

The International School of Kuala Lumpur

'21 - '22

# ISKL SELAMANYA

**Journey on Panthers!**

**Alumni Year in Review**



THE INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL OF  
KUALA LUMPUR

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– Kathy Calvin

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SELAMANYA

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Susana Hyvonen ('18) brings ISKL tenacity to the pitch as she offloads. Read more on pg. 24



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# ISKL Selamanya

## *Alumni Year in Review*

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*Once a Panther,  
Always a Panther*



## FROM THE ALUMNI OFFICE

These past few years have been a challenge for most, likely filled with more downs than ups, and when things are hard and we find ourselves at a crossroads of sorts, we have to ask ourselves what we are going to do, or how we are going to handle it. For each of us, there are different answers, and that's the point. Everyone's journey is unique. In this issue, you will see different stories of panthers making their way through life's ups and downs, and sharing the lessons they have learned along the way.

First, we catch up with alumni making their way back to one another, both in person and virtually, in a [recap of alumni gatherings](#) (pg. 04). We take a look at all the ways [campus roared back to life](#) as the Covid restrictions eased (pg. 10), and the ever-resilient [class of 2022](#) is celebrated starting on page 20. We also take a look at all the ways that our [alumni are supporting our current students](#), including a recap of the most recent instalment of the [Alumni Black Box Conversation](#).

I am thrilled to share with you a guest-written article and this issue's [cover story](#) by alumni faculty and parent Dr. Amy Schneider about alumni who have continued to nurture their passion for rugby, first ignited while at ISKL, in their next chapters at university (pg. 26).

The look at Panther journeys continues as we catch up with [Sophie "Soph" Schillings \('11\)](#), as she quite literally navigates some of the most dangerous terrain there is, in her humanitarian work clearing minefields (pg. 36).

Additionally, in this issue you will find an inspiring guest written article by alumni [Louie Agnir Paraan \('79\)](#), who shares how her time at ISKL has helped her navigate the challenges of serving her community during a pandemic, and an historical look back at alumni staff [Dixie Wai](#), the secretary to the first head of school, and one of the key people responsible for helping ISKL achieve its not-for-profit status.

This issue would not be possible without the roadmap laid out by my predecessor Mrs. Lynette MacDonald, the research and writing help of our Head Copywriter Sarah Madzney and alumni intern Aleia Zulkifly ('08), contributing alumni, contributing writer Bridgette Wong, and the support of numerous members of the ISKL community who have gone out of their way to help me transition into this new role. To all of them, and those who will lend their support in the future, thank you.

Enjoy the read, and remember, Selamanya means "forever" in Bahasa Melayu.

Once a panther, always a panther.

Kendra Jones

Alumni Engagement and Development Lead



Alumni pose for a photo at the Alumni in KL gathering in December.

# MAKING CONNECTIONS

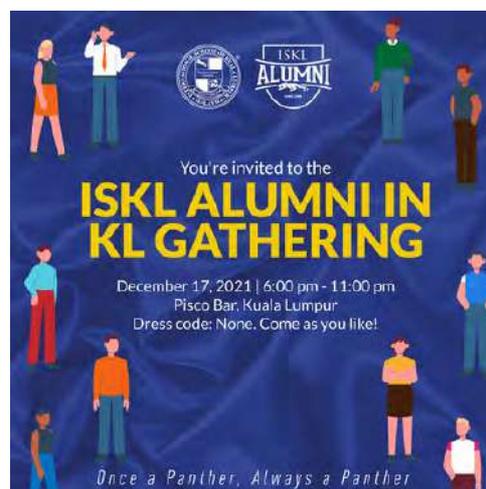
By: Kendra Jones

They say good friends are hard to find, harder to leave, and impossible to forget. It is the nature of an international school for people to be regularly coming and going, yet no matter how long or how short the time together is, the relationships formed here at ISKL are impossible to forget. From KL to the Netherlands, U.K., U.S., Canada, and Guam, Panthers have found ways to come together.

## Alumni in KL

On December 17th 2021, Malaysian and Malaysia-based Alumni came together for the first time in a long time. An alumni gathering for alumni in and around KL was held at Pisco Bar in Kuala Lumpur. As we were not allowed to have visitors to campus in accordance with current Covid-19 prevention SOP's, we did the next best thing – meet safely off campus, adhering to all required SOPs for hosting gatherings in a public place. While it wasn't the typical alumni reunion, after so many months of separation and strict movement control

orders here in Malaysia, when the opportunity to meet in-person presented itself, we took full advantage while adhering to capacity requirements, strict contact tracing, and requiring attendees to complete a rapid test before attending. Those who attended were able to meet fellow alumni who had returned to Malaysia, those still living here, and Malaysian alumni. It wasn't the perfect scenario, but with so many alumni scattered across the globe and the difficulties surrounding travel, it was a good start.



The twenty-four hours before the event were filled with non-stop rain, leaving the city wet and soggy to say the least. The bad weather didn't let up as the event drew near. As you may remember, Friday evening traffic in KL can be a challenge without the rain, but in spite of the never-ending downpour plaguing the evening, thirty-six of the fifty registered alumni were able to make it into the city for appetizers and drinks at the popular watering hole.



Alumni reconnect at the Alumni in KL gathering in December.

While we had several activities planned, it became clear that people just wanted an opportunity to reconnect with old friends, and our help breaking the ice wasn't needed. The night was a success as everyone was able to catch up with old friends, including some who have been overseas for years and managed to make their way back to KL. It was heartwarming to see everyone pick up right where they had left off however many years ago.

The laughter was contagious and before we knew it, the entire room was engaged in conversation. Old friends spoke of the future and shared stories of the past. It was awesome to see so many familiar faces and catch up with old friends. We are definitely looking forward to the next one, hoping it can be on campus, and more of our alumni from around the world will be able to return.

Despite the splendid evening, old memories shared and

new memories made, we still missed out on the opportunity to connect with our Alumni who aren't able to get to KL.

**Alumni Amazing Race**

Not to be left out, it was important to give our alumni around the world an opportunity to reconnect as well. After two years of online gatherings and awkwardly sitting through Zooms, there was a desire to give people an opportunity to engage in a fun and meaningful way, but not glue them to another boring virtual meeting. With that in mind, all alumni were invited to join the ISKL Alumni Amazing Race.

This virtual event consisted of a series of virtual challenges that were completed in a team of Alumni. The challenges took them around the world, and back to ISKL. Each challenge was completed in a set amount of time, and the team that completed the race the fastest was the winner.

The race consisted of challenges that included a Wine and Cheese Party, Re-creating favorite yearbook photos, and writing a poem about ISKL. The race ended with a live online closing ceremony where alumni joined together to celebrate the winners Team Tuadangilalah comprised of Tim Chavez ('84), Shirani Tisdale ('82) Louise Broadbent ('84) and David Gagliano ('82). The race included 34 Alumni participating from 9 countries including alumni students, parents, faculty and staff. The class years of participants range from the class of 1975 all the way to class of 2021. The judges were thoroughly pleased with the creative submissions.

Left: The Bell Bottom Belles, Class of 1975 Alumni Amazing Race Team submitted their yearbook photos as their team photo.





Alumni caught up virtually to complete the Amazing Race Challenges which included a wine and cheese party (above) and recreating a yearbook photo (below).



It was fantastic to see alumni from all over the world finding ways to reconnect in spite of the challenges of our present time.

### It's the little things that count

Some of the best kinds of reunions are the ones that happen by chance; the ones that are just old friends grabbing a bite to eat, all home for the holidays or finding out they happen to be in the same city and making a plan to meet up. It has been so nice to see Alumni reconnecting around the world, maintaining their relationships and connection to ISKL. Some recent reunions shared with us include:

Virginia Flora Davis ('18) Marthanne Davis ('19), Micha Angell ('17) and Zarina Angell ('16), meet up every couple of years, but remain close and talk "all of the time". They met in Malaysia and consider themselves all "sisters". "Our families are still close and we love to FaceTime every chance we get!" said Virginia.

Virginia and Marthanne flew up to Montreal, Canada from the U.S. to visit the Angell sisters. In the past, the girls had managed to visit one sister at a time. This was the first time all four were together since high school. Virginia graduated from Wofford College, in Spartanburg South Carolina, USA in Spring 2022, and Marthanne is a Junior at Elon University in North Carolina.

Marthanne is studying physical education and hopes to go abroad and teach PE at an international school, while Virginia Flora is looking to start her career in university Admissions. Micah and Zarina are living in Canada. Zarina graduated last year from McGill University and is now teaching at a school for students with special needs. Micah is finishing up her final year at Concordia University studying Art and Design.

**"Our families are still close and we love to FaceTime every chance we get!"**

- Virginia Flora Davis ('18)



Virginia Flora Davis ('18) Marthanne Davis ('19), Micha Angell ('17) and Zarina Angell ('16), meet up every couple of years. (Photo Submitted by Chuck Davis)



Some Class of 2018 graduates meet up in Copenhagen (Photo Submitted by: Julia Love)

Above, class of 2018 graduates met up in Copenhagen at the end of November 2021 (from left to right): Frida Haettmark (studying in Copenhagen) Savanna Razzaque (studying in Edinburgh) Nina Wassenaar, who just graduated from university in Rotterdam and Iza Van As who is currently studying in Amsterdam.

**Moving on together**

Faculty Alumni Bonnie Lam met in London with some former students. Max Webster ('17), Susanna Hyvonen ('18), and Barbora Hyklova ('17). Max is living in Jersey, U.K. and studying Economics. Susanna recently graduated from King's College, and is now doing a master's degree at the London School of Economics in Media & Communication. Barbora is in her fourth year of Veterinary school at Edinburgh University.



Reconnecting in London (Photo Submitted by: Bonnie Lam)

Bonnie is teaching at the American School in London. She and Susanna are able to meet up regularly as they both now live in London. They made a plan to all meet up one weekend when Max was going to be in town.

Bonnie reminisced, "From teaching them in grade 9 PE, grade 10 Health, and coaching them through varsity volleyball...to now watching them become young adults, doing all sorts of cool things around the U.K.; proud is an understatement. I am continually in awe of how incredible these 'kids' are and forever grateful for our shared time at ISKL."

**You just never know**

In a truly small world kind of way, alums Maribeth Keeler ('16), Samuel Pelant ('84) and Gina Ragan ('74) met by happenstance over this past Christmas while in Guam.



A chance connection in Guam (Photo Submitted by: Gina Ragan)

They didn't realize until then that they were all ISKL alumni.

Samuel lives and works in Alaska, USA but he is currently in Guam working on a construction project for the U.S. military. A friend of Gina's, who herself has been living in Guam for the past 32 years, happened to be working with Samuel. Gina's friend knew Samuel would be on his own for the Christmas holiday and invited him to attend a Christmas gathering at Gina's. Maribeth is the daughter of one of another of Gina's friends in Guam. Maribeth, who recently graduated from university in Scotland, was visiting her parents who brought her along to the Christmas gathering. The three of them, Maribeth, Samuel and Gina had no idea that they were all ISKL alumni until they started talking and reminiscing about their school days. It turns out they were all reminiscing about the same school!

#### **Keeping traditions alive**

Students from the classes of 2016, 2017, and 2018 met for their traditional ISKL Chinese New Year reunion at Goldmine restaurant in London.

Pictured are: Isabella Glanznig Santos ('17), who recently graduated university with a bachelors in Professional Dance and Musical Theatre.

At the time she was auditioning for West End Shows like Hamilton, Dear Evan Hansen and Jersey Boys. We hear rumors of a big recent casting, and we are looking forward to hearing all the details.

Laura Scheepers, ('17) is working for Hays Recruitment as a recruitment consultant for financial markets after graduating from the University of Arts London in Journalism in 2020.

Ni Ahn Ho, ('16) graduated with a Bachelors of Law from the University of Warwick and completed her Masters in Business Management and Entrepreneurship from the University of Brighton.

Other alumni joining the dinner included:

Alex Webster ('16)  
Petra Blackburn ('16)  
Adam Khoo, Class of ('17)  
Alex Yusof ('17)  
Lim Jih Ming ('17)  
Arman Jumabhoy ('17)  
Andrea Handal ('17)  
Elena Ortiz ('17)  
Susanna Hyvonen ('18)

**Have you recently reconnected with fellow ISKL alumni? Planning an upcoming reunion in your area? We would love to hear from you!**

**Write to us at [alumni@iskl.edu.my](mailto:alumni@iskl.edu.my)**



Class of 2016-2018 graduates celebrate Chinese New Year together in London.



# STAYING CONNECTED

Social channels and virtual experiences brought our alumni community together in difficult times. We increased our social media presence, and held virtual events connecting Panthers from all corners of the globe.

**25% & 98%**

Increase in Facebook and Instagram profile visits respectively

# STAY UP TO DATE ON ALL THINGS ALUMNI

Follow us on social media and register on the alumni portal for all of the latest ISKL Alumni news and events.

**921**

Active Members on the Alumni Portal  
[www.alumni.eskl.edu.my](http://www.alumni.eskl.edu.my)

# BY THE NUMBERS

FB Page Likes	3,116
IG Followers	599
LinkedIn Followers	965
Twitter Followers	519
Virtual Events	7
Hybrid Events	1
In person Events	1



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Jazz night returns for in person performances.

# CAMPUS COMES BACK TO LIFE

*By: Kendra Jones & Sarah Madzney*

The performing arts roar back with live performances. The rooftop playground is completed. GAP and Malaysia Week make triumphant returns, and we celebrate a new scholarship, and close out the year with the resurrection of a timeless tradition.

## **Jazz Night**

On Sunday, December 12th, the ISKL Jazz Night Combo had their first public performance! ISKL was asked to perform at the KLCC Convention Center as part of the Ministry of Education's commemoration of their first 100 days in office. The Malaysian Family Aspiration event featured a variety of musical and dancing groups from several schools, as well as a 20-minute performance by the ISKL High School Jazz Combo. The group consisted of Grade 10 students who were directed by Jonathan Baird. They were all professional, upbeat, and played with panache!

The ceremony was attended by the Ministry of Education, Private Education Department Director, Encik Fauzi Asirip, Deputy Director, Puan Aniza Binti

Kamarulzaman, and a host of other Ministry representatives. It was a fine addition to ISKL's long performing arts tradition.

By the week of January 24th, a fantastic SOP-friendly performance by the High School Jazz band and singers took place in the Robert B. Gaw Theater. The performance was attended by both high school and middle school students, in socially distant seating arrangements, and live streamed for the wider ISKL community. The ISKL Singers and Jazz Combo put on a spectacular presentation under the direction of Jaymin and Jonathan Baird, which had us all tapping our feet. Their determination, as well as their amazing talent, shined through in their performances, and we are incredibly proud of them.

## **Addam's Family**

Our High School students put on a creepy, hilarious, and fun rendition of The Addams Family musical, which filled The Robert B. Gaw Theater with lively music. With almost 50 kids involved in the production. This lyric from the opening number: "When you're an Addams, you've got to have a lot of passion!" rang true as students demonstrated their passion and range of abilities. Tina Casey, ISKL's Performing Arts Director and HS and IB Theater Teacher, gave us an all-access ticket to the highly anticipated musical, and explained how it represents hope for our Panthers. We caught up with Mrs. Casey in the most recent newsletter, where she is featured in the faculty profile.

"Our students had to adjust and pivot, just like the odd family in the musical, especially with SOP limits that stopped them from running the play the way it would have been before COVID. Mrs. Casey praised the pupils' perseverance and enthusiasm for theater. She continued on this topic, "They were very resilient and kept up their desire for it," she remarked. Even if we don't teach them anything else, we're teaching them that in the face of adversity, they can conquer anything."

Were you a student of Mrs. Casey's, or one of our other esteemed performing arts faculty? We'd love to hear your memories. Don't be shy to share them with us at [alumni@iskl.edu.my](mailto:alumni@iskl.edu.my)

## There truly is nothing like the Malaysia Week experience: an adventure of a lifetime for Middle School students!

### Adventure of a Lifetime!

There is perhaps nothing more remarkable than the ability to break out of the quotidian events that make up our world and learn to work together as a community, deal positively with new situations, recognize self-perceived limitations, and challenge ourselves to go beyond the norm.

For our Middle and High School students, these experiences await them as they participate in the much anticipated outdoor experiential learning programs—Malaysia Week in Middle School and the Global Action Program (GAP) in High School.



The theater comes alive with Addams Family the Musical.

### A Magical Malaysia Week

A long-standing ISKL tradition of more than four decades, Malaysia Week is ISKL's outdoor interdisciplinary education camp program that takes place in the tropical reefs and lush rainforests of





Malaysia and the heart of Kuala Lumpur. While the tradition is to combine Middle Schoolers from different grades in multiple locations, this format was specially curated for our Panthers this year, where Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 students all depart for different destinations.

#### **GRADE 6**

Catching fish, making smores, and kayaking for the first time—the Grade 6 experience was designed to provide the opportunity for students to participate in outdoor adventure activities and learn various survival and bushcraft skills that happened at The Nest in Serdang. While over at the ISKL campus, students learned the importance of teamwork during The Amazing Race and Spirit Week activities.

#### **GRADE 7**

Hiking to a stunning waterfall, kayaking through

an undisturbed rainforest, seeing and hearing Malaysian birds deep in the jungle, making Orang Asli traps, and battling leeches might have been among the highlights of our Grade 7 students' week in Endau Rompin. While on campus, students rotated through incredible experiences such as abseiling off the Middle School wing, doing a high ropes course of defying gravity in the gym, completing discovery diving in the swimming pool, and riding bicycles through jumps and turns!

#### **GRADE 8**

The Grade 8 Malaysia Week trip was a joyous and memorable week for participants. There was an incredible amount of learning through the activities on campus, such as repelling, mountain biking, pioneering, and paddle boarding. When students headed out for their Rawa Island adventure, they were snorkeling, hiking, stargazing, and using rope skills to build structures such as catapults! They also engaged in debates about sustainable development and became aware of the fragility of the island ecosystems.

For all students participating in Malaysia Week, it is an opportunity to gain an increased sense of independence and responsibility. There have been many positive lessons about resilience and overcoming challenges from the pandemic. Still, life lessons such as being away from home, growing in independence, solving problems, and becoming more responsible have not been as evident. The return to 'normalcy' and Malaysia Week's return offers powerful chances for students to grow in these critical life skills.



**"What was most rewarding was watching our students truly appreciate their first Malaysia Week experience. It was inspiring to see our students once again socializing, making new friends, and strengthening their bonds with classmates, teachers, and the country of Malaysia. After five days of sun, surf, rainforests, and endless activity, our Middle School students wrapped up their adventure full of hope, optimism, and gratitude for their friends, family, and school."**

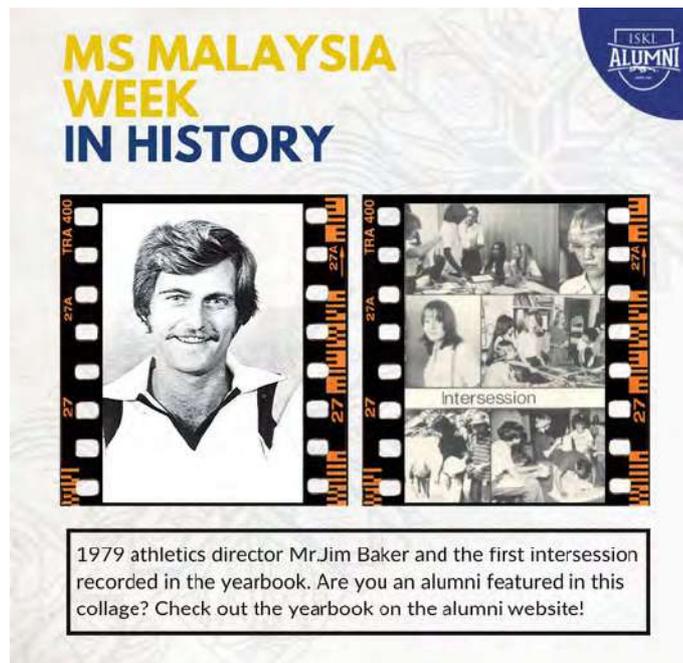
- Middle School Principal Peter Casey



Some of the lessons will be beneficial and powerful when students return from Malaysia Week. Others can be positively life-impacting. It is lovely to see the collective power of students coming together to achieve something more significant than any individual. From connecting with a roommate to partnering with a team, the positive aspects of the community are abundant on Malaysia Week trips.

Before it was known as Malaysia Week, it was called Intersession. Did you see our Intersession/Malaysia Week flashback on social media? Check it out on the right.

**What do you remember about your Malaysia Week experiences?** Have you carried any of these lessons with you into adulthood? We would love to hear about it at [alumni.iskl.edu.my](http://alumni.iskl.edu.my)



**Another ISKL experience that leaves a mark on HS students is GAP, which made a modified return.**

#### **A Modified Global Action Program**

Grade 9 students boarded their buses and headed off to Terengganu and Pahang for three days of experiential learning and fun as part of a modified Global Action Program (GAP) event, the first since 2019. Our Panthers traveled to central and coastal Malaysia, where they enjoyed several challenging physical activities, engaged in local issues, and had fun with friends and classmates. In an average year, this event would include Grades 10 and 11, but plans are being made for a more traditional GAP event in October!

### Seizing The Moment With Team Dungun

Adrenaline-busting challenges, volleyball competitions, snorkeling with turtles and sharks- Team Dungun had an adventure along the east coast in Terengganu! Our students explored different areas of the Sustainable Development Goals, participated in a beach clean, and learned about sea turtles and plastic recycling before making necklaces collected from the trash they collected using plastic machines.

Our Grade 9 students will also be able to show off some local skills after the trip, such as ways to pull the teh tarik and the art of roti canai making that they picked up in the Dungun Amazing Race.

### Taking The Plunge With Team Merapoh

While over in Pahang, our Panthers embarked on an outdoor expedition as they braved the river rapids on rubber tubes along a scenic river, engaged in rock climbing, caving, and hiking at various spots in the beautiful Merapoh! With over 80 precious limestone hills, it is hard not to marvel at a wealth of rare flora and fauna species as our students explore the many million-year-old caves around the area.

Students also partook in a service project based on an agroforestry concept where villagers grow cash crops such as cocoa and trees. This model is essential for humans and animals to coexist in a bio-diverse environment, which is especially important in Malaysia. They also spent a few hours hiking with a Batek guide, where they got to ask questions about his life, culture, and history.

As passionate advocates for the benefits of outdoor experiential learning, we see Malaysia Week and GAP as the culmination of a school-wide program designed to foster these experiences and build these skills over time. Combining service learning with outdoor adventure enables our students to gain different perspectives, build their global understanding, and develop new skills. Upon their return, our students all report a greater sense of resilience, confidence, and compassion.





Former Alumni and Development Director Lynette MacDonald and a Grade 5 Red Hat cut the ribbon at the ES playground grand opening.

## The combined effort of various groups within our community, culminating in the new Elementary School rooftop playground, is something we can all be proud of.

### The best was yet to come

As the reality of the 2020-2021 Academic Year began to sink in, ISKL Leaders came together to ensure that the funds generated by our community, mainly from the PTA, would be used for a meaningful project. Typically, funds contributed to the ISKL Inspiration Fund are awarded to projects supporting ISKL's Vision and Mission and extends student learning beyond the curriculum offering. However, with all the challenges hurtling our way in 2020 and 2021, it was evident that the scope of projects would be limited due to the students not being on campus, so the focus shifted on long term impact projects. The Elementary Rooftop Playground was one of the projects identified as key to enhancing our ES students learning environment.

The ISKL PTA has always been a great support to our community and contributions from their fundraising efforts was one of the reasons the elementary rooftop playground construction was so successful. Through

their numerous campaigns over the years, the funds raised through the Inspiration Fund, allowed this state-of-the-art outdoor playground to be brought to life. We are immensely thankful for their hard work, to ensure that students' experience and access to top notch facilities was not sacrificed in spite of challenging times. To all our parents, thank you for your gifts, you made this possible for your children with your continued support.

At the same time, we must recognize our generous alumni and their contributions that also helped to fund this project. To close the gap between the Inspiration fund and the final cost, a special 55th Anniversary Pewter Panther fundraiser was launched in April 2021. With a deadline of May 5th, the goal was to sell 55 Pewter Panthers and raise RM55,000.

**"We can't wait to see our students enjoying the space and for our faculty to be able to use it as part of the curriculum - it will add an amazing dimension to the ES experience."**

- Julie Olson, ES Principal



ES Students explore the new playground.



ES Principal Julie Olson helps students try out the zip line.

That goal was met and exceeded thanks to the tremendous generosity of the ISKL community both current and alumni. In total about RM70,000 was contributed.

Notable thank you's go to ISKL parent Jamie Chew, who not only purchased the last two Gold panthers, but then donated one back to be re-sold. To really drive the effort home, Alumni Scott Roberts, class of 1983, offered to donate RM10,000 if the community would match the donation by purchasing 10 of the Anniversary Pewter Panthers. The 10 panthers, plus a few extra were sold within hours of the challenge being set.

**Thank you to everyone who worked so tirelessly in trying times to create this space for our students.**

It is with the generous support of community members that projects like this are able to come to life, and children are able to benefit. You too, can contribute to inspiring people, places, and programs at ISKL, so that students may benefit from that giving right now.

## Thank you to all of the donors who made this campaign such a success.

*Ahn Hyung Jib (Parent)*

*Aliya Ahmad ('12)*

*Angela Zhou (Student)*

*Antonious Moors (Parent)*

*Arda Tuna ('21)*

*Ayesha Zulkifly ('06)*

*Azlina Azmi (Alumni Parent)*

*Benoit Briand (Alumni Parent)*

*Catherine Gresse (Staff)*

*Christine Sterk (Alumni Parent)*

*Class of 1978*

*Danial Gastel (Parent)*

*Daniel Zhang Yu (Alumni Parent)*

*David Gonsalvez (Parent)*

*David Tang (Parent)*

*David Watson ('75)*

*Dennis Flannelly ('94)*

*Dennis Petersen ('77)*

*Derek Haught ('86)*

*Effendy Shahul Hamid (Alumni Parent)*

*Feng Guo (Alumni Parent)*

*Frances Fraser (Staff/Alumni Parent)*

*Gaby Los Santos (Alumni Parent)*

*Georgina Scorer (Parent)*

*H Alan Cardenas ('99)*

*Henk Jan Jonge Poerink (Alumni Parent)*

*Hideto Nakajima (Alumni Parent)*

*HOS Office (Rami Madani)*

*Hong Xiandong (Parent)*

*Jaimie Chew (Parent)*

*Jeff Caton*

*Jenn Collins (Faculty)*

*Jennifer Vorobiev (Alumni Parent)*

*Jihae Koo (Student)*

*Karen Palko (Faculty)*

*Karien Hoogenboezem*

*Katie Milton (Staff/Alumni Parent)*

*Kevin Gaw ('78)*

*Kirstin Chavez ('87)*

*Kristin Keller ('91)*

*Kunming Wu (Alumni Parent)*

*Liam Callan ('14)*

*Lilian Ngundo*

*Lynette MacDonald (Alumni Staff/Parent)*

*Mario van den Heuvel ('02)*

*Mark Van Cott Alumni (Parent)*

*Muna AbuSulayman ('90)*

*Omar Salim ('92)*

*Patrick Wilkinson ('97)*

*Petra Recter ('87)*

*Radhika Mohit (Alumni Parent)*

*Rangam Bir (Alumni Parent)*

*Robert Davidson ('18)*

*Robert Thompson (Alumni Faculty)*

*Rodney C Muse (Alumni Parent)*

*Sanggyun Ahn ('90)*

*Satoshi Yamada (Alumni Parent)*

*Scott Roberts ('83)*

*Serra Tunaman ('88)*

*Seung-Jin Lee ('99)*

*SooLee Oh ('21)*

*Steve Tay (Parent)*

*Suzanne Donnelly (Parent)*

*Thomas Tsao (Alumni Parent)*

*Tina Williams (Alumni Parent)*

*Tomas Charvat (Alumni Parent)*

*Vasily Pasetchnik (Alumni Parent)*

*Xu Wen Jun (Student)*

*Yihan Wang ('10)*

For more information please visit <https://alumni.iskl.edu.my/supportus>.



**INSPIRE PEOPLE**



**INSPIRE PLACES**



**INSPIRE PROGRAM**

# A new scholarship furthers our commitment to our host country.

## The First Pathways Scholars

ISKL granted two Malaysian students who completed their Form 3 school evaluation in 2021 the ISKL Pathways Scholarship as part of its commitment to fulfilling its vision and mission. The scholarships are merit and need-based, and are equivalent to a four-year High School Program study from Grades 9 to 12.

The scholarships were given to deserving and inspiring students who are passionate about developing the skills necessary to make a positive difference in the world, and who want to be nurtured and guided in further developing their passions and knowledge of the world in order to mould themselves, others, and the environment.

Along with Rhenu Arivananthan and Delphine Thompson who received ISKL's prestigious two-year International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Scholarship, Vidyaasni Pretyba Uthiya Kumar and Soraya Hani Bte Shuhaizan were awarded the inaugural four-year ISKL High School Pathways Scholarship. The 2022-2023 school-year will mark the 20th anniversary of the ISKL IBDP Scholarship. There's no better way to celebrate than by inaugurating a whole new scholarship for deserving students. Providing opportunities for inspiring students such as this would not be possible without the generous donations from our Alumni, PTA, and other members of our community. If you are interested in supporting the scholarship programs at ISKL please visit <https://alumni.iskl.edu.my/supportus>.

# The best traditions stand the test of time, and even a mandatory hiatus.

## Return of the last day of school clap-out

What a lovely way to end our school year by being able to return to our ISKL clap-out tradition. For the first time since June 2019, it was wonderful to be able to



relive this tradition in person. A video of the event is available on both Alumni and ISKL Official social media. In addition to the whole school clap out where all students are celebrated for completing another school year, a new tradition was started with the Senior Clap-out where the class of 2022 received a special clap-out on their last day of school as they made their way from their Senior Awards Ceremony to their yearbook signing party.

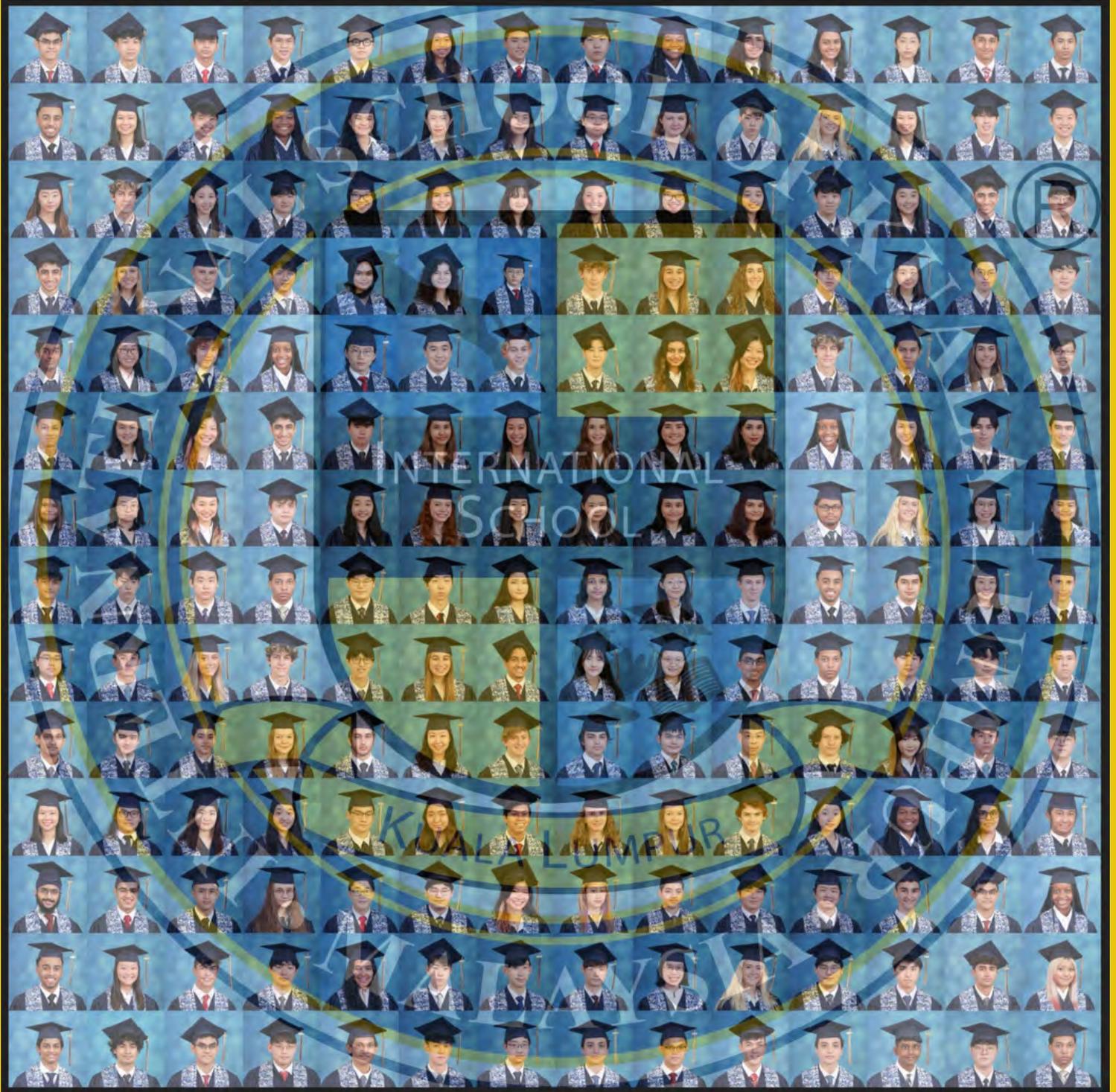
It was a very special way to end a challenging couple years and for many felt like a true return to normalcy.



# Graduating CLASS OF 2022



By: Sarah Madzney



# CONGRATULATIONS

## After a particularly challenging HS experience, the class of 2022 has a lot to celebrate!

“Today we celebrate our 153 Grade 12 students who have reached this momentous milestone in their lives and are about to become ISKL graduates. Class of 2022, we celebrate you. In particular, we celebrate every way that each of you is different and unique, and the richness this brings to all our lives. We learn so much from our diversity and culture of inclusion as a school and I want you to hold on to this as you step into the next phase of your learning journey.” Rami Madani, Head of School, delivered these inspiring comments during the first in-person Graduation Ceremony conducted at ISKL’s campus in Ampang Hilir. After two



**“You all share the common trait of being in Grade 12, you all will receive the ISKL High School Diploma, and you are all wearing the same outfit today. But that is where the similarity ends. You are each unique. This is an inclusive school and you are a diverse group of individuals; each of you has taken a distinct journey to get here today.”**

- Jeff Farrington HS Principal

years of being impacted by the pandemic, it was delightful to see the graduates, along with their friends, family, teachers, and ISKL's Administration and Board of Directors, come together for this momentous event. The Ceremony, which took place on June 3, was broadcast live across the world so that friends and family near and far could partake in the festivities.

The graduation was a celebration of identity and inclusion, a sentiment echoed by High School Principal, Jeff Farrington, shared how ISKL's High School program prides itself on catering to students' diverse interests, hobbies, and aspirations, and Jeff praised the diverse paths followed by the Class of 2022. “Many students graduating today will also receive the IB Diploma. We also have our first cohort of students receiving certificates for completing our innovative Pursuits two-year program. Also graduating is the young woman who initiated what is now known as ISKL's Life Centered



Education program. We are humbled and proud of how our students have enriched our school and taken full advantage of every opportunity."

Evelynn Schorr, the student-elected representative for the Class of 2022, spoke of the hurdles the class had faced, as well as how, whether it was on campus or online, students had made the most of every opportunity. Evelynn shared, "We persevered through a pandemic and subsequent shifts in our modes of learning. We learned new languages and improved English as a first, second, or third language. We organized impactful projects, like delivering cookies during lockdown to raise money for charity, or organizing the ISKL Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. We excelled in athletics, both individually and as a team. ... Our efforts have made a positive impact on ourselves and our community, and we have the opportunity to make a more positive impact in the future."



**“We started off our senior year separated, with classes and clubs all online, wondering if we would be able to have graduation in person. Now, almost 10 months later, we are here together, on campus, with friends and family, to reflect on all that we have accomplished. Collectively, we have studied rigorously, joined sports teams, played in concerts, organized clubs, served our community, and more, but most importantly, planned for our future. It was difficult to imagine, sometimes, that we would ever make it to graduation, but here we are.”**

- Evelynn Schorr ('22)

Paul Hengstler, a high school social studies teacher, was also chosen by the Class of 2022 to give a speech. As Jeff Farrington points out, "Above all his other strengths, Mr. Hengstler forges caring relationships with students. Students know they are valued, that they belong, and that his classroom is a safe space to take risks, extend their intellectual boundaries, and challenge thought. It is due to the connectedness students feel in his presence that the Senior class chose him to be their speaker today."

In a witty and touching address, Paul summarized the themes expressed throughout the celebration—perseverance, thankfulness, and the necessity of being true to oneself. His address demonstrated his close connection with the students:

**“Class of 2022, no one can say about you that you don’t have grit and determination.”**



Paul went on, "You faced down a pandemic. I think we all learned a few things from that experience. We learned that we can do hard things, and we learned just how much we need each other. I hope that you've spent these last few days relishing these people around you. I hope you hugged them tight and said "thank-you for being a friend". Thanks for being on my team. Thanks for helping me get through when the going was tough."

He continued, "So here you go Class of 2022 this is my advice: just be yourself. When we say: 'Be All You Are' let's put some heavy emphasis on the YOU. You need to be who YOU are. Be yourself. You are the only you you've got. You're good enough just the way you are and you deserve to be loved and respected just the way you are."

Student-led musical performances included the High School Chamber Ensemble, Senior Choir Ensemble, and the Class of 2022's rendition of "The Climb" as well as a beautiful solo by Grade 12 student, Chelsea Choong of the Malaysian National Anthem, Negaraku. The ceremony came to a close with the students' most anticipated event: sliding their graduation cap tassel from right to left, hearing the words "I now present the ISKL graduating Class of 2022!" and tossing their caps in celebration. It was a lovely occasion, made even sweeter by the fact that we could finally celebrate together in person!

Whether they begin their studies in colleges and universities throughout the world, embark on a gap year, military service, or work experience, ISKL wishes our graduates the best of luck and we look forward to hearing about their contributions to making the world a better place. Our newest Alumni make us #ISKLproud!



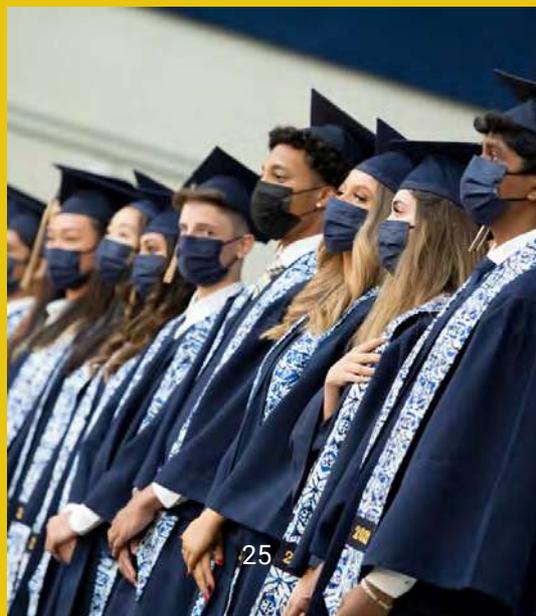
# Graduating CLASS OF 2022

Addy Farhan Adli Haikal  
Lola Nuha Safiyah Binti Ahmad Fuad  
Hyun Soo Ahn  
Elio Alaimo  
Rishabh Sukrit Anand Mahadevan  
Muhammad Arif  
Wan Aisha Aziz  
Nurin Dania Azrul  
Anshika Bahinipaty  
Zoe Shao-Wei Beck  
Caitlin Ann Blattner  
Jack Campbell Brannan  
Eve Chenyi Butler  
Bryden Paul Campbell  
Yogita Chandrasekaran  
Pratyush Piyush Chaudhari  
Ashley Yumin Cho  
Inez Chong Tze Wei  
Chelsea Choong Kye Xin  
Anoushka Chulliparambil Viju  
Gregoire Delannoy  
Abdoukarim James Diop  
Pia Ruby Jane Dunlop  
Jessica Christine Ekbom  
Abhinav Elumalai  
Emma Nur Andjani Emil Rinaldi  
Braylon Isaiah Ferguson  
Alexandra Zhenya Flanagan  
William Foong Hsien-Loong  
Valeria Sophia Fuenmayor Van Praag  
Go Shu Wei  
Cade Damon Gulley  
Jaewoong Han  
Jaeyoung Han  
Seungyoon Han  
Kyle Taiyo Hanato Gallagher  
Sebastian Bradley Havas  
Sydney Alexis Henry  
Yun Seo Her  
Emilio Hernandez Morales  
Zixiang Hong  
Felix Zhichao Huang  
Zekai Huang

Aashika Jain  
Abigail Elisa Jesudasan  
Mark-Oliver Jopp  
Natalie Andrea Junker  
Humayra Kabir  
Aryan Giri Kalliat Chali  
Muhammad Haziq Shah Kamarul Hatta  
Mohammed Zakarya Kamli  
Steve John Karippai  
Ryohei Kawakami  
Ilhan Rayan Khairul Anwar  
Byung Yun Kim  
Chaeyeon Kim  
Dokyoung Kim  
JooHyuk Kim  
Min Chan Kim  
Sean Kim  
Soumya Bhanu Kuchimanchi  
Yeonjun Kwag  
Jasmine Qiu-Yi Lambert  
Law Kar Junn  
Joel Campbell Learmonth  
Lee E-Therng  
GaEun Lee  
Heon Lee  
HongJu Lee  
HyunWoo Lee  
Jimin Lee  
Jiwon Lee  
JongBin Lee  
Joy Lee Loke Ern  
Ryan Lee Wei Jian  
Seung Ah Lee  
SooJi Lee  
Suah Lee  
Sung-Chae Lee  
Lee Yan Qing  
ZiXuan Li  
Rex Lim  
Yunzhe Liu  
Oliver Anthony MacDonald-Butler  
Mehr Malhotra  
Aoi Matsumura

Md Tamzid Mazumder  
Josh William McCallum  
Ryan Andrew McDonald  
Liam Kim McNamara  
Muhammad Alfaim Bin Mohd Hassan  
Jin Woo Moon  
Sang Won Mun  
Daniel Chadwick Muse  
Muthike Lynn Ndolo  
Elizaveta Nebesnaya  
Karl Ng Ji Hao  
Kate Ng Ji Ling  
Devanshi Pandey  
Hyewon Park  
Junyeong Park  
Prabhjot Singh Paul  
Muhammad Harith bin Ramlan  
Arav Rajkumar Ramrakhyani  
Nicole Rausch  
Pei Ren  
Irene Rodriguez de Lope Ruiz  
Katrina Laila-Rahil Ruslanf  
Emile Christian Davis Safar  
Auritro Sami  
Beatrice Anne Leopoldo Santos  
Romeo Sassolini  
Evelynn Schorr  
Seah Yuxuan  
Mohammad Shayaan Shahid  
Jacob Nean-Hua Sheikh  
Muhammad Ismail Sheikh  
Daniel Jin Ho Shin  
Raul Akhil Sivaneindiren  
Jeffrey Skaf  
Jeikyounng Sung  
Wookyoung Sung  
Syed Muhammad Azri Syed Azman  
Aoi Takashina  
Teng Junn Wei  
Ritvik Teotia  
Kiara Isabella Tolman  
Amelie Tomson Tsao  
Amelia Unwin

Christian Andrew Van Cott  
Lorenzo Marcello van Lier  
Anandha Krishna Vengadasalam  
Venkatayoga Aayush Veturi  
Alexandros Akito Vogiatzakis  
Herman Per Vide Wallmark  
Wei-Hao Wang  
YouJia Wang  
Uday Wazirchand  
Wee Li Ern Stephanie  
Wong King Chow  
Sarah Hui-Yun Wong  
Gabriella Julianna Woodward  
Sizhe Xiang  
Muhammad Aidil Syabil Yanto Isra  
Zon Chin Yen  
Dageyoung Yi  
Han-Kyoung Yoo  
Jong Ha Yoon  
Sung Won Yoon  
Yifan You  
Leona Yu  
Hassan Zahid



# COVER STORY

By: Dr. Amy Schneider

# ISKL Alumni Continue Their Rugby Journey

2022 marks the 40th anniversary of IASAS (Interscholastic Association of Southeast Asia School). IASAS team sports and cultural conventions become some of the most memorable experiences for students, parents, faculty and staff alike. Faculty Alumni and former Panther Rugby Team Mom Dr. Amy Schneider keeps us up to date with Panthers whose Rugby days are far from over.



Coby Baker ('21) stares down the opposition.



Susana Hyvonen ('18)  
with her Touch Rugby  
team in London



Clara English ('18) &  
Iman Kysah on USA  
Team No Man's Land

Rugby for some seems like a brutal and uncontrolled sport. Memes such as “Give Blood, Play Rugby,” are commonplace. For ISKL Rugby Alumni and millions of other players around the world, the game is like poetry in motion. What ultimately binds these rugby players is the overall community not seen in other sports. Let’s follow ISKL 2018-2021 Rugby Alumni as they continue their journey and become part of the global rugby family.

The ISKL boys and girls rugby and touch teams have been successful through the years and have made it to finals for the last decade. They have come away with silver or gold most of those years. Not only have these ISKL Alumni excelled at this sport in high school, but many have gone on to continue playing rugby and touch rugby at their University or in local clubs. The sport has helped ISKL alumni stay connected to each other from afar, connect with new friends and share a love of the sport with others.

#### **ENGLAND (the birthplace of rugby):**

An ISKL Alumni rugby touch player, Susana Hyvonen ('18) said, “I decided to play contact rugby at my British University since touch wasn’t offered. While it was a big change, it was amazing to try out a new sport and I really enjoyed my 3 years of playing rugby, making so many good friends along the way! Now that I’ve graduated from my undergraduate program, I have gone back to touch and am now playing for a club in London!!”

#### **USA (where rugby is the fastest growing sport):**

Another ISKL Alumni Clara English ('18) recently connected with a former teammate Iman Kysah ('18) in Austin, Texas playing together in a national touch tournament against teams from all over the USA. Clara played at ISKL for 6 years and helped her team win silver two years in a row at IASAS along with Iman who played for three years. Both Alums are playing for the No Man’s Land team, an all women’s team that was created for players who don’t have a home team and are located all over the USA. Clara said, “Playing touch in the USA is great because it is such an up and coming sport and many players we see at tournaments are other IASAS alumni we played in high school.”

**“Playing touch in the USA is great because it is such an up and coming sport and many players we see at tournaments are other IASAS alumni.”**

- Clara English ('18)

**Canada (Rugby in the Great White North):**

One player who has gone on to play world class rugby is Liam Casey ('18). He has played for the Canadian National Team and Queens University for the last four years. His club is in the National Championships. Liam was named the province of Ontario Player of the Year and is a member of the Pacific Pride, a Canadian rugby union team based in British Columbia. He has played on the national rugby team since he was 17 years old and is currently on the U20 men's team where he played in England this past December. He recently connected with Max Rausch ('19) who was visiting the University at Queens.

**Holland (Nicknamed- The Oranges):**

Max said, "It was great seeing Liam in action again after high school." Max went on to say that after playing rugby at ISKL, he realized how much he enjoyed the sport and the culture, so he joined the Erasmus University team in The Netherlands. He said, " It has been an amazing experience to play in university as it has allowed me to meet tons of amazing friends and travel around the country!"

**USA (currently ranked 18th in the world):**

Another standout ISKL Alumni, Ryan Thomas ('18) said, "Playing rugby at university has many benefits. It is a great way to stay in shape while playing a sport you love, and it expands your social circle. You become part of a family, as you had at ISKL, which is important to have at university.

I encourage anyone thinking about playing rugby at university to get out and give it a go." Ryan Thomas ('18) has played scrum half for Santa Clara University in California for the last two years. Ryan and his team



Liam Casey ('18), Ontario Player of the year with Queen's University

took on the Cal Poly Mustangs in February 2022, where he played against his former teammate, Coby Baker ('21). At the time, Ryan said, "I'm excited to play against Coby. It will be a lot of fun!" Coby Baker ('21) has played global quality rugby for the U18 USA National Team in New Zealand and represented the North American Lions in the December 2021 Dubai Rugby 7s tournament. Coby currently plays for Cal Poly and recently played against former teammate, Kartik Parab ('21). Kartik represented UCLA at the 2021 West Coast 7s tournament in San Luis Obispo, California.

**"You become part of a family, as you had at ISKL, which is important to have at university."**

- Ryan Thomas ('18)



Left: Kartik Parab ('21) & Coby Baker ('21), UCLA vs. Cal. Poly



Max Rausch ('19), third from right front row and the Erasmus University Rugby team.



Ryan Thomas ('18) & Coby Baker ('21), UC Santa Clara vs. Cal. Poly

The UCLA rugby team is exceptional, they push me and expect the best. It's great to learn from amazing players and continue the ISKL fighting spirit in the USA."

**Switzerland (Rugby played with Swiss precision):**

Another ISKL Alumni, Faegan Ng ('18) said, "I'm currently playing for the local rugby club, but am also a part of the EHL Rugby Committee in Lausanne where I go to school." Faegan works as the assistant of Finance for the Rugby Committee. Faegan quoted ISKL rugby coaching legend Gareth Allum, "Playing rugby is like having a passport, which allows you to make friends very quickly. I am grateful to be a part of a great community in EHL and ISKL."

**USA (bidding for rugby World Cup Hosts 2027, 2029 and 2031):**

Another Alumni, Pat Pantrat ('19) said, "Continuing to play rugby after high school for Michigan State has allowed me to make so many new connections with people and also travel every week all over the US to compete against different colleges. Playing for my college team has helped me grow my rugby skills and keep me fit. I highly recommend playing rugby after high school and to get involved with the university teams."

Josh Chesson ('19) said, "ISKL rugby is an excellent program with great coaches: Gareth Allum, Steve Willis, and Max Wright. I've had the opportunity to play from 6th - 12th grade and experience IASAS 2017 - 2019. I firmly believe that if you take what you've learned from the program you will be a good player on any team you try out for. Freshman year at the Virginia Military Institute 2019 - 2020 I started as a center and then a fly half, I loved every minute of it, made lifelong friendships, and countless memories. My advice to



Pat Pantrat ('19) playing at Michigan State

recent graduates who were part of ISKL rugby; try out for your college/university/club team."

These ISKL Alumni, have gone on to play rugby for not just the competition, but also to make friends and be part of the rugby community. According to one site, rugby is the fastest growing sport in America with 82% growth in popularity between 2011-2016. Rugby is also now an Olympic sport. Maybe one day, we will see some of our ISKL Alumni at the Olympics holding the ISKL banner where the love of rugby all began. ISKL Rugby took these players from Ampang or Ampang Hilir to their worldwide rugby journey.



Josh Chesson ('19) at Virginia Military Institute



Ryan Thomas ('18) playing scrum for Santa Clara University



Faegan Ng ('18) playing for EHL Rugby Club in Lausanne Switzerland.



2022 Senior Assembly  
Alumni Panelists

# ONCE A PANTHER, ALWAYS A PANTHER

*By: Sarah Madzney*

Often heard echoing through the walls of our beloved campus, the phrase carries significant meaning at ISKL. If you are a student, parent, faculty, or alumni who make up our dynamic community, you are a Panther.

Being a Panther is for life, and when you transition into an alumnus, there are various opportunities for you to give back, motivate, and inspire fellow Panthers who will soon join you in experiencing life after ISKL. Curious to know how? Read more below!

### **The Intimate Group Sesh: Senior Assembly**

Do you remember the spectrum of emotions coursing through you when you graduated High School? Excitement, nervousness, and joy are all mixed up with the understanding that school life as you know it is coming to an end. Fast-forward to where you are now,

and who better to impart these post-graduation experiences other than yourself? This is where our Senior Assembly comes to play. It is an avenue where our students can ask our dynamic alumni panel questions about their experiences and lessons learned as they navigate life after ISKL.

### **Personalized University Tips and Tricks: Get Real!**

For seniors heading off to university, it can be daunting as they transition toward this new phase of life. Understanding that this period comes with many questions and uncertainties, the Get Real! Series invites one alumnus for a casual chat with our students, where they have the opportunity to learn more about university life and ask questions in a small group environment. Whether on application essays, living with a roommate, or interesting dorm hacks, you can get down to the nitty-gritty and give your insight into the life of an undergraduate.

### **Industry 101: Black Box Conversations**

If you are already on a career path, the Future Ready: Alumni Black Box Conversations is the perfect series for sharing your pathway and inside career knowledge with the ISKL community. Each episode looks at a different professional grouping, exploring the many and varied opportunities in the field.

### Here's what we have done in the past:

- **Black Box Conversations: Medical Sciences**

Focusing on the field of Medical Sciences, the alumni-filled event was hosted by Hezril Asyraaf ('13), a Presenter/Producer of the Evening Edition at BFM. Hezril is joined by Dr. Hana Aziz ('98), a General Practitioner at the Malaysia Social Research Institute clinic in Ampang, Dr. Elena Azizan ('05), a Research Lecturer at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Centre, and Yu Ern Hsueh ('17) who pursued Bachelor of Genetics at Queen Mary University of London.

- **Black Box Conversations: The Arts**

The inspiring and informative event features alumni from across the artistic spectrum. Hosted by our alumni host, Hezril Asyraaf ('13), the session is joined by Mezzo-Soprano singer Kirstin Chavez ('87), artist Haffendi Anuar ('04), filmmaker Tony Pietra Arjuna ('96), and film composer Varqa Buehrer ('03). Each panelist shares their journey in their respective professions and tips for other aspiring creatives.

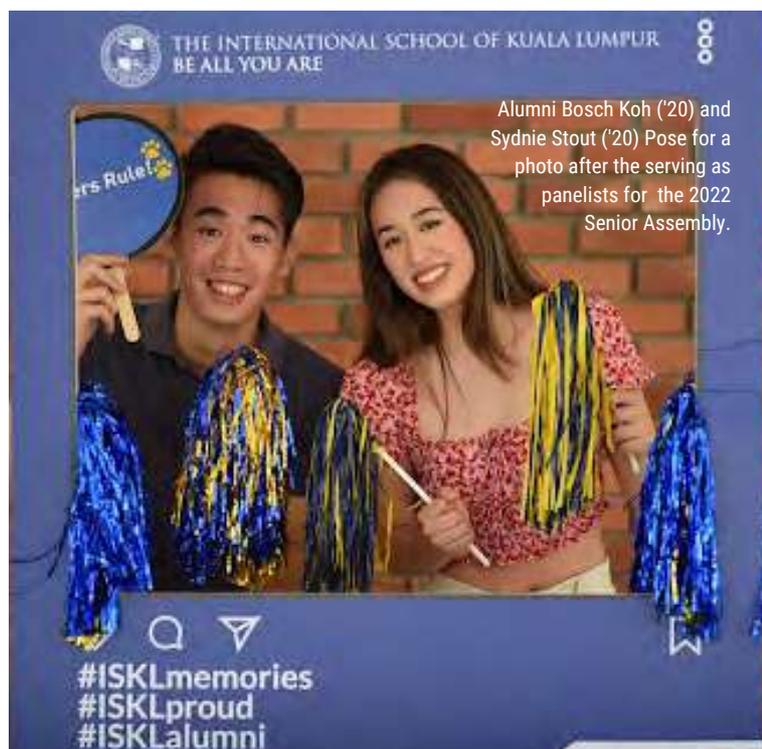
- **Black Box Conversations: Law**

Helmed by ISKL's Director of Talent and Culture Ika Muzamal, the third installment brought together Panthers to shed some light on the law-related career paths. Professor William Birdthistle (Class of '91), Sabrinne Gibson (Class of '11), Hannah Costley (Class of '12), Maggie Casey (Class of '14), and Jonathan David Ross Silva (Class of '14) joined Ika to talk about their respective journeys and shared advice for anyone who wishes to venture into law. Read more in depth interviews with the Alumni Black Box Law panelists on page 31.

One of the most rewarding ways for alumni to give back is by imparting knowledge and empowering students to thrive. Whether via Black Box Conversations, Get Real!, being part of the Senior Assembly and more, one thing is for sure- your involvement will be an invaluable experience and creates lasting memories for graduates as they move on to a new chapter after ISKL.

Our Class of '20 Panther Sydnie Stout said it best, "When I left, I didn't think I would be as attached. But coming back and seeing the campus, all these nice, happy memories were really special. It's a sense of community that you never want to lose, and you want to guide your juniors."

Keen to become a lifelong mentor? Head on over to the ISKL alumni portal to begin your journey!



Alumni Bosch Koh ('20) and Sydnie Stout ('20) Pose for a photo after the serving as panelists for the 2022 Senior Assembly.

**"When I left, I didn't think I would be as attached. But coming back and seeing the campus, all these nice, happy memories were really special. It's a sense of community that you never want to lose, and you want to guide your juniors."**

- Sydnie Stout ('20)

Alumni Tanmay Gupta ('20) catches up with Alumni Engagement Lead Kendra Jones on a recent visti to campus





presents

In conversation with Ika Muzamal ('07), ISKL's Director of Talent & Culture

# BLACK BOX CONVERSATIONS LAW



Prof. William Birdthistle ('91)  
(Corporate and Finance Law)



Hannah Costley ('12)  
(Criminal Law)



Sabrina Gibson ('11)  
(Labour Law in Medical Field)



Maggie Casey ('14)  
(Human Rights: Labour, Employment  
and Family Law)



Jonathan David Ross Silva ('14)  
(Finance Law)

## LAWYER UP!

By: Sarah Madzney

Alumni Blackbox conversations explore the career journey of Alumni at different stages of their professional lives in a particular field. In this example of Alumni supporting our students, alumni ranging from the class of '91 to '14 discussed Law as a career path.

"I enjoyed being able to connect with old friends that I went to school with and to get the chance to hear about what they are doing. It was really fun to reflect on our time at ISKL with people who get what a special and transformative place it was for us as students. I learned that there are many paths to law and that even though we all came from the same High School, we all took very different paths!" - ISKL Alumni Maggie Casey reflected on her experience as a panelist during the third installment of ISKL's Future Ready: Alumni Black Box Conversations that brought together Panthers to shed some light on the law related career paths.

Hosted by ISKL's Director of Talent and Culture, Ika Muzamal ('07), the Black Box Conversations explore a different academic and career pathway featuring alumni

from all over the world who come together for a panel discussion. Here they share their experience and different journeys while pursuing a similar professional pathway. We have been so fortunate to have our Alumni make time to continue to engage with and support our community.

One such alumni who routinely finds time to support our current students is Professor William Birdthistle ('91). One of our panelists for this Black Box, Professor Birdthistle is owed A special congratulations. He was recently appointed to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission as the Director of the Division of Investment Management. The Division oversees regulatory policy for investment advisers and investment companies, including mutual funds and other investment products and services relied upon by retail investors.

Not to be overshadowed, some talented and successful panelists joined Professor Birdthistle to talk about their respective journeys and shared advice for anyone who wishes to venture into law. The impressive lineup included Ika, who is also an ISKL Alumni and Law grad, set the scene for viewers by explaining,

"we will be exploring some pertinent themes such as career pathways or what it's like to be in this field in reality." And who better to give current Panthers advice than our alumni themselves? From having grit and doing what you love, here are the all-important hacks for success in the realm of law!

If you are interested in sharing your experiences with the ISKL community, please reach out to [alumni@iskl.edu.my](mailto:alumni@iskl.edu.my) to learn about more ways to get involved.

### Look At The Activities You Enjoy At School

Although he comes from a family of lawyers, Jonathan, a former legal associate at Shearn Delamore & Co, the oldest law firm in Malaysia, stressed how ISKL influenced his decision to pursue law. He said, "I decided to go to law school because I looked at the activities that I enjoyed at ISKL like MUN (Model United Nations), debate, forensics, and I looked at the classes that I enjoyed, which were English, history, and commerce and social sciences."

**"I decided to go to law school because I looked at the activities that I enjoyed at ISKL"**

- Jonathan David Ross Silva ('14)

Echoing Jonathan's statement, alumni Maggie who recently graduated from the University of Ottawa, believes that her activities at ISKL contributed to essential life skills such as work ethic and leadership. She said, "I don't regret for a single second every moment I spent on a track team or forensic team. And so I recommend that to students. Don't quit your activities – your extracurriculars, because some of the most important skills that you will learn, you will get in there."

### Look For A Mentor

When asked about mentors and guiding forces, Sabrinne, whose role as a Senior Investigator includes investigating allegations of discrimination, sexual and gender-based misconduct, said the people she met during her internship were people that were influential on her success today. "They were instrumental in helping me prepare for my interviews. They were helping me with my resumé. They helped me speak with moral support. And then eventually, they were helping me talk through salary negotiations. So really, they were just super helpful throughout the whole process. I know that if I ever have any questions about anything in this field, they would be the experts to ask" she went on to say.

**"They were instrumental in helping me prepare for my interviews. They were helping me with my resumé. They helped me speak with moral support. And then eventually, they were helping me talk through salary negotiations. So really, they were just super helpful throughout the whole process. I know that if I ever have any questions about anything in this field, they would be the experts to ask"**

-Sabrinne Gibson ('11)

Professor Birdthistle gave a shoutout to his peers when asked about the same topic. "My biggest mentors were all classmates at almost every stage of the way. I feel like peers can be excellent mentors because they show you exactly how much can be done. So I think that's probably the lesson for me."

**"My biggest mentors were all classmates at almost every stage of the way."**

-Prof. William Birdthistle ('91)

### Do What You Love

Finding a job you love is age-old advice. That still rings true today, and as Hannah has put it, "You have to make sure you love what you do because you spend most of your time doing it. If you are unhappy with what you are doing, that unhappiness can seep into other areas of your life and affect your relationships and mental health. So I would say make sure you love what you do and don't be afraid to change and switch it up. If you need to, there is nothing wrong with that."



**There are many ways  
to leave your legacy  
at ISKL and help lay  
the foundations for  
years to come.**

Find out more:

<https://www.iskl.edu.my/giving/>



**INSPIRATION  
FUND**

**"You have to make sure  
you love what you do  
because you spend most  
of your time doing it."**

- Hannah Costley ('12)

Maggie agrees and adds how she thought about the stuff that really matters to her and genuinely enjoys doing before pursuing the field. "I came to law school with a specific purpose of wanting to figure out how to help people. Coming from ISKL, living overseas, understanding that the world is so broad and the legal system influences so much of our day-to-day lives. So that is what interests me."

**"I came to law school with  
a specific purpose of  
wanting to figure out how  
to help people."**

- Maggie Casey ('14)

#### **Get As Many Internships As You Can**

There is great value in pursuing internships and experiences in this practical field. Jonathan's advice is to start early and try as many different areas as possible. "You see the way people work, and then you feel the energy of legal practice, which is so different from academics. And when you do an internship, really try to get value from that experience. Learn about the place, the organization's culture, industry, and profession; especially because law is such a unique profession in so many different ways." He continued,

"Follow your interests and do things that you're interested in besides law. So if you're interested in finance, you should go to a finance internship, and if you're interested in tech, you should do a tech internship. The skills you learn will set you apart from your cohort by an insane amount. No internship is wasted."

#### **The Power of Grit**

To have grit is to have courage and perseverance. In Hannah's line of work as a criminal defense solicitor whose job includes being out at two o'clock in the morning dealing directly with police officers, grit is an essential part of the job. "You have to be willing to do the hours and the jobs. That might seem silly, but there's a purpose for it. You shouldn't ever say no to anything, but within your limitations, because you don't

want to burn out, you don't want to be overwhelmed. It is not glamorous, but it's fun. It is a lot of fun."

**"It is not glamorous, but it's fun. It is a lot of fun."**

- Hannah Costley ('12)

#### Keep in Touch

Professor William Birdthistle highlights how connecting with other students or alumni is one of the most valuable resources in high school for hearing real-life testimonials about higher education. "The only good thing that I think has come out of the pandemic has been that I have zoomed more with ISKL in the last few months than I have in the previous 29 and a half years. It is something I encourage all ISKL students [and alumni] to do, which is to get in touch with alumni to ask them what it is like."

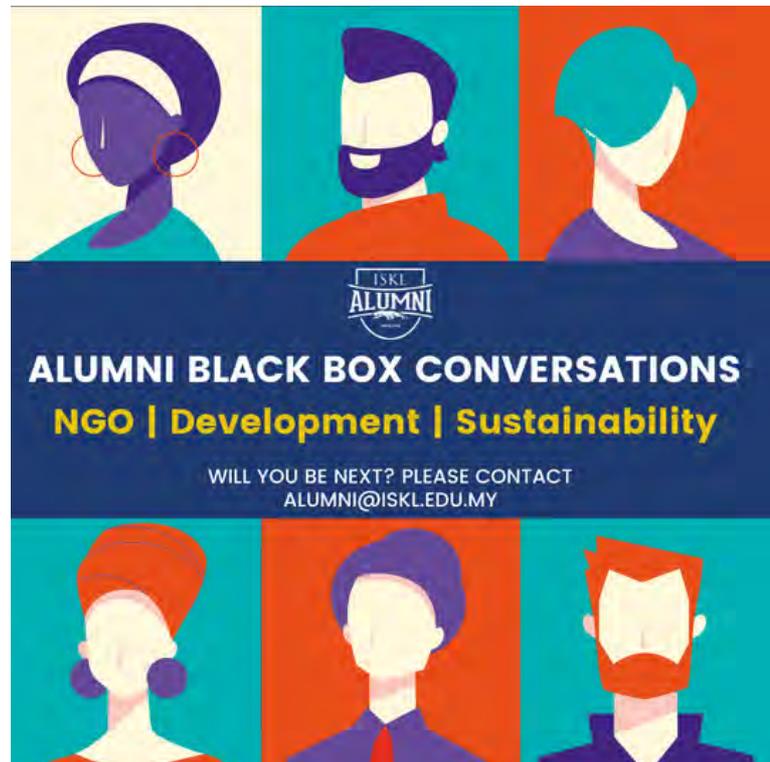
#### Be Future-Ready

ISKL is committed to supporting our students in being ready for what the future may hold and equipping them with the lifelong skills they will need. Taking note of this, our alumni shared their perspectives on what we can expect in the future for the legal industry. Hannah discussed how there are more virtual hearings in the aftermath of the pandemic, but she believes that the criminal justice system will remain face to face because it is such a people-oriented area of law.

Echoing Hannah's sentiment, Professor Birdthistle mentioned how AI is now used to process the bulk of the work that goes into reviewing contracts adding, "I think there'll be plenty of technological disruptions to come. But I think fundamentally; the practice is going to happen. It's going to continue as it has for millennia because, as Hannah said, "at 2:00 am, when you're looking at being deprived of liberty, the first person you're going to want to talk to is a lawyer."

This is just a sneak peek of the insightful conversations among our alumni. Head on over to ISKL's YouTube channel to watch the entire session; it is a session that is ipso facto worth exploring. A big thank you to Hannah Costley, Jonathan David Ross Silva, Maggie Casey, Professor William Birdthistle, and Sabrina Gibson for taking the time to offer valuable advice to our students and the ISKL community. They are a testament to how the ISKL Alumni always find ways to give back to the community.

**Our next Blackbox Conversation will feature alumni working in sustainability, development, or for NGO's. If you would like to participate, please let us know!**



ISKL ALUMNI

**ALUMNI BLACK BOX CONVERSATIONS**  
**NGO | Development | Sustainability**

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# EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

By: Aleia Zulkifly

*What's mine is Yours* - For Sophie "Soph" Schillings ('11), the road less traveled is exactly where she has found her passion and her purpose. Working to clear minefields in conflict regions, Soph shares her experience.

Soph is one-half of a pair of twins and is currently working for the HALO (Hazardous Area Life-support Organization) Trust in Malawi to support clearing landmines. In what may have been seen as a male-dominated ex-military profession, Sophie expresses calmly,

**"It is difficult sometimes, but we bring skills and other approaches that they don't have. "**

We just need to prove ourselves that much more. The sector is expanding and realizing that there is much more need for people from various backgrounds". Soph and her twin sister Clementine both attended ISKL from 2004-2008 before moving to Caracas, Venezuela, in Grade 10, where they completed their high school diploma. Soph

was born in the Netherlands and raised around the world, moving every four years. She mainly grew up in South East Asia and the Americas until finally settling back home in the Netherlands for her Bachelor's Degree and Master's, before starting her career in Southern and Eastern Africa, and the Netherlands.

"As a humanitarian working for the HALO Trust, I supported the clearance of landmines and other explosive remnants of war for the past two and a half years. My job has taken me to Cambodia to clear some of the densest mine belts of the world, Sri Lanka, Kosovo, Somalia, and Malawi. I spent eighteen months working on the Somalia program, with fourteen months living in the country coordinating and supporting de-mining along the Ethiopia-Somali border to help Somalia become landmine impact-free.

Visiting a minefield with colleagues



I just moved to Malawi to work as the program manager to help support Malawi security forces to mitigate unplanned explosions at ammunition sites (to prevent events such as the explosion last year in the Beirut port) and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons."

**"ISKL prepared me for community service and developing a work ethic. We all participated in community service work during Middle School as well as during the International Baccalaureate (IB)."**

Soph was always active in sports during Middle and High school, but she was equally engaged and passionate in volunteering. "ISKL prepared me for community service and developing a work ethic. We all participated in community service work during Middle School as well as during the International Baccalaureate (IB). I was part of Varsity sports such as football/soccer and touch rugby throughout the year, which meant I had to learn to balance the school work and the extra-curricular." She goes on to explain that she has had to maintain that work ethic even now as it is a very demanding job.

With students and teachers from different countries worldwide in ISKL, she learned to adapt and work well within multicultural teams. She points out the Interscholastic Association of Southeast Asia Schools

Planning safe mine destruction



(IASAS) tournaments as one of her highlights while attending ISKL. It showcased the camaraderie and sportsmanship between diverse groups of students across five different international schools. Compared to previous schools, she felt that the sense of community ISKL had was unmatched, especially when she could witness immense support from the whole school during sporting events.

On the teacher that impacted her the most during her days at ISKL, she said, "I remember Mrs. Rebecca Lemos (Faculty Alumni) was always available for a chat and support when I needed help. She was always in the crowds cheering during games. Besides, her husband, Mr. Scott Anders (Faculty Alumni), and fellow science teacher, Mr. Anderson (Faculty Alumni), just made science super enjoyable. Even though I didn't choose that path, it was always fun to get to class. I remember it fondly".

#### **From ISKL to university**

"To be honest, I didn't know what I wanted to study when I was searching for a Bachelor's degree. I knew I wanted to stay in the Netherlands and study something related to English, so a Liberal Arts Degree allowed me to do a combination of that."

From this, Sophie was able to explore what she wanted to pursue in the future. While on a semester abroad at Monash University, Australia, she took some courses related to development and conflict and realized that it was something she could pursue. Sophie then chose to do a Bachelor of Arts (BA) with a major in Law and Sociology and a minor in History at the University College Roosevelt, Netherlands. It didn't directly align with development, but it gave her the key competencies

and skills that she eventually took into development as a career. She then pursued a Master's in International Development while focusing on conflict and natural disasters. The two-year course allowed her to delve deeper into the development world.

"After sleeping in a hammock, we all grabbed our equipment (de-mining tools and metal detector) and hiked up 30 minutes to the minefield, on top of a hill. The field officer in charge of the minefield showed me where I was going to work. Red sticks indicated the area between what was cleared and unsafe, and all around me were yellow sticks in the cleared ground." These yellow sticks represent mines that were found and destroyed. In one patch of about 5m x 7m, there were over 100 mines located, and that was where she was to start her work.

## "It hit me then, what I was doing."

"It hit me then what I was doing." This was her first day at work as a de-miner in Cambodia, and though she did not speak Khmer and her teammates spoke very little English, they were still able to communicate, which remains one of her most memorable experiences.

In the five days she worked there, she found seven mines and cleared 21 square meters of land. The team worked through the heat and the mud. "At lunchtime, everyone would come together under the tent and share lunch." Everyone was so proud of our work, and you could see it. People are meticulous and so careful because they know the dangers. Many of them either have family members who laid mines during the war or lost their lives or limbs to them."

"They thought I was crazy! I didn't apply to be a field officer then, but a couple of months later, I was still thinking about the organization while applying for other positions". She eventually applied, but it was not until six months later that she was finally selected as a field officer. The role pulled me in because it combined office work with fieldwork. The work is practical, and each day is different. I was also drawn to the impact of our work. We take mines out of the ground and destroy obsolete ammunition. Through our clearance work, we are able to make communities safe. Our impact is almost immediate, with communities cultivating or building homes, schools, or shops on the land immediately after we clear it. We also provide employment to large groups of people in areas with limited employment opportunities. In many



At HALO Trust in Sri Lanka

countries, communities clear land within their districts to help ensure a safer future for their community."

### A day on the job in HALO Trust

"Each day in HALO is different. My training took me to Cambodia, Nagorno Karabakh, Sri Lanka, and Kosovo. The training was very hands-on. We learned from the bottom up, which meant we learned how to conduct de-mining first in practice minefields (with just pieces of metal to find) and then moved to join de-mining teams along the Thai-Cambodian border to work on live minefields. I was good at it; it came naturally to me," she said. She had always wanted to do work that was more geared toward the social work and development sector. Through the different internships and work experiences, she was able to get more insight into the industry and finally chose to focus more on humanitarian work rather than the development side of the sector.

Sophie stumbled upon the HALO Trust while working as a European Union Aid Volunteer in Mbale, Uganda, reducing disaster risks by training the area's disaster community teams. Her contract as an aid volunteer ended, and she started looking for other alternatives. She found HALO Trust and liked that the organization provided training to field officers as part of their work. Almost immediately, she told some friends about her plans.

Sophie expresses, "My ultimate objective is to make an impact through my work. Whether through supporting colleagues or communities or with the projects implemented. In the future, I want to move back into disaster preparedness work."

## "My ultimate objective is to make an impact through my work. Whether through supporting colleagues or communities or with the projects implemented."

She advises those looking into this line of work that there is no one way of getting into the field, so be open. From taking interesting or practical courses to doing internships and studying abroad, these opportunities can broaden your worldview. She also encourages those interested in pursuing this sector to be patient when applying for different work and go for things seemingly out of reach as we often underestimate ourselves.

"You are able to make networks that will prove to be pivotal later. Also, if I hadn't gone to South Africa on that internship, I would not have found a topic for my thesis and gone into this field". While reminiscing on her journey to where her career has taken her so far, Sophie says, "I would have probably focused a bit more on academics, but other than that, I am where I am today due to the choices I made along the way, and I wouldn't change it for the world."

She was an operations officer in Somalia for her first official posting, where she and her teammates cleared contaminated land along the Ethiopia-Somali border. Being an operations officer in Somalia was a more hands-off experience as it was more dangerous for the team to visit the minefields. She supported their local field officers, who were in charge of the teams and the progress. Sophie's work was very much serving as a liaison between local de-mining authorities, the United Nations, other donors, and working with the teams on the ground to improve their work. It involves a lot of checking on minefield clearance progress and report writing.

She visited a couple of minefields along the border, which left her impressed. For many de-miners, clearing minefields within their own communities was one of the few employment opportunities. She remembers, "It was great to see. Previously cleared minefields have since turned into schools, grazing land for cattle, and it is amazing to see the development take place so quickly after clearance."

Read more about Sophie's journey and development work on the Alumni Community website at [www.iskl.edu.my](http://www.iskl.edu.my).

Setting up for explosive ordinance disposal



# FINDING A WAY

By Lucris Carina (Louie) Agnir-Paraaan ('79)

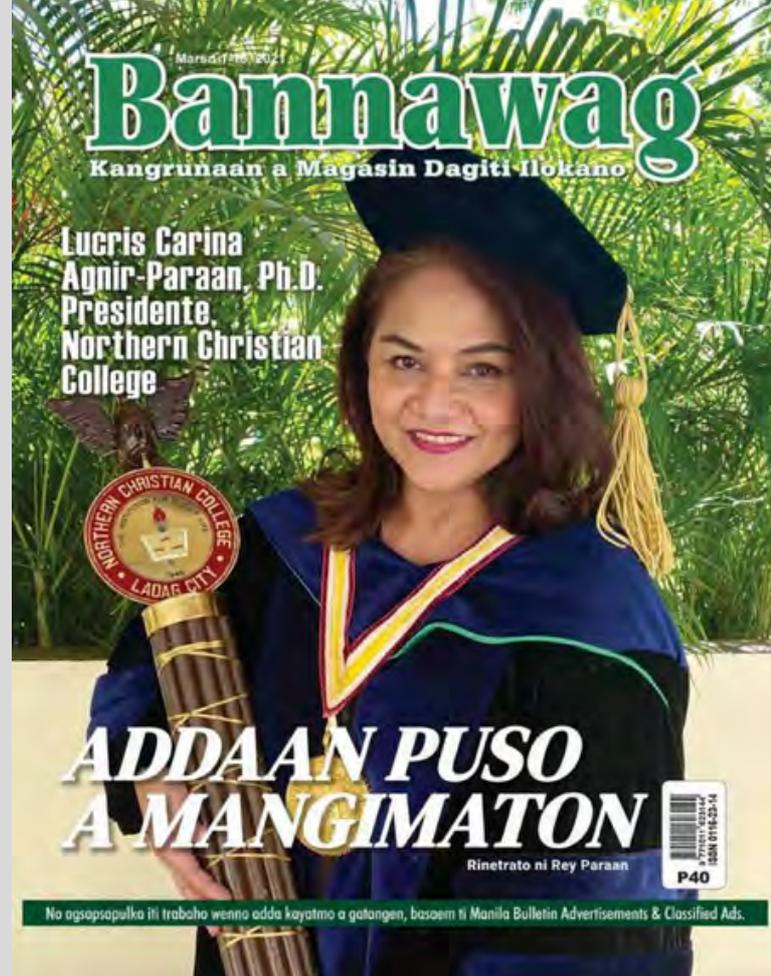
Alumni Lucris Carina (Louie) Agnir-Paraaan ('79) reflects on the ups and downs of life during the pandemic, and how her time at ISKL influences her efforts to create a culture of care and empathy within her own community.

I graduated from ISKL with the Class of 1979. I was there for just a year, but my ISKL life was rich and full: I formed friendships with amazing people, had wonderful teachers, became Editor of the school paper, and took part in fun and fulfilling activities.

It was in ISKL (and in Garden International School, where I spent a year before ISKL) that I became interested and immersed in cross-cultural and inter-cultural discourse. This eventually became the subject of my PhD dissertation and proved invaluable in conceptualizing the workshop-seminars I do with my expatriate clients and with my local clients who work with expats.

It has also influenced aspects of my part-time work as Director for Communication Programs at the Center for Global Best Practices, Inc. Life was good, pre-pandemic. In 2016, my husband and I both decided to retire from our jobs in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. We decided to move up north to Ilocos Norte to be with my aging parents, and since his hometown Baguio City was also up north, it was a win-win plan. We were dreaming of relaxed retirement; happy chats with parents, trips to visit family in Baguio, long walks with our dogs, and new adventures together. But God had other plans. I found myself in the position of President-elect of a Christian college whose mission was committed to preparing children and youth, especially the underprivileged, for a better life, a life more abundant.

On September 11, 2017 (that dreaded 9-11 date!), I lost my life-partner to an aneurysm, and less than 3 years later, the pandemic happened. And then, mere months into the pandemic, I was installed as President & CEO



of the college. My dreamed-of life of leisurely retirement had taken a 180-degree turn in reality. Private schools were struggling to survive (more than a thousand have closed in the Philippines so far), people were losing their jobs on a massive scale, and everyone was battling fear, anxiety, and depression. But I did not have time to wallow in my own anxieties. I needed to walk the talk, as the leader of an institution. How do we keep the school alive? How do we continue to take care of our stakeholders? How do we show our commitment to helping provide a better life? We were plunged into a situation that we were not prepared for.

According to a 2021 United Nations report, 196 million students in 27 countries had schools that were fully closed, nearly 80% of classroom instruction missed, and 56% of all students worldwide were prevented from continuing their education because of the pandemic. I did not want this to happen to our students. I could not let this happen to our personnel whose livelihood depended on the school.

When we are caught by surprise, by a sudden, unexpected turn of events like the pandemic, it is not so much what you know that matters, but how you respond that makes the difference. They say that it is in times of



adversity that character is formed. It's easy to succeed when everything you want and need are within reach. But what happens when things turn out badly? What do you do? Do you cry, whine, complain, and blame others? Do you become a troll, pulling others down into your darkness? Or, do you look for the light and try to be a light for others as well? Do we become part of the problem or do we seek to be part of the solution? My school is not a large university; it is a small college in the under-2,000 enrollment category. But in a crisis, it's not the size of the population or of the organization that matters; it's the size of your heart. They say that, "where your focus goes, energy flows". This I found to be true when, in the midst of a pandemic, I chose to put my focus on prioritizing people over personal and material gain.

We continued to deliver instruction, via delivery/pick-up of learning packets; printed, in flash drives, and online, to all students from Kindergarten-to-doctorate levels. The next was to ensure that people did not lose their incomes. We continued to pay full salaries and wages during the lockdown and all throughout the no-work periods to all personnel, whether full-time or part-time, teaching or non-teaching, permanent or contractual. Radio stations and the editor of a national broadsheet came calling: Why? How? They all wanted to know. Why, despite the Department of Labor and Employment's no-work no-pay policy, did we do this? How, as a small college, could we afford to do this? We did so because people, not profits, are our priority. We did so because we wanted to walk the talk. We did so because we wanted to stay true to the mandate of our faith, to love God and to love thy "neighbor"; those who are in need.

In March 2021, International Women's Month, I was featured on the cover of the 88-year-old local magazine *Bannawag*, with a regular readership that spans the country and stretches across the globe to Hawaii. The banner headline is "Adda Puso A Mangimaton", meaning "A Leadership with a Heart". They had heard over the radio and read in *The Business Mirror* (in the editorial of its National Heroes Day issue <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/08/31/prioritizing-people-over-profit/>) about what we had done.

Valuing the role of the heart when making decisions is something that my upbringing and education have instilled in me and that has stood me well during my personal and professional trials, as well as during this pandemic and beyond. In spite of everything, our school is surviving, despite 1,179 private schools closing and compliance requirements of the Department of Education and Commission on Higher Education becoming stricter. Our Nursing seniors, whose fourth quarter instruction was distance-delivered during lockdown and whose review classes had to be done virtually, scored so well that our school ranked number one in the entire province, per the July 2021 Nursing Board exams. Two of our graduates scored in the top twenty nationwide. Four months later, at the next Board exams, we produced one graduate in the top ten nationwide. Enrollment has ballooned, and we have not lost a single person among our students and personnel to Covid-19. We continue to align our fees to our primary market, the underprivileged children and youth who choose private education over public schooling.

My area of expertise is actually English Language Studies. In this area, I am also continually given

opportunities to serve. I am blessed to have had my ISKL education, because it exposed me to different cultures, and to different ways of communicating and understanding. Last year, I was able to be part of the solution yet again by answering the call of the Commission on Higher Education for Bayanihan among schools by sharing skills, knowledge, and best practices. 'Bayanihan' is a Filipino cultural value that emphasizes communal unity, helping others without expecting rewards, fostering a spirit of solidarity. I delivered a series of free webinars on GLOCAL English with a focus on Business Writing. GLOCAL English recognizes that there exist two dominant "native" varieties of English (British and American English), and these are considered to be the bases for the global "standard". However, GLOCAL English supports the use of in-country English in local contexts (seen as "situated Englishes").

As we in the ISKL community know, different nationalities have variations in their use of English, whether in the sound, the vocabulary, or the grammar. Culture, worldview, and psyche all influence the way we use a borrowed language as well. GLOCAL English has local linguistic and cultural features as well as local usage (structural and grammatical) patterns and stylistic conventions, but it is comprehensible to the international community.

It's a complex issue, which involves education, politics, and globalization. My first webinar had over 900 Zoom registrants and nearly 2,000 Facebook attendees. It caught the attention of a dean of a college in Canada, who reached out to me and the Philippine Consulate in Toronto asked me about the possibility of doing a similar webinar for Filipino immigrants in Canada, in order to help raise their employability levels. My second webinar thus became part of the celebration of the Philippines' quincentennial anniversary in Canada, and had spontaneous registrants from Spain, New Zealand, Thailand, Canada, and the USA.

These days, I continue to contribute to that Bayanihan spirit and seek to be part of the solution by saying 'Yes'

to the Department of Health's request to use our school facilities as a regular mass vaccination area with the assistance of our security personnel and occasionally, our Nursing faculty and graduates. I also participate in various forums that share best practices in education in the context of the pandemic.

In addition, as President of a local chapter of the Soroptimist International of the Americas, I am also actively involved in supporting the continuing education and livelihood training of disenfranchised girls and women with money raised from donations and fundraisers.



In these many small but meaningful ways, I am able to use my position to serve our elderly, our sick, our children, our youth, the vulnerable and underprivileged – those "neighbors" whom we are called to love. When this pandemic is over, I hope to resume my outreach work in Sagada, a beautiful town in the Cordillera Mountains, where my husband and I worked every summer for five years until he became ill with a team of dedicated teachers. For now, I am happy to continue to serve where I have been led. Being able to take care of my parents, having fulfilling work to look forward to every day, and contributing to the national Bayanihan efforts give my life purpose and meaning.

I am blessed to have all these at a time when the world is reeling from the blow of Covid. One of my favorite memes has this saying: "The same boiling water that softens the potato hardens the egg". It's not the circumstances that determine the outcome, it's what's in you. I am blessed to have had the education and upbringing that formed what's in me; the values, skills, and perspective that enable me to keep looking forward as I make my way through this journey called life.





## DOING IT ALL WITH DIXIE WAI

By: Bridgette Wong

*You may be familiar with ISKL's origin story and the founding of the school by Robert Fendley in 1965, but have you heard the story of the resourceful superwoman who joined the school almost by accident and ended up leaving her mark via ISKL's application for non-profit status?*

If you don't know the name Dixie Wai, here is your chance to get to know the person who assisted in building ISKL from the ground up with Robert Fendley, the founder of ISKL. An elegant and humble woman, Dixie was born in 1944 in Shanghai, when American troops were occupying the city, and the Second World War was at its tail-end.

"My dad went to an American university in Shanghai after he completed his 'Senior Cambridge' (now known as O-Levels). During his study days, he socialized with the American soldiers in Shanghai and met my mother there. That was how I was born there. Because of my father's close association with the soldiers, I got my name - Dixie. It was given by my dad's friends in the American army. I was a blessed child, as during the war when there was no food, I was able to be fed with milk

because of the soldiers as they had supplies."

Dixie grew up in a single-parent home in Malaysia, raised by her father. Her upbringing helped her become self-reliant at a tender age, jetting off to Australia when she was just 15! She attended high school in Perth, Australia, and eventually became a trained professional secretary.

"After I graduated, I worked in Australia for a couple of companies and met my husband in Perth; he was an architect. He came back to Malaysia in 1965, and I decided to follow as well." Her decision to follow her husband back to Malaysia is what will eventually bring her to the doors of ISKL. After her first job teaching accountancy, bookkeeping, and secretarial courses, she was offered a job as a personal assistant (PA) to the secretary of the Association of Banks. She was due for a final interview, but things did not go according to plan. "On the way back from a trip to Ipoh, it was raining, and my husband and I had a car accident. I had to miss that final interview. However, a week later, I got an offer from ISKL and also received an offer from the bank, as they said that the final interview was actually to meet me to offer me the PA job."

**"...However, a week later, I got an offer from ISKL and also received an offer from the bank..."**

Upon receiving this unexpected offer from ISKL, Dixie's first reaction was to reject it. "My first instinct was to accept the PA job because when I heard about the school, I thought that there were no prospects, so why should I get involved with a school? I also had no knowledge of what an international school would entail. I asked my dad, and he said that I should take up the job at the school. I remembered this advice and decided to accept this ISKL job. I think it was the accident that happened that was the blessing in disguise, as I only got the offer from ISKL after the accident," she explained.

### **The Beginnings of ISKL**

Dixie joined ISKL in 1965 armed with her bookkeeping and accountancy skills alongside the then Principal, Robert Fendly. Through and through, starting and running the school from scratch was not easy. Dixie faced a fair share of challenges that she had learned to navigate and overcome.

"I had a not so easy headmaster to work with back then - and we didn't know or have the word for 'stress.' I was so many things, a secretary and a business manager, and suddenly I felt like I couldn't cope. I had too much anxiety, so I sat down, and one of the teachers came in, seeing me almost in tears. Then she said to me, Dixie, let me tell you this. Working in ISKL, some are only here for 2-3 years; they are not here permanently. But you are different; you are here to stay.

**"...But you are different; you are here to stay."**

So think about it that way, they are not going to be here forever, don't let it cloud you'. I thought about that, and it had honestly helped me a lot. I've shared this advice with many others who have felt the same way. You have to think out of the box, think long term, and don't let small things bother you so much; you are not stuck. It's simple advice, but it has a deep meaning."

### **Memorable Moments at ISKL**

"I enjoyed working at ISKL because when it first opened, we had 12 grades and a learning coordinator, but they were by correspondence. There was a lot of office work involved, and Grade 12 students were not in class at the time. I had to put their work in the mail, their projects in envelopes, weigh it, pass it to the office boy, and add stamps to be sent abroad."

Besides keeping the records and accounts organized,



Picture here are our three hard-working secretaries, from left, Miss Irene Chuah, Miss Molly Khoo, and Mrs. Dixie Wai.

Dixie also played crucial roles in various moments of ISKL history, including purchasing the Melawati campus and helping the school attain its non-profit status.

"I was glad I was part of the history that implemented the steps that would help the school recover from the economic crisis and be able to accomplish a tax exemption for ISKL, which was the most important thing to ever happen. I was the person who supplied the documents and assisted the tax consultant company - and we got the approval after a tedious process and after many, many years.



It was one of the biggest accomplishments during my time; when ISKL became a not-for-profit. It was not due to me alone, but I was right smack there during the process."

When asked what made her work at ISKL enjoyable, she cited the diverse work tasks and how she always had to expect the unexpected. "The variety of work, even after 40 years, I find it a joy to come back to work. It was a continuous journey of learning, and the job was not dull. You think about a problem at night that you can't wait to come back again tomorrow morning to solve. It's like in a business where continuous problems come from external and internal factors, you need to solve them. I saw it as a challenge, so there's always something you have to learn and grow to fix the issues."

On who was someone she admired or was inspired by, she said, "I grew up pretty independently and made it a point to be aware of people who were doing great, so there's no particular person I can point out, but the one boss I learned a lot from was Robert B. Gaw. I learned a lot and admired him."

#### **In the Present**

Despite being at a venerable age of 78, Dixie is still as active as ever and keeping herself busy at home in Perth, Australia. "I am still involved in the Malaysian chapter of Toastmasters, where we now have Zoom meetings. I'm also active in the Malaysian Professional Administrators association committee, of which I am a chartered member, one of the first in 1968. I also joined a Senior Citizen group as the government here (in Perth) supports senior citizens. Every week we play (Western) Mahjong and have networking sessions. I've also got many friends here because many Malaysians migrate to Australia, so we would explore and travel around Perth. I would also join informational talks that are held online. I'm always learning. I am 78 years old this year, but I am still active. I even had a group from the UK who invited me for an interview as a consultant."

Reflecting on all her years of service and contribution to ISKL and its community, Dixie feels she has lived up to the ISKL motto 'Be All You Are.'

"I think I hit that mark. I am all that I am, from day one till now! No doubt I have had experience, but my view of my life has always been that I am today, much enriched from my experiences. I am a very positive person, and do not let negative thoughts rue me."

Finally, Dixie leaves some heartfelt words for the ISKL community.

**"I believe the children that went through ISKL are so blessed to have had this opportunity to study in an international school environment. And they are in a very small percentage of people, of students, who were able to get this experience of being in an international school environment, they are so blessed."**



ISKL would not be the school it is today without the service of people like Dixie. We truly owe it all to everyone who has come through ISKL's doors, whether they are students, faculty, or staff. Each footprint left behind is a story in the journey they've had with ISKL. It is what has made ISKL the diverse, unique, and dynamic school it is today.

As Dixie said, "I feel so blessed at my age. I have had a complete life, no regrets." We hope that your journey at ISKL, whenever it may have started, was one that was enriching and unforgettable and that even when it was time to leave, it was a journey of no regrets.

# IN MEMORIAM



Former ISKL Elementary Educator Mrs. Jane Gaw passed away November 27th, 2021 in Carson City, Nevada, after a heroic battle with cancer. Jane is survived by her husband Bob, and her three sons Jeffry ('76), Michael ('74), and Kevin ('78). Jane officially taught kindergarten at ISKL from 1976 to 1978, but her contributions to the community throughout her family's time in KL spanned from 1970 to 1978.

Before teaching at ISKL, Jane volunteered with the Red Crescent, helped the United Nations with a socio-economic/cost-of-living survey pertaining to living in Kuala Lumpur, was an active elementary classroom volunteer at ISKL (at the Istana Campus), and was very active with the after-school theatre arts program.

Jane was very active in supporting the after-school theatre arts program from September 1970, all the way through to 1978. One of Jane's hobbies was sewing, and she put her skills to work in helping to create many of the costumes throughout her years at ISKL, for the big productions and the small ones. She also assisted with makeup and was a performance coach. Jane was also known by students for her kindness and smile. A few remembrances collected by her son, Kevin Gaw, from former ISKL students who attended between 1970 and 1978 include:

*"I was in a play; you [Kevin] were with me in the same act... I have no idea what it was... I think I was a sultan of some sort? My line when I got on stage was " strategies! we must have strategies!" Simple you would think...but kept cracking up and you and Val were no help to my laughter... [Your mom] eventually got me to do it. She was a great lady!!"*

*"I certainly remember her on campus and helping out on shows. I think she made my Jester costume from "Once Upon a Mattress" The costumes for that show were good, my tap dancing was not."*

*"I remember her as being a very kind and generous person."*

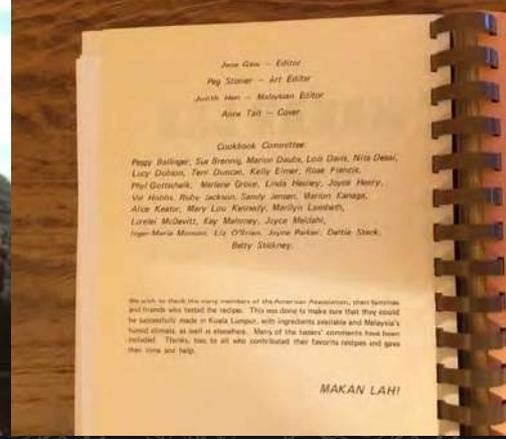
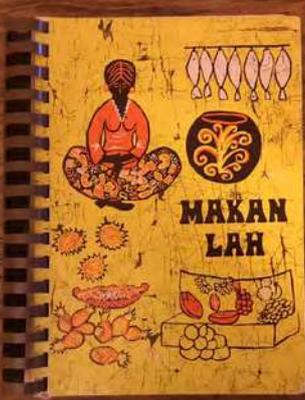
*"I only have fond memories of her smiling face every time I would see her in the hallways of the school and of course, our play rehearsals."*

*"She always had a smile for me even though I was not in her class. My copies of the Mekan Lah are some of my most treasured from my mom."*

*"Your mom made me feel like one of the family..."*



Looking back on her time at ISKL, Jane loved how the teachers, the staff, the students, and the parent community of ISKL interacted amongst each other. ISKL was a hub, it was a community unto itself and it was brimming with possibilities, discoveries, and vitality. She also deeply enjoyed teaching at ISKL - and felt a strong connection with her fellow educators.



As for KL, the vibrancy of the city, with the many cultures interacting and influencing each other, and the expression of cultural identities through food and arts and culture, were all things she loved about her time in Malaysia. This is true of the entire country of Malaysia, as well. Not just Peninsular Malaysia, but also Sarawak and Sabah, where she spent some time exploring, as well.

Jane loved traveling throughout Malaysia and Southeast Asia. Her love for antiques and Southeast Asian textiles blossomed in Malaysia and she frequented many shops in KL, Malacca, Penang, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and elsewhere to find that rare Qing Dynasty bowl, a wayang kulit or wayang golek puppet, carvings made by the Orang Asli, a famous batik pattern done the traditional way, or a special silver buckle.

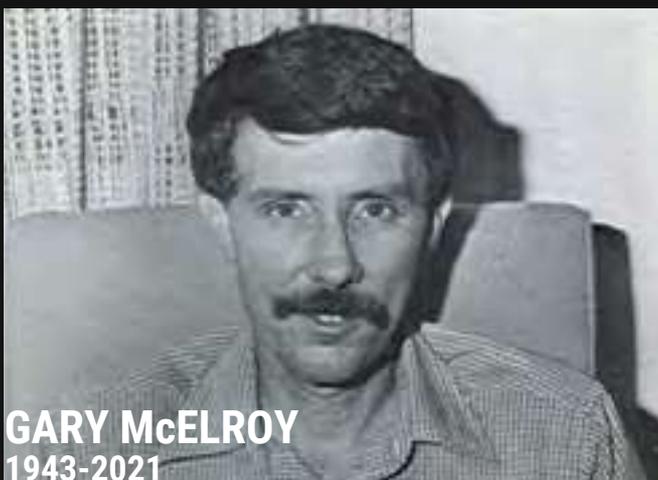
Jane was a life-long learner and took classes in KL – such as Bahasa, Ikebana, cooking, and batik. She was an avid cook and was the editor of Makan Lah, a community cookbook published by the American Association of Malaysia, of which Jane was an active member.

It was a big, inclusive project, with many contributors and several co-editors, and recipe contributions from all over the world, and a great Malaysian section, with proceeds given to local charity. One of the wonderful aspects of Makan Lah is that it was truly an international endeavor and a reflection of what ISKL was all about. Copies of Makan Lah are coveted and passed down within families from those years. Occasional copies can be found on Amazon or abebooks.com!

Upon her passing, Jane's son Michael Gaw reached out to ISKL Alumni, and shared that it was important to his mother to notify ISKL of her passing. Jane felt deeply connected to her fellow ISKL colleagues (teachers and staff) and kept in touch with them over the many years, well into retirement for all. These were life-long friends of Jane's.

Jane led a full and exciting life. Her full obituary can be read here: <https://www.nevadaappeal.com/obituaries/2021/dec/01/jane-gaw/>

*Remarks prepared by Kevin Gaw (78)*



**GARY McELROY**  
1943-2021

We are also sad to share the passing of Gary McElroy. Gary is survived by his wife Carol, three children, and six grandchildren. Gary was a much-loved teacher, head of department, and HR coordinator from 1980 to 2000. He taught in the Science Department as a BSCS/AP Biology, Physics, and Chemistry teacher.

He also taught Statistics during his time with ISKL. Sumitra Sundram ('92) reminisced "Mr. McElroy was one of the best teachers I had at ISKL. His warmth, wit and sense of fun when teaching statistics were amazing."

Gary did most of his teaching while holding the role of HR coordinator at the same time. As if the dual roles were not enough to keep him busy, Gary filled the rest of his time with coaching both boys and girls basketball and softball. Alumni Joanne Howe ('93) remembers Mr. McElroy as "the best softball coach". Similarly Kelly Bonny ('92) said "He was also a loved softball coach. I know he touched my life and he will be greatly missed."

During his time at ISKL the things Gary enjoyed the most were building new programs as a department head, playing and coaching softball and getting in a round or two of golf. Gary and wife Carol spent 20 of their 43 year marriage in KL, and remembered it fondly. All three of their children graduated from ISKL, including Mark,

their youngest, who was here from Kindergarten through 12th grade. He has since followed in his parents' footsteps and is an overseas teacher in South Korea. They loved the people, the culture, the food and the climate in Malaysia. They had permanent residence, and always intended to return for part of the year in retirement. In fact, the Mc Elroys were one of the first families to buy a house in Malaysia as expats. Unfortunately things changed when the pandemic made travel difficult. While looking back Carol said "ISKL was our favorite overseas post - actually our favorite post period. It is a special place for sure." A special place made more special by its people.



Gary retired to San Diego, California, USA in 2000, where he maintained a very active schedule featuring Rotary projects, San Diego Zoo volunteer duties, and pet sitting. Gary is remembered fondly by former colleagues as always greeting them with smiles, being welcoming and treating everyone with respect. A celebration of life was held in December at the San Diego Zoo.



Please find Gary's obituary through this link: [https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/sandiegouniontrib/obituary/name/gary-mcelroy-obituary?id=31357943&\\_cf\\_chl captcha tk\\_\\_=rQxibp6jU\\_MfPFs29ENIIOp997qNkd7u83Je0iewO1g-1641865727-0-gaNycGzNFaU](https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/sandiegouniontrib/obituary/name/gary-mcelroy-obituary?id=31357943&_cf_chl captcha tk__=rQxibp6jU_MfPFs29ENIIOp997qNkd7u83Je0iewO1g-1641865727-0-gaNycGzNFaU)



**PABLO SOLE CANALES**  
2002-2022

On behalf of the family of Pablo Sole Canales, we share the sad news of his passing as the result of a skiing accident. Pablo's family has received many messages from different friends and families of ISKL and requested that we communicate their appreciation to the people who have already shown affection for their son. Pablo's family also shared, "Pablo was extremely happy being a member of ISKL. We were so proud that our effort could provide Pablo the opportunity to be in such a splendid school. In the short year that he was there, Pablo felt welcomed, protected, and encouraged to be part of a school full of opportunities to grow. A picture of Pablo running in an ISKL track meet was shared as he was "crazy about sports and this is why he started Sports and Exercise Science at Kent University in the UK."

We express our deepest condolences for the loss of Pablo. We are terribly saddened by his passing, and we know Pablo will be missed by many.

*Once a Panther, Always a Panther*



# Stay Connected

Join the network!

## The Alumni Portal

We treasure our relationships with former students, parents, instructors, and staff who have all enjoyed the unique ISKL experience. We encourage you to keep spreading the Panther spirit by registering on the Alumni Portal to stay connected to our community via our ISKL Alumni Community website. Our alumni's adventures represent an important component of our school's success and efficacy. Your ongoing participation and input will assist us in becoming a better school.

We're excited to hear about where your journey has taken you, and we're excited for the chance to enhance our bond as a global ISKL community. Please don't be shy!

## Help Us!

- Join the Alumni Council 
- Organize Reunions
- Support fundraising
- Volunteer on campus
- Share news, memories and insights

## Office of Alumni Engagement & Development

- Promotes ISKL's position as a pioneer in international education by developing and engaging parents and alumni as vital stakeholders.
- Preserves the school's unique culture, diversity, and reputation.
- Aligns needs and fundraising efforts to supervise the development of projects and activities to support the school's goals and vision.
- Enhances and strengthens relationships between the School and its community of nearly 25,000 faculty, staff, students, parents, friends, and donors by fostering excellent community and alumni relations

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