



Welcome to KAMLOOPS UNITED CHURCH

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← **Worship Service for March 25 – 5th Sunday in the Season of Lent**

LINK April 1, 2012 →

Raising More than Rice

Posted on [March 29, 2012](#) by [Rose Soneff](#)

Ken and Rose Soneff with their son and daughter were planning a trip to the UNESCO World Heritage Rice Terraces of the Philippines. Coincidentally, looking at a picture from a Fair Trade calendar depicting rice farmers in this area, an idea to visit these farmers was born.

During the 70's, Mary Hensley was a Peace Corp volunteer in the rice terrace area of the Philippines and it left a strong impression on what she would do in the future. She resolved that something must be done on the terraces, the native rice, and cultures of the Cordillera region would pass beyond the tipping point. Mary started Eighth Wonder in the US to market the rice and teamed up with Vicky Garcia, founder and Executive Director of the nonprofit group Revitalize Indigenous Cordilleran Entrepreneurs (RICE) Inc to help the farmers create the Heirloom Rice Project in 2004.

The rice grown for over 2,000 years in this area is usually cultivated and harvested by hand in an organic manner. Historically, tribal groups within these rice terraces also grew fruit, vegetables, and fish to create a sustainable system. Bartering was the primary economic mode until the last 60 years when rice became a commodity. The Ifugao people (the indigenous group) have seen an erosion to their culture, increasing poverty, climate change affecting rice cultivation, and the loss of their young people to more attractive and higher paying urban jobs.

When the Soneffs visited this farm cooperative last December, Rose was surprised that many filipinos were unaware of the heirloom aromatic red, violet, or brown, fragrant or glutinous rice that is grown in this area because of the smaller amount harvested and hesitation to pay the higher prices. On the other hand, low land rice is cheaper because the genetically modified rice can be harvested twice a year rather than once a year, and relies heavily on fertilizers and pesticides for greater yields.

In the early days, Mary and Vicky recruited 30 farmers to form a co-operative model, which is the cornerstone of their success and very different from their previous tribal and individual bartering systems. The success of the co-op model has been an increase to 187 farmers, mostly women who are involved, and spreading to 7 districts. Their struggles and plight intrigued Rose. When she voiced an interest to help, Vicky and Mary suggested supporting training sessions to increase the viability of the cooperative. Funding for this kind of training is difficult to obtain. Mary Hensley has submitted a proposal to Global and Community Action for 135-150 farmers to attend quality control seminars that would bring farmers from rural areas who would otherwise not be able to participate. They have asked for \$1665 US for training materials and supplies which would augment potential support requested from the Philippine Dept of Agriculture. These seminars would be held in April and May.

To Support the co-operative, Global and Community Action Group of KUC will host a fundraising dinner and slide show **Saturday, May 5, 5:30 to 8:30 pm**, featuring filipino food and especially this wonderful rice such as Ulikan Red and Violet Sticky Rice. Fair Trade Kamloops will also provide a helping hand to advertise the event. Tickets are \$25/person for dinner and the slide show, or \$10/person for the slide show only. The tickets will be available from the KUC office and Global Members. If you have any questions about this event, please contact Rose Soneff, at 250-377-6887 or email her at rsoneff@gmail.com

[Raising More than Rice](#)

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Kamloops United Church

Sunday worship at 10 am
Rev. D. Bruce Comrie
Rev. Teri Meyer

Phone: (250) 372-3020

[Directions to KUC](#)

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