



## MARCH 2015: UPDATES FROM OUR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION (PAR) ACTIVITIES

### Pastor Manny serves God and people through his brickmaking technology Reported by Jonathan Cranston

Engineering was Pastor Manny Alkuino's love from an early age, but his parents urged him to study agriculture so that he could take charge of the family farm. After earning his degree at the University of the Philippines Los Baños College of Agriculture, Alkuino dutifully returned to Valencia to cultivate corn. But when a seven-month drought caused the loss of two harvests, Alkuino and his wife Joy realized that they needed a sideline source of revenue that would be independent of the uncertainties of farming. They decided to try making bricks.

Alkuino looked for raw materials. Silica and soil are the ingredients that, when mixed together and baked at high temperature, combine by a chemical reaction to create brick. Alkuino's ready source of soil was obvious: the nearby Pulangi river is in a drastic state of siltation, so an unlimited quantity of loose silt can be had for the cost of trucking it up from the river bank. Sourcing the silica proved a bit trickier. Sand is typically used for the silica ingredient, but sand is not a cost-effective option in Valencia, since Bukidnon is a landlocked province. From his agricultural courses at college, Alkuino recalled that rice hulls contain silica, and rice hull is at least as abundant in Bukidnon as sand is in the maritime provinces. After each rice harvest, the farmers rake the hulls into mounds and burn them, dimming the skies of Bukidnon with smoke. Through much trial and error, Alkuino eventually discovered the ideal ratio of river silt to the ash from burnt rice hulls.



At first he was able to make 200 bricks a day, but over the years Alkuino's ingenuity has enabled him to automate much of the process. In one day, he and his crew now produce about 8,000 bricks. "I discovered," he says, "that the first love of a man will come back." Having deferred his engineering dreams to honor his parents by studying agriculture and assuming the management of the farm, he has since discovered abundant employment for his love of inventing.



Pastor Manny Alkuino is a strategic advisor and consultant for PBCI and is the spiritual leader of Bukidnon's PAR Community. In June of 2014 he invited PBCI to help manage and market his company, Sidlak Pinoy, whose motto, "Pinoy Technology for Pinoy Prosperity," presents a vision of indigenous social enterprise that harmonizes with PBCI's hopes for inclusive growth throughout the Philippines. PBCI is grateful for the opportunity to strive alongside Sidlak Pinoy and Pastor Manny in our shared mission to serve God by serving our neighbors.

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. - 1 Cor. 3:11

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## Canadian songwriter and singer Matt Epp visits Coffee For Peace and PeaceBuilders Community

Reported by Salome Haldemann

The last Juno Awards, which took place in Winnipeg, Canada in March 2014, were the scene of a prolific encounter: that of Matt Epp and Willard Metzger. It seems strange that Canadian singer-songwriter Matt Epp, born in a Mennonite family, should meet Willard Metzger, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada (MCC), in a big country-wide music awards event. But as the song goes, it's a small world after all! Matt had been invited for a song he had co-written with Serena Ryder (who won Juno Awards both for Songwriter and Artist of the year). Willard heard him perform and talk about his music at the Songwriter's Circle. He told us: "I fell in love with his beautiful soul!" Fast forward one year of a growing friendship, and in March 2015 Matt Epp was coming to the Philippines to visit Mennonite Church Canada's mission PeaceBuilders Community, Inc (PBCI) and their fair-trade business arm Coffee for Peace.



Matt Epp and Coffee for Peace realized that they had much in common. In Canada, Matt is a musical activist for the First Nation People, and thirsts for justice and peace. This concern shines through his music, through songs like "Metal Bird", "Put it Back" or "There Shall be Peace". In the Philippines, Coffee for Peace stands out by paying a fair price to their partner-farmers, both Indigenous People and Migrants. Coffee for Peace works hand in hand with PeaceBuilders Community to help value and strengthen the Indigenous People's identity, to advocate for their rights, and to call the attention of the church and the country on injustices that are being done to them.



This one-week visit was very busy, and very rich. After a first few days in Manila where Matt met Peace Church, our sister community, he and Willard landed in Davao a Tuesday morning. They were driven to their hotel to drop their bags, and from there went straight to the joined facilities of PBCI's main office and CFP Warehouse. The rest of that day was spent in Purok Pluto, one of CFP's partner-farmers community on Mount Apo. Intensive logging in that area caused the mountain to suffer from severe erosion, affecting the upper communities with droughts and the lower communities with floods. For Coffee for Peace, developing Arabica coffee was both an economic and an ecological move: economic because it supports the growth of the farmer community, ecological as both the coffee trees and the shade trees help hold the soil together and prevent erosion.

The last two days of Matt's stay, a group composed of Matt, Willard, founders Dann and Joji Pantoja, PBCI Information and Communication Team Jonathan, AJ, Kevin and Salome, and Videographer Sam Finlay, went to Bukidnon. They were invited by the Talaandig People, one of the 7 tribes of Bukidnon, to celebrate both the beauty of life and the appointment of one of their Datus – or "Chiefs" – Datu Vic as a senior consultant for PBCI. It was beautiful to see people from different backgrounds, countries and cultures play, dance and laugh together, and gave us all a taste of heaven. Each was embracing their identity while welcoming the other: this is the world the CFP and PBCI want to help building, this is Amoria, the country that Matt Epp sings about.

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