

Report on the Multicultural Potluck on 13 November 2009

Thanks to all the volunteers, the CommSci ESL Committee hosted about 50 people at our successful multicultural potluck on November 13, despite the snowy weather. Many attendees expressed enthusiasm about holding future cultural programs.

As slides of previous ESL multicultural events and music from several countries played in the background, Marina LaGrave opened the event by greeting people in many languages. We enjoyed cuisine originating from Ukraine, Japan, Malaysia, Africa, China, Mexico, Venezuela, Native America and other places. Several people dressed in their native costumes. A display table featured family pictures, books and decorative objects from various regions of the world. People told life stories about their homelands and acquainted us with unique aspects of their culture.



Bob Tan talked about the devastation experienced by his home community in Indonesia after a recent earthquake in Pariaman, West Sumatra, Malaysia (<http://pariaman.org/>). Wes Wildcat showed us photos and artifacts representing his role as a hereditary Native American chief of the Euchee tribe. Jielun Sun shared some of her difficult experiences as a child during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, saying matter-of-factly that everyone there had similar stories. Raisa Leifer spoke of her love of her native land and sang a song by a beloved Ukrainian poet. Mary Golden noted that in the U.S. we are all immigrants, whether we arrived yesterday or 30,000 years ago, and spoke of her mixed Scots-Irish and Cherokee heritage. Marina, who grew up in France and Venezuela, said that when her large and far-flung family gathers, "it's like being at the United Nations." She sang and played the cuatro, a four-stringed Venezuelan instrument, and showed "Tocar y Luchar", an award-winning music education documentary from Venezuela (<http://www.tocaryluchar.com>). Tim Barnes



spoke of being one of a small number of African Americans in Colorado and of a visit to West Africa, where he was overwhelmed by the friendliness and generosity of those he met.

Hearing the personal stories of people we work with but rarely get a chance to know was very moving. Thanks to E&O's support and donations from participants, we have a little money left for future activities. We look forward to seeing you all there.

We are also planning some writing and speaking workshops for 2010. Please send us your suggestions on what we can do to improve language skills and enhance cultural awareness and appreciation of the diversity of UCAR/NCAR/UCP staff.

ESL committee