

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study sought to document the practices and challenges of Baguio-based newspaper journalists in covering IP-related issues in the communities of Benguet.

The study was conducted from December 2010 to February 2011.

The IP-related issues covered by the respondents have something to do with the IPs' culture.

There were noted differences between covering issues in mainstream communities from and that of IP communities.

Generally, a specialized type of skill is necessary for effective gathering and writing of IP-related information.

Baguio-based newspaper journalists who cover IP-related issues in Benguet are sometimes challenged by issues on the province's topography, IPs' distrust on the media, language barrier, cultural barrier and the growing gap between the IPs and the government.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were drawn: Others researchers may want to focus on the possible solutions to the challenges identified by the respondents; other researchers may want to undertake the broadcast aspect of the study; other researchers may want to undertake the study in a broader locale; and findings of the study should be written in monograph to be shared with community development workers and the IPs themselves.



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## INTRODUCTION

### Rationale

Indigenous peoples (IPs) heavily value their wealthy customs and traditions. They put so much emphasis on the sacredness of their unique rituals. This is so because of their worldview that is centered on nature. Nature for them is life and this is what constitutes the very foundation of their culture.

In the Cordillera, most of the IP communities retained their old ways of life. However, in this fast-paced modern world, conformity to such traditionalism serves as a challenge for them. And from this perspective, the fact that they maintain their traditions often leads to them being misunderstood by the mainstream Filipino.

In part, the media play a role for such landscape. For example, since they tend to focus on the elements of crisis, conflict and tragedy, some of their stories and reports are put in exaggerations with unsubstantial basis. At times, the mainstream media perceive the rituals and practices of IPs as “unusual” or “uncommon,” hence, the stories are angled with the element of oddity. In this scenario, the IPs are either misunderstood, misrepresented or underrepresented.

In this light, this study seeks to curb the problem on the IPs being misinterpreted and misunderstood especially by the mainstream communities by documenting the practices and challenges of Baguio-based print journalists in covering IP-related issues particularly in Benguet. Having knowledge on such practices and challenges provides a lucid picture of what IPs are, of what their beliefs relate to, of what their culture is all about. Similarly, a clearer comprehension and understanding of the Cordilleran culture



can dissolve the barrier of misconception between the mainstream Filipino and the indigenous person, therefore championing unity toward development.

The result of the study could be used as a reference and guide, particularly by journalists, in promoting fairness, equality and human rights as a whole.

### Statement of the Problem

The study generally aimed to document the practices and challenges of Baguio-based newspaper journalists in covering IP-related issues in the communities of Benguet. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents?
2. What IP-related issues were covered by the respondents in Benguet?
3. What practices do the respondents apply in gathering IP-related information from the communities of Benguet?
4. What practices do the respondents apply in writing IP-related information from these indigenous communities?
5. What are the respondents' challenges in gathering and writing IP-related information from the communities of Benguet?

### Objectives of the Study

The study intended to:

1. determine the profile of the respondents;
2. identify the IP-related issues covered by the respondents in Benguet;



3. identify the practices applied by the respondents in gathering IP-related information from the communities of Benguet;
4. identify the practices applied by the respondents in writing IP-related information from these indigenous communities; and
5. identify the respondents' challenges in gathering and writing IP-related information from the communities of Benguet.

### Importance of the Study

Knowing and understanding the practices and challenges in covering issues in indigenous communities hugely impacts the interpretation of the information gathered and more importantly the portrayal of the IPs.

The result of the study can serve as a guide in understanding the indigenous peoples – in educating the public on their beliefs, customs and practices. This may narrow down the gulf of misconception and tension between the mainstream Filipino and the indigenous person, therefore, fortifying harmony and unity which essentially escalates development. The Philippine Clearing House Mechanism for Biodiversity (2009) noted that such documentation can help facilitate preparation of management plans and support policy formulation and legislation.

Moreover, the study could be a reference and guide for journalists – beginners and experienced alike – specifically those working in indigenous communities, as well as students who want to pursue indigenous peoples-related journalism.

For researchers, the study can serve as a springboard for further related studies.



### Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study focused on the practices employed by selected Baguio-based newspaper journalists in gathering and writing IP-related information from the communities of Benguet. The challenges they encountered in covering IP-related issues were also covered, including the IP-related issues that they covered.

The study limited IP-related issues in Benguet communities.





## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Gathering and Writing Information from IP Communities

The Australia's Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths Custody proposed the development of codes of practice and policies relating to the presentation of indigenous issues, the establishment of monitoring bodies and putting into place training and employment programs for indigenous peoples (Mindframe National Media Initiative, 2011).

Mindframe National Media Initiative (2011) pointed out that although there are no specific codes and protocol on the reporting of issues in indigenous communities, media organizations have developed codes of practice that relate to the coverage of indigenous issues. Journalists should refer to their relevant codes and guidelines for further information.

In addition, the media should consider both principles and protocol for sensitive reporting on indigenous issues.

### Practices of Media Practitioners in Gathering and Writing Information from IP Communities

In particular, the Mindframe National Media Initiative (2011) emphasized the following points for effective gathering and reporting of information from IP communities:

“Program makers and journalists should always be aware of and challenge their own prejudices, stereotyped beliefs and perceptions about indigenous people.



There is no one kind of indigenous person or community. Indigenous communities...have their own distinct history, politics, culture and linguistic experience.

Programs and stories should be done in consultation with indigenous people, being particularly sensitive to the experience of those who are subjects of the program or story.

In many... indigenous communities, the depiction...of a person who has passed away can cause great distress to people, as can showing their image through visual media. Even using the same name as the deceased person, or a similar sound, can cause distress for a period of time.

A story...can be improved by canvassing members of the appropriate indigenous community on their perceptions, rather than solely seeking the opinions of outside experts.”

In addition, De Vera (2007) stressed that those who gather information from IP communities should not be ill-equipped, poorly trained and lacking field experience or appropriate cultural sensitivity to handle land conflicts and issues of resource access affecting indigenous communities.

Most importantly, it takes the whole nation to help the indigenous communities – the government, the public, the media, as well as indigenous people themselves (Yu, 2005).

#### Media Practitioners' Challenges in Gathering and Writing Information from IP Communities

Representations of indigenous people in the mainstream media are important, as they have the potential to define indigenous people to non-indigenous people. They provide a framework about what to think about indigenous people and subsequently influence attitudes towards them. The historical context of representations of indigenous people is central to how they are understood today. With such, the coverage of indigenous issues by journalists involving inferential racism is significant (Scott, 2006).



A code of conduct can, in the real world, be difficult to uphold consistently. Journalists who believe they are being fair or objective may give biased accounts—by reporting selectively, trusting too much to anecdote or giving a partial explanation of actions. Even in routine reporting, bias can creep into a story through a reporter’s choice of facts to summarize, or through failure to check enough sources, hear and report dissenting voices, or seek fresh perspectives (Anonymous, 2010).

Kevin R. Kemper, an assistant professor at the University of Arizona School of Journalism and an authority on indigenous peoples who studies issues of tribal journalism and press rights, examined newspaper articles by tribal journalists that discussed views about freedom of expression to see whether they practice rhetorical sovereignty, which he defines as the right of indigenous peoples to represent themselves (North America Indigenous Peoples, 2010).

“Tribal journalists sometimes come under enormous pressure from tribal authorities and others not to publish items that are perceived as critical or intrusive,” Kemper stressed in his study, as cited by North America Indigenous Peoples (2010). “They are sometimes accused of not doing what is best for their tribal group” (North America Indigenous Peoples, 2010).

Similarly, in an international conference involving journalism and the indigenous communities, some tribal journalists admitted that they often find themselves agonizing over whether to publicize some news or shelve it to protect their community (Cariboni, 2008).

On the other hand, non-native journalists are often put in an untenable position: If they go into an aboriginal story “cold,” they can both encounter resistance and get the



story wrong; but if they do their preliminary research and work to gain community trust, they can be accused of being biased or too close to the story. Likewise, aboriginal journalists may be limited professionally to covering “native beats” and then criticized for their pro-native bias (Media Awareness Network, 2011).

Nor do aboriginal communities themselves always cooperate in telling their story. “We can’t use the quick-hit approach,” says CBC journalist Loreen Pindera, as cited by Media Awareness Network (2011). “It takes an awful lot more time to re-establish trust with a community after they’ve been so frequently misrepresented by the media” (Media Awareness Network, 2011).

Furthermore, the Media Awareness Network (2011) put it that:

“... the only coverage native people receive in the news media centers on political and constitutional issues, forest fires, poverty and substance or sexual abuse.

Occasionally, stories about cultural activities appear on some local stations—but these are usually given only passing mention. And when it comes to issues that affect all...aboriginal people are rarely, if ever, consulted.

Of course, the fundamental nature of news and news reporting is that the bad news gets all the attention. Tragedies, conflicts and crises get reported; success stories rarely do. But the end result is that a non-native audience may come to the conclusion that aboriginal people are a troubled, plagued and contentious people.

Rudy Platiel, who spent 27 years covering the aboriginal beat for the Globe and Mail, noted that there are an “awful lot of good things happening that are not going to get reported in the mainstream press unless somebody pushes to get them there.”

There are a number of causes for poor reporting on aboriginal issues. Journalists have tight deadlines and are rarely given adequate time to thoroughly investigate issues; the gatekeepers of newsrooms and newspapers are seldom well-versed in aboriginal affairs; and there is a dearth of experienced aboriginal journalists.

In a 1994 study by the Diversity Committee of the Canadian Newspaper Association, of the 41 mainstream papers surveyed (employing 2,620 reporters, copy editors, photographers and supervisors), only four people were aboriginal.

These factors all contribute to the perpetuation of incomplete and, in some cases, biased information. Over the years, for example, much coverage has been given to the “tax-free” status of Canadian aboriginals—leaving many Canadians



to believe that all native people share a lucrative tax-exempt status. What is less well known is that only those working on reserves are eligible, and the unemployment rate in these communities is high since opportunities for work are quite limited.”

It is essential then, as we consider the pressures that tribal journalists endure, to think about how tribal peoples want and deserve as much sovereignty as possible, according to Kemper. “Those of us who practice or study tribal journalism do what we do because we love our people. That is what I think is the native way. The issues of sovereignty have to be decided by the indigenous peoples. Free press won’t flourish unless indigenous peoples see it as an idea from within their cultures that can nourish and protect those cultures” (North America Indigenous Peoples, 2010).

Kemper, as cited by North America Indigenous Peoples (2010) further argued: “How could good journalism not be in the best interest of indigenous peoples who value the truth and story-telling as a means of survival and prosperity?”

### Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined on how they were used in the study:

*Indigenous Peoples (IPs)*. Indigenous peoples are those who, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system (United Nations–Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2004).



In Australian communities, the IPs are referred to as “aboriginals” (Tchacos and Vallance, 2004). In Latin America, they are called as “natives” (Chávez, 2008). Meanwhile, Indian Americans are termed as “tribal” people (North America Indigenous Peoples, 2011).

*IP-related issue.* An IP-related issue refers to a concern, topic or subject that is of great association and relationship to IPs and their culture.



## **METHODOLOGY**

### Locale and Time of the Study

The study was conducted in Baguio City (Figure 1) from December 2010 to February 2011.

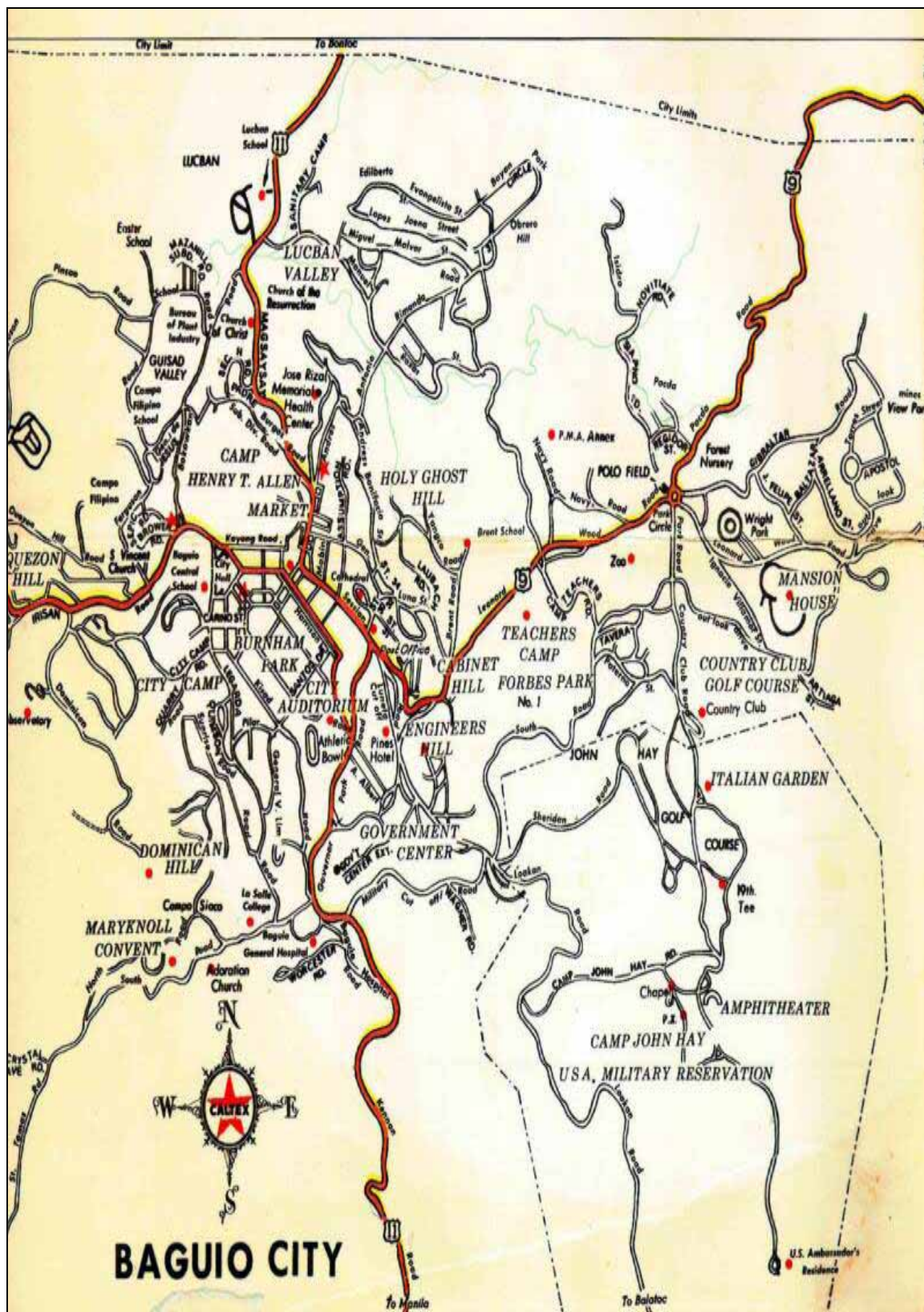
Baguio is a highly-urbanized city in Northern Luzon. Its name was derived from the word ‘bagiw’ in Ibaloi, one of the indigenous languages of the Benguet province, meaning “moss.” It was established by the Americans in 1900 at the site of an Ibaloi village known as Kafagway. It was designated by the Philippine Commission as the Summer Capital of the Philippines on June 1, 1903 and was incorporated as a city by the Philippine Assembly on September 1, 1909.

Baguio City is at an altitude of approximately 1500 meters (5100 feet) in the Luzon tropical pine forests eco-region conducive to the growth of mossy plants and orchids. It is the seat of government of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) and has become the center of business and commerce as well as the center of education in Northern Luzon.

According to the 2007 census, it has a population of 301,926.

Baguio City is likewise a home to the media industry. Community newspapers come in wide array. Among these are the Baguio Chronicle, Northern Dispatch, SunStar–Baguio and Zigzag Weekly. The regional offices of mainstream daily publications also proliferate in the area, one of which is the Philippine Daily Inquirer–Northern Luzon Bureau.





*Journalists and the Indigenous Peoples: Practices and Challenges of Selected Baguio-Based Newspaper Journalists in Covering IP-Related Issues in the Communities of Benguet / RONALYN T. BANAKEN. 2011*





Figure 1. Map showing the locale of the study

### Respondents of the Study

Twenty Baguio-based newspaper journalists were purposively chosen. Staff from the newspapers in Baguio City, which included Baguio Chronicle, Northern Dispatch, SunStar–Baguio, Zigzag Weekly and Philippine Daily Inquirer–Northern Luzon Bureau, served as the respondents.

The criteria in choosing the respondents were the following: they should have background and experience in gathering and writing IP-related information, as part of their job as journalists, from any of the communities in Benguet.

There were five respondents from Baguio Chronicle, five from Northern Dispatch, five from SunStar–Baguio, three from Zigzag Weekly and two from the Philippine Daily Inquirer–Northern Luzon Bureau.

### Data Collection

Personal interview was employed in gathering data. A questionnaire was used as a guide in conducting the interviews.

### Data Gathered

The respondents' practices in covering IP-related information in the communities of Benguet were documented. The challenges they encountered in covering such issues from the communities were likewise identified, as well as the IP-related issues they covered in Benguet.

Moreover, the study noted the respondents' profile.



### Data Analysis

The gathered data were consolidated, tabulated and analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Likewise, they were presented in descriptive and narrative form.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondents' Profile

*Age.* Table 1 presents the respondents' profile. Based on the table, the age range of six of the respondents fall under the 27-30 category. The 35-39 age bracket came next, with five respondents. This was followed by the 19-22 and 23-26 brackets, respectively. This implies that majority of the respondents are young adults, according to Erik Erikson's (1975) classification.

*Number of years of journalism practice.* Most respondents' (55%) average number of years of journalism practice, which involves covering of IP-related issues, falls under the 1-5 years range. Those (25%) with 6-10 years of experience ranked second. Meanwhile, those (5%) with 11-15 years and 16-20 (5%) years of journalism practice listed the least frequency. Ten percent of the respondents have practiced journalism involving covering of IP-related issues in a span of more than 20 years. This indicates that most of the respondents do not have lengthy-time experience in covering IP-related issues in the communities of Benguet.

*Ethno-linguistic affiliation.* Ethno-linguistic group is a concept that has been used to define a human social unit that shares the same language and culture and uses the same criteria to differentiate itself from other social groups (Jenkins, 2010).

Seventy-five percent of the respondents are of Cordilleran descent while 15% are non-Cordillerans. Meanwhile, 10% said they came from the mixture of Cordilleran and



non-Cordilleran ancestry. This means that most of the respondents are indigenous people themselves.

Table 1. Respondents' age range, number of years of journalism practice and ethno-linguistic affiliation

CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY N=20	PERCENTAGE (%)
<b>Respondents' Age Range</b>		
Age Bracket		
19 – 22 years old	3	15
23 – 26 years old	2	10
27 – 30 years old	6	30
31 – 34 years old	1	5
35 – 39 years old	5	25
40 – 43 years old	2	10
44 – 48 years old	1	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Respondents' Number of Years of Journalism Practice Involving Covering of IP-Related Issues</b>		
Range		
1 – 5 years	11	55
6 – 10 years	5	25
11 – 15 years	1	5
16 – 20 years	1	5
21 years – above	2	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Respondents' Ethno-linguistic Affiliation</b>		
Cluster		
Cordilleran	15	75
Non-Cordilleran	3	15
Mixed (Cordilleran and non-Cordilleran)	2	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

#### IP-Related Issues Covered by the Respondents in Benguet



Majority of the respondents said they have covered issues on mining (Table 2). A staff of Northern Dispatch noted that during her visit to Mankayan to cover the mining exploration in the area, she observed that most groups of people in the place were against

Table 2. IP-related issues covered by the respondents in Benguet

IP-RELATED ISSUE	FREQUENCY (N=20)
Mining exploration	16
Cultural festivals (Adivay, Bendiyan Festival, Ibaloi Day)	15
Ancestral land claims	14
Justice system	12
Culture and tradition commercialization	9
History (of a particular IP community)	6

\* multiple responses

the mining exploration in the community because of its destructive effects. Another staff of the same publication added that majority of the people in Bakun were against mining activities, too.

The opposition can be linked to the belief of IPs that land is life and that it is sacred. As Cordilleran Chieftain Macliing Dulag put it, “land is grace that must be nurtured” (The Mountain Collegian, 2009).

Issues on cultural festivals and celebrations were likewise covered by most of the respondents. This result supports the growing concern of documenting Indigenous Knowledge, Systems and Practices (IKSPs) in IP communities, may it be in print or in other forms of media. As emphasized by the Philippine Clearing House Mechanism for



Biodiversity (2009), an information-sharing site under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the documentation of these IKSPs is of great importance in understanding the norms of conduct, customs and traditions, belief systems and institutions of indigenous peoples in the Philippines.

Equally, most of the respondents covered the celebration of the Bendiyan festival in Kabayan. Some visited La Trinidad, Tuba and Itogon regarding cultural celebrations such as Adivay and Ibaloi Day, among others.

Concerns on ancestral land claims were also mostly covered. Behind this is the idea that central to indigenous ways of life is the persistence of traditionally-owned lands and resources and on this basis, hunting, gathering, agriculture and handicrafts are prevalent modes of livelihood. Private ownership, in its common understanding, especially of land, does not largely exist. Individual ownership of land was confined to irrigated rice terraces constructed elaborately by some of the indigenous peoples in the Cordillera region. All other ancestral lands and all their resources are traditionally considered community property (Cordillera People's Alliance–Minority Rights Group, 2010).

Meanwhile, Gary Pekas, 47 years old, staffwriter of Zigzag Weekly, covered issues on the justice system of Bakun and the issue on the violation of rights in Bokod and Mankayan.

Likewise, a staff of Baguio Chronicle visited Tuba, Kapangan, Itogon and Buguias to cover issues on the commercialization of culture.

History of some of the communities in Benguet was likewise written about by the respondents.



The said issues are greatly connected to the very culture of the IPs, as the respondents noted.

### Respondents' Practices in Gathering IP-Related Information from the Communities of Benguet

*Background.* The respondents recognized that the basic practices in gathering information in journalism apply to both mainstream and IP communities with some noted differences (Table 3). According to the respondents, having a background on the IP-related issue being covered is significant in understanding the issue itself. Adam Borja, associate editor of Baguio Chronicle, said that one should do a background check on the subject. “Do this so that you would know what to say and what to do when you are in the area, especially if you do not have enough knowledge on the issue,” he said.

Maurice Malanes, who writes for the Philippine Daily Inquirer–Northern Luzon Bureau, averred that a journalist should have a strong understanding and context of the history of IP communities. “It will give substance to your reportage,” he said.

He claimed that if a journalist truly understands the issue he is writing about, he helps clarify things with the readers, considering the issue on the misunderstanding of the IPs.

*Entry.* In going to the indigenous communities of Benguet to cover IP-related issues, most of the respondents mentioned that they go with IP advocate groups. “There are instances wherein an IP group would visit a certain community. Take the chance of going with them because at least they have a background of that certain community,” a respondent said.



Malanes, who started practicing journalism in the 1990s, said that going with advocate groups to IP communities builds a part of networks and linkages. He said that advocate groups come in various political leanings, particularly. “Learn to deal with such

Table 3. Respondents’ practices in gathering IP-related information from mainstream and IP communities

ACTIVITY	RESPONDENTS’ PRACTICES IN GATHERING IP-RELATED INFORMATION FROM THE MAINSTREAM COMMUNITIES	RESPONDENTS’ PRACTICES IN GATHERING IP-RELATED INFORMATION FROM THE COMMUNITIES IN BENGUET
Research/ Background	Do a research/have a background on the topic.	Do a research/have a background on the topic.
Entry	A journalist can go directly to the target community.	Go with IP advocate groups who visit IP communities.
Identifying informants	A journalist can directly go to the concerned person/s for interview.	Consult the elders before interviewing the concerned person/s.
Data-gathering	Directly approaching and asking the concerned person/s can be done.  A journalist can use English or Tagalog in communicating with the person/s involved. Observe the basic journalism protocol in acquiring and handling documents.	Conform to the ‘pinikpikan’ and ‘tapuey’ traditions of the IPs in communicating, among others.  Speak in a particular IP community’s native language. For those who do not know any, learn some. Observe procedures or considerations set by the elders particularly in acquiring needed documents. At the same time, observe the basic journalism protocol in acquiring and handling





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		documents.
	Always ask permission before interviewing and taking pictures.	Always ask permission before interviewing and taking pictures.
Exit	A journalist can just leave after gathering needed information.	Visit the elders before leaving the community.

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different clusters. It will further your skill in gathering information,” he said. The IP groups’ advocacy might also be of help to the story, he added.

*Identifying informants.* One feature that puts the distinction between covering issues in IP communities and non-IP communities is the fact that IPs have their own IKSPs, according to most of the respondents. Borja, who has been in the journalism profession for 20 years, agrees to this principle. “When you interview a mainstream Filipino, you can just go directly to the person/s involved and get that/those person/s’ statement. In IP communities, a journalist should always consider visiting the elders,” he said.

Majority of the respondents noted the importance of visiting and consulting the community elders before conducting any interview with the party involved.

The respondents put it that elders have the first-hand knowledge on most of the issues that concern the IPs and that IP communities give high regard for them. This will also serve as a sign of respect for them, according to the respondents.

The premise on the high regard for elders as the holders of first-hand knowledge involving IP-related issues supports the statement of Walker (1993) that the elders “have the wisdom, the knowledge and the spirit. Elders play an extremely important role in indigenous families as role models, care providers and educators. We rely strongly on



them as key decision-makers within families. They are the people we hold the greatest respect for because many of them went through so much. Their guidance is often illustrated through everyday life and their teachings are often done subconsciously; we follow, we observe and we go on to teach our own families. It is through our elders that the spirit as indigenous people is kept alive.”

An instance illustrating this is the custody of ancestral lands. Traditional leaders or elders act as guardians of such ancestral lands, as put by the Cordillera People’s Alliance–Minority Rights Group (2010).

The respondents also mentioned that the community elders could refer possible informants for the issue.

*Data-gathering.* One unique feature of gathering information from IP communities is the unhurried mode of disclosing information from the natives. According to Malanes, an effective way of gathering information from IPs is the “story-telling” approach. “Talk to them the normal way, like you’re just telling stories. Do not speak and act like you are a journalist because the possibility is that they will be intimidated. As a result, they won’t be too comfortable sharing information with you,” he elaborated. On the other hand, in mainstream communities, Malanes said that the people are more at ease in giving information.

The story-telling manner of communicating with the IPs helps the journalist establish pleasant rapport with them. “It’s massively important that the IPs will say, “*Maid sabsabali* (We all belong). Develop the skill of relating with other people. It helps a lot,” Malanes noted.



Meanwhile, one common traditional practice among the IPs when entertaining someone who is not from their community is the butchering of native chicken or ‘pinikpikan’ or drinking of rice wine or ‘tapuey.’ This outlines their respect and warm welcome for their visitor. In this consideration, the respondents said that conforming to such tradition enormously helps in effective data-gathering.

“When you show them respect, they tend to be more comfortable in giving information,” said a respondent. Delmar Cariño, who writes for the Philippine Daily Inquirer–Northern Luzon Bureau and whose IP-related journalistic practice spans in over three decades, noted that conforming to such tradition also gives the journalist the feeling of belongingness with the community, therefore making the information-gathering more effective, easier and smoother.

Another distinguishing feature in covering issues in IP communities is what Cariño called the “umbrella journalism.” According to Cariño, a journalist will only go to a particular IP community when an IP-related issue is to be covered. “The journalist goes not very often to that IP community; unlike in a mainstream community where the people are often involved in the covering of issues by the journalists since the journalists themselves are based in mainstream communities. This is one thing that makes information-gathering in IP communities different from that of mainstream communities,” he said.

Likewise, speaking in a particular IP community’s native language hugely helps in effective information-gathering. This will slim down chances of misinterpretation of ideas, words and terms. The respondents stressed that for those who do not have a wide knowledge on a particular IP community’s dialect, it is advantageous if they learn the



dialect, even a few basics of it. “It will narrow down the chances of the IPs being misunderstood, eliminating their doubt that they might be misunderstood just because the journalist doesn’t clearly understand a certain term,” added a respondent from Baguio Chronicle.

Zigzag Weekly’s Pekas also emphasized that at times, proper procedures in acquiring needed documents should be firmly followed especially if some instructions or considerations are set by the elders.

*Consent.* All interviewees should be informed of the interview beforehand and that their consent should be sought first. This was greatly emphasized by the respondents. “Ask your interviewees if they are willing to bring a particular piece of information out. It’s part of courtesy,” mentioned Malanes.

This principle should also be done in taking pictures. A journalist should always ask permission from the involved person/s. “It is a cardinal rule,” Borja emphasized. This disputes the practice of other photographers that subjects are to be taken in a tricky situation and that it should not be known by the subject being taken to avoid a scripted-type picture. “However, many trained photojournalists emphasized that asking permission could still create a picture that is “unscripted” to view. That is where the skill of the photographer would come in,” added Borja.

*Exit.* The respondents noted that it is still important to consult the elders before leaving the community. “For the mainstream communities, you can just leave after the data gathering. In an IP community, you should visit the elders back to show your courtesy and respect for the community. This way, you can always go back to the



community and gather information more easily since you already established an understanding with them and have shown them respect,” explained Malanes.

It is argued that respect for persons and cultures is a critical element in effective information-gathering. Respect is reflected in each of the steps undertaken to gather and analyze the data, validate the findings and present outcomes in ways which communities find comprehensible, accessible and facilitative of their growth and continued development (Tchacos and Vallance, 2004).

Respondents’ Practices in Writing  
IP-Related Information from the  
Communities of Benguet

*Interpretation.* The respondents affirmed that verifying the facts with the person/s involved or with those who have deep understanding on the issue is a big deal in the article’s credibility.

According to the respondents, the interpretation of IP-related data needs to be done in the presence of the person/s involved on the issue (Table 4). SunStar–Baguio’s Mary Ann Cacdac put it that in a non-IP community, a journalist can interpret the gathered information even without the presence of the person/s involved. However, in an IP community, a reporter should do the interpretation with the person/s involved. One reason for this, according to the respondents, is the interconnection of most IP-related issues.

Additionally, the respondents said that a journalist should be sensitive enough to understand and interpret any IP-related information that he/she is handling or writing about. Yu (2010) warns journalists that some problems are real, notwithstanding the



causes and roots of those problems; others are exaggerations with little foundation. Those negative images may be a result of ignorance or maybe because of prejudice and bias.

*Angling and framing.* It is significant to always present both sides of the story involving an IP-related issue, according to the respondents.

Table 4. Respondents' practices in writing IP-related information from mainstream and IP communities

ACTIVITY	RESPONDENTS' PRACTICES IN WRITING IP-RELATED INFORMATION FROM THE MAINSTREAM COMMUNITIES	RESPONDENTS' PRACTICES IN WRITING IP-RELATED INFORMATION FROM THE COMMUNITIES IN BENGUET
Interpretation	A journalist can interpret the information gathered even without the person/s involved.	The interpretation of the information gathered needs to be done in the presence of the person/s involved.
Angling and framing	A journalist can present only one side of the story.  Observe the basic journalism rules in handling sources.  Verify the data story before publishing.  Be aware of the rules of the court.	Always present all possible sides of the story. Always balance the report.  Observe the basic journalism rules in handling sources.  Verify the data story before publishing.  Be aware of the rules of the court.
Publishing	Observe the basic journalism protocol in acquiring and handling documents.	Observe procedures or considerations set by the elders particularly in acquiring needed documents. At the same time, observe the basic journalism protocol in



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acquiring and handling documents.

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Cariño said that in framing a mainstream issue, presenting only one side of the story is at times acceptable. On the other hand, in handling an IP-related story, he noted that it is always vital that a journalist should always consider presenting both sides of the issue. This is because IP-related issues are most of the time interconnected, as Cariño put it.

Specifically, on the issue of small-scale mining in Bakun, two faces of argument surfaced, that of the pro-mining and anti-mining groups. “What I did was I interviewed the group who supported the proposal on small-scale mining. Then I went to get the reasons of the “pro” group for going against the scheme,” explained a respondent from Northern Dispatch. She added that in such situations, careful reporting is very important and that a journalist should be careful enough to be able to present both sides.

According to Malanes, the parties involved tend to be critical on the presentation of the story. “For example, on the issue of mining in Itogon, in my experience, when I wrote about the negative effects of mining explorations, the corporation operating the industry scrutinized the article and there were not-so-good comments. But when you do not put the negative effects of mining in your story, the affected IPs are likely to criticize you for not putting it. That is how critical taking sides is. The point is learn to always balance your story; present both sides,” he said.



In this context, Plater (1993), as stated by Yu (2010), said that for journalists, adequate journalistic education is the key to understanding indigenous people and to a balanced and objective reporting on indigenous people. The Royal Commission has recommended that “media courses containing a significant component relating to aboriginal affairs are needed to properly reflect the social context in which journalists work.”

Moreover, journalists should refrain from using the elements of oddity which often leads to sensationalized stories, as the respondents emphasized. The respondents recognize the fact that sensationalism indeed sells. However, they also recognize that IPs have the right to be represented and interpreted fairly and rightly. The bottom line is that journalists should never sensationalize stories, according to the respondents. They stressed that getting the story right means always balancing voices and presenting sides accurately.

Philippine Daily Inquirer–Northern Luzon Bureau’s Malanes asserted that instead of focusing on the element of conflict, a more effective alternative in writing the story is the proposal of solutions to the conflict presented. In this way, the writer helps unravel the chains that held the IPs in stereotype for so long, as Malanes pointed out.

*Sources.* The respondents noted that most of the usual practices employed in writing a story from the mainstream communities are similarly done to that of an IP-related issue. One of these is the handling of source.

In writing the article, one should consider withholding the name/s of source/s if requested. “Respect your sources. Ask them if they want their names to be published or





not. Based on my experience, some indigenous groups are not used to being interviewed and cited,” revealed a staff of Northern Dispatch.

Journalists’ interaction with sources sometimes involves confidentiality, an extension of freedom of the press giving journalists a legal protection to keep the identity of a source private even when demanded by police or prosecutors. The right is based on the recognition that without a strong guarantee of anonymity, many people would be deterred from coming forward and sharing information of public interests with journalists (Anonymous, 2008).

Cacdac also added, “Disclose your sources to your editor so that if anything happens, someone else knows who your source/s is/are.”

*Verification.* SunStar–Baguio’s Cacdac stressed that a journalist should always verify, clarify and analyze the data gathered from indigenous communities especially that most of the IP issues are complicated and interrelated or interconnected. “Verify, verify, verify. Ask those who have an extensive background on the subject or issue. You do not want to be sued for libel,” she added.

There is always the threat of libel facing those journalists, who, through carelessness, ignorance or malice, make inaccurate statements in their reports that reflect the character or reputation of an individual or group (Anonymous, 2011).

Another reason for constant verification is the sensitivity of most IP-related issues. Cariño explained, “Some information, while they are of public interest, are considered taboo among the IPs and that publishing these information is just not acceptable.” This is where the issue on the rules of the court would also come in.



Cacdac's remark strengthens the basic fact that governs the practice of journalism: Verify the information before you publish. This is a must to all journalists, a rule that needs to be observed at all times as journalism books and journalism professors always emphasize.

*Rules of court.* Baguio Chronicle editor Borja noted, "Know the rules of the court – particularly on the issues of contempt of court and libel – including that of the Constitution."

Borja, who is also taking a degree in law, elaborated that in most cases, the "see-saw" between the freedom of the press and the [IP-related] issues' critical nature is in motion. According to him, journalists are bound by the law, therefore, the freedom of the press is not absolute. On the other hand, the extent of confidentiality or sensitivity of an IP-related issue, for that matter, is likewise limited by the Constitution. He said that journalists should be aware of this.

Generally, Borja, Cariño and Malanes all agree that it takes a higher degree of sensitivity and special skill in covering a story in IP communities. "In the mainstream communities, you do the typical way of covering a story. You can have their statements published right away. This is because they quite know the nature of mass media, they are accustomed to it, they are accustomed to what is common around. But in gathering information from IP communities, there's a sort of special kind of treatment of the story – starting from interviewing your sources, accessing pertinent documents and finally writing the story," backed Cariño.

Tchacos and Vallance (2004) affirmed this assertion: "Aboriginal people have different cultural and language background from mainstream society and therefore there



is a need to develop models of inquiry that recognize these cultural differences and are sensitive.”

Cariño further stressed that a journalist must be constantly guided by the journalist’s code of ethics.

Respondents’ Challenges in Gathering and Writing IP-Related Information from the Communities of Benguet

Table 5 presents the challenges the respondents encountered in gathering and writing IP-related information from the communities of Benguet. Accordingly, in some cases, when roads are closed, the IP-related story is likely to be scrapped or unfinished. Hence, the search for the “real story” is hindered. Connected to this is the matter on the deadline of the article and the distance of the community where the issue is to be covered. The respondents put it that if the place is too far and remote, the possibility is that the article will not be finished before its deadline of submission.

Specifically, in cases of typhoons and other natural phenomena, the respondents noted that needed information from involved IP communities could not be accessed due to roads which are shut down.

Malanes said that as a result, such hindrance sternly affects the story. “The story would end up half-finished, if not scrapped. It would lack depth, heightening the possibility of misinterpretation,” he said. The Media Awareness Network (2011) supports this: “Journalists have tight deadlines and are rarely given adequate time to thoroughly investigate issues.”

In addition, most of the respondents mentioned that some IPs do not trust how the journalists handle reports that involve them (IPs). They fear that the story might be



framed using the element of oddity, making the story sensationalized. “They presume that they may be misinterpreted or misunderstood. This is particularly true to journalists who do not have detailed knowledge about IPs,” Pekas noted.

Table 5. Respondents’ challenges in gathering and writing IP-related information from the communities of Benguet

CHALLENGE	INSTANCE/S
Place inaccessibility/road problem	In some cases, particularly during typhoons, the road/s going to the community where an issue should be covered cannot be reached due to its/their closure.
Deadline and distance of the place	The deadline of submission of the [IP-related] article makes it possible for it not to be continued [to be written] or finished due to the long distance of the place involved.
Indigenous peoples’ wariness toward the media	Some IP groups assume the possibility of being misquoted or misunderstood by the journalists. Others pre-judge the journalists as doing a press release for a certain company or political figure.
Struggle in feeling belongingness	Journalists who do not feel that they belong and are welcome to the IP community where an issue is being covered find it hard to gather information from that community.
Language barrier	In some instances, some journalists’ lack of knowledge on the IPs’ local dialect often leads to misinterpreted, inaccurate or inappropriate terms.
Cultural barrier	Some IP members avoid going against their fellow IP members for the sake of maintaining community harmony. On the other hand, the culture of ‘inayan’ (fear of going against the norm) sometimes leads to incorrect information being disclosed.



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Bridging the IPs and  
the government

Some offices/institutions feed the IPs with wrong information, making the later misled. In some instances, the government's alleged poor understanding on the rights of IPs makes the situation worse.

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This was echoed by Yu (2010): “Many journalists are not well-versed in indigenous affairs.” Fueling the worse scenario is what Yu (2010) described as the journalists’ competition for readers and viewers. Many journalists believe they are compelled to focus on conflict and violence – two of the distinct elements in writing a story in the mainstream media. This created the gap between the journalists and the IPs (Media Awareness Network, 2011).

Cariño disclosed that there are times that IP communities judge a journalist as doing publicity for a certain company or political figure. “This is one challenge journalists gravely face,” he said.

Malanes’ experience also validates this finding: “When I once visited Atok to cover an IP-related issue, I was mistakenly identified as a representative of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR). It was because I happened to ask some income-related questions. And when people are asked with those kinds of questions they tend to be passive. So you see in here the role judgment and presumption significantly play.”

A factor that contributes to such scenario is what Malanes termed as the “research fatigue.” According to him, it is the trend that occurs when researchers, journalists or survey representatives flock to a community to inquire for the same information. “They arrive to the idea that people from the mainstream communities sort of ask questions over



and over again. *Kumbaga nakukulitan sila sa paulit-ulit na mga tanong* (It's like they're fed up with the same questions),” said Malanes.

More importantly, the concept of “umbrella journalism” aggravates the IPs’ wariness toward the media, according to Cariño. “Since the journalists do not always visit IP communities, possibility is that IP-related stories do not have strong, deep foundation when published,” he explained.

Similarly, Cariño and Pekas recognize that the IPs’ wariness toward the media fuels the journalists’ struggle in feeling belongingness in the IP community where the issue is being covered. “You find it hard to talk to them and gather information comfortably because you do not feel that you belong in their community,” said Cariño.

Moreover, Pekas noted the role of culture itself in gathering and writing IP-related information from IP communities. He said that with the strong traditionalism among the IPs, going against a fellow IP member would reflect as an act of antagonism against the existing cultural norm. “You rather choose not to speak or act against your fellow IP member because you want to maintain good community relationships,” Pekas said.

On the other hand, he acknowledges the fact that amid the strong cultural bond, IPs sometimes go off track from their culture. “Sometimes they also betray their own people. Of course they have their reasons, but the point is that the culture of ‘inayan’ (fear of going against the norm) is now slowly disintegrating. As a result, some IP members give incorrect or inaccurate information to the journalist,” Pekas added. This statement of Pekas is ironic to what Walker (1993) pointed out that a dominant characteristic of the indigenous family is the sense of kinship, the feeling of family



togetherness, the ability to rely on each other, and the creation of spiritual bonding which helps to give hope and strength to indigenous people.

According to a Northern Dispatch respondent, what is worse is that they [IPs] are fed with wrong information by non-government organizations (NGOs) and political organizations by conducting forums.

On the issue of mining in Benguet, according to a Baguio Chronicle respondent, some agencies conduct forums on the positive effects of mining. “Consequently, the government’s weak efforts in advancing the rights of the IPs, such as passing of memorandums and the like in favor of the IPs’ concerns, make the IPs less heard, prompting the breach between the IPs and the government that is supposed to be the frontliner in championing the rights of the IPs,” agreed Pekas.

In this connection, De Vera (2010) argued that very limited development activities in support of the Ancestral Domain Management Plans have been implemented. “The inability of the government to fully implement the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) in order to address the problems and concerns of the indigenous communities is rooted in conflicting policies, capacity gaps and a questionable commitment to empower indigenous communities. The urgency of the problem is underscored by overt encouragement on the part of government of the entry of large-scale commercial investment into traditional lands to install extractive industries which include open-pit mining, palm oil plantations and industrial forest farms,” he stressed.

In this situation, the journalist has the choice to make the two meet halfway for a responsible and productive societal landscape, as Pekas said.



The power of journalists is undeniable. Any attempt to solve problems on aboriginal communities should be done in partnership with and the consent of the aboriginal community (Tchacos and Vallance, 2004).





## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### Summary

The study was conducted to document the practices of Baguio-based newspaper journalists in covering IP-related issues in the communities of Benguet. Specifically, it intended to determine the profile of the respondents; to identify the IP-related issues covered by the respondents in Benguet; to identify the practices applied by the respondents in gathering and writing IP-related information from the communities of Benguet and to identify the respondents' challenges in gathering and writing IP-related information from the communities of Benguet.

The researcher used personal interview as instrument. The study was conducted from December 2010 to February 2011.

The respondents' mostly-covered IP-related issues in Benguet have something to do with the IPs' culture.

There were noted differences between covering issues in mainstream communities and that of IP communities.

The respondents put it that it is extremely important for a journalist to consult the elders and conform to the traditions of IPs for effective information-gathering.

The respondents' challenges in covering issues in IP communities of Benguet have something to do with deadline of the article, topography, IPs' wariness toward the media and culture itself.



## Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study:

1. Majority of the respondents are indigenous people themselves. However, they do not have lengthy-time experience in covering IP-related issues in the communities of Benguet.
2. Most of the issues covered by the respondents in IP communities have something to do with the communities' culture.
3. There were noted differences between covering issues in mainstream communities and that of IP communities.
4. In covering IP-related issues in IP communities, the respondents constantly involve the elders in gathering and writing the stories.
5. A specialized type of skill is needed in covering IP-related issues as most of these issues are sensitive and are sometimes interrelated or interconnected.
6. Baguio-based newspaper journalists who cover IP-related issues in Benguet are sometimes challenged by issues on the province's topography, IPs' distrust on the media, language barrier, cultural barrier and the growing gap between the IPs and the government.

## Recommendations

The following are recommended:

1. Other researchers may want to focus on the possible solutions to the challenges identified by the respondents.
2. Other researchers may want to cover the broadcast aspect of the study.



3. Other researches may want to consider focusing on the study's concept on other IP communities in the region as practices vary from one IP community to another.
4. Findings of the study should be written in monograph to be shared with community development workers and the IPs themselves.



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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## Questions for the Interview

## I. RESPONDENT'S PROFILE

Name (*optional*): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Civil Status: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Highest educational attainment:  
 elementary  
 secondary/high school  
 tertiary/college (*course*): \_\_\_\_\_  
 vocational (*specify*): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ethno-linguistic affiliation (*if any*): \_\_\_\_\_

## II. JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE PROFILE

\*Position in the publication: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \*Number of years of journalism practice involving covering of IP-related issues: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \*Benguet communities visited [in covering IP-related issues]: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What IP-related issue/s was/were you able to cover in the communities of Benguet?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. In conducting interviews with IP communities, is there a standard set of procedures or protocol that you follow?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 How do you usually do the interview? Is it individually or by group?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 How do you approach the person or party involved in a story? Do you directly look for him or do you approach the particular community's *barangay* captain or council of elders?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. In writing an IP-related story, is there a standard set of procedures or protocol that you follow?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are there factors or elements that you consider in angling a story?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. What type of source/s do you usually use in getting/writing a story? Primary or secondary? If such, what is/are this/these?



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Is there a set of codes or procedures that you follow in handling your sources (like the withholding of names and confidentiality issues)?

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5. In paper trails, how do you access or acquire documents related to your story?

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Is there a set of rules that you follow?

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6. What are your positive experiences regarding the gathering/writing of IP-related information in the communities of Benguet?

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How about the negative ones? What are the challenges that you encountered in covering IP-related issues in the communities of Benguet?

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7. What advice can you give your co-media practitioners as well as the young journalists in the gathering/writing of IP-related stories specifically in Benguet?



## APPENDIX B

### Letter for the Interview



Republic of the Philippines  
BENGUET STATE UNIVERSITY  
La Trinidad, Benguet



College of Agriculture  
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION  
Development Communication Society



#### GOALS and OBJECTIVES

The Department exists to:

1. Provide instruction for the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills essential to development communication work;
2. Provide training ground for development communicators who will uphold the ideals and standards of instruction, research and extension in the fields of development journalism, community broadcasting and educational communication;
3. Create innovative alternative communication strategies and opportunities that shall draw the full potentials of learners and practitioners of print, radio, and television.
4. To conduct researches or field studies; and
5. To formulate and implement extension and development programs.

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12 January 2011

**ADAM O. BORJA**  
Associate Editor  
Baguio Chronicle

**Sir:**

Greetings of peace!

I am a fourth year student of Bachelor of Science in Development Communication of Benguet State University. Presently, I am conducting a thesis titled "Journalists and Indigenous Peoples: Practices and Challenges of Selected Baguio-Based Newspaper Journalists in Covering IP-Related Issues in the Communities of Benguet."

In this regard, please allow me to conduct interviews with your staff who have experience and background in covering stories in the communities of Benguet. Rest assured that all information that will be obtained from the interviews will be strictly used for research purposes only.

Thank you very much and God bless.

Sincerely yours,

**RONALYN T. BANAKEN**  
09284152631

Noted:

**FILMORE Y. AWAS**  
Adviser

