

Rabon is a true inspiration



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Congratulations go out to Master of Chamorro Dance Frank Rabon for once again having the vision and being awarded a grant from the Administration for Native Americans. This will be the seventh grant since 2003 that Rabon has been engaged with and each grant has contributed to the development, preservation and perpetuation of our Chamorro culture.

The first grant focused on strengthening the organizational capacity of the newly formed Pa'a Taotao Tano and building the Chamorro performing arts movements of song, dance and chant in the Marianas through the establishment of the Dinanna Minagof Dance Festival, which is now in its 12th year.

Subsequent grants included apprenticeships, a language assessment survey, documentation of Chamorro songs and chants and cultural arts programs within our most populated villages up north. The new grant will document and teach "kantan Chamorrita," a style of impromptu musical and oral exchange that was prevalent in the early 1900s in Guam.

Since forming Taotao Tano in 1983, his efforts have now grown with 15 guma (houses) representing nearly 1,000 traditional Chamorro dancers, musicians and chanters of all ages. His efforts also included the establishment of Chamorro dance academies along the West Coast and in Japan. His hard work has motivated

other individuals and organizations to research and develop their own perspectives on traditional dance movements and chants. Over the years, Rabon's efforts have been instrumental in creating a renaissance of culture on our island. His work is based on extensive research and is expressive of our affinity and respect for our island's natural attributes and our people's aspirations as a unique culture in Oceania.

Guam has been fortunate to have been represented by Frank and his groups at various FestPacs throughout Oceania, beginning with Tahiti in 1985. His presentations served to underscore our unique cultural identity among all the various island nations and territories that regularly participate.

The 2016 FestPac will be Rabon's eighth festival and there is no doubt that, alongside fellow Master of Chamorro Dance Eileen Meno, who chairs the 2016 Performing Arts group, they will both pour their hearts and souls into ensur-

ing that all the delegations and audiences leave with an understanding of what our Chamorro culture is all about. As Frank puts it, "FestPac will be an awakening of our Chamorro indigenous identity."

Meno is currently overseeing auditions of over 400 applicants for the Performing Arts. Auditions are held from 7 to 9 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Barrigada Community Center. Stop in and show your support!

Highlights for festival

The new Farmers Market in Dededo is close to being open to the public. This will be a much-needed boost to

our burgeoning agricultural industry and a boon for foodies looking for fresh, local ingredients. In preliminary surveys received from the 27 participating countries, those in the culinary arts have expressed their need for fresh ingredients and local food and the new Farmers Market will be a welcome addition. During the Solomon Islands festival, the local farmers market was a favorite place to visit for all the delegations and we should expect the same here in 2016.

The completion of the Guam Museum will be another highlight for the festival. Slated as one of three venues for our visual arts, the Guam Museum and the surrounding park areas are sure to be a favorite gathering place for the delegations between presentations. We will finally have a true monument to our unique history and heritage — a place that we can all visit and experience our rich heritage and traditions.

Congratulations to Frank Rabon and PIPIT on your grant. Congratulations also to the Guam Museum for realizing their vision and biba to our farmers on their new facility. "Maila ya tan fan Dana ya ta susteni yan silences i kutturán i Chamorro siha, i man mapos, pago, yan i man mamaila na teimpo." Let's all join together to sustain and celebrate our Chamorro culture of the past, for the present and for our future!

I would also like to thank Gov. Eddie Baza Calvo for generously donating the proceeds of his birthday celebration to our FestPac efforts. His celebration will take place tonight at the Pacific Star Resort and Spa beginning at 6 p.m. See you all there and biba FestPac!

Monica Okada Guzman is chairwoman of the Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency.

