Guinahā-ta, Hāfa Ta Pātte ~ Dinanña' Sunidu Siha Giya Pasifiku"

GUAM 2016