

## TUGDAAN INDIGENOUS HIGH SCHOOL

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The TUGDAAN Mangyan Center for Learning and Development is an educational institution dedicated to serve the 8 Mangyan tribes of Oriental and Occidental Mindoro. TUGDAAN aspires to be instrumental in the empowerment, life-long learning, formation and community building of the Mangyan people. It aims to strengthen the Mangyans capabilities as they journey towards self-governance and meaningful development.

Tugdaan was set up in the community of Paitan in 1989 after many discussions with the elders who had reflected that they are being discriminated against and tricked by lowlanders and felt this was due to their education levels being very low. They developed their dream to educate their youth without compromising their deeply rooted cultural beliefs, knowledge and practices. The school started under a tree, with 12 young people and one volunteer teacher. This was the small beginnings of what is now a fully accredited and licensed culturally based indigenous high school with 152 students and 15 Mangyan staff. Since 1989 hundreds of Mangyan students have graduated from Tugdaan, many have gone on to university and many have returned to their ancestral domain to work for the rights, prosperity and self determined development of the Mangyan people.



### **Land and Infrastructure of Tugdaan**

Tugdaan sits on a 9 hectares plot of land that includes 3.8 hectares of agricultural land that is used to train the students in sustainable agriculture. The school owns the land which was donated by the community of Paitan from their communal land.

Buildings of the school include 2 classroom buildings, a library, cultural learning centre, a weaving cottage, a coffee and coconut processing centre, a fruits and roots processing centre, 2 dormitories, and a training centre that can be hired out to visiting groups.

## **Curriculum**

Tugdaan cover all the same subjects as any mainstream high school but also has 4 additional subjects that are specific to their Mangyan culture. The additional subjects that are not included in mainstream education are: Sustainable Agriculture; Mangyan culture; community development and community service; indigenous skills, knowledge and practices. All subjects are also interwoven with the indigenous cultural perspective.

## **Tugdaan's 8 Elements of an Indigenous People's Education System**

1. Valuing Education
2. Promoting Cultural Integrity and Empowerment
3. Promoting People's Involvement and Participation
4. Enhancing Analytical Thinking and Responsible Attitude
5. Promoting Peace and Community Building
6. Valuing Land and Environment
7. Promoting the Spirit of Service and Volunteerism
8. Promoting Holistic and Integrative Learning



## **The process of receiving government accreditation.**

After 2 years of running as a non-formal school, the community decided to start the process of getting formal accreditation to be able to run the school as a n accredited high school under the government's Department of Education. This involved submitting various documents and being inspected and assessed by the Department of Education. Various documents had to be assessed including: Land ownership, buildings standards; standard curriculum; additional curriculum subjects; teachers profiles and licences; financial audited reports; educational resource lists (books and laboratories); registration of organisational structure of leadership etc. For the first 4 years there were annual accreditation applications and after 4 successful applications the school was able to apply for and was granted, full recognition to operate as a formally accredited High School which lasts for 50 years.



### **Financial Sustainability**

Once the school was accredited as a government high school it could then also apply for annual government funds to cover operational costs. Currently Tudgaan is funded 60% from the Department of Education, 15% from foundations and individuals, 20% from its own community run social enterprises and 5% from parents. Each student costs US\$ 30 per year although nobody is excluded on financial grounds. All parents also commit to working in the school for 5 days per year.

### **The Mangyan Indigenous People**

The ancestral domain of the Mangyan people is 220,000 hectares most of which is mountainous primary rainforest and contains with 20 communities. The government has declared this land to be the ancestral domain of the Mangyan people although they are still in the process of applying for the full Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT)

The Mangyan people are determinedly committed to maintaining their self-determined development and have turned away several potential outside investments including a large conservation project which wanted to protect the ancestral Mangyan forests on behalf of the Mangyan people.



### **Questions for Discussion**

What are your cultural systems of learning – How is knowledge passed down the generations?

What are the skills and knowledge that are important to pass on?

What are your principles of learning?

What are the benefits and risks of interweaving the mainstream education system with the indigenous system of learning?

Where do your youth go to high school and what are the pros and cons of this?

**[HTTP://TUGDAAN.ORG](http://tugdgaan.org)**