The Ivatan House
Basco, Philippines
Toby Martin

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

The Ivatan House is famous for its resilience to typhoons that whip Batanes, but recent development has seen locals eschewing tradition for modern building methods. Today the process of building a house is only orally transmitted, there are no written or visual documents. The project will build a house by completely traditional means using indigenous materials and cooperative community labor while being documented on video. The resulting structure found in the capitol town serves as cultural center wherein the video will be played to visitors. Video is also distributed to different local schools as a visual teaching tool in their indigenous education program. The success of this project ...
Your idea

This will be the address used to plot your entry on the map.

Street Address
Provincial Capitol Compound
City
Basco
State/Province
Batanes
Postal/Zip Code
Country

Geotourism Challenge Addressed by Entrant
Quality of tourist experience and educational benefit to tourists.

Organization size
Small (1 to 100 employees)

Indicate sector in which you principally work
Tourism-related business

Year innovation began
0

Indicate sector in which you principally work
History, Architecture, Living culture, Destination aesthetics, Indigenous people, Education.

Place your video embed code here from YouTube, Google Video and other video sharing websites. How to embed a video from YouTube.
Paste your code here

Innovation

What is the goal of your innovation? Please describe in one sentence the kind of impact, change, or reform your approach is intended to achieve.

The Ivatan House project constructs an Ivatan House in traditional methods to preserve the heritage for the community and share the cultural significance with tourists.

Please write an overview of your project. Include how your approach supports or embodies geotourism or destination stewardship. This text will appear when people scroll over the icon for your entry on the map located on the competition homepage.

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Explain in detail why your approach is innovative

1. The construction of the house is done by thru the traditional cooperative system where materials and labor are divided amongst the neighbors. In this project’s case, it is a province wide effort, thereby unifying the entire province (of 16,000 pop) thru each municipality’s provision of different components of the construction, making everyone a stake holder.

2. Research and documentation of the project from start to finish provides a visual record of the construction. It becomes a definitive reference for future builds. The video material is also usable for education and marketing.

3. The structure once completed is utilized as a cultural center to exhibit the construction, the architecture, and the lifestyles that accompany the Ivatan House.

Impact

Describe the degree of success you have had to date. How do you measure, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the impact on sustainability or enhancement of local culture, environment, heritage, or aesthetics? How has it transformed or contributed to the
power of place or demonstrated the sustainability of tourism? How does your approach minimize negative impacts?

Over centuries the cultural landscape of the islands of Batanes was formed by its peoples adaptation to the land. They employ many sustainable practices in agricultural land management, in fisheries and in architecture. The adaptation was slowly perfected but recent changes have shown the abandonment of some of these practices particularly in building of the houses. Houses are traditionally built in cooperative fashion, with labor and materials contributed equally by neighbors without the exchange of money. This projects aims to demonstrate the importance of conservation not only of the houses but of the culture that builds them in their tourism. The documentation will preserve the processes in video and will allow them to be transmitted to others in a definitive visual manner keeping the traditions intact.

The province is currently being organized according to their contributions. Certain areas are sources for certain materials: grass for roofing, rocks for structure, lime for mortar, etc. the process is slow, as can be imagined when organizing people from 6 towns, spread over 3 islands that may only be travelled by sea. Research into the processes is underway. site selection is complete.

In what ways are local residents actively involved in your work, including participation and community input? How has the community responded to or benefited from your approach?

The community is involved in the construction aspect and the construction will be done completely by locals. The response is overwhelming, particularly among those who are cognizant on the effect on tourism. The current generations are also very receptive because of the resulting video becoming a means to preserve and transmit their traditions for their kids and future generations, an opportunity they didn't have due to lack of the technology.

How does your program promote traveler enthusiasm, satisfaction, and engagement with the locale?

For the traveler there will be a definitive source of information regarding the Ivatan House and the cultural landscape that produced such houses. It allows for more knowledgeable interaction with locals and greater understanding of the culture as a whole.

Describe how your work helps travelers and local residents better understand the value of the area’s cultural and natural heritage, and educates them on local environmental issues.

The traditional house is the best example of how the Ivatan culture adapted itself to its environment. They built houses of out of indigenous materials and thru cooperative labor to withstand the terrible typhoons that struck them all year long before modern building materials. They employ strict land management thru crop rotation, erosion prevention, communal pastures, etc. They continue to produce and consume only what is needed. Understanding their relationship with nature is embedded in their culture surrounding the house, its architecture, to its materials to its construction.

Sustainability

How is your initiative currently financed? If available, provide information on your finances and organization that could help others. Please list: Annual budget, annual revenue generated, size of part-time, full-time and volunteer staff.

Currently it is financed thru sponsors both from a member of the House of Representatives, and a local corporation. Approx exchange rate is US$1: PhPeso 50; Total Project Budget is PhP 2.5M, we've raised PhP 800,000. the construction group is entirely volunteer, the research (2 members) and documentation (4 members) staff is full-time.

Is your initiative financially and organizationally sustainable? If not, what is required to make it so? Is there a potential demand for your innovation?

The documentation portion is sustainable. We are concurrently working on other projects that will eventually result in documentaries that will help preserve heritage and communicate the viability of combining heritage with innovation to produce compelling tourism products. We just need the projects and the funding to match. For instance, we are conducting an expedition into the largest marshland in the country on traditional dugout canoes to save them from falling into disuse and being traded for easier to build plywood and epoxy boats. the goal of the expedition is encourage people to come out and try it.

All over the Philippines, where there are hundreds of different tribal minority groups there are traditions dying slowly, so yes there is a potential demand, but many of the people who may need it don't even know they do, it is our goal to reach them before its too late.

What are the main barriers you encounter in managing, implementing, or replicating your innovation? What barriers keep your program from having greater impact?

Funding is the greatest need, followed by exposure of the documentaries in more mainstream media, which on local TV, is sadly dominated by soap operas and game shows. Lastly, we want people to get involved with us, to help spread the word, and to help us identify the areas that need our help.

What is your plan to expand or further develop your approach? Please indicate where/how you would like to grow or enhance your innovation, or have others do so.

We with to continue identifying cultural, heritage, aesthetic, natural sites that have potential tourism products, document these and help develop the tourism products to benefit the local communities by driving the income from the products to them as guides, home-stays, and other tourism services.

Also we hope to broaden the appeal of our documentaries, perhaps thru more entertaining content and wider distribution, also to develop media values that increase likelihood and continuity of sponsorships.

The Story

What is the origin of your innovation? Tell the Changemakers and media communities what prompted you to start this initiative.

I first visited Batanes to write a travel piece about it. In my research to produce the article I found out that the most famous component of the Batanes tourist experience, the Ivatan House, was dying a slow death. Several factors were contributing to this: easier and less costly modern building methods and materials, bureaucratic government policies in guide of environmental protection that cause great delays in the gathering of
traditional materials, and the view of some locals that a modern house is more aesthetically pleasing.

I felt that my background in communications and tourism consultancy would make a difference.

Please provide a personal bio. Note this may be used in Changemakers’ marketing material.

I am a communications and tourism consultant, an adventure travel writer and photographer. In a prior communications career, I handled multi-disciplinary communication design work in graphic environmental, multimedia and corporate video for large multinational corporations. My most recent focus has been in geotourism consultancy, by helping local governments develop adventure-, eco-, cultural-, tourism products and communicating their availability through media.

Describe some unique tourist experiences that your approach provides. Be specific; give illustrative examples.

In Batanes all tourists enter thru the main town Basco because of the airport's proximity. The Ivatan House provides a primary stop for the tourists to see an Ivatan House in a complete manner, both the structure and the way it is built. Currently, one can enter houses all over the province but only get snippets of information regarding how they are built. The video also makes for an excellent souvenir to take home and share with those who didn't get the chance to see the place for themselves.

What types of partnerships or professional development would be most beneficial in spreading your innovation?

Integral to the project is the participation of the government by organizing its constituents to work on the project. Also, the broadcast of the final video on a network such as National Geo or discovery would help instill in the people the importance of their culture.

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