

New Caledonia delegation visits



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This past week was an eventful one as we welcomed a delegation from New Caledonia as their advance team visited to discuss our ongoing preparations for the 12th Festival of Pacific Arts in Guam.

New Caledonia is one of three overseas French territories that have confirmed participation at the festival next year. With a population of close to 300,000 people, the indigenous people, the Kanak, have a 3,000-year history and New Caledonia is the second largest land area in Melanesia with just over 700 square miles.

Although given short notice of their visit, our team quickly put together an extensive itinerary for Leila Bouchet, assistant, Ministry of Culture Gender and Citizenship, government of New Caledonia and member of the New Caledonia delegation committee, and Karyl Beronon, member of the New Caledonia delegation committee, which included meetings with Lt. Gov. Ray Tenorio, Speaker Judith Won Pat, and the festival executive committee, as well as the various programming artistic discipline leads. They toured the sites and proposed accommodation venues for the festival.

They also had a chance to meet with cultural practitioners and participate in a floral arts workshop at the CAHA Gallery. Bouchet and Beronon indicated the trip was insightful and they received valuable information about Guam's plans for the festival.

They added that their interaction with the artists held special significance as they got to share and experience a little of what Guam would be offering at FestPac.

They attended the first auditions for performing arts held at the Barrigada Community Center and the opening of the art show at the CAHA Gallery featuring Master Weaver Phillip Sablan and his apprentices, Rita, Lia and Arisa Barcinas, stone carver John Damian, artist David Sablan, and Patricia Taimanglo. Their show continues through Aug. 31.

The visit was very much a two-way exchange as New Caledonia hosted the festival previously and discussions centered on some of the lessons learned from their hosting. It gave us first-hand experience on the language barriers and highlighted the importance of ensuring we have the appropriate number of interpreters during the festival.

English and French are the official languages of the festival. The New Caledonia visit reminded us that although we speak different languages, we are similar in our cultures, as some of the requests included the use of an underground oven, similar to our chahan, for their culinary demonstration. Additional requests included banana leaves for their cooking to line their chahan, coconut leaves for weaving and wood for their carving.

They plan to demonstrate tapa-

making by a traditional master and asked if we could assist in providing the bark from a banyan tree. When informed the banyan tree, our "tronkununu," has very deep spiritual meaning to the Chamorro, they understood, as the Kanak perform a special ceremony prior to any harvest. Imagine a joint cultural ceremony between Guam and New Caledonia for this specific purpose. Our "guelo yan guela" chants interspersed with their ceremony!

We now must consult with our elders if it is acceptable to peel the bark of the tree. We'll keep everyone posted on the progress of this.

In addition to hosting the advance team for New Caledonia, the second FestPac 2016 raffle drawing was held this past Wednesday at the Governor's Cabinet Conference Room at Adelup and \$1,800 was awarded to five winners: Deborah Borja, Tom Pablo and G.C.A. (\$500 each); Al B. Manlucu (\$500); and Dongo (\$1,000). Winners can claim their prizes at CAHA in the Terlaje Building in Hagåtña. As an added incentive, all winning tickets are put back into the raffle bin for more chances to win. Incentive drawings will continue monthly with the final drawing scheduled Dec. 10 for the grand prize of \$100,000. Tickets are \$10 each and available for purchase through the 12th FestPac Coordinating Committee and the Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency. Show your support for FestPac by purchasing a ticket. Who knows, you may be the lucky winner of \$100,000!

Monica Guzman is chair of the Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency, and chair of the Programming Committee of the Festival of Pacific Arts.

