



Republic of the Philippines  
**Department of Education**

Department of Education  
**DIVISION OF CAVITE**  
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**A Letter from the Secretary of Education  
to Teachers, School Heads, Officials  
and Other Personnel of the Department of Education  
on the Occasion of the National Indigenous Peoples Day**

August 9, 2016

Dear esteemed colleagues:

Today, August 9, 2016, we join the entire nation in commemorating the National Indigenous Peoples Day.

The law instituting this national celebration — Republic Act No. 10689 — only came into effect in the latter part of 2015. As the primary government agency with the mission to protect and promote the right of every Filipino learner to basic education, including the inculcation of values that promote recognition of the nation's cultural diversity, we have deemed it imperative for the Department of Education (DepEd) to actively promote the meaningful observance of this significant day. I join each and everyone of you as you commemorate this day in schools and learning centers everywhere, especially those in the most remote areas that have not always been given the attention they fully deserve.

As a vital social justice concern — enshrined in no less than the 1987 Philippine Constitution — the recognition of the rights of indigenous Peoples has been particularly challenging to government agencies mandated to find the appropriate and effective response through its various programs. In DepEd, we have started to lay down the policy and program foundations that would help us respond in a sustainable manner to the aspirations of our indigenous communities for culturally rooted education.

As an institution, we have started this conscious effort to journey with our indigenous communities when we adopted the National Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Policy Framework, more popularly known as "DO62" (DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011). It has given birth to our National IPEd Program and various policies that further guide us in program implementation, such as the IPEd Curriculum Framework (DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2015) and our guidelines on the conduct of activities and use of materials involving aspects of indigenous peoples culture (DepEd Order No. 51, s. 2014), which is considered to be the first cultural sensitivity guidelines of its kind to be issued by a government line agency. Aligned with the implementation framework laid down by DO62, these initial gains are all fruits of our collaboration and partnership with indigenous communities.

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*To: SDSs  
For dissemination,  
please -  
Mdu. G. Almonte  
22 Aug 2016*

At this juncture, our regions are in different stages of IPed Program implementation. Some are in more advanced stages, while some are still painstakingly establishing community engagement and partnership mechanisms with indigenous communities, which we have set as prerequisites to a sound and sustainable implementation of the program. IPed implementation requires tenacious consistency and the willingness to nurture a "culture of encounter", which calls for a continuous effort to engage with openness and humility various realities, experiences, aspirations, and cultures, which may be different from our own.

I ask you to continue to be diligent and not to resort to shortcuts as you implement your plans and strengthen the foundations of IPed. It is better to take small yet solid steps than to rush into action that has not been well assessed and planned for vis-a-vis the principles and directives of our IPed policies. Many of you are now going into more intensive work and deeper engagement on curriculum contextualization and the development of culture-based learning resources for the different indigenous communities that we serve. We know that this work is not simple and much more demanding than what is asked of us in our other education programs. Let us remain focused and prove that we are in this with our indigenous communities for the long haul.

For those who know that they can do more to move the IPed Program forward, I challenge you to continue to push yourselves and be true to the solemn responsibility and privilege that you carry as part of the Department of Education: to conscientiously form and educate each and every Filipino learner -- in all their diversity -- entrusted to your care.

Today is also an opportune time to remember that what we have now did not come at a small price -- this is the fruit of the long and continuing struggle of our indigenous communities for the recognition of their rights to cultural integrity and culturally rooted education. May we always be reminded of this in everything that we plan and do for IPed.

As Filipino educators, let us continue to honor all the sacrifices and efforts of those who have gone ahead of us and those who continue to work for IPed. We do not only owe this to our indigenous communities, we owe it to the entire nation. We have to finally come to terms with our history and reality as a nation with diverse cultures. Only then can we truly become whole and realize our full potential as a people by drawing from the wealth of our cultural resources.

Remembering the wisdom and sacrifices of our elders, together let us renew our call with our indigenous communities and partners in government and civil society:

*Magandang bilangin! Sama-sama, tulung-tulong sa pausulong ng Kataunsaing Edukasyon!*

  
**LEONOR MAGTOLIS BRIONES**  
*Secretary*