

# ISKL selamanya

*Remembering 40 Years of  
Malaysia Week*

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**Tackling the Covid-19 Puzzle**  
**Dr Elena Azizan ('05)**

*Journey from the Istana to  
Ampang Hilir*





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more than ever,  
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*"I'm glad to be able to give back a little bit. I'm a proud panther, a proud member of the ISKL community."*  
Matt Nobles ('02)

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The Thomas Family

*"ISKL has been the highlight of our kids international school experience spanning six countries. The dedication by faculty and staff is unparalleled."*  
Richard De Rouse (2020)

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## ISKL Selamanya

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*Once a Panther,  
Always a Panther*



Selamat Datang (Welcome) to ISKL Alumni's new magazine, ISKL Selamanya!

Why Selamanya? In Bahasa Melayu, selamanya means forever and that's the way we like to think about everyone, from former students, parents, teachers and staff, who have studied, worked, or been part of our community at ISKL. Each one is part of our ISKL Alumni family, forever.

For this first summer edition (initially in e-version) we're featuring one of ISKL's favorite institutions, Malaysia Week. Who better to tell its story than Karen Palko, another ISKL institution who has steered Malaysia Week for 31 of its 40-year history. I know from firsthand experience just how wonderful these Malaysia Week adventures are, having been a parent helper on three. You can read about my adventures as well on Page 17. This year, 2020, is the very first time Malaysia Week has been cancelled, but it will return next year, just as amazing as ever.

This magazine is brimming with news from our ISKL alumni around the world, including Dr. Elena Azizan ('05) who is working at the forefront of Covid-19 research in Kuala Lumpur. We also hear from the organisers of this January's historic Utopian Visions Reunion about how the inspired teaching of the late Mr. Buddy Burniske, their Grade 10 English teacher, has influenced the course of their lives. They reveal why it was so important to return to KL and visit the skybridge of the Petronas Twin Towers at exactly 2pm on January 2, 2020.

We were fortunate to host some wonderful reunions before Covid-19 caused the cancellation or postponement of so many planned events. I hope you enjoy seeing some familiar faces in our photo galleries. We're becoming quite adept at

organizing virtual events these days, including the virtual Senior Assembly held in the last week of school for our graduates, and will do whatever necessary to ensure we continue to provide opportunities for our Alumni to get together.

Our new Head of School, Rami Madani has had a challenging first year in the job, but maintains his unwavering optimism. Don't miss our profile article on Page 12. The impact of Covid-19 in Malaysia has also meant our Class of 2020 has missed out on many of the traditions of their senior year, like prom, in-person graduation, and even the annual post-school trip. Senior leader, Ryan Lim, also shares his insights into the rollercoaster year that was on Page 24.

You may have fond memories of attending our former ISKL campuses - with all their idiosyncrasies! ISKL stalwart, Katie Milton, takes us on a journey down memory lane ending with our move to the new Ampang Hilir campus in 2018.

A huge thank you to ISKL Alumna and current relief teacher, Ayesha Zulkifly ('06) who volunteered to design this magazine. I'm sure you will agree she did an amazing job!

Please share your thoughts about this, our first issue of ISKL Selamanya, at [alumni@iskl.edu.my](mailto:alumni@iskl.edu.my). We would also love to know your news and any ideas you may have for future features.

Happy reading and remember - Once a Panther, Always a Panther!

Lynette MacDonald  
Director of Development and Alumni Engagement

# Once a Panther

Our ISKL Alumni family is an incredible mix of generations building wonderful lives all around the world. Our pre-Covid-19 calendar was full of reunions, big and small, cosy and rowdy! Unfortunately, some planned events have been postponed, but I'm sure we'll be back together, in some way, soon.

## Winter in Ottawa February 8, 2020

Proving that ISKL Alumni are a hardy bunch, a group of enthusiastic Panthers got together to skate Ottawa's famous Rideau Canal in minus 18 degrees Celsius in February. Organised by Jessica May ('16) and mum Michelle, this is ISKL Alumni's first ever winter-themed event, but unlikely to be the last.

The full-day event included ice skating (decked out in cosy ISKL Alumni scarves), hot cocoa and beaver tails, evening drinks at one of Ottawa's famous ice bars, and a good thaw out at dinner. It's hard to imagine a greater contrast with the steamy jungle environment of Malaysia, but certainly shows that the Panther spirit thrives wherever you are. Joining for the evening, David Chernushenko ('80), brought along his 1978 yearbook - a real conversation starter. Michelle says, "(I) Definitely think entrance to any future event is a yearbook in hand - it made for a lot of laughs! And a great walk down memory lane."

## CNY in London and Cosy Edinburgh January 2020

Great to see our Alumni living in London keeping alive a tradition started by ISKL's graduating class of 2015 - the annual Chinese New Year dinner. Isabella Glanznig ('17) took the lead this year, bringing together ISKL Alumni for a traditional CNY dinner - minus the Yee Sang.

ISKL Alumni in Edinburgh, Scotland, plus Oliver Henning ('17) visiting from Amsterdam and Charlie MacDonald-Butler ('18) dropping in from Australia, found a cosy local pub for a casual get-together.





## Swimming Reunion December 13, 2020

ISKL's Alumni Swimming "family" met poolside on the evening of December 13 to celebrate ISKL's long and proud swimming history. ISKL's swim club, now known as the Aqua Panthers, began as the Aqua Kudas (Sea Horses) and then the Piranhas. It was with the move to our new campus in 2018 that Aqua Panthers was adopted.

Former swimmers, along with their parents and coaches, were treated to a very special swim meet, featuring present Director of Aquatics and former Olympic swimmer, Coach George Carpouzis, along with our Varsity Coaches and some of our brave Alumni swimmers. For some of our guests, it was the first time they had seen ISKL's impressive 50m pool, a big step up from the 25m pools at the Ampang and Melawati campuses.

The evening was an opportunity to recognise not only those who competed for ISKL, but also the parents who spent so much time and energy supporting our swimmers, including running the Piranhas club prior to the move to the new campus.

## Alumni Forum November 7, 2019

How do ISKL's Millennial Alumni feel about the school and want to stay connected? That was the topic of our very first Alumni Forum on November 7 last year. The gathering of Alumni born between 1980 and 1994 brought together two very interesting "generations" of ISKL Alumni, those who graduated around the turn of the century for whom Y2K and Wawasan 2020 were front of mind, and those who entered university and the workforce post the 2008 economic crisis.

Gathering at the Epson Commons in the High School science wing of campus, the evening was also an opportunity to introduce this group to Head of School, Rami Madani, who shared his vision for ISKL. They then broke into focus groups to discuss their experience of ISKL as a student, what gives them pride in being ISKL Alumni, and the values they developed at ISKL. A huge pleasure to welcome this energetic group to campus to share their memories and look to the future.



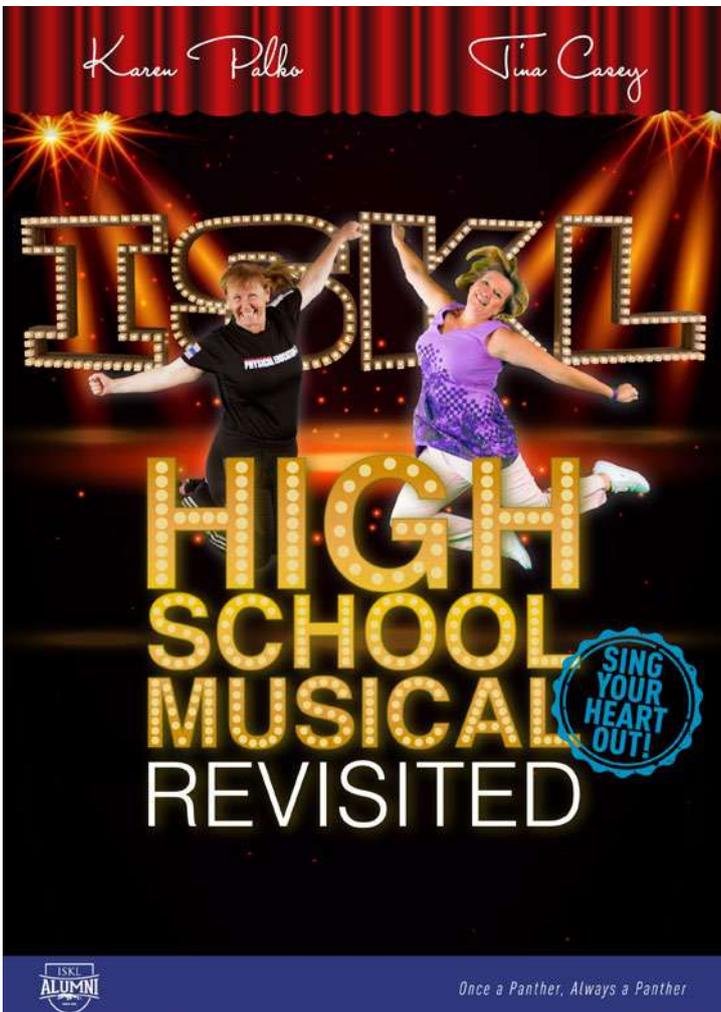


## Gala Reunion December 20, 2020

We all know that ISKL has talent, and that was on full display at our annual Gala Reunion in December. With the theme of “High School Musical Revisited”, this cabaret-style event was an opportunity to showcase the incredible talents of our Alumni who graciously volunteered to reprise their favorite performances. The stellar lineup included performances from favorites such as Beauty and the Beast, Hamilton, Miss Saigon, Anything Goes and, of course, High School Musical.

Close to 100 guests of all ages enjoyed the ambiance of the evening on the Robert B. Gaw Theatre terrace, reminiscing about the many unforgettable High School musical productions over the years, and catching up with old friends and colleagues. Once the official program finished, an open mic session revealed even greater depths of talent - or raw courage - as others took to the stage on a night to remember.







## Parent Alumni Soiree October 24, 2019

What would ISKL be without the amazing mums and dads who supported their children, and the school, over the generations? Our first Parent Alumni Soiree on , a celebration of these most important members of our extended Alumni family, was held on the rooftop of the Elementary School wing, with the stunning KLCC skyline in the background. Recently coined Parent Alumni, Cathy Thomas and Michelle May, helped organize a beautiful event that brought together former ISKL Board members, Faculty and our wonderful former PTA members and volunteers.

For some who hadn't seen each other for years and had not visited the new campus, it was a chance to catch up on news, share photographs of family, and reconnect with their ISKL family. Parent Alumna Judy McClusky summed up so many guests' thoughts about the importance of the event saying, "For many of us, Kuala Lumpur is our home now and staying in touch with this group of people is important for us as our extended families are not here."



“ (I) Definitely think entrance to any future event is a yearbook in hand - it made for a lot of laughs! And a great walk down memory lane. ” Michelle May, Parent Alumni



Do you have reunion plans? Is there a virtual get-together you would like some help to orchestrate? Do you need help finding former classmates, friends or colleagues? We are always here to support our ISKL Alumni students, parents, faculty and staff to plan reunions of all types and sizes.

Let us know how we can help by emailing [alumni@iskl.edu.my](mailto:alumni@iskl.edu.my).

See all the photos from our reunions this year [here](#).



# Utopian Visions

One visionary teacher, one challenge, one extraordinary reunion.

Twenty four years is a rather generous homework deadline, but such was the case for our Grade 10 English assignment given on the last day of class back in 1996. The assignment was part of a Utopian Visions class unit set by English teacher, Buddy Burniske.

At 2pm on 2 January 2020, at the exact time specified by Mr. Burniske, members of that original English class completed the assignment, meeting on the Skybridge of the Petronas Twin Towers. We were there to reflect on whether Malaysia had realised Wawasan 2020 (Vision 2020) set by PM Mahathir back in the 1990s, and if our own projections for the country as teenagers in 1996 were right.

## What was Wawasan 2020?

The 1990s was boomtime in Malaysia. The economy was roaring, infrastructure was being built at breakneck speed, and Wawasan 2020 (Vision 2020) was set by PM Mahathir for Malaysia to become a developed country by 2020.

At ISKL, Mr. Burniske was the first to introduce the internet into the classroom in 1996; we



used it to exchange visions for the world with other students from Europe and North America. Our Grade 10 English class was the very first to include tutorials on how to use listservs and proper email etiquette.

## A Visionary Thinker

Little did we know at the time that what Mr Burniske introduced to us was the future and the foundation for us as students moving into the 21st century. The tasks he set opened our eyes to what was and what could be.

Mr. Burniske was not just a teacher. "He always pushed me to do better and made me believe I could do better," Farrah Vivien

“We quickly began to realize that Mr. Burniske’s project meant more than just a school reunion!”

Raguet says of her corrected homework full of red pen marks and underlined mistakes. “Back then it horrified me but now, as an adult, I realize the dedication it took to spend time on each student’s work and give us constructive feedback.”

Mr. Burniske encouraged us to set our vision and to think through different viewpoints. Looking back at the Utopian Visions we wrote in our groups, we were already thinking of the long-term detrimental effects of burning fossil fuels, renewable sources of energy, new ways of living and online dating, the misuse of technology, its consequences on society and the responsibility and empowerment technology brings.

His impact as a teacher was celebrated long after his passing in 2006, as we discovered through his work in the University of Hawaii, Manoa where he lectured in the College of Education and where each year a Burniske Award and Endowment is given.

### No Ordinary Reunion

It was September 2019, less than four months away from the planned bridge meeting, and a few of us in KL realized we could not just see if people would show up. With the support of the ISKL Alumni Department, our plans to meet on the skybridge took shape, and we were introduced to experts such as Sohail Inayatullah, an ISKL alumna and leading international Futures Studies advisor, as well as Dr Azhari Karim, a former Malaysian senior diplomat during the time

of the original Wawasan 2020 project. Both agreed to speak at an evening event showcasing the Utopian Visions project and which was to be livestreamed for those unable to attend. We quickly began to realize that Mr. Burniske’s project meant more than just a school reunion!



The afternoon meet up on the skybridge brought together over 15 alumni and some family members as well. We felt like kids again on an exciting school trip! For some of us living in KL, despite ample opportunity beforehand, we had waited until this day to visit the skybridge. It was an emotional gathering which we followed with tea and another of Mr. Burniske’s assignments, a discussion on the book, “The Bridge of San Luis Rey”, led by former ISKL teacher Clare Khairuddin. Twenty-four years later and some of us still managed to procrastinate and leave the reading assignment until the very last minute!

Joining us for the livestreamed evening event were our former classmates as well as Mr. Burniske’s family and friends around the world. As Jason Welker (‘98) says, “I have thought about and imagined this reunion for almost 22 years! [I] Kinda feel like we’re all able to connect via this bridge of technology despite not all of us being able to be on the actual bridge today!”

### A Powerful Message

Mr. Burniske asked us tough questions that challenged our values, pushing us to think further and to dream bigger. Although our class discussions seemed trivial and inconceivable at that time, today, many of us now working as health professionals, policy makers, or teachers are asked these same difficult questions everyday.

We hope that teachers today will use Mr. Burniske’s teaching techniques as a blueprint for their lesson plans. He gave us homework that was literally due in 25 years!

Our message for today’s students is your time is right now. Believe that you and your ideas are worthy and that it can help shape the future. Mr. Burniske asked us what our utopian visions were two decades ago. We can’t help but wonder how different the world would be if we had acted on them immediately.



Marilyn Yim, Dr Hana Aziz, Scott Griffiths and Farrah Vivien Raguet (‘98)  
(From the G10 Yearbook)



*Optimism*

# *Unlimited*

In his first year as Head of School at ISKL, Rami Madani has been in the unenviable position of having to close the campus not once, but twice. First the haze, then Covid-19, provided enormous challenges for ISKL and its new leader, but Rami is not one to be daunted!

"I felt a huge sense of optimism." Rami Madani, reflecting on his first day as Head of School at ISKL, back in July 2019 which for many of us feels like a whole world away.

To say that the 2019-2020 academic year has been a rollercoaster seems almost an understatement. For Rami, that sense of optimism has guided him through unprecedented times for ISKL.

Back to day one. Rami muses that his outlook was to limitless possibilities and potential for a school community he was part of for 11 years prior to taking on the head of school role, first as an IB Mathematics teacher, then Director of Teaching and Learning, steering curriculum and teacher development. "I had plans I wanted to put in motion; I didn't feel I needed to wait."

Those plans revolved around challenging everyone at ISKL, from staff and faculty, to students as well, to learn, serve our school's vision and to constantly improve, believing that each of us exists to make conditions better for all.

Taking inspiration from some of ISKL's former heads, notably Dr. Richard Krajczar (1989-1996) and William Powell (2000-2006) who oversaw significant periods of development in the culture of learning, Rami believes his role is to provide a vision, then to work collaboratively with the entire community to achieve it. Of his predecessors, he recalls, "They were amazing leaders. They were people centered, connected, they challenged people and the school as a whole, and they defined the direction for the school."

Empowering people to travel that journey together is the key to success.

Rami speaks of "we" not "I". He says, "To be successful, we must have collective efficacy and high expectations. It's no use having star performers in your team, if the team isn't all on board on the journey. And people, adults as well as students, must be accountable for their contribution, but within a culture of empathy and care."

So has the Covid-19 campus closure and many restrictions challenged that optimism and vision? In short, not at all. Rami explains, "Covid-19 has

quickly. Decisive action based on sound judgement has allowed ISKL to continue to provide the highest level of care and support for the community. He says, "We need time to make decisions because of the complexities and nuances, but we have had to be very decisive. We developed our matrix for how we would respond to the pandemic, and we've been decisive about how we have implemented it. Our team is working on so many contingencies, always focused on providing the very best learning environment possible and ensuring student well-being. Sometimes, it's plan A, B and even C. I am always amazed by their tireless dedication."

*"Covid-19 has augmented everything we are - our strengths and our challenges."*

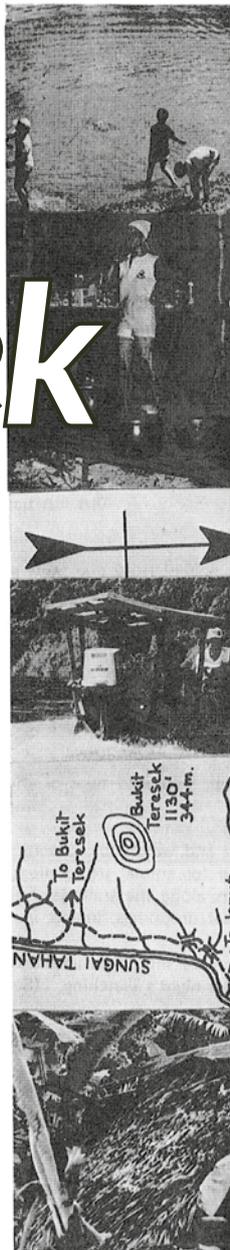
augmented everything we are - our strengths and our challenges. Or strength is the community, our amazing faculty and staff who continue to work and support each other day after day because that's what we do. But we do have those challenges and it's an opportunity to face them, particularly those around streamlining our systems and becoming more agile in remote environments as well as on campus. It's true that the challenges make us stronger when we face them together. And that's exactly what we have done here at ISKL."

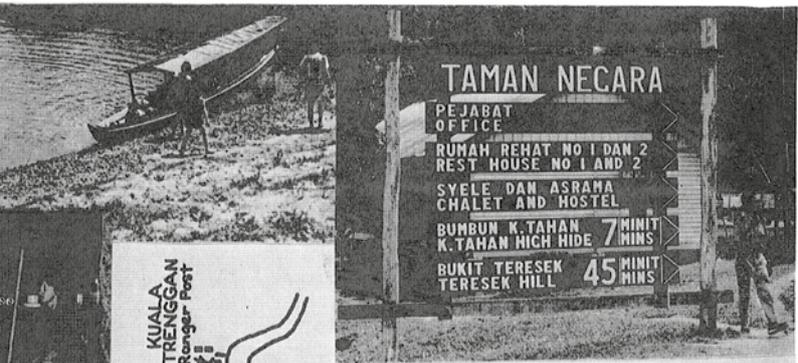
While overseeing ISKL's path during the pandemic Rami has also learned about himself, especially that his natural thoughtfulness must also be tempered with awareness of the importance of making decisions

As this academic year comes to a close, all contingencies are being considered for August. Rami acknowledges there will be challenges, especially with uncertainties over enrollments and related financial matters, but he is also excited for ISKL's future, particularly its new bespoke High School learning programs, PRAXIS 2030 and Pursuits. He says, "There is such power in providing our students with opportunities now to develop passion and competencies in areas that will make the world a better place." Rami continues, "Traditional systems aren't designed for all learners to be successful. Our innovative programs are the future of learning."

# More than a Week

Malaysia Week is so much more than a trip; it's an ISKL institution. Who better to share her memories, than Karen Palko, Malaysia Week coordinator and another much loved ISKL institution.





Disrupting a date

The cave was real interesting but there was tons of Bat guano which was very slippery but we saw lots of bats, frogs, and rats.

By Marc Thomas

We also saw two cave racers which one was eating a bat, a frog which was bigger than a foot stretched out, and other animals that was a cross between a spider and a scorpion. It was an interesting creature that was about three inches long and carried it's babies on its back.

By Joel Page

I even managed to stick my hand in some very nice and appetizing bat stuff.

By Pauline Smith

Outlets

I really enjoyed staying in Taman Negara. I got lost when I expected.....hahaha!

David Thait

It was fun, but it's time to go home.....

Marc Gagliano

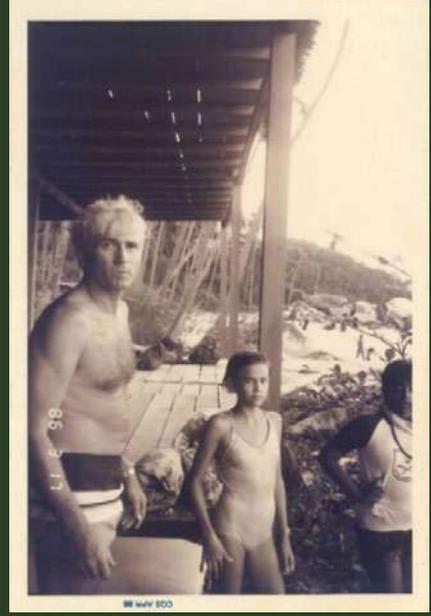
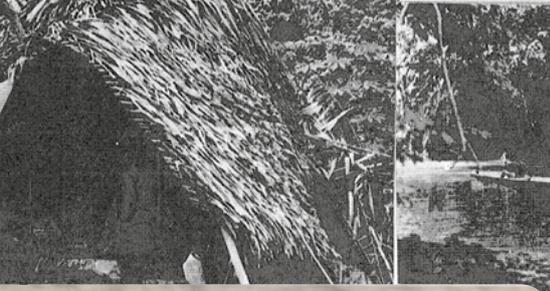
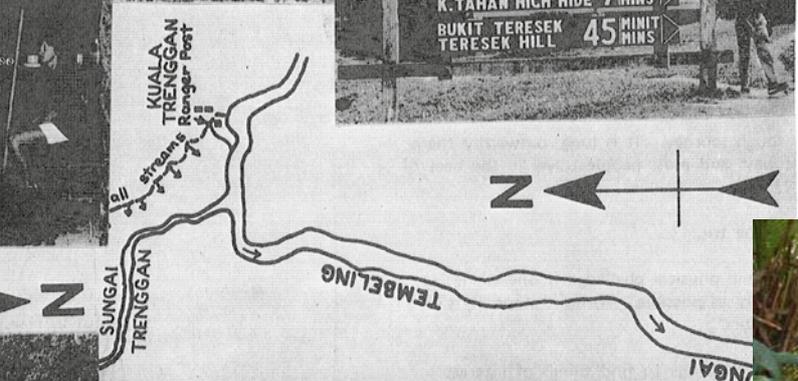
I woke up before and we finished our watch. It was only an hour and twenty minutes instead of two hours. We probably would have stayed up the full two hours since we had some pressure with us.

Joel Page

The hide

Last night we went to a hide. The hide was built about 30 feet off the ground, had eight beds, and a large open window along one side where you watch from. The air on a bench and every ten minutes or so if you hear a sound you shine your lights on it. They say that at about 1:30 a.m., I fell off the top bunk. Apparently, I wasn't hurt since I climbed right back up and went to sleep again. I don't remember a thing.

To watch for the animals, we divided in five groups to take 2 hour shifts alone there was 21 of us. Marcus and I had the 11:00-1:00 a.m. shift. The people in the shift before us went to sleep at about 7:11. They slept until 11:20 when they woke up. I woke up before, and we finished our watch. It was only an hour and twenty minutes instead of two hours since we had some pressure with us.



I remember vividly a Grade 6 boy who was sleeping on the beach (not in a tent) for the first time in his life and looked up to the night sky where he saw hundreds of millions of stars. He promptly took out his camera to take a picture and in that one instant the camera flash took away all the stars leaving him in inconsolable tears. He cried about how beautiful it was and that he just wanted to 'share the experience' with his mom.

If you were a student at ISKL during your Middle School years then you were sure to have experienced one of the highlights of every Middle Schooler's year... Malaysia Week! Each year, except this year due to the coronavirus, Middle School students have headed off to remote corners of Malaysia to learn more about our host country Malaysia, and to experience it in new, often novel ways. Students hike, cycle, camp, kayak, cook and fend for themselves in ways that few other students in this age group ever experience. Being taken away from all technology for a week allows them to appreciate the wonders of nature and the power of teamwork during a week in the wild, Malaysian style.

## Humble Beginnings

Originating as a special trip that happened in January (between first and second semesters), Intersession was started by then Middle School Principal Chip Barder. Designed to be a week-without-walls type annual program, the purpose was to provide alternative approaches to academic learning. "Having the opportunity to immerse themselves into Malaysian culture, history and geography and explore potential service opportunities installed a love for Malaysia that was a core goal and that alumni connect with if



and when they eventually leave Malaysia," writes Chip.

It wasn't all smooth sailing. Chip continues, "We had our moments when we wondered if we should continue. Some major injuries including broken bones, severe fevers, and leech and other bug bites gave us pause. But in the end, we did our best to ramp up safety each year and kept the program going. I can honestly say that the creation of the ISKL Middle School which included the development of the Intersession/ Malaysia Week program remains a highlight of my 47 years career as a professional educator."

## Intersession Becomes Malaysia Week

The first nine years of Intersession involved teachers planning their own trips with a central office coordinator organizing busing and housing. That's where I came in! I am an avid recreationalist and jumped at the chance to take over the program in 1989 when there were 212 students and nine total sites. I have been coordinating the program for the past 31 years

and have brought structural changes and opportunities that have helped move Malaysia Week along through a variety of iterations, changing up the program, but maintaining the original goals which haven't changed from inception. There is nothing quite like witnessing the exact moment when a student is able to light their own fire with just a flint and knife or when a student sees a leatherback turtle swimming next to them in the ocean. That thrill of discovery is a powerful force that makes me want to keep offering these experiences year after year. In 2019 we had 22 Sites and a total of 416 students!

## Three Unique Experiences

Whether it's a Rainforest or Ocean site, there is certainly a variety of experiences on offer. Malaysia Week is designed for students to explore Malaysia's beautiful undersea panorama as well as its oldest rainforests. For students lucky enough to experience a third year, there are several other unique and novel experiences: Survivor Island or our more 'Outward Bound' type experiences like the Langkawi Wilderness Adventure where students hike, cycle, abseil and sea kayak, pitching tents each night at a new site. Students get to choose their challenge level and we encourage them to go outside of their comfort zone. The value of programs like Malaysia Week is undisputed. Research indicates that our youth today do not develop the same type of

*"It is a terrifying and exciting venture to send almost 600 of our students, faculty and parents on a five-day adventure into the wilds of the Malaysian rainforests and ocean ecosystems."* Peter Casey, MS Principal

relationship with the environment that came so naturally to their parents and grandparents without the added impetus of a 'novel experience, risk and discovery.'

For many students, it's a week of firsts. "This was the first time I saw an actual rafflesia, the first time I went rafting on bamboo, and the first time I met Orang Asli people." says Sahana, Grade 7. Learning how to light a fire with no matches, sleeping on the beach under the stars, cycling through kampungs, fishing from a kelong in the middle of the sea, discovery diving, jetty jumping, rappelling off an 80 meter cliff...the list of first time experiences reads like the incredible program it is. Beyond the adventure experiences, all students experience personal challenges as well as amazing personal growth.

It's the same sense of wonder that older Alumni remember. Renata Tapia ('93) recalls, "Lumut was the best experience I've ever had and now that I will never have again. Rowing to an island, sleeping in tents and being afraid of bats, or that a snake might crawl inside our tent at any time...where ordinary people do extraordinary things!" Laurel Radcliffe ('94) agrees, "One of my best memories was floating down the river rapids in Taman Negara. No boat, no raft, just kids in life jackets with tennis shoes on trying to avoid getting our bums bruised and not drown! We had no fear. And taking turns in the lookout at night waiting for a tiger to show up. Oh well...a tapir will do, instead."



## Leeches, Beaches, Screeches - Oh My!

Whether it's a leech that got through your carefully planned leech sock protection or a sea urchin or jellyfish sting, the creepy crawlies on each site feature prominently in each student's Malaysia Week memories. Outdoor experiences typically go hand in hand with a level of risk. Developing a long standing relationship with vendors has allowed the program to continue these novel experiences over the years, with a minimum of risk. We now even have ISKL Alumni giving back as Malaysia Week vendors!

Michael Grossman ('09) runs one of our successful SCUBA Diving sites on Pulau Tioman. How is that for a full circle experience? Michael enthuses, "It's a blast working with ISKL again! I honestly love running the Malaysia Week trips. I run them as if I were a kid going on them again. Today, as a business owner, ISKL helped build my communications skills, my ability to adapt to new situations and to better understand new cultures. I am a better leader today because of ISKL."

Timothy Chavez ('84) is another who has experienced Malaysia Week from different perspectives. He explains, "I was fortunate, not only did I get to participate in the very first "Intersession", I was able

## Malaysia Week Memories

Survivor Island, Pulau Tioman Discovery Dive and Langkawi Wilderness Adventure. I've been fortunate to experience the full Malaysia Week trifecta! The role of a parent helper, dealing with scratches and bruises, curfews and personalities, is not a glamorous one, but it is certainly one I will always cherish. This opportunity to tag along and explore the wonders of Malaysia with a bunch of bright eyed tweens and early teens is almost too good to be true.

If I had to choose favorite moments and memories, there are three. Firstly, the sight of fully clothed children with backpacks being thrown overboard as we were unceremoniously "shipwrecked" off Pulau Acheh, the start of our Survivor Island adventure. Secondly, again from Survivor Island, waking to the sound of gentle waves lapping just meters away from my feet after a night sleeping under the stars. Finally, the true grit and determination of the 6th Graders finishing a six kilometer sea kayak off Langkawi and then, after just a gulp of lukewarm water, beginning to set up camp, including raising 28 tents, digging the toilet and cooking dinner.

They are memories of a lifetime, even for me.

Lynette MacDonald

to participate as a Senior (student chaperone) and again as pseudo-staff chaperone. To be given the opportunity to explore different parts of Malaysia (and Singapore in my day) "in the wild"... Wow!"

From the Langkawi leech march in the late 80s, when each student had upwards of 30 leeches per person, to the Ulu Perak cumulative 400+ leech bites for the entire group, those little blood suckers are one of the most exciting experiences of any student's rainforest memories. A close second would be massive spiders and a distant third is the typical snake encounter experience. One of my all time favorite comments is, "Wow! I never knew the rainforest could be louder than a Middle School party." It is an awe inspiring experience to be sleeping in a tent and listening to nature's concert throughout the dark night in the oldest rainforests in the world.

On ocean sites it's often the jellyfish, sea lice and sea urchin stings that dominate students' memories, but are soon forgotten when they get the chance to see the wonder of Malaysia's coral reefs for the first time, a shark sighting or a chance to swim with giant turtles. Students come home with stories to tell. And, oh my, the stories do come out!

## Minggu Malaysia... Selamanya

As ISKL continues to grow, so does Malaysia Week! Before MW 2020 was corona-cancelled, our numbers were upwards of 460 students. Middle School Principal Peter Casey says, "It is a terrifying and exciting venture to send almost 600 of our students, faculty and parents on a five-day adventure into the wilds of the Malaysian rainforests and ocean ecosystems. Of course, we have the bumps and bruises of both

*“ It is an awe inspiring experience to be sleeping in a tent and listening to nature's concert throughout the dark night in the oldest rainforests in the world. ”*

body and soul during these adventures but our students come back more confident, more compassionate and more appreciative of the world that they live in and all they have. May this year be the only year we cannot provide this life changing experience for our students.”

After 40 years, Malaysia Week basically remains unchanged. The amount and depth of learning that occurs before, during and after is truly remarkable. Students are knee deep in this learning experience and use the School-wide Learning Results (SLRs) as survival tools. They enthusiastically do everything we encourage them to do in their classroom learning. They take risks. When confronted with a problem they figure it out. They work effectively with others and come away a little more tired but a lot more proud of what they have learned and accomplished. These are lessons that they will carry with them forever.

I recall being on a site when it started raining and the students asked if they could just experience standing still in the rain. It dawned

on me that we never let these types of experiences happen - we always call students in from the rain. Students crave those types of experiences and, despite world-wide trends to scale back school adventure activities because of risk factors, I have always pushed for more novel experiences for our Malaysia Week sites.

What keeps me doing this year after year? Whenever I encounter Alumni who went on Malaysia Week I always get an earful of how put out they were, how they couldn't drink soft drinks or have their phones with them. Then they proceed to tell me about all the hardships and difficult experiences they had on site, including admitting any naughty behavior that they thought I wouldn't have known about. But they ALWAYS end their stories with "the best experience ever!"



Karen Palko,  
Malaysia Week  
Coordinator and  
ISKL Faculty





Showcasing the ISKL Senior Awards, recognizing past recipients, and the Class of 2020 winners.

## Hee Won Bakh Award Michael Anthony George ('10)

"It is only with the benefit of time that I have been able to fully appreciate how lucky and privileged we were to attend high school at ISKL and to interact with so many peers from different countries and cultures. I did not recognize how much I had learned, and that carrying that knowledge with me in the years has shaped and continues to shape the way I view my place in the world." Michael Anthony George ('10) with his message to this year's recipient of the Hee Won Bakh Award which he won in 2010. Hee Won Bakh

('94) was killed in the Highland Tower tragedy in December 1993. She was an active and much-respected student and this award is given to a student who contributes to community and cultural understanding.

Michael was a stellar student who went on to study Government and Economics at Harvard University, graduating in 2014. Selected for a Marshall Scholarship to the UK, he went on to study at the London School of Economics and the University of Oxford.

Now working at the Gates Foundation on their Covid-19

emergency response, Michael says one of his proudest achievements at ISKL was as President of the International Club in 2010 when he started the Walk for Children which raised RM78,000 for Shelter Home, a welfare organisation that supports at risk children and teens. At the time, Michael was quoted in The Star saying it was the first fundraising effort "for children by children".



## Troy Marschang Award Beryl Seiler ('13)

Troy Marschang ('07) was an ISKL all-rounder, representing ISKL in 17 IASAS meets between 2004-2007. In 2013, Beryl Seiler was the recipient, with a passion for culture and sports that continues today.

Having represented ISKL for four years in IASAS Touch Rugby, with two years as captain, Cultural Convention Choir for four years, and three years for Softball, Beryl says there was just one downside. She explains,

"I remember we used to have a post-IASAS blues period, coming down from the high of competition. I competed with some of my closest friends in IASAS events, and met some incredible people from other schools as well."

Beryl gained a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Affairs and Spanish at [Tufts University](#), and is now a program associate at [Mathematica](#) in Seattle, WA, where she works on education monitoring and evaluation projects in West Africa and Central America.

## John G. Hadwen Award Tracy Howard ('99)

Named for the Canadian High Commissioner to Malaysia and Singapore from 1967-71, the John G. Hadwen Award recognizes a Senior student who has had the most positive and dynamic overall impact on the ISKL community in the fields of service, scholarship, sportsmanship and character.

In her Senior year alone, Tracy Howard (née Candler) was

National Honor Society and a Peer Helper, and captained Varsity Soccer and Softball, as well as competing in Varsity Swimming. However, it was an opportunity for service, through a [Habitat for Humanity](#) trip to the Philippines in her Junior year, that she says she "...first found my driving force, I just didn't realize it until years later." After studying Health and P.E. Education at [William and Mary](#), Tracy found her passion for health education and spent several years working in a health clinic in Honduras.

She is currently studying for a Master's in Public Health, in Health Promotion and Health Education at the [University of Texas School of Public Health](#).





### Scott Smith Award Tim Munnerlyn ('90)

Scott Smith ('76) may only have studied at ISKL for his sophomore year, but his legacy as a passionate sportsman lives on in the annual Scott Smith Award, presented to ISKL's most outstanding female and male athletes each year at the Senior Awards. In 1990, Tim Munnerlyn received this most prized sporting accolade, an award he cherishes to this day.

Describing his years at ISKL as "some of the best days of my life,"

Tim went on to study Science at [Louisiana State University](#), then a Master's in Education at [Buffalo State University](#). He has worked as a School Counsellor in the UAE and Poland, and is now the Director of Education Partnerships for [Cialfo](#) in Warsaw.

His message to the 2020 recipient he says, "Winning this award means you have led, sacrificed and given all you can in your respected sports. You will always remember this moment and cherish your time as a student-athlete at ISKL."

### Robert B. Gaw Award Hezril Asyraaf ('13)

"Find opportunity in crisis and proceed with grace under pressure." Hezril Asyraaf ('13), recipient of the Robert B. Gaw Award for Citizenship 2013, with some sage advice for the 2020 recipient. The Robert B. Gaw Award for Citizenship, named for ISKL's third head of school from 1970-1978, is sponsored by the ISKL PTA.

Reflecting on his own experience, Hezril says, "...receiving the award was definitely a special occasion for me - not because I needed something to validate my love for other cultures. Rather, I took it as an important milestone that I was stepping in

the right direction in terms of how I wanted to shape myself as a young adult."

Now a Presenter/Producer on the Evening Edition at Kuala Lumpur's business radio station, [BFM89.9](#), Hezril received a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Middle Eastern and Islamic and minoring in Political Science at [New York University](#) and worked for [KRA Group](#), an ASEAN-focused public affairs and political risk consultancy.

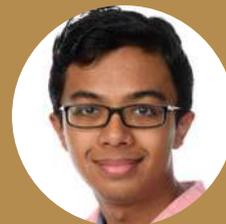


## ISKL Senior Awards 2020



**Hana Elsoda**

The Robert B. Gaw Citizenship Award



**Tanmay Gupta**

The Hee Won Bahk '94 Award for International Understanding



**Isabella Jokela**

The John G. Hadwen Award, Outstanding Senior



**Reeve Woodward**

Scott Smith Memorial '76 Award, Outstanding Athlete



**Wen Li Yau**

Troy Marschang '07 Award  
Scott Smith Memorial '76 Award, Outstanding Athlete



## 1965 The Journey Begins

In September 1965 the first 48 students in 6th to 9th grade, along with their 9 teachers, stepped over the threshold of The International School of Kuala Lumpur. Our school was starting its journey. The school was housed in the Istana on Jalan Maxwell, a former Royal Palace then leased to a British Military school to house their boarders.

All those who worked, lived and learned at the Istana have fond memories of leaky roofs, errant wildlife and a library with walls made out of bookshelves. In the good old days there were no fire drills but Beryl Lau, the first art teacher, fondly remembers water drills, where buckets were placed under leaks all over the school! Founding faculty, Leslie Muri, recalls students sitting under golf umbrellas to avoid “presents” from birds nesting in the ceiling. She says, “...the umbrella was to protect the kid underneath who would have taken a direct hit.”

Through the 60s enrollment grew and 10th through 12th grade came on line with the students undertaking

correspondence courses, a little like this year’s continuous learning. In 1967, our first five seniors graduated and, by the end of 1969, we boasted almost 400 students.

## 1970s Build It & They Will Come

The 70s were amazing years for our journey. Student numbers were growing each year and we became a K-12 school. It became apparent we were outgrowing the Istana and the search for new land began. In 1973, on the “outskirts of town” in Ampang, 6.4 acres of land was found and the design and construction of a new campus started.

The doors of the Istana were closed for the last time in December 1975 and, as 1976 dawned, the Ampang campus became ISKL’s new home. And what a home! With two teaching wings, air conditioning, a canteen, music and art rooms, a gym, playing fields and a theatre, this brand new facility was the talk of the town! However, by

# Palace



the end of 1978, our school designed to host 600 students was already reaching capacity with enrollment at 548. The enrollment at ISKL continued to grow and grow and once again more space was needed. The board of the time wrote, “Infrastructure problems are serious,” and highlighted the need for more classrooms, better music, art and canteen facilities and noted “woefully inadequate” parking. Land for a new high school was found in Melawati, but the process to acquire it turned out to be a lengthy one.

In the meantime, the Ampang campus was expanded. Coming back after the summer of 1986 was like coming back to a new school again. More classrooms

*“The Nineties and the Naughties were a rollercoaster for both Malaysia and ISKL.”*

# to Present Day



had been built, music and art rooms were relocated and an indoor canteen was established. Much needed outdoor space was added with the acquisition of adjacent land and two tennis courts, creating the upper field. We had some breathing room.

## 1990s Best School in the Land

By the early 90s the Ampang Campus was once again overflowing. Plans to build a new high school were changed and a new elementary K-5 school was on the drawing board. In true ISKL spirit the plans were a collaborative process, with teachers consulted every step of the way. Ahead of its time, the new elementary campus included grade levels centered on large commons areas, the pods, a swimming pool, science labs and a black box which would become the much loved studio theatre.

The Melawati elementary campus opened its doors in August 1992 and none too

soon, with enrollment reaching a massive 1350 students. Back at Ampang, the Middle and High Schools spread their wings, the decks became prized property, and the Senior Deck was every high schooler's ultimate goal.

## 21st Century Back Together Again

The Nineties and the Naughtyies were a rollercoaster for both Malaysia and ISKL. The economy saw ups and downs as did our enrollment. Soon after the turn of the century, a new land and building fund was initiated as we started to look to the future and recombining the two campuses on one site. The limitations of the Ampang campus were becoming apparent, as was the imminent loss of the upper field.

The search for land was long and often disheartening but, 50-plus potential site visits later, in early 2015 land was found. Twenty-six acres next door to the Polo Club, in the heart of KL! Architects and project teams were hired, plans

drawn, consultation meetings with staff, faculty, students and parents were held. Boy did we collaborate constructively!

## 2018 Vision Becomes Reality

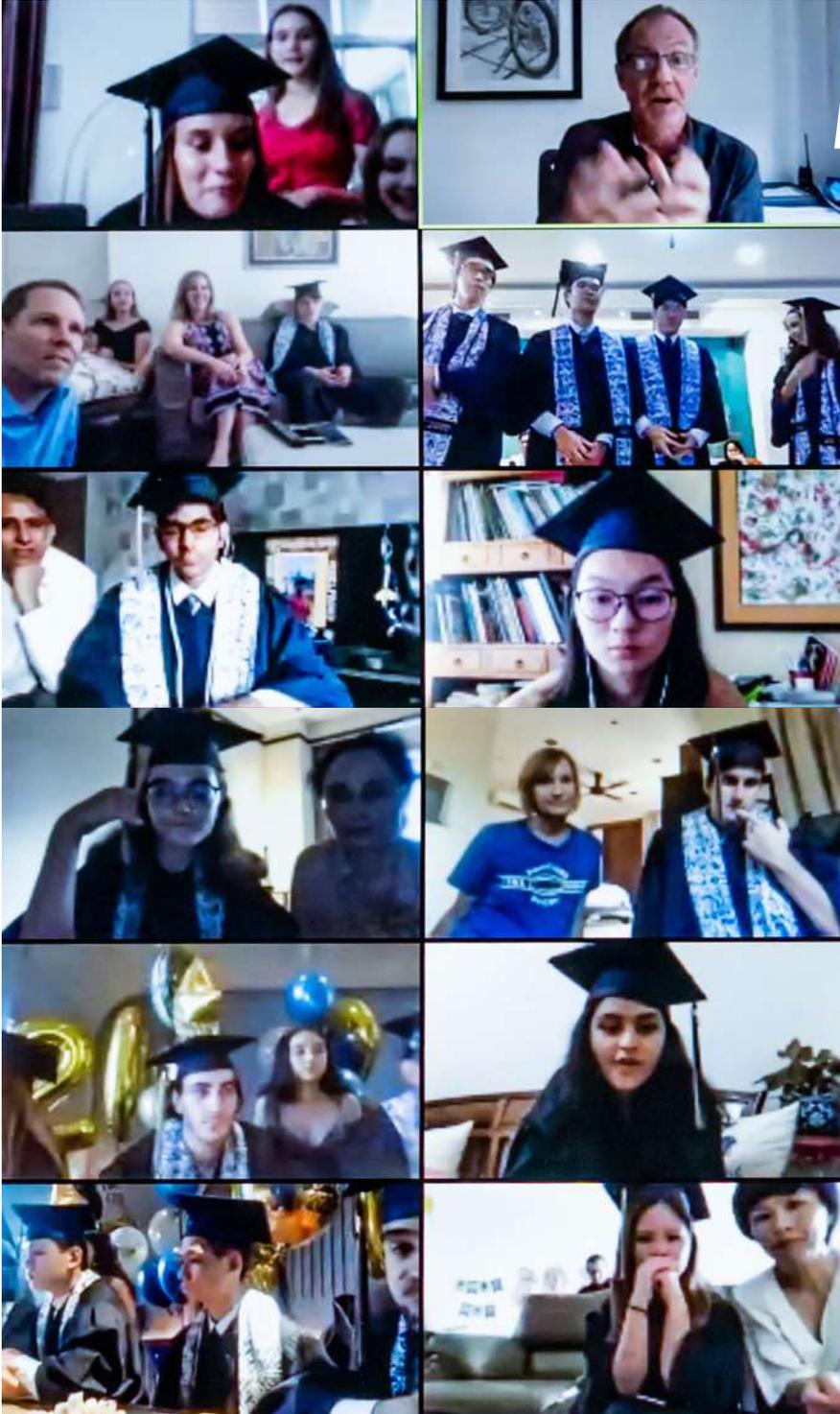
The projected campus opening was August 2018 and, literally up until the first bus arrived on August 13, those coordinating the move from the old campuses did not believe we had made it. The Ampang Hilir campus, once again bringing together students from K-12, is light-years away from the Istana. Its facilities include Olympic size swimming pool, two theaters and platinum-rated sustainability design. Our beautiful new school is the start of the next part of our journey. Who knows what the school of 2065 will look like when ISKL turns 100.



Katie Milton,  
Central  
Administrative  
Officer

# Letter from

# Home



# As with most things these past few months, the COVID-19 pandemic meant this year's Graduation ceremony was prerecorded and held virtually. ISKL Senior Ryan Lim gave one of the speeches and reveals what it was like to watch it from home.

## *Dear Outside World,*

It felt strange to watch my own speech on the computer at home with my family. I should've been dressed in a suit and tie but, instead, I was in my shorts and t-shirt; I should've been giving the speech live in front a crowd of parents, teachers, and friends but, instead, I was watching a recording of myself from last Friday; I should've been sitting on stage with my fellow classmates but, instead, I was laying down on my bed in the comforts of my bedroom. It was unconventional, almost as if the ceremony and our graduation weren't official, but it was the best that we could do.

Collectively, we expected senior year to be a "busy and challenging time" (April Ong). As expected, the first semester was exhausting as we scrambled to complete our IAs and applications. We were forced to stay home due to the haze in November, but many of us appreciated having more time to spend on our work or to rest. As the haze lifted and Christmas break passed, we were excited to celebrate our last semester of school with our friends and to experience all those final milestones like "leaving the final exam, our final day of classes, the clap out, and, of course, walking the stage at grad" (Mashal Iqbal).

Personally, I was thrilled to be travelling to Taipei for my last IASAS and I was looking forward to going to my senior prom. Things started to take off in the second semester of school, but

fate had alternative plans for us. It was called Covid-19. As the pandemic took hold around the world, the Taipei trip was cancelled, we were forced to stay home midway through our mock exams, and week by week, all other activities were eventually cancelled. In fact, we never made it back to school again!

I miss school. I miss having breakfast with my friends in the morning despite only getting 5 hours of sleep the night before. "I miss the sound of discordant music that hits you the moment you step through the doors of the music department and that super weird smell that kinda grows on you over time" (Rebecca Chan). "I miss walking up four flights of stairs while complaining about school to my friends" (Nava Saylany).

The prospect of not being able to go back for our last few months of high school was demotivating for most of us. The situation reached an unprecedented low when the May session of IB exams was cancelled; a truly 'anti-climatic' end for the year. Imagine this - you've spent the last two years prepping to sit for exams to end high school, only to have them cancelled in the blink of an eye. As Yasi Khan reflects, "(It) makes me feel as though I haven't even graduated or done anything to academically end high school."

Fortunately, our school community was supportive - the PTA fed us well with scrumptious senior treats throughout the year; the Alumni Department

delivered gifts during the Movement Control Order period; my French teacher even travelled to my house in Klang to pass me a departure gift! These gestures, albeit small, were impactful in boosting our morale.

Perhaps spending the last semester at home wasn't ideal for us as seniors, but many of us have found ourselves exploring other interests, learning to cook (and clean), play a new instrument or just enjoy reading a book (for pleasure) with the excess time on our hands! Cheryl Choong spent her time during the MCO writing supportive messages to her classmates through ISKLcheersquad, to "remind myself to focus on the good in people and situations".

While this year will be remembered for its struggles, I will remember it fondly for the care the ISKL community has shown us. This *pantun* (Malay poem) sums up perfectly how I feel:

*"Dua tiga kucing berlari,  
Akhirnya tikus tidak ditawan,  
Walaupun keadaan susah masa ini,  
Yakinlah kawan-kawan akan masa depan."*

In other words, while times may be tough now, have faith, let's embrace the bleak present and not lose hope for the future.



Ryan Lim,  
Graduating Class  
of 2020



# Campus News

## Virtual Graduation

Our Class of 2020 Graduation on May 29 proved that it is possible to maintain traditions and celebrate achievements even in a virtual setting. High School Principal, Jeff Farrington, was determined to ensure that this year's graduates, who have encountered unprecedented challenges, including not being able to be on campus since March 13, would nevertheless have a graduation to remember.

The entirely pre-recorded and live-streamed event included all of the traditional elements of an in-person graduation. Mr Farrington was Master of Ceremonies for an event that included an inspiring address from Head of School, Rami Madani; speeches by Student Leaders, Isabella Jokela and Ryan Lim; and a commencement address by ISKL IB/AP Coordinator, Michael Ortiz.

Mr Ortiz asked the graduates to put their experiences into

perspective, saying, "Every time is extraordinary...every moment unprecedented." He spoke of the many examples of spirit, from leadership to music, sport to community service, that have been part of this cohort's experience at ISKL. Finally, he challenged them to not leave the ISKL spirit here, but to take it with them wherever they go, to rise to the occasion of their life in their world, and to find out what they love to do and do it well.

Many families made the most of the occasion by creating a special graduation event at home, and graduates' parents were charged

with the solemn task of handing over graduation certificates. The moving ceremony was followed by a special Zoom call where the graduates were able to perform that most important ritual, moving the tassel on their mortarboard from right to left, signifying their changed status.

ISKL did have one graduate who received her graduation certificate in a ceremony on campus this year. Little did anyone know on December 19, 2019, that Class of 2020 Early Graduate, Joselin Fogelberg would be the only graduate to do so in this cohort.



## ISKL Faculty and Staff Retiring and Moving On

Some well-known and loved members of faculty, staff and administration are moving on or retiring this year. With many years of service to ISKL, we wish them all the very best in their next destinations and look forward to welcoming them back to ISKL as Faculty and Staff Alumni.

### Elementary School

Jamie Elizabeth Antos - 4 years  
Rumiko Aruga - 2 years  
Monica Burke - 2 years  
David Herbert - 15 years  
Carolina Menzel-Jones - 1 years  
Stacey Lynn Short - 2 years  
Amy Simpson - 6 years  
Elaine Tan - 10 years (Retiring)

### Administration

Dave Perrau - 5 years

### Middle School

Christine Baker - 8 years  
Janelle Maxson - 4 years  
Mark Pate - 5 years  
Bernadette Williams - 19 years  
Elizabeth Yaganegi - 8 years

### Middle/High School

Timothy Farrow - 4 years  
Patricia Podorsek - 8 years

### High School

Laura Houston - 1 year  
Timothy Howe - 13 years  
Chamindika Hutterd - 8 years  
Julie James - 12 years  
Stetson Johnson - 5 years  
Kathryn Kindle - 3 years  
Gordon Minton - 2 years  
Michael Ortiz - 8 years  
Hisae Yamazaki - 14 years (Retiring)

## Call to Unite Showcases ISKL High School Choir

The ISKL High School Choir had a global audience when they were the only international school choir to perform as part of **“The Call to Unite”** live streamed event on May 2.

The choir’s performance of “North” was not only moving and beautiful, but also a technical triumph for singers and student video editors alike as the piece

was edited together from 46 individual home recordings.

“The Call to Unite” brought together many internationally renowned performers, visionaries and leaders including Oprah Winfrey, Deepak Chopra, Julia Roberts, Steve Aoki, Jay Shetty, Quincy Jones, and Marie Kondo, who shared inspirational messages to lift spirits and

connect people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Senior Rebecca Chan, one of the video editors described her feelings about the project, saying, “In these times where many of us feel adrift from regularities of our daily lives, let these voices reach out to remind you that music unites us all and, in its way, is our universal home.”



# YOU GOT THIS!



@ISKLOFFICIAL

ART BY MATT SMITH! (ISKL CLASS OF 2003) @SMITHVSSMITHCOMICS

# Panther News

With more than 20,000 ISKL Alumni worldwide, selecting our news highlights is quite a challenge. ISKL alumni are making their presence felt in a broad range of professions, embarking on entrepreneurial business ventures, and achieving milestones in their studies. Here are some of this year's top picks.



**Yolanda Cantu Garcia** ('02) was back in Kuala Lumpur in February as a delegate to APEC 2020. Yolanda, who lives in Chicago but hails from Mexico, was one of the first generation of Obama Foundation Scholars in 2016, and works on education curriculum development for students in at-risk communities. Although she only attended ISKL Elementary School from 1993 to 1995, Yolanda says, "ISKL was unique in my life experience, with lots of my skills based on this foundation."

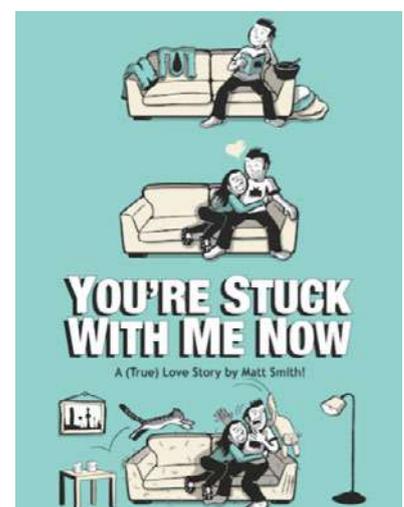
It's been a busy time for **Steven D. Powell** ('06) who, in January this year, was appointed to the Health Policy Committee of the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses in the US. He was then deployed to Puerto Rico by the Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) of the Department of Veterans

Affairs to assist in relief efforts after the January earthquake. To top it all off, on March 5, he was one of two national scholarship winners to attend the Nursing Organization of Veterans Affairs Hill Day in Washington D.C.



**Aziz Ayman** ('03) moved back to KL in 2019, after several years studying and working in the USA, and launched a startup

car subscription service, FLUX; think Airbnb for cars. Aziz spent 10 years studying and working away from Malaysia, firstly undertaking an economics degree at the University of Warwick, then a Masters in Entrepreneurial Management at Regent's University London, and finally an MBA at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Yet, he says the draw of ISKL for him has always been about the people. He explains, "I honestly think it's the fact that I established such close friendships. My closest friends now are my classmates from 2001."



Comic crusader, **Matt Smith** ('03) is currently running a Kickstarter Campaign for his first graphic

novel, *You're Stuck With Me Now*. The book is the true story of how Matt met his Scottish wife, Emma, while they were both teaching at international schools in Kuwait. It is a slice-of-life romantic comedy with lots of third culture themes and the book features cameos from a host of ISKL alumni like Jon Morrison, Andre Slaatta, Ed Moline ('03), Andrew Smith ('05) and ISKL Faculty Alumni John and Shelley Smith!



on Amazon.com and achieved #1 Bestseller for multiple Amazon categories. Dennis spent his Elementary years at the Melawati campus before moving to Vancouver, Canada. He says his time in the Accelerate Reader program at Melawati, competing with his best friends Kevin and Ariq, allowed him to gain excellent English skills quickly, noting his class was the first to "run the school" in Grade 5.



Faculty alumna **Sally Purbrick-Illek** (ISKL Middle School '87-'89) is making waves as a dog trainer in her adopted home "Down Under". After ISKL, Sally and her husband moved back to Berlin for several years where she taught in international schools, before making the move to Australia where Sally took up a teaching role at Griffith University on the Gold Coast. But it's her passion for dogs that is grabbing attention with Sally gaining a reputation as a leading dog trainer, especially for working dogs in urban environments. Sally was recently featured in the Gold Coast Get It magazine. Take a look here.

Congratulations to **Dennis Wang** ('17) who isn't letting the grass grow under his feet while studying economics and political science at Duke University. Dennis' writing debut, "Reigning the Future: AI, 5G, Huawei, and the Next 30 Years of US-China Rivalry", was the #1 New Release



Joining United States Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan and esteemed legal scholars Richard Epstein and Cass Sunstein, ISKL alumnus **William Birdthistle** (Class of 1991) was awarded the 2019 Teaching Award from the University of Chicago Law School. William teaches a Securities Regulation course and is the first non-tenure-track recipient of the teaching award. Congratulations!



One of the founding students from the 1965/66 school year, **Mike Radway** retired in 2019 after serving as Chief-of-Staff and Senior Policy Advisor to Rick Metsger, Chairman and Board Member of the U.S. National Credit Union Administration. Mike says, "It was an honor and a privilege to be appointed by, and serve in, the administration of President Barack Obama, who was also kind enough to allow me to take time off to attend ISKL's wonderful 50th anniversary celebration." Mike has retired to his home in Portland, Oregon.



Will **Aqil Khairi** (Class of '15) be the first ISKL Alumnus in space? Having completed a Bachelor of Science in Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering at the University of Washington (Seattle), he will stay at the university to pursue a Master's degree in 2020. Aqil was part of the University of Washington's student rocket engineering team that won the overall prize at the 2019 Spaceport America Cup in New Mexico. This year, with co-researcher Kat Teo, he also placed third in the undergraduate category for the AIAA Region VI Conference for computational research and testing of valves for the Z-pinch plasma experiment which aims to

develop a compact nuclear fusion device for deep space propulsion and power generation as a reactor. Aqil hopes to one day work for NASA, and maybe even go on a research expedition into space. Good luck!



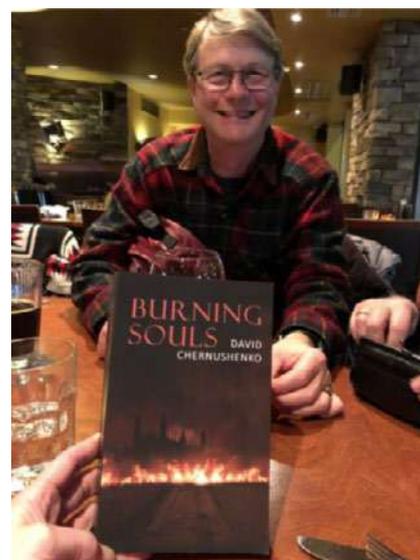
Did you know that ISKL has offered the IB diploma program since 1989? It's the longest-running program in Malaysia. Alumnus **Shiho Takagi** (Class of '01) who now teaches the IB Educator Certification at Okayama University of Science in Japan, took advantage of that wealth of knowledge by bringing along a group of her students to observe ISKL IB classes in September. The group also met with current Japanese IB students who shared their experience of the IB, along with

ISKL IB Coordinator Michael Ortiz and CAS Coordinator Chika Kumashiro-Wilms.



**Chartsiri (Patty) Klinpibul** brought a surprise with her when she visited ISKL in January - the entire UN Youth New Zealand Globalisation Tour 2020 Delegation. Patty was selected as a delegate for the group's 2020 tour of South East Asia and was excited that Kuala Lumpur would be on the itinerary. The group, comprising New Zealand university students, was exploring trade, globalisation and international relations on the three-week regional tour. Patty is in her final year of a Bachelor of Culinary Arts at the Food Design Institute at Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin, New Zealand.

**David Chernushenko** (Class of 1980) spent the summer of 2019 driving his fully electric car on a cross-Canada promotional tour for his new book, "Burning Souls", a climate-breakdown thriller. David says that, despite only spending one year at ISKL, his memories of school and Malaysia are strong and good ones. Indeed, one of the main characters of the book is Malaysian and KL is mentioned as well. Find out more at [www.davidc.ca](http://www.davidc.ca).



Share your news at [alumni@iskl.edu.my](mailto:alumni@iskl.edu.my)

**Alan McLean 1956-2019**



## IN MEMORIAM

ISKL High School Mathematics and Theory of Knowledge teacher, Alan McLean, passed away on September 14, 2019. Alan initially worked at ISKL in the 1980s and returned to ISKL in 2006. For many years, Alan was the steward of ISKL's outreach to Malaysian schools through SEA Forensics. Alan was remembered by the ISKL community at a special celebration of his life, attended by his partner Rachel and daughters, Corrie and Rhiann, on September 26.

**Ruth Schoppert 1930-2020**



Ruth Schoppert passed peacefully on April 29, 2020, a few days after her 90th birthday. Ruth worked at ISKL as a kindergarten teacher during the time her husband Gail was ISKL's Head of School (1978-1983). Her kindergarten teacher colleague Emily Goudie remembers, "Ruth and Gail were thespians and adored the theatre. She was a very kind and generous lady." Ruth and Gail met in Paris in 1960 and they were married the following year. Together they worked for 10 years in DOD schools and a further 24 years in international schools. She was a talented artist, adventurous traveler who visited 48 countries in her lifetime, and an avid reader.



## *In Profile:*

# **Dr Elena Azizan**

**ISKL IB Scholar from the Class of 2005  
now working at the frontline of research  
into Covid-19.**

“ISKL IB education was very useful for me as it gave me the first taste of research which I did through the extended essay in Chemistry with Mrs Goh.” Dr. Elena Azizan (’05) was awarded an IB Scholarship in 2003, an opportunity she says had a profound impact on her future career. She continues, “It... shaped my passion for scientific research which resulted in a postgraduate degree at the University of Cambridge and led me to my current choice of career as a research lecturer in

UKMMC (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Centre).”

That career now finds Elena at the forefront of Malaysia’s research into the infectivity of Covid-19. This May she received a grant of RM50,000 to undertake “a pilot study assessing angiotensin-converting enzyme II (ACE2) expression in the infectivity and severity of COVID-19”. As international efforts to understand the virus continue apace, Elena sees her research as an important part

of the puzzle. She explains, “I hope this research would provide some much needed data on ACE2 in regards to human infectivity of SARS-CoV-2.”

The research is important because ACE2, or angiotensin-converting enzyme 2, is a protein on the surface of many cell types that the virus attaches to, effectively using it as a gateway into the cell. Understanding how that process works may help to combat the virus’ spread. However, Elena cautions that it will take time, “As this is just a pilot research, more experiments after this would be needed to confirm the findings.”

Elena began her post-ISKL academic career at the University of Leeds, studying Pharmacology, before going on to Cambridge. For her research into ACE2, she is working with a large team and is being advised by her old Cambridge supervisor, Professor Morris Brown, now at Queen Mary University London.

Although her PhD was in medicine, Elena always knew she wanted to work in medical research. She says being offered the ISKL IB Scholarship, after completing her Malaysian SPM at local school, helped pave the way for her future studies in the UK, explaining, “IB education allowed me effortlessly to enter the UK university of my choice as it was accepted worldwide. Further, the faculty, infrastructure, and environment in ISKL allowed for not only an academic experience but also involvement with dance, theater, arts and the sports field.”

Favorite memories of ISKL? Performing in the Malay cultural dance team, drama class, and being part of the executive team where she was treasurer in her final year.



Do you remember the Melawati Way? Take care of yourself. Take Care of Others. Take care of this place. It's a simple but powerful message and one that rings true whatever your age. We're proud to see ISKL Alumni living by this creed and making a difference in their communities.

### Taking Care of Others

One of ISKL's young Alumni, Jude Fauzi ('28), who's now living back in Virginia, USA, launched a YouTube project to help other kids while he was a student at ISKL. Through his **JDyourreader** YouTube channel, Jude reads books aloud, and records them for other kids to watch.

He says, "I started the channel in KL when I was 8 years old. I did it because I know out there some parents don't have time to read to their kids. So far (there are) about 11 books available but more are coming soon. The video

with the most views is 'Tough Guys Have Feelings Too' and the author read out and commented on my video."

Jude wanted to reach 100 subscribers by the time he turned 10 this year, and we're pleased to announce that he was successful and now has 120 subscribers. Congratulations!

### !Kontakte

In true Panther spirit, ISKL Alumnus, Rowan Pearce ('00) is offering his logistics App, !Kontakte, pro bono to NGOs, governments and businesses to

help them connect quickly with workers, interns and volunteers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Kuala Lumpur-based Rowan calls it "going Freemium."

He says, "Offering **!Kontakte** pro bono wasn't ever a debate we had - we have a platform that



“ I started the channel in KL when I was 8 years old. I did it because I know out there some parents don't have time to read to their kids. ” Jude Fauzi ('28)

could help organise more people on a daily basis, resulting in more supplies reaching the frontlines and the vulnerable communities. If there ever was a time for the community to come together, it is now.”

!Kontakte has been taken up by an NGO that delivers essential food to disadvantaged communities around Kuala Lumpur, and is being used by universities and companies to connect interns and employers and help kickstart the economy.

## Coach Way Forward

The changes to work routines and norms caused by Covid-19 shutdowns around the world have given many of us pause to think about our priorities and goals. It is with this in mind that Marilyn Yim ('98) contacted ISKL to offer 1:1 counselling to ISKL staff wanting to take this time to set some goals and strategies to achieve them.

Marilyn says, “I wanted to reach out at this time as I know it's a difficult one for many. Most individuals in the ISKL community are much more fortunate thankfully in terms of coping in general with resources and financially, amidst the challenging landscape. However, every person comes with their own individual challenges at different points of their life.”

Ika Azwa Muzamal, Talent and Culture Development Lead at



ISKL says the tailored online coaching has been an excellent opportunity for staff during unprecedented times. She explains, “Being an ISKL Alumni, Marilyn understands the delicate nuances of what makes ISKL so special, and to have her onboard as a leadership and wellness coach for our staff was an opportunity we couldn't pass up.”

## ISKL Alumni KIVA Microloan Group

Since 2012, ISKL Alumni, largely graduates from the 1980s, have been making micro loans to communities in need around the globe through the microloan website **KIVA**. To date, they have made 565 loans, all from an initial contribution of only \$US25 and with just 26 members.

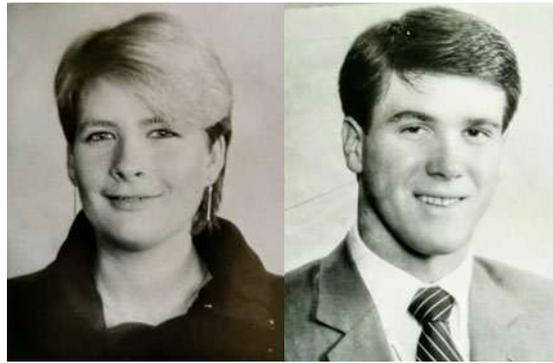
Lara James ('85) and Derek Haught ('86) spearheaded the

initiative which has seen loans made, and repaid, to, for example, an entrepreneur starting a clean water business in Uganda, a single mother in the Philippines raising and selling pigs to support her son through school, a roadside vendor in Timor-Leste who wants to expand her business, and many more.

Lara says, “I started the KIVA group because, quite simply, attending ISKL made us rich people (as in our spirits to be open people) and we have an obligation to pay it forward.” Derek adds, “I think just going to a school with so many different countries represented you truly become a global citizen and, as such, look to help people who need it wherever they may be, regardless of race or religion.” He continues, “Obviously with the COVID crisis around the world the need for underserved communities will only grow as

resources dwindle. I continue to lend and as luck would have it have funds to relend in my account this morning.”

Derek’s connection to ISKL couldn’t be stronger - he is ISKL’s first “lifer”, the first student to attend ISKL from kindergarten through to graduation.



Derek and Lara are keen to get more ISKL Alumni involved. Use this link to join Derek and Lara’s ISKL **Alumni team**. Please note this is not an official ISKL Alumni project, but we are proud to support our ISKL Alumni making a difference.

“ I started the KIVA group because, quite simply, attending ISKL made us rich people (as in our spirits to be open people) and we have an obligation to pay it forward. ”  
Derek Haught (‘86), ISKL’s first “lifer”

## Helping Rohingya Refugees Help Themselves

Gale Metcalf and Joel Wallach were teachers at ISKL in the late 1970s, at a tumultuous and fascinating time in the region’s history. At the core of their lifelong work, which has taken them around the globe and now back to Malaysia, is service to vulnerable communities. These days, that takes the form of volunteer work with the Rohingya community in Penang through **ASPIRE Penang**.

While Gale and Joel provide consultancy training and expertise, a guiding principle of the NGO is “Nothing About Us Without Us”. Gale explains, “All work allowances go only to refugees. Our two community outreach workers and our three pre-school teachers are all refugees. We work to develop leadership skills among members of the refugee community as well as provide classes in English and computer skills to promote self-sufficiency. Refugees conduct research into the



needs of their community and use that information to design appropriate interventions.”

Gale and Joel continue to conduct workshops in cross-cultural management, communication, para-professional counseling and critical thinking for international and local companies, organizations and NGOs.

# If Only They Could Talk

Many an ISKL student, parent and teacher has stolen a quiet moment beside the campus turtle pond without ever realizing they were being watched!



I'm Terry, the handsome one on the left...a red eared slider turtle (*Trachemys scripta elegans*). I'm also proud to tell you that I'm one of ISKL's founding turtles. This fellow to my right is Fred. Fred is new to school. He just walked in one day and, between you and me, he's a real wild child! In fact, he's a Malayan box turtle (*Cuora amboinensis*). Fred isn't the first, and he's unlikely to be the last turtle to wander in off the street, but he's keen to know how we all got here. So, grab a cup of tea, and let me share the story.

It all began in 1997 when, like many schools around the world, ISKL placed a peace pole on each campus, at Melawati and Ampang. The words, "May peace prevail on Earth" were inscribed in Chinese, Malay, Tamil and English. Then, in 2006, the McCluskey family created a beautiful garden on the Ampang Campus with the Peace pole at its heart, to celebrate the memory of their son Chris. The garden was a truly contemplative place. Many faculty, parents and students sat in the space and reflected in stolen moments

sitting in Chris' garden listening to the water. But perhaps there was just one thing that could make it even more special...

In 2014 the garden was remodeled and the pond expanded, a waterfall was added and that's when we, the turtles, first arrived. My old family, the DeWards, were moving away and asked if my siblings and I could come to live in the pond and so we, the red eared gliders, found our new home.

Word spread (as it does) and sure enough soon more reptilian friends joined us and, as families left, they dropped off their beloved turtles and we became their legacy to the school. Everyone who entered the campus passed by our home and we had lots of regulars come to have their lunch or snack, or sit for a minute as they waited for a show in the theatre. We loved it there basking on the rocks, watching them, watching us.

Then the rumours started. Apparently, the school was moving, and to say we were

worried was an understatement! Plans were on the drawing board, but would we have a new home or would they leave us behind? Apparently there were multiple surveys and town hall meetings but no one asked us our opinion. Would you believe it, the most asked question from students, parents, faculty and staff in those questionnaires was "will we be taking the turtles?" The answer, of course, was "Yes". So, during the final clap out at the Ampang campus in 2018, Dr Hudson carried us through the clap-out line showing everyone that we were moving over to Ampang Hilir. It was a beautiful moment. Brought a tear to my eye.

Our new home is awesome! Right in the heart of the school, we have the best vantage point to watch the action. We are a community of 12 at the moment but our numbers fluctuate a little as some turtles wander off and new friends move in. We still have special deliveries from human friends, and it always gets the gang excited when one of our former families drops by to visit the ISKL Alumni Department and asks to see us again.

Please stop by for a chat. While we are not sure you can hear us, we do enjoy the company. Remember, once a turtle always a turtle. I mean Panther...



Terry  
(aka Katie  
Milton)

# PANTHER PRIDE!

ADD YOUR POINTS TO SEE HOW YOU SCORE

Ate durian 5 pt 

Attended a CulCon event 10 pt

Graduated from the Ampang campus 10 pt

Worked on a yearbook in ISKL 8 pt

Had your hair styled at Helen's for Prom 8 pt

Was in the 1st IB graduating class at ISKL (1992) 15 pt

Went on Malaysia Week or GAP with ISKL 8 pt

Owns an IASAS duffle bag 8 pt 

Played Simon Says with Mr. Callan (MS Principal) 10 pt 

Taught by Mr. Stupka (longest-serving faculty - 43 years) 10 pt 

Ate Connie's cinnamon buns 10 pt 

Went to Pulau Tioman 5 pt 

Can sing the Malaysian National Anthem 10 pt

Got lost in the new Ampang Hilir Campus 5 pt

Participated in the first IASAS (1982) 15 pt

Was part of the Art class that created Harry the Hornbill 15 pt 

Visited the Royal Selangor Foundry in Grade 2 5 pt

Played in an ISKL music group 8 pt 

Bought something at the 1st Pac Shack (1986) 5 pt

Met your spouse at ISKL 15 pt 

**Top Cat: 110 - 185**

**Cat's Whiskers: 51 - 109**

**Panther Cub: 5 - 50**



ISKL

ALUMNI



SINCE 1965