

Guardians of the Sacred Oil and Comb



Towards an Understanding of Talaandig Spirituality, Customary Law and Peace Practices

Datu Migketay Victorino "Vic" L. Saway and the Tribal Council of Elders
Tulugan, Sungko, Lantapan, Bukidnon Province, Philippines

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Recorder's note on this project:

My purpose in this effort was simply to gain a "beginners" knowledge and understanding of the peace and conflict resolution practices, known as "customary law," of the Talaandig indigenous/tribal community in the Lantapan area of Bukidnon. I present here only a few of the practices and underlying concepts (praxis and cosmology) of the Talaandig community, in their own words, from conversations over an 11 month period. I also did some additional reading of Datu Vic's writings posted on the web, these are referenced at the end. These 2 sources, conversations and writings, are indicated by *italics*. I have tried, minimally, to include some of my own reflections (written in regular font) in order to clarify my understanding and make my own thought process clear. I divided this only roughly into several themes that emerged, and within each theme's heading are either reflections by Datu Vic and the council or stories and experiences of actual peacemaking in action. The result is not intended as an exact replication of Talaandig reality or an analytical and abstract research report. Rather, I hope it reflects the ebb and flow of real conversations, multiple understandings and lived experience.

I have attempted to cross-check this with those who shared with me. I hope this reduced the inevitable filtering, bias, and misunderstanding that occurs when a cultural outsider attempts to talk about the reality of another community. That being said, this is still just my attempt (as an outsider) at recording and understanding the Talaandig community and culture, and so it is greatly limited. I take full responsibility for any errors that may still exist and welcome any corrections to improve the accuracy of this.

I am immensely grateful to Datu Vic and the council of elders for allowing me to be a guest in Tulugan and sharing their time, wisdom and experience with me. I hope this can serve as stepping stone for strengthening, understanding and successfully transmitting Talaandig indigenous knowledge, systems and practices.

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Introduction

Recording, understanding and transmitting the wisdom of the Talaandig community is, according to Datu Vic, like drinking from the elders and stirring the pool of knowledge and history in the community, under the guidance of Magbabaya (the creator god) and the Mulin-ulin (spirit teacher).

You have to stay on the road by drawing on the source, the spring that feeds the pool.... If you stop receiving guidance, input from the master/God, the flow will stop. So it's like each pool overflows and fills another and they keep going down. If you think you are the pool, even if you are a big pool, you will eventually dry up. If you give without being replenished you will be lost; lose the knowledge. To be a learner you have to stay connected to the elders and those who have gone before.

How to become a pool? How to accumulate knowledge? Become more analytical, go deeper. When asked, have a deeper analysis or reflection. Doesn't guarantee you are a fountain or spring, we still have to stay connected to the spring. To analyze is to "turn over" what is in the pool. You must be able to store the stock of knowledge [have a pool].

Talaandig Spiritual History

To understand where this communal-spiritual "stock of knowledge" comes from, or where the "source" and "spring" of guidance is found, we must understand the epic story, or spiritual history, of the Talaandig, called the *Gugud*. It is, "a treasure for all, a master plan for creation. It also reveals how everything is anchored in relationship."

Gugud

In the beginning of time there were 3 gods living in a rainbow-like structure called Bubulusan Balugtu, or "the sitting place of the rainbow." One was 10-headed, called Gumagang-aw, the 10 heads were all noisy, some crying, shouting, arguing, but they were not bad. He was known as "the lord of the warriors" or "the forbidden god" and had in his possession soil for creating. Magbabaya, the "decision-maker" and "god of creation," was the second of the creatures, like a person. The third, Agtayabun Migbaya, or the "pure white god" or "god of peace" had wings and was holding and balancing the other two. Agtayabun is the Lord of spirit teachers, the source of wisdom and supplier of full knowledge. Known as the quiet god, Agtayabun Migbaya is the balancer who equalizes the powers of the other 2 gods.

The first conflict happened when Magbabaya wanted to create using the soil. Magbabaya needed Gumagang-aw's permission to get it and so they made a peace pact with the help of the Agtayabun Migbaya. This pact included a dialogue between them where they were convinced of a common benefit in creation. So a mutual decision was made and Magbabaya was affirmed by Gumagang-aw as the decision maker, that Magbabaya's will would be done.

So they made the agreement and Magbabaya created the world: It was barren at first, but out of Gumagang-aw's saliva came rain and water, his hair was made into plants and grass, and so on and so forth revealing the corresponding relationships of "Agpangan" [the framework of Talaandig indigenous knowledge]. So trees and vines correspond to bones and veins, air to breath, the sun to sight and heat, sound to voice, spirit to the conscience and soul and flesh to soil. So Magbabaya made 7 human-like forms out of the soil and he went away to the top of a mountain to think about how to bring them to life. But while he was away, Gumagang-aw went ahead and brought 6 of them to life with his saliva. When Magbabaya returned, he was so angry with Gumagang-aw for bringing them to life that they fought each other. When they fought, the sound of their blows was like thunder and lightning. Since neither could overcome the other, they finally agreed that these 6 creatures would become the guardians of the 6 elements of creation: bulalakaw - water, pananalsal - wind/fire, talabugta - earth, ibabasok - plants, mamemulig - animals, and pamamahandi - natural resources. Thus this reflects that there are two forces at work in spirits and in people.

Magbabaya brought to life the last human form, breathing his own breath into him, and he became the first person. He did not have a name, but was given the customary law and rituals by Magbabaya in order to guide him in his life and in the community. Humans were allowed to do whatever was required for their life, as long as they followed the rules and rituals established by Magbabaya to maintain harmony.

But the descendants of the first man failed to keep the law and there was a drought that cleansed the earth. Only 2 men remained, Apu Kumuloi and Apu Lumibulibu, who were wanderers and nomads on the earth, but afterward, their descendants again did not follow the ritual laws and so there was another cleansing of the earth, that left only four remnants - 2 men, Apu Balaoi and Apu Tibulun; and 2 women, Apu Hinanglayan and Apu Binanglayan - who came to Lusukan, a

sacred waterfall on the Pulangi river (now within the property of the Pulangi river dam) where they found water and recommitted to follow the law, rituals and guidance given by Magbabaya. So they procreated and spread out over the land, but again their descendents disobeyed the law and customs given by Magbabaya which lead to a time of lawlessness. So Magbabaya brought a flood, killing all but two people, Bai Ginamayong and Apu Agbibilin, who were saved by going up to the tops of Mt. Kitanglad and Mt. Kalatungan (Dulangdulang).

Apu Agbibilin and Bai Ginamayong had 8 children who became the elders of the first tribal council and the ancestors of the 4 tribes of Mindanao – Talaandig, Maguindanao, Maranao and Manobo. Of these 8 siblings, Apu Saulana was the ancestor of the Talaandig nation, which was named because the others were supposed to "take note of" (tala-an) this and "lean on" (sandig) the peacekeeping role of Apu Saulana who would be active and going around to fulfill this role. So, in the presence of the brothers and sisters of the council, Apu Agbibilin entrusted to Apu Saulana the sacred jar of oil ("puti") and comb that would be used to comb out the tangled hair of conflicts between the clans. They were told that in times of conflict, to rely on Apu Saulana because he was given the oil and comb to make peace. The oil was kept in Bulanbulan and the territory of peace boundry from there to the Kimanga River, the Manupali river and to the peak of Mt. Kitanglad. Though the first area was reduced because of tribal war, what remains is to be the abode or zone of peace because the peacekeeping tradition of the tribes is preserved here.

Rituals, Sacrifices and Spirit Realities

The community and its customary laws are linked directly to Magbabaya, the creator, at the beginning of time, through the re-telling of the *Gugud* (and related oral traditions called *Batbat* and *Tanud*) and through rituals. The rituals and sacrifices made to the spirits are a way of acknowledging the first divine peace agreement and the spirits'/guardians' ongoing roles in the life of the community. The sacred rituals and customary laws protect, connect, reconcile, and orient/situate today's community to the greater Talaandig spiritual reality. In regards to indigenous peace making, the rituals are a bridge to the spiritual/divine "peace process" and agreement between Gumagang-aw and Magbabaya at creation. This first peace process resulted in the creation of man, nature, the spirit guardians and spiritual reality as we know it, and without that first peace process, we would not exist. **Therefore, any Talaandig peacemaking or healing process must include rituals and sacrifices.**

Thus, understanding Talaandig customary peace building processes starts with an invitation to receive the spirit of Magbabaya, in harmony with the spirits of creation and the community, both living and dead. This is done through a ritual, because rituals are the bridge between the material and spiritual world. This reflects a culture that is organic and integrated, grounded both in concrete physical and unseen spiritual realities.

The tribal council (*pasagi*) in Sungko notes,

Talaandig means, "the way of the forefathers." The elders will work and sit down together and discuss so that people/family won't be ashamed. Importance is to reconcile the guardian angel of the parties so the people will reconcile. That is why the ritual, chicken will be used to stop the bad spirits. The elders will investigate, talk to the parties and find out what started it. So that is why there is a need for a ritualist to be with the Datu (chief). The first thing is that the community will call to the guardians of the territory by doing rituals using different processes. Spiritual guidance may come through dreams, nature, sound of birds etc.

Datu Vic states,

What is the process for dealing with community problems land grabbing, no money, no food, no medicine, divorce and killing? Small things are usually dealt with by neighbors. The first thing of importance is inviting of the spirit aspect. There are 4 relationships to deal with: person – person; person-thing; person-spirit; spirit-spirit. The courts only deal with the first 2. The judge hears and decides a case, issues a sentence/punishment/fine, then it get's paid and it's over; or if the person goes to prison, after they get out, it will continue. If you don't settle the spiritual relationship, you can go 10 times, but if it's not spiritual, it won't get to the source.

The relationship is basic. The I.P. [Indigenous People] way counts the cost, listens to the real story and ensures the restitution is fair and appropriate, ensures the spiritual aspect is addressed and relationship is considered. We have to consult with different spirits – water, fire, etc.. Have to consider timing to allow for cooling off. Spirits have to make peace with each other for it to last. There is the spirit of water and wind to cool off and diminish anger, for example. Need to assess what spirit is needed for the situation. To put out a fire, need water and spirit of water. The I.P principal is to uncover something that opens eyes of everyone, so we're always looking around, deep inside

ourselves. Trying to find the key, a word, that opens the door to shared knowledge, to cultural understanding, to explain clearly or more directly a principal.

If you resolve the conflict between the people, or just in the physical/material world, without reconciling the spirits, then the solution or agreement will not last.

Meaning of the ritual peso is character of customary law. How to deal with emotions? Anger – say a prayer to make an offering to the spirit of anger to be reconciled. Request ritual "pamugsa/panlugbak" to stay away from or put up a wall or barrier between the anger and the person. Do this before going to the person to cool them off, prevent revenge or further problems. This payment or offering will settle the account, using coins, cloth or an egg. If it is to be comprehensive, there will be 7, and there might need to shed blood if there would be blood shed otherwise. If there is depression, concern, fear or worry, use 4 chickens – 1 to drive off the bad spirit, 3 to restore the good. This was used for a student who was acting crazy. He was a student at a university in Cagayan. He was committed to the mental hospital in Mintal for substance abuse, but they found nothing. He was released and brought to Sungko. After doing the ritual, he was cured.

In the case of murder, 2 pigs are needed for each side, to be barbecued. Bamboo will be cut by the river in order to symbolize the ending of the conflict. Other researchers have come to record about Talaandig indigenous culture, but when they replayed the tape, it failed to record because they lacked the ritual. The peso is the FPIC (Free prior informed consent) for the spirits on this interview. Another researcher came from Manila and lost everything in a fire because she did not do a ritual.

The diversity of universal justice – good, bad, evil, harm and healing

The Talaandig sense of good and evil has a broader understanding of what is labeled "bad" and "good," more relative, rather than absolute. What is actually evil or bad is what causes harm to people. This also is grounded in the *Gugud*, in the relationship between Magbabaya and Gumagang-aw. Therefore, Datu Vic clarifies,

These two gods provide the framework of the Talaandig concept, idea, philosophy, principles and practice of equality and justice. By understanding the relationships of the two gods, the mediators of the

Talaandigs tribe are able to resolve conflicts that occur in the community.

You should know that I not only have the good spirit in me, but also the bad. But the bad is not really evil. For example: the bad spirits are needed to guard you from forces that would harm you. We need to have both the good and bad so that both kinds of people would know that I know both sides. If they are bad, they would know that I have the bad. If they are good, they would know the good. Bad spirits are not necessarily evil spirits. For example, there are times when you need to be angry, with injustice.

Good and bad must be reconciled, like a husband and wife, in order to have children. Need to harmonize the good and bad working together.

*So this ties back to the *Gugud*, where the reality at the beginning of time was one of balance, ecology and reconciliation. The inter-relations between *Magbabaya*, *Gumagang-aw* were balanced in the stabilizing work of the peacemaking god *Agtayabun Migbaya*,. So the Talaandig practice of resolving conflicts revolves around the restoration and protection of relationships and the community rather than the imposition of an abstract system of laws.*

So, it started without conflict, something happened, which caused a wound needing healing, emotions needing healing, and healing of the spiritual relationship. The I.P. way works to bring back brotherhood/kinship. Restore prior relationship. – friends, in-laws, business partners, siblings. Find acceptance, no hard feelings. Is it possible? Always, if the spirits are contented. There is a ritual for this called "tampuda" – a reconciliation ritual, to attest witness and support the conflict resolution. Spirits have to discuss and agree to reconcile, settle. To include the spirits, you need a ritual. Need to invoke principal of universal justice, justice of nature, of creation. It does not change, it is always there, constant, cannot be manipulated. What is it? That which is upheld by the spirits, the balance of good and bad, which is a challenge to maintain. That's why we need to understand how plants and animals resolve among themselves. What if one is food of the other? That is reciprocity. But across cultures, different animals are prohibited to eat, so even in universal justice, there is diversity, so that's where relationship must be defined.

"Approximations" – allegories, metaphors and symbols

*So while the customary laws are fixed in a communal sense of universal justice and *Agpangan*, by having metaphors and allegories,*

they allow for flexibility and dynamic processes which are rooted in a relational spirituality. There are two additional concepts that provide reference for balance and equality in dealing with situations. They are *Timbangan* (balance) and *Gantangan* (measuring box). *Timbangan* provides a sense of the qualitative relationships or "horizontal" aspect of knowledge and justice, for example the concept of a person can be further delineated as both male and female. *Gantangan* helps define quantitative or "vertical" differences, for example, taller or shorter, shallow or deep etc. Datu Vic, in commenting on how restitution is determined in a conflict that resulted in death, reveals the flexibility that is inherent in the indigenous way,

LIFE you took life that produces livelihood. You cannot take it back, but approximate it. So when you have offended, what aspect of life have you harmed? And you have to rebuild it... We understand vengeance, but we don't encourage or initiate it. That's why Talaandig are peaceful people.

Our perspective is organic, like a body. It has different parts. Each part has its role that the other parts cannot do. For thinking, there is the head. For strength there is the legs, and different roles for the heart, hands, butt etc. Extending the body out gives you the family. The balance of the family is horizontal and vertical. The male and female provide horizontal balance, the elders and the children provide the vertical. The grandparents are on top and have wisdom. The bodily extension of the family is into the community, with its different body parts. Extending that further is into the nation. Even in a democracy, not everyone can be the spokesperson. Peacebuilding is healing of the body. Here in our village, we are one body. So the tribe may be the "puwet"(anus) of the Philippines. Or the 3rd world is the "puwet" of globalization. Because if you don't respect us, or put us down (be-little), then if the puwet stops working, the head should watch out!

Organic metaphors, symbols and "approximations" permeate the practice of Talaandig peace practices. These approximations and spiritual considerations are **not** simply peripheral, secondary or optional aspects of the community process of peace making, but they are actually the core of the indigenous justice process and the means of healing. This allows creativity in the restoration of communal relationships, affirmation of people's humanity and sanctioning of harmful behavior, all within a holistic spiritual framework.

These metaphors include correspondent relationships in Talaandig spirituality, so:

Blood corresponds to water, flesh to land, voice to words of life, bones to trees, breath to air, body heat to fire, the soul relates to the creator. After death, the makato (soul) either goes back to Magbabaya or goes wandering, if you didn't fulfill your role as custodian of creation. The spirits are supposed to help and work with us. We, the physical custodian, and spirits, the spiritual custodian. Spirits are providers of human needs, will take care of basic material elements and sources of life. All elements of earth that give life are found in body. Body is a perfect reduction of the world. Elements can take care of the world by taking care of the body. Reconciling all elements – bad/good; rich/poor; smart/dumb by rituals.

So, the fruit of approximation is flexibility, which allows almost infinite potential responses and solutions in peacebuilding situations as the details of each are considered within the spiritual-communal context.

You have to know the specifics of each situation. Say you have 2 cases where someone was killed. In one, there was a person who was drunk. In the other, there was a rebel and a soldier and it was because of ideology. It's like a formula in math. You can have the same numbers, like 5 and 2; depending on the formula, the result will be either 7 or 3. So you can't apply the framework [Agpangan] or general principal equally in every situation, you must be flexible. It's not fixed, have flexibility of ideas so you can be clear about the problem. Each [prior] situation simply provides a reference point. Someone can be trained in all the peace-building skills/ways, but they may only apply in one situation and so when he comes to another situation, he is lost... So what happens when you are in a multi-sectoral conflict situation? Is it possible to have a solution? Or can we even have a discussion. Often, the discussion is about the 90% commonalities and the 10% differences are overlooked or ignored. So the capability to simply have the authentic discussion about the 10% differences may be success and may be what helps set the stage for the future, the next step.... And the result is not a project, per se, but an ongoing conversation. Because you might get to a solution, but the problem has changed, or it does not fit anymore. That's why I might change my answer, tonight is "yes," tomorrow is "no." Because then I was hungry, now I'm not. You might want to marry and I say "no, you're too young." So you come back, and I say no again because you're not prepared, so you come back prepared, and the girl married someone else.

In another example, not only does the community have a tribal council called a *pasagi*, but there is a corresponding divine *pasagi* that oversees the spiritual realities in the community and therefore must be included in community affairs. When a group came into the community claiming to be Talaandig to help the community, they met with the *pasagi* to obtain their approval for their work. When it was clear they were actually scheming to recruit members, collect fees and possibly take their land, the group was "fined" 8 water buffalo, one buffalo for each member of the mystical *pasagi*. So, whether it is a situation between individuals, families or the entire community, the spiritual processes of customary law are applied for the restoration and protection of all.

One time my cousin invited me to his village. When we arrived, there was a family. One of the family members killed a teenage son of another family. This conflict had been going on for years. So here you go, they already have the 2 pigs, chickens and 2 cows to be offered as peace offering/restitution by the offending family.... So now is when both parties are supposed to arrive at my cousin's house. But they are not here. I am getting restless. So my cousin says, "why don't you go to the offended party." So I went and listened, pretending that I had just happened to stop by. So there was venting and listening. The father said that they are really willing to put this in the past. But the offending party could only give 25% of what the offended were asking. And anything below 50% is inhuman, does not validate their full humanity. So I said to add another 25% to bring it to 50%, but the offended did not know this. So I drew up the papers... it must be 50% or greater towards 100% of what the injured is requesting. If it is less than 50% than it says that "you are not a person."

Indigenous ecology in peacebuilding

Ecological peacebuilding is a recurring theme in Talaandig customary law, both in solving conflict around nature and creation, and the inclusion of the spirits of creation in the peacemaking process. By accessing the governing spirits of creation, their application can be done not just toward individual or family conflicts, but as a way of addressing large scale communal and systemic issues like structural oppression and social justice.

For dealing with a land claim conflict... it is important, because if the spirits that are the custodians of the land don't acknowledge the claim, you can't get it. If you want to use it for agriculture and the spirit of

the crops doesn't acknowledge that/you, you won't be able to. Have to get the spirit of the land to be your ally. Also, the spirit of water, animals, insects – an alliance with the spirits of nature and creation. The world will work with us if we acknowledge it, though Magbabaya is still the ultimate decision maker. Ask God the creator to give his blessing, reconciling with the creator. If you pray to Magbabaya directly but don't take care of the guardians of creation on earth, than how can he bless?

Some things learned from elders, father – is that community is like a family. Need to feed them, if full, the problems are less. So focus on food security. To plant food and encourage all to plant food to have their own land to feed themselves, family visitors, the hungry. To eat first before working on problems. If hungry, problems are worse.

What is the process for conflict resolution between animals in the U.S.; or between plants; or, if insects attack plants? Keep animals separate, don't put a rat and a cat in the same basket.... So, you have to start with nature, because we use the same techniques with people. You have to combine plants that work together. What about the food chain, about plants that overshadow another and kill it. The chicken pecks the corn. The powerful oppress the weak. But by combining plants, you can have one that provides water for another, one that breaks up the soil, one that repels weeds, or another against insects. Then you only need a little extra cultivation, and you pick the fruit like its paradise or a garden. No extreme labor. We need some technology, even for ecological peacebuilding, farming, though they want to destroy our seeds with hybrids and things that require lots of inputs and chemicals.

Principal of substitution

There is a ritual principal of substitution in that you can replace the life of a human with an animal. For example, there was a time when Waway needed a pin surgically put in his arm, and people were afraid to allow it to happen, his sister had a dream that he might die, but they did a ritual, taking all his clothes to Tulugan since he was in the hospital, doing the ritual there, and then bringing them back so that he would get the benefit. Datu Vic explained that having the surgery was not that different from the way in which the immortals bodies were "tempered" so they could become immortal. They asked the spirit of the blood not to leave (bleed) out of his body so that he would not die.

In the creation, there was a need for sacrifice. And no one was willing. The chicken volunteered because they had the self awareness to be the extension of our body. They are happy to do this. For whatever we want to do, we offer life, instead of human life, chicken.

So during the ritual, after the animal is sacrificed, it will be cooked and eaten together, like a communion meal.

So whatever part of the chicken you get, that is a part of your prayer. If you get the head – it is thinking and determination, clarification. The wings - about soaring, the heights; heart – changing people’s heart; legs – strength, what you can accomplish; feet – to scratch and search and “unearth” what is hidden, research; [then he ate the butt] nothing will be left out. And so we are asking the spirits to bless our intention.”

Kinship and the role of mothers for peace and cultural guards

There are 5 elements of customary law that are based on the principals of kinship, which are applied by various groups within the community for a common purpose of maintaining harmony as the community is like a large family:

*Mutual Recognition and respect
Sharing of Information
Cooperation
Protection of Life
Sharing of Benefits with the poor*

The mothers for peace have developed tools and instruments for their peacemaking. For example, there was an investigating team from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) that came into their community unannounced. So the women encircled the NBI team and did a water ritual around them which caused the team leader to soil himself and wet his pants. The women “held” them in their circle for 5 hours until they signed an agreement. They know that if they don’t follow the agreements, they will get killed, because the spirit is angry.

The mothers are the first to respond because even a crazy person has a mother who knows them. They want to expand this to other areas, if the moms are organized, the place is organized. The emphasis is on mothers because they are connected and attached to families and can’t take sides because they are their children. They are basic and are the ones who act on problems first in the community. The Talaandig mothers for peace is unique because it is based out of their

tradition and customary law, not like other mothers for peace groups, which are based on something else.

Cultural guards are community members who go on duty in any number of situations – when guests are in community, they are monitored in case there are problems. They help resolve low level conflicts. The most common being fights. They investigate incidents, talk to the different sides and bring them to community, datu or mothers for peace, if it involves females.... The most difficult situations are rape and robbery because they are necessarily premeditated and/or intentional. But if a carabao tramples or escapes from someone's field, then they have to assess the cost, damage and see if it can be repaid. They have an investigation, judges etc. If they can work it out, they will and have a ritual for it. Another problem is arson, especially if you burn your field and then burns someone else's stuff. Whatever it is, important to weigh each side in order to make a decision. If people are fighting, find out why, talk to each person.

Education, training and leadership development

According to Datu Kinulintang, Datu Vic says,

Leadership is a burden, leadership is listening, not only to people, to nature, to the creator, to all and everything....Start with Spiritual realities....go to the forest to spend time with nature and the spirits, with the Creator, because everything starts there..

A critical concern for the Talaandig community is the training and education of youth for the continued transmission of indigenous knowledge and stories for the protection and survival of the community. Datu Vic talked repeatedly about the need for training, to take the youth away for "retreat", back to the forest. This is even more important because the community is under threat and there is a need to remember, not only the positive core of culture, but the challenges that they have overcome.

We don't go around and evangelize because we assume they know, they all have the highest education, which is common sense. But people are losing their common sense. There is a need to give comprehensive [cultural] knowledge to the children. Before, the elders prayed without explaining. Now we have to explain so people can understand and make the choice not to leave.

They think if we just target the youth, a dog and cat can be taught to get along if they grow up together, we will forget because they didn't

experience the killings, the suffering – we have hunger, sickness – martial law, that they will forget. But we are telling them [the youth] stories. So we are in similar situation here, that we are losing our land, and maybe we will work with NPA, or the warriors, which we have. But we always hold on to our hope, though we have lost so much...so many assaults, every kind of thing is an assault. – by farming, technology, land grabbing, etc..

And this all then ties back to the very understanding of Talaandig cultural ways that comes about by "drinking from the elders." *To be a learner you have to stay connected to the elders and those who have gone before.* Coming full circle, by understanding the past, the community of the living and dead, and spirituality, it provides a way forward into the future for the survival and prosperity of the Talaandig nation.

Other References

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