

## **Learning About Mountain Cultures during IMD 2016**

International Mountain Day at Utah Valley University (UVU) was a very insightful and interesting event. Starting with small presentations from UVU students involved in the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a very interesting presentation on Congo by a professor and two of his students, a presentation from Mehak Asad on the Kalash culture in Pakistan and ending with two of her short films, one about the Kalash and another the story of two young kids hoping to help their mother. This was a full event that took several hours, however it was definitely time well spent as I was able to learn more about the world through the experiences of students around me.



*Jacques Baraketse, UVU student speaks about research project in Congo before the audience*

I was not expecting to be so enthralled about the presentation on the Congo, however I found myself being very interested in what our presenters, Dr. Patience Kabama with two of his students Jacques Baraketse and Sam Kabwika, had to say about Congo. I was not expecting to learn so much about Congo during this presentation. My attention was completely sucked in as I

learned about Congo through the experience that these three gentlemen had in their life and in their studies. Learning about a community that completely sustains itself and keeps peace within its boundaries even though there is war and conflict all around them was fascinating to me. Dr. Patience was incredibly knowledgeable and was very interesting to listen to and learn from.

Mehak Asad is a very sweet and personable woman, I am grateful that I was able to briefly meet her before she presented at UVU. She was dressed in the clothing that women in the Kalash culture wear, this made her presentation more engaging as the audience was able to see in person what their clothing looked like and how intricate the embroidery work is on the dresses. As Mehak was presenting about the Kalash culture I was very intrigued by how this small community of people are able to live their life and sustain themselves enough to keep going. Mehak did a very good job of putting into perspective the daily lives of the people in the community and answered many of my questions before I had the chance to ask them. During her presentation I found myself thinking about how American people think of Native American cultures. It seems to me that the Pakistani people have more respect and cherish their old cultures more in comparison to how American citizens perceive Native American culture.

After Mehak's presentation, she showed her short documentary film titled *Daughter of Kalash*. It is clear that Mehak was willing to do whatever she needed to do to be able to show the world what a day in this culture looks like, starting with young boys and girls at school to elderly women who make their clothing and beautiful beaded headdresses to sell. It was incredibly fascinating to me to see that this culture is still, even though money is incredibly tight, makes their living off of these handmade goods. It is clear that this culture is only still around today because the people who live in this community of people are working very hard to continue their

way of life and doing everything they can to pass their culture down to their children for them to carry on in future generations.



**Judy Torsak, Daughter of Deann Torsak, President of the Sustainable Mountain Development Club at UVU tries Kalash women headwear**

Taking a step outside of the Kalash culture, Mehak decided to premier another short film that she did about two young kids helping their mother during a time their father was in jail. Needing money to bail her husband out of jail, these two kids were sent to the mountains to gather their sheep and bring them back home. Mehak told an incredible story through her short film about these two young kids. It was fascinating for me to be able to see two very different ways of life of people who live in the same county. Mehak did a wonderful job presenting, I hope that I will be able to see any future projects that she creates.

*Kiersten Dumas, Vice President of the Sustainable Development Club at UVU*