

# ISKL selamanya



## *Perspectives on Leadership*



**Introducing Our Latest  
ISKL Alumni**

***Four Decades of Forensics***



## **ISKL Panther Pride**

**Celebrating 55 Years Young with our Malaysia-inspired ISKL Pewter Panther and Gold Panther.**

**Purchase your panther to take home and your name (or one nominated by you) will be added to our beautiful 55th Anniversary commemorative plaque at ISKL.**

**Help us lay the foundations for the next 55 years at ISKL.**



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## ISKL Selamanya

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*Once a Panther,  
Always a Panther*



Taking stock at the close of this rather extraordinary year, it's easy to focus on the challenges that have arisen (and largely been conquered) during ISKL's 55th Anniversary year. However, it is the words of William Birdthistle, ISKL Class of 1991, that spring to mind. William, who took part in our new Get Real! series this year says, "I have been an alumnus of ISKL for thirty years now, but until the pandemic unleashed Zoom across the world, I hadn't had an effective way to be back in touch with teachers and students in Kuala Lumpur."

Likewise, for me, this year will be notable for the connections made with Alumni around the world, and the tremendous generosity of our Alumni family worldwide, always ready to step up to support ISKL when the opportunity arises. That culture of giving ensured we were able to maintain and even build our connections during this pandemic year, through new initiatives and events, like Get Real! and the Future Ready: Alumni Black Box Conversations series, testing our technical abilities along the way.

Alumni have enthusiastically given of their time to support the next generation of ISKL students and help them to chart their own courses with the benefit of the knowledge and experience of those who have gone before them. This is no more so than in our recent Senior Assembly, where young alumni, themselves impacted heavily by pandemic disruptions, gave freely of their time to share advice with our seniors. Find out more about our Alumni Events from Page 8.

Traditional notions of leadership have certainly been tested this year, and for our Cover Story this issue (Page 14) we asked four alumni to share their personal perspectives on what good leadership really looks like through the lens of their personal experiences. In sharing his thoughts, Sohail Inayatullah ('75) takes us back to the basketball

court at the Istana campus. I caught up with Sohail (pictured) recently in sunny Brisbane. Star swimmer Nadia Redza ('17) shares the lessons learnt as a swim team leader at the University of Chicago during the pandemic, we hear from community organizer Aliya Ahmad ('12), as well as from recent graduate Jasmine Ng ('21).

I am thoroughly delighted that Alumni Faculty, Leslie Muri, graciously agreed to share her encyclopaedic knowledge of a longtime source of ISKL pride, Forensics. Though not quite from the start, Leslie has been a constant supporter of Forensics through its more than 40-year history at ISKL. She shares her memories of the people and events that have shaped the futures of so many alumni (Page 28).

As usual, this issue is brimming with information and news about ISKL Alumni around the world, including our two profile subjects, Michael Dixon II ('97), who still holds three IASAS Track and Field records, and IB Scholar, Nathaniel Zachariah ('12).

We also share the latest campus news, including an update on the new Elementary rooftop playground project which many alumni supported by purchasing our 55th Anniversary Pewter Panthers during a special fundraising effort this year. You can see some of the latest photos and plans on Page 32.

A very special treat in our ISKL Story on Page 40. Kevin Gaw ('78) shares the story of how his amazingly connected cohort decided to support our fundraising efforts this year, in the process recognizing some of the wonderful teachers who they still fondly remember. Don't miss it!

As ever, I am indebted to Ayesha Zulkifly ('06) for again weaving her magic and creating the beautiful design for this magazine. We truly could not do it without her!

Please share your thoughts and suggestions at [alumni@iskl.edu.my](mailto:alumni@iskl.edu.my), and remember that we are always keen to hear your news and any ideas for future features.

Take care and remember - Once a Panther, Always a Panther!

Lynette MacDonald  
Director of Development and Alumni Engagement

# Congratulations Class of 2021

We are so proud of this incredible cohort - our ISKL Class of 2021 - for the incredible positivity, persistence, and empathy they have displayed over the past two years. They truly deserve to wear those gowns and mortarboards. Congratulations to our graduates!



Ana Abdul  
Rashid



Olivia Grace  
Allum



Coby Tailor  
Baker



Ethan Christopher  
Biggs



Samuel Byrom



Haoyu Chen



Matilde Lopes Vieira  
Marques de Abreu



Thian Amarasekera



Christian Kelly  
Bangarter



Thomas Daniel  
Bircher



Emily Sy Jin  
Chai



Dean M.  
Chenzaie



Ji Soo Ahn



Eunice Deena Anak  
John Louis



Amanda Josefa  
Barros Zeiner



Thomas Bogacz



Lachlan Sam  
Chami



Myeong Woo  
Choi



Mohammed  
Mumtazimul Aiyat



Oskar Juel Andersen



Zara Rose  
Barrow



Evi Boot



Yunik Chang



Woo Jin Choi



Ariz Ismawi  
Alirahman



Muhammad Naim  
Azri Azahari



Nolan Time  
Besserer



Carina Braune



Darrick Tsui  
Sherng Cheah



Ming Xia Chong



Marcus Kai Hng Choong



Ada Alora Eubanks



Ann Nguyen Gaither



Crisha Haro Aguirre



Emily Michelle Johnson



Ethan H. Kim



Aimee Latatia Connolly



Kaila Thandiwe Fairhurst



Victor Alessandro Giaquinto



Laila Suraiya Hisham



Farah Diana Jones



Hye Ryun Kim



Nathan Oliver Coran



Kyle Gabriel Fairman



Molly Rose Godde



Jeong Heon Im



Eva Jonge Poerink



Na Kyung Kim



Hugh Terrence Coyle



Juan Diego Fernandez Aranguren



Jakub Michal Golebiewski



Nuved Mizan Iqbal



Aisha Kafoud



Se Jin Kim



Abigail Davis



Kayla Clark Foudy



Zoleen Goswami



Yuvraj Jaisinghani



Asyirah Sofiah binti Kamal Hisham



Yungju Kim



Jose Antonio De Lune



Callum Stephen Angus Fraser



Jackson Mateo Graham



Dayyan Safiuddin bin Jamal Sharifuddin



Dayoon Kang



Zachry Hirokazu Kobayashi



Alexa Emily Delves



Achintya Gahalaut



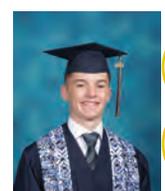
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Hyeondo Jeong



Jiun Chen Kerk



Kian Ricardo Kraemer



Eunji Ee



Ananya Gahalaut



Sean Tristan Joseph Gustini



Lisa Meyha Jesudas



Arnusha Arnaz Khan



Robin Christobal Kraemer

CLASS OF 2021



Arthur Hao Ran Kuan



Hyun Seo Lee



Megan Kar Yee Lim



Ethan Sipro Harrison Mangelsdorf



Nysa Amber Malihah Muhd Shahrulmiza



Soo Jee Oh



Derin Kulbul



Hyunpawm Lee



Rou Szen Lim



Francesca Sophia Marshall



Diya Nanavati



Lucca de Freitas Oliveira



Jung Hyun Kwon



Jiwon Lee



Sebastian Boon Kheng Lim



Yasmine Zara McKibbin



Jasmine Wei Chen Ng



Ayari Omachi



Andre Khan La Grange



Sophia En-Hui Lee



Amy Olivia Loftin



Aneesa Mehmood



Chihiro Nishiwaki



Francisca Maria Ortola Villanueva



Nathan Yan Cheng Lam



Su Ah Lee



Hsien Rong Evan Loo



Catriona MacDonald Mills



Mahiro Nishiwaki



Ashay Kshitij Panse



Oliver Yan Shen Lam



Yong Pyo Lee



Roberto Lopez Ruiperez



Elayna Mohamed Emery



Nur Ulfah Binti Norazmi



Kartik Niranjani Parab



GeonWoo Lee



Shuang Shuang Li



Nishan Mahesh



Azra Safiya Mohd Khalid Abbasi



Caitlin Emily O'Brien



Eduardo Pedrosa Passos



Ho Lee



Yida Li



Vasily Malashich



Yaimar Sofia Molina Gonzalez



Asha Octoman



Thomas Ilmari Penttila

Class of 2021



Olivia Peters



Arjun Nicholas Puri



Aditya Sagar



Pranit Singh



Kieran Ze Ren Tan



Louwrens Albert van der Steen



Alexandra Jessica Phillips



Nadir Isaam Rafee



Keisuke Sukamoto



YeJun Son



Yee Shin Tan



TTMouz Vargas Giraldo



Vincent Edric Pontines



Naman Raina



Michael Santoso



Anirudh Srinivas



Allegra Yi Chyn Tang



Sophie Claire Wagner



Venkata Sai Pranav Pothuri



Rahul Singh Randhary



Eva Scharer



Shiyva Srivastava



Gregory Thomas Therond



Shi Chuan Wei



Anika Prakasen



Deena Rehman



Varun Rajagopalan Seshardi



Techin Subunvong



Jean-Yves Daniel Thomason



Yik Khai Yew



Bianca Soeria Prameswari



Jung Min Roh



Hina Masuda Singh



Siyoun Suh



Syria Torti Alcalde



Youngkyung Yun



Liam Forbes Pritchard



So Yee Ryu



Nishtha Singh



Ahmed Aiham Mohamed Suhail



Arda Tuna



Zuhayr Zahris Sham



Matthias Adrien Puc



Preethika S. Arumugam



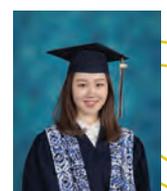
Olivia Ayesha Singh



Esther Grace Tan



Ittai Turin



Shiru Zhou

CLASS OF 2021

# Welcoming Our Newest ISKL Alumni

How better to welcome our graduates from the Class of 2021 into the ISKL Alumni family, than to introduce them to other alumni around the world who are willing to share their experiences and tips for life after ISKL?



The ISKL Senior Assembly Alumni Panel is one of our ISKL Alumni traditions and this year was held on Monday May 24, 2021. With a panel consisting of ISKL Alumni spanning the Class of 2017-2020 and studying across the globe, in Australia, Canada, the UK, USA, the Netherlands and Korea, it provided an excellent entree into life after ISKL.

With exams completed, graduation just around the corner, and their sights firmly on the future, the Class of 2021 were able to ask our panel the questions that are most important to them, and get the benefit of hearing from ISKL Alumni who have also experienced the uncertainty of studying during the pandemic.

Each panelist introduced themselves and talked about their year which, for Leo and Bausch, meant spending their Freshman year at university at home in Kuala Lumpur, studying online. For others, it involved pivoting to online learning, then back again, and dealing with the challenges of staying connected, not only with their universities, but friends and family as well.

This was not a “normal” year for anyone, but our panelists shared ways they managed to stay positive and connected, whether that be taking part in university-organized online trivia nights, or just making sure to facetime with family. A key message was that everyone at some point feels stressed, lonely or uncertain, and the best way to deal with that is

to ask for help, whether from the university, friends or family.

The interactive session was hosted by Lynette MacDonald, Director of Alumni, and several seniors took the opportunity to ask their own questions; from what it’s like when your classes are online, on the other side of the globe, and in the middle of the night, to tips for networking to make the most of the university experience.

As our seniors, now graduates, embark on the next exciting phase of their lives, we wish them all the very best and welcome them wholeheartedly into our ISKL Alumni family.

### Our Alumni Panel:

- Nadia Redza ('17), final year student at University of Chicago
- Alexis Vaillaud ('18), final year student at London School of Economics
- India Cooper ('19), University of Melbourne
- Max Rausch ('19), Erasmus University
- Leo Rubio Burkle ('20), University of British Columbia
- Gyeonga Jang ('20), Konyang University
- Bausch Koh ('20), New York University

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# Senior Awards 2021



**Olivia Grace Allum**  
The Robert B. Gaw  
Citizenship Award



**Jakub Golebiewski**  
The Hee Won Bahk '94  
Award for International  
Understanding



**Asha Octoman**  
The John G. Hadwen  
Award



**Kayla Foudy**  
Troy Marschang '07  
Award

# Get Real!

Of all the things that our ISKL Alumni around the world can give back to their alma mater, their experience and knowledge is undoubtedly the most valuable.

Get Real! is an opportunity for high school students to explore university and career options with our own ISKL Alumni working or studying around the world. It's a chance for them to find out more about university and work life and to ask the important questions in a small group environment.

This new collaboration between ISKL Alumni and the High School Counselling Department kicked off in May 2021, providing a valuable opportunity for ISKL students. High School Counsellor Heather Cook elaborates, "By interacting with a variety of graduates, students can hear of possible opportunities during the time they study as well as potential future pathways for careers and higher education."

The sessions are also recorded and a library of videos is now available on the ISKL Alumni Community website at [alumni.iskl.edu.my](http://alumni.iskl.edu.my).

## Legal Perspective

The first session featured guest alumni Professor William Birdthistle, ISKL Class of 1991, professor of Law at the University of Chicago and graduate of Duke University and Harvard University. William studied at ISKL for 8 years, graduating in 1991, and went on to Duke, then Harvard Law, where he was also managing editor of the Harvard Law Review. He has worked as a lawyer in private practice, specialising in investment management practice, including

mutual and hedge fund management, and is the author of *Empire of the Fund: The Way We Save Now* (Oxford University Press, 2016). His articles have appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Chicago Tribune and Christian Science Monitor.

While not a recent graduate, William had a wealth of knowledge to impart, including of the current state of acceptances at University of Chicago. He willingly shared his Third Culture Kid experience with the students, before opening up to questions. William says, "I greatly enjoyed the experience - it was a wonderful way to reconnect with a place that was so important to me." He continues, "I have been an alumnus of ISKL for thirty years now, but until the





pandemic unleashed Zoom across the world, I hadn't had an effective way to be back in touch with teachers and students in Kuala Lumpur. I highly recommend it to other alumni - it's an easy and gratifying way to share a planet's worth of experience to the newest versions of ourselves at ISKL."

Students were particularly interested in the application process and William's understanding of investment management, as well as pathways to working in that field. Deliberately opting for a small group format meant students were able to ask questions freely throughout the session, ensuring they got the information important to them.

### Demystifying Korean University

Students thinking of studying in Korea usually only start their application process after they graduate from high school. For many, it's the first time for many years that they have lived and studied in Korea and it can be a disorienting experience.

Our second Get Real! featured Yuna Baek, Class of 2015 and a final year student at Yonsei University in Seoul. Yuna is completing a bachelor's degree in Economics at Underwood International College, a popular choice for international students, and has previously undertaken an Education Abroad Program with the University of California San Diego. She also took a gap year in 2019-2020 to pursue internships in her chosen field, green economic development, including with the United

Nations, so had a wealth of experience to share.

The students came armed with questions and were especially interested in what it took to secure the internship with the UN, as well as the relative standing of UIC in Korea and possible career pathways.

As Heather puts it, these events are an invaluable opportunity for students to ask questions directly and hear the answers "from the horse's mouth."

**GET REAL!**  
ISKL ALUMNI AND STUDENTS TALK UNIVERSITY AND CAREERS

We Want You!

If you would like to be part of Get Real! and share your knowledge and experience with ISKL High School students, please contact the Alumni office at [alumni@iskl.edu.my](mailto:alumni@iskl.edu.my).



# Black Box Goes Virtual

C. S. Lewis wisely said, “You never know what you can do until you try, and very few try unless they have to.” (Family letters 1905-1931). We know now what he meant!

With a top-class panel of alumni signed up to be part of our second Future Ready: ISKL Alumni Black Box Conversations, scheduled for Thursday, March 25th, 2021, we faced the unfortunate situation where access to campus, and our usual venue for the Black Box, the Robert B. Gaw Theatre, was barred. On top of this, our panel of guests and host included people who were in Kuala Lumpur but also overseas, prompting the question: Can we possibly manage to host the event using an external studio and sort out the technicalities of Zooming our guests in from their remote locations? The answer was a resounding “We don’t know, but let’s give it a go!”

ISKL Alumni was lucky to have the assistance of the ISKL Advancement team, especially

our two alumni, videographer Danial Marzuki ('17) and Mushamir Mustafa ('10), as well as the amazing ISKL Theatre team led by Sessa Kalimuthu, to iron out the many technical challenges of recording a television talk show-style event. We also decided to engage a local production company to assist with sound and lighting, and the search for the all-important venue.

## Another Pandemic Pivot

As we converged on the shop lot studio venue, the sense of anticipation and trepidation was intense. Could we pull it off?

Fortunately, all of our guests for this event focusing on The Arts are seasoned professionals who not only understand the workings of a studio, but also

have each pivoted heavily online during the pandemic. With multiple monitors, cameras, audio recording equipment, and greenscreen in place, it was time for cameras to roll and our host, Hezril Asyraaf ('13) to take charge of proceedings. Future Ready: ISKL Alumni Black Box Conversations showcases the careers and study choices made by alumni in a range of fields, with each program focusing on one field - in this case a broad one, The Arts. We hope to provide current students and alumni with inspiration for their own journeys, and some good advice about the challenges and opportunities ahead.

ISKL Alumni includes an incredible array of talent from across the artistic spectrum. Joining us for the panel were: Opera diva and singing teacher

at the University of Utah, Kirstin Chavez ('87); artist, Haffendi Anuar ('04); film composer, Varqa Buehrer ('03); and filmmaker, Tony Pietra Arjuna ('96). Kirstin dialed in from her home in Salt Lake City, USA, while Haffendi joined us from his Oxford studio.

## Valuable Perspectives

The pandemic has been particularly impactful on the performing and visual arts, with theatre and gallery closures. Haffendi and Kirstin shared their personal experiences of maintaining their practice, including for Kirstin, conducting all of the classes for her students online, as well as auditions for next year's cohort. She says the circumstances were less than ideal for performers, but the experience has reinforced the importance of artists taking charge of their destiny. During the pandemic, Kirstin has initiated a new course in entrepreneurship for musicians at the University of Utah. She explains, "As a musician, you can't just be a musician, you also have to be a business person...you kind of have to understand how to sell yourself almost."

For Haffendi, who completed the final term of his Masters at the Ruskin School of Art at the University of Oxford online during the UK's lockdown, the

lack of gallery time over the past 12 months has been a great challenge. He admits, "I mourned the loss of the studio and the workshop...and it was detrimental to my creative fitness." Haffendi continues, "It took a while...I believe in adapting to a new method of communication, of sharing work... but I'm missing the physical space, going into a gallery and seeing an artwork in the flesh."

Perhaps not surprisingly, the experience of pivoting online has been quite different for the behind-the-scenes creatives. While onsite film shoots have become more challenging, Tony is upbeat about the opportunities provided by the growth in online streaming services especially for independent filmmakers. He observes, "It's possible that the pandemic might have put them in the spotlight...Right now there's a level playing field for other filmmakers and other kinds of films to make themselves known."

## Advice from the Pros

The discussion touched on many aspects of a creative career. Varqa, who composed the score for "Better Days" which was nominated for best International Feature Film at this year's Academy Awards, recalls how ISKL influenced his decision to pursue composing, "When I

first went to ISKL that's the first time I was actually exposed to a professional setting...ISKL had such a great stage...ISKL helped me to be able to see I could do things professionally."

Despite his recent success, he emphasized the importance of being willing to continually learn new things explaining, "For me, it's constant. It's not so much a matter of how deep...Even if today I scored a film that's very successful, for my next film I still need to learn something new...I don't see it so much as a curve but more an uphill, but that's the fun of it."

Giving their final round of advice, our panelists encouraged any aspiring artists to follow their dreams, and do the hard yards! Kirsten's final words of advice: "Look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself: Am I meant to be this artist that I'm trying to be? If the answer is 'yes' then you've got no problems."

## Then...The Zoom Bomb!

We couldn't resist organizing a very special surprise for our panelists, keeping the Zoom links open and cameras rolling for a Zoom bomb by Karen Palko, ISKL's long-serving dance teacher who was only too happy to join the group. Karen shared her memories of this amazingly talented group from when they were teens, and even inspired an impromptu dance from Tony.

While we hope to host the next event from the Robert B. Gaw Theatre, we are delighted and relieved to know that when it comes to an outside production, we tried and we could do it!

*Watch all of Future Ready: ISKL Alumni Black Box Conversations - The Arts - by going to the ISKL Alumni Community website at [alumni.iskl.edu.my](http://alumni.iskl.edu.my).*





# Perspectives

What does great leadership look like? We asked ISKL alumni - an activist, a futurist, an athlete and a recent graduate - to share their thoughts, at a time when many are rethinking what it means to be a leader, and the characteristics that unite people when uncertainty is the norm.

## Everyday Leadership

**Aliya Ahmad, Class of 2012**

There are so many different ways to be a leader. Not all leaders have an official 'title' – being a leader is more than being a CEO, a director, or a president. A leader can be anyone who inspires and encourages the people around them to push themselves and challenge systems that keep others down.

When I was at ISKL, I saw leadership take so many forms. Some of us ran for Student Council, representing our year level, others became presidents of school clubs, others still were captains for IASAS teams – tennis, swimming, MUN, forensics and more.

When I graduated from ISKL, I had no idea what I wanted to do. I experienced racism when I moved back to Australia for

university and I felt powerless. I couldn't find anyone on the news who looked like me, speaking out and demanding to be heard. I knew something had to change. I knew I wanted to support others who were marginalized because of systems that were never built for us to have the power and the backing to speak out but, what would a job like that look like?

I studied history and politics at university, inspired by my IB



# on Leadership

history teacher Sally Painter, but her impact on me lasted well beyond tertiary education. When we studied the Cold War and civil rights movements, Ms Painter always colored our classes with a personal story about a protest she attended, or a marginalized community she worked with, before she became a teacher. By being a part of communities campaigning for social change, she – unintentionally I suspect – led me into the work I do now.

## Lived Experience Matters

In the past decade or so since graduating from ISKL, I've worked and campaigned for racial justice, public education, social and affordable housing, gender equity, and economic justice. While 'traditional leaders' like CEOs of peak bodies or senior policymakers from think tanks have good policy solutions, but I have found that the most innovative and appropriate

solutions have come from within the communities and people with lived experience.

For so long, the media has demonized people who bear the brunt of trickle down economic policies. So many of the spokespeople I see in the news are those generously paid CEOs who are speaking on behalf of highly vulnerable people – many have never wondered whether they will be able to pay next

“...a leader who knows when to step back, when to share their platform, and when to ultimately step down so that a movement can continue to grow and flourish – that is an exceptional leader.”

month’s rent, or what it truly feels like to be singled out and humiliated because of the color of their skin.

Right now, I work at a non-profit that trains up interesting, diverse spokespeople from grassroots movements and communities with lived experience of economic injustice to speak in the mainstream media. Rather than exploiting their experiences by using them as “case studies”, I support them to realize that their experiences are expertise. They have the unique knowledge of what works and doesn’t work in the system, and whether to adapt, change, or entirely redesign policies.

### Compounding Challenges

Early last year, I pitched a story about how the impact of the pandemic would continue to disproportionately impact people of color and people on low incomes unless governments invested in more social housing. With over 35,000 people in overcrowded or marginal housing in Victoria, social distancing or isolating would be next to impossible.

Within weeks, a second wave had torn through several public housing buildings that predominantly housed communities of color and First Nations families, many living in overcrowded conditions and many with underlying health issues that would be fatal if they became sick. But communities had the answers all along – create more social and affordable housing.

After coordinating a media campaign that centred the stories of people on social housing waiting lists or sleeping rough, or of people of color in overcrowded accommodation, the Victorian Government announced a \$500 million investment to build more social housing – the largest investment in five decades.

### Nothing About Us Without Us

“Nothing about us without us” is a key principle for disability advocates who demand, rightfully, that they are front and centre of any and all policies for people with disabilities. It’s also since become mantra for almost every social justice movement that is based on principles of community organizing.

Anyone can be a leader. Last year, the Black Lives Matter movement empowered a whole generation of people from diverse communities to become leaders. And yet, how much do we all know about the three co-founders of Black Lives Matter? Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi founded the movement, but they’ve never been the faces of it. Rather, it’s communities and groups of people who are the leaders, side by side, never standing in the front or in the back, but alongside their friends, their families, their communities. I think that’s real leadership.

I’ve been a media campaigner for years. I pitch stories to journalists about whole communities that are organizing for more inclusive policies



Top: Graduation 2012, Aliya center-left.  
Above: Election campaigning.

every day. I use my trade skills to elevate the voices of these communities into the mainstream media. To me, each and every person in these communities is a leader. Every person who has the courage, the determination, and the bravery to stand up to injustice – against themselves or against another community – is a leader.

A good leader advocating for social change is not driven by their ego, and instead driven by their passion and desire to see a fairer future. They empower the people around them to become leaders in their own right. And a leader who knows when to step back, when to share their platform, and when to ultimately step down so that a movement can continue to grow and flourish – that is an exceptional leader.



Aliya Ahmad,  
ISKL Class of 2012,  
Associate Director,  
Economic Media  
Centre, Melbourne,  
Australia

## From Past to Novel Futures!

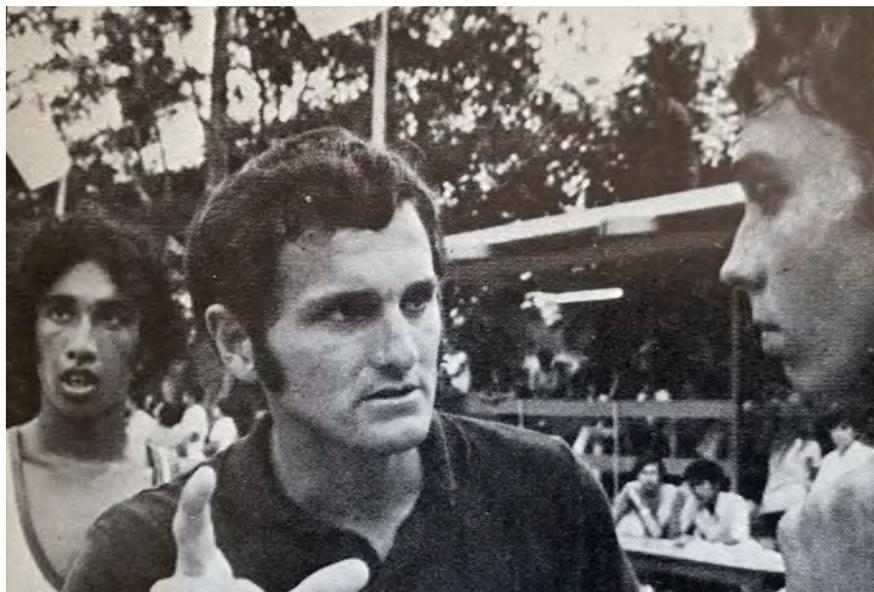
### Sohail Inayatullah, Class of 1975

Looking back at my time at ISKI, three leadership principles stand out. First, I remember coach Bill Wright frequently admonishing one of the members of our basketball team. He was consistently late, and generally lackadaisical about basketball practice. Finally, prior to one training session, when the player was once again tardy, coach Wright asked him to pack up his belongings and leave. The player just stood there and smirked. Coach Wright again said please leave now. He left.

I was troubled as I thought he was being far too harsh. But Coach Wright was noticeably clear: while we should have fun playing basketball, a team sport like basketball requires coordination and discipline. With the efficiency of time, the fun could stay. Discipline ensured that it would. I am today still unable to set these strict guidelines, as my children know, but I appreciated the coach's willingness to draw boundaries. Discipline paradoxically creates greater freedom.

“Discipline paradoxically creates greater freedom.”

In a world where we are increasingly moving toward cultures of realities where in numerous nations as for example, India, Brazil and USA pre-2020 elections, COVID-19 remains a subjective experience – true for the beholder (fake news) - and not a brutal reality, having clear boundaries, anchors, and collective discipline is critical. As we move more and more into artificial worlds



Above: Coach Bill Wright center, Sohail on right.

– immersive technologies, computer/mind interfaces, dramatic global tribalization – leadership will become more and more about gaining clarity on these boundaries – the rules of engagement. In a world where everything will be possible, leadership will be about deciding what is allowable and what is not.

### Creating a Planetary Team

Coach Wright's second main point was about teamwork. We work together for a shared goal. If we look at the COVID-19 responses throughout the world, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern stands out. She responded quickly and followed best practice scientific advice. But more importantly, again in contrast to Brazil, India, and the USA, she created a narrative of teamwork – A team of six million became the guiding metaphor. Recently when one citizen bypassed quarantine measures, she admonished him, “you let the team down.”

In the future, leadership will be about rallying the team of eight billion around clearly planetary goals: for example, creating a quadruple bottom line for Gaia: prosperity, people, planet, and

purpose instead of today's focus only on GDP i.e., wealth accumulation. Leadership will be thus about creating deep inclusion. For me, more and more it is about engaging in projects that are team based, each one of us bringing our strengths to the vision of the desired future. This has meant slowing some projects down to ensure that we move together, step by step. In my basketball games, at a nearby court, where I play with many under 20 year olds, I reinforce the idea of keeping everyone on the court involved, not just letting the best person dominate.

### Systems of Support

Discipline and teamwork need a third component. This is support. In a team, everyone has different abilities. I remember Coach Wright providing different types of advice to different players, each needed something else to prosper. We are individuals nested in groups, communities, nations, and indeed, the planet.

“Leading will be about clarity in a world of fluidity.”



Left: ISKL Basketball Team 1978, Sohail at far right.

As we move toward a world where current jobs disappear, the notion of one job, one career likely will be relegated to fantasy, individuals will need financial and social support to make the transition to a far more fluid Artificial Intelligence driven global economy. Whether it is a planetary universal basic income or universal basic assets or other types of support, the transition to a new type of future will be fraught with material, emotional,

and spiritual pain. Leadership will be to ensure all - all - are supported in this transition.

For me, this has meant asking myself what support I need when I go through transitions. It has also meant ensuring that in every workshop I run, we not just focus on the preferred vision but also what support every person needs. This support can be systemic or it can be narrative: a new story for a new era.

In conclusion, leadership in the future will need to focus three areas. First, when everything changes what do we maintain, what rules are critical for more freedom? Second, as the world changes, what are the deep myths that we can use to create global instead of tribal identities? Leading will be about clarity in a world of fluidity. And finally, third, leadership will be about creating personalized based support systems to assist individuals in the transition to a remarkably different world we are witnessing being created.



Sohail Inayatullah, ISKL Class of 1975, UNESCO Chair in Futures Studies



Left: University of Chicago Swim Team seniors.

“ Many were starting out their college journeys from their childhood bedroom and that they didn’t even know what it was like to wake up 10 minutes before class started and sprint across campus to some building they couldn’t even pronounce. ”

## Make It Happen

### Nadia Redza, Class of 2017

If you ask anyone how the pandemic affected them, they will probably answer with something along the lines of “I haven’t seen anyone in months”, “I don’t have a workout routine anymore”, “Working at home is

driving me nuts”, etc. While all of the above is also true for me, being a senior in college during a pandemic and not being able to see my friends or family for basically an entire year has taught me how to be a more effective leader, and the power of community and support.

### No Matter How Long

When we got news that our 2019-2020 swim season had gotten cut short in March 2020, we felt many emotions. Confusion, sadness, frustration, maybe even relief for some. The then-seniors had such an



Above: ISKL Varsity Swim Team 2017.

abrupt stop to their lifelong swimming careers, and even as a rising senior, I didn't know how to help them. Seeing their pain and disappointment with how it all ended, I knew that as a teammate, peer, and friend, I needed to be there for the team no matter how long this pandemic lasted.

In April 2020, I was elected to not one, but two leadership positions. I was voted team captain of the varsity swim and dive team, and also vice president of the Women's Athletic Association. I received the news with so much pride and joy, but it quickly became panic and uncertainty as I realized we were still in the middle of social distancing and mask-wearing.

I thought back to my last official leadership position as captain of the varsity swim team in my senior year at ISKL. Being able to see everyone during the school day and interacting with the team in person on a daily basis allowed me to be a more hands-on leader and be more physically present with the team. Moreover, the ISKL women's team only had at most 20 swimmers. The women's team at UChicago had about 38 swimmers and divers, and the only means of communication were all virtual.

One of the biggest challenges I anticipated was how to keep the entire team engaged and devoted to our season, despite everything being online. I couldn't just show up at someone's apartment or dorm room to see how they were doing anymore, and couldn't check-in with them after class on the walk to the pool. If I wanted to schedule time with a teammate or my coach, I would have to send over a Google Calendar invite.

### Virtual Transition

The transition to online-everything was rough, to say the least. Wifi would always be cutting out, eyes red and swollen by the end of the day, and my back felt like it aged 50 years. However, knowing that I had responsibilities as a team captain and vice-president of two organizations that I cared about deeply, I had to be the leader that my teammates and peers needed. Many were starting out their college journeys from their childhood bedroom and that they didn't even know what it was like to wake up 10 minutes before class started and sprint across campus to some building they couldn't even pronounce.

From this, I realized that these individuals didn't know what it

was like to be a part of a college community. I made sure to keep this in mind when I was figuring out what kind of virtual events to plan and what my team and organization needed from me the most. I saw the power in not only community and collaboration, but also in being empathetic and accommodating to those who need it the most.

### Empathy, Community, Action!

Every Friday at swim practice, my coach would introduce us to a new quote he had read about that week. In one of my small group practices during the pandemic, he quoted Michael Jordan: "Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen." What made this quote so memorable to me was that it made me realize that I was doing my best to make it happen.

None of us had ever gone through life in a pandemic before, and these were unprecedented times for us. We had no idea what life was going to throw at us next year, next month or even the next day. But by simply trying to make it happen, I knew that I was being the leader that everyone needed. To me, effective leadership is not only leading through empathy and community, but also through making it happen. By staying committed and willing to step up whenever it's needed, you become a true leader who people look up to.



Nadia Redza, ISKL Class of 2017, Senior, University of Chicago

## Adaptability is Key

### Jasmine Ng, Class of 2021

Being locked down and confined to virtual learning in my junior and senior year for a total of seven months, made me appreciate the flexibility of leadership and the many different leadership styles. Great leadership is all about adaptability - the ability to evolve and work with new situations.

When COVID-19 hit, just as all of our lives changed, leadership changed as well. I saw this among our teachers; when uncertainty arose in March 2020, they acted fast and worked together to adapt their lesson plans to still be able to finish all the content in shorter class times and created a system that allowed students to reach out to them easily with any questions they might have.

ISKL administrators exemplified what good leaders are like as they remained calm and positive during the pandemic to model to the rest of the school to do the same. What I also admired about our HS principal, Mr Farrington, was his constant optimism, always hoping that we would be back on campus. He showed all of us the light at the end of the tunnel when our motivation levels were low after months of learning at home.

At ISKL, I was part of the Student Leadership Team, consisting of eight students from each grade. Grade 11s and 12s mentored the grade 10s and 9s in small groups which allowed the team to be closer and form meaningful relationships between each

other. With these intimate relationships, we were able to work more effectively as a team. My role in SLT was head of the Spirit Committee so I led the discussions making sure everyone was engaged and heard when planning school events such as pep rallies, spirit week and spring fest. However, when we went back online in October we no longer had pep rallies and the other events to plan for so obviously the spirit in the Spirit Committee was not so high.

Being a new leader myself, it was a challenge to keep up the motivation of my team and myself and this is where our supervisor Mr Naughton brought back the positivity into our zoom meetings with his funny jokes. Ms Kotcher and Ms Weber also helped engage us a lot with fun online team building games to help maintain those relationships online. During the pandemic, teachers were more understanding and constantly checking in on us which influenced me to check up on my mentor group and my peers because seeing them on a zoom call is definitely not the same as seeing them in class.

Around November, we seniors got very busy with IB deadlines and our supervisors exempted us from coming to meetings. Sophomores Georgia and Amelia stepped up into leadership roles in the Spirit Committee, running flextime activities for the HS. They exemplified great leadership and received excellent feedback from teachers. I couldn't be more proud of them! Senior year is already hard as it is and when you throw in a



Above: Jasmine and friends at Track & Field; GAP Nepal.

global pandemic, it's a whole different story. Nonetheless, I am proud of how I handled the challenges thrown at me. It was definitely hard to stay motivated and optimistic after so many cancellations and disappointments, however, I kept reminding myself to not let them bring me down but instead drive me to be the best. I always made the most out of any given situation and I carried that mindset over to my role as leader in the SLT, to reassure my mentees that we were going to get through it together and that they weren't alone.

I'll be going to the University of Southern California this fall! In college I will be bringing the leadership skills ISKL has given me to help me collaborate with students in different clubs and classes. The ability to be able to lead discussions and be a good listener will help me a lot when I work with new people.

“...when we went back online in October we no longer had pep rallies and the other events to plan for so obviously the spirit in the Spirit Committee was not so high.”



Jasmine Ng, ISKL Class of 2021, rising Freshman at University of Southern California

# Panther News

We are so proud of our ISKL Alumni around the world, making a difference in their communities and always striving to “Be All You Are”. Here are some of our Panther News top picks.



## Prism Turns 25

ISKL’s much loved Prism magazine celebrates its 25th anniversary this year with a special edition of selected poetry, prose, and photography. Over the years, hundreds of talented ISKL writers have contributed to Prism with dedicated editors selecting only the very best to make the final cut.

This beautiful hardcover anniversary anthology was

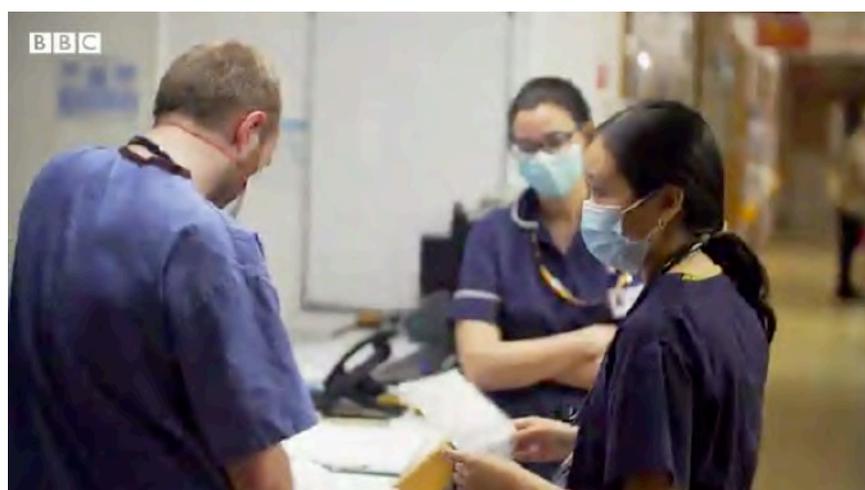
compiled by ISKL Alumni, Sera Fuad (Class of 2020) with the assistance of editors-in-chief past. Sera managed to find all known editions and this collation includes selected pieces from 1996 to 2020. It is a truly wonderful showcase of ISKL talent over the years.

Find out more about the book, and click through to read it here - [iskl.edu.my/celebrating-the-25th-anniversary-of-prism/](http://iskl.edu.my/celebrating-the-25th-anniversary-of-prism/)

## Inspiring Young Doctor

It’s hard to imagine a tougher first year for any young doctor than that experienced by those who graduated in 2020 and were immediately thrust into the role of frontline medical workers during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Among those is Dr Anne Chua (‘15) who featured earlier this year on a special BBC video series “Hospital and Home: Our Lives”, recognizing Covid-19 frontline medical workers in the UK.

Anne graduated from Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry in 2020 and immediately started working as a Junior Doctor at the University Hospital of Southampton, dealing with the daily challenges of the pandemic. Her story featured in the documentary, along with other professionals, and gives



a very moving account of the impact on her life and those of her colleagues.

Log onto the BBC to watch the show or check out the link on the ISKL Alumni Community website at [alumni.iskl.edu.my/news/profiles/10/10-Congratulations-Dr-Anne-Chua](http://alumni.iskl.edu.my/news/profiles/10/10-Congratulations-Dr-Anne-Chua).



## Storytopia

Asian American storytellers, including our very own ISKL Alumni student and faculty, Tobey Ishii Anderson ('72) have joined forces to produce Storytopia. The ambitious project was launched by the Asian American Storytellers in Unity, a collective whose mission is to promote and celebrate Asian American culture and heritage through storytelling.

Tobey explains the impetus for the project: "Last year, when the world shut down and anti-Asian violence increased, a group of Asian American storytellers began meeting weekly to provide support and friendship to its members. From this beginning, Asian American Storytellers in Unity grew into a collective whose mission is to promote and celebrate Asian American culture and heritage through the art of storytelling."

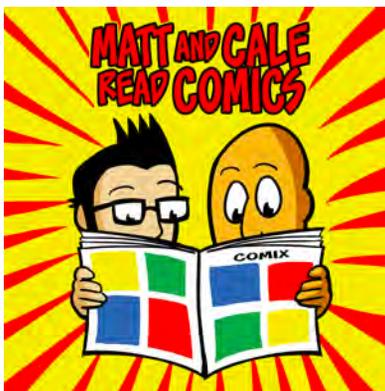
Each story is 15-20 minutes long and is accompanied by activities



suitable for K-5 students. In Tobey's case it's her Japanese heritage, and years of teaching in Asia that provide her inspiration. She says, "I would be hypnotized by the folktales my Japanese grandmother would tell. These memories got me started on the journey of storytelling. The experience of teaching in various countries in Asia has enabled me to collect folktales and weave them with personal stories. It's been quite an adventure!"

The first episode features Tobey, with grandson Andersen, making Onigiri, Japanese rice cakes.

The free program, aimed at encouraging elementary students to embrace and celebrate diversity and to treat all people with respect and equality, is available on the group's YouTube channel - <https://bit.ly/3gVdkU3>. Their website is <https://bit.ly/3vWADZx>.



## ISKL Podcaster

"Matt and Cale Read Comics" is a biweekly podcast where cartoonist and comics educator Matt Smith ('03) and cosplayer/fan Cale Werake dive deep into different graphic novels, including classic graphic novels like "Watchmen" and "Batman:

The Dark Knight Returns". The duo are regularly joined by guests from the world of comics and cosplay including a recent episode with Matt's old pal from ISKL, Ed Moline ('03).

This is just the latest adventure for Matt who is always exploring new and exciting ways to share his passion for comics and cartoons. Over the past year, he has also conducted very popular online comic workshops with ISKL students, inspiring the next generation of enthusiasts.

"Matt and Cale Read Comics" is available for free on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts! You can find more information at [MattandCale.com](http://MattandCale.com).



Left: Graduation 2003.



Varqa conducting at Warner Bros. Eastwood Scoring Stage.

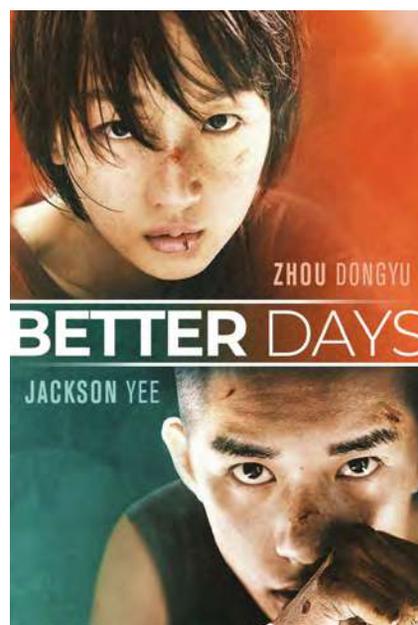
## Oscar Nomination

Congratulations Varqa Buehrer ('03) on the news that *Better Days*, a film he scored, was nominated in the International Feature Film category for this year's 93rd Academy Awards. While "*Better Days*", a Hong Kong romantic crime film directed by Derek Tsang and starring Zhou Dongyu and Jackson Yee, did not win the category, it has won a swag of awards, including Best Film at the Hong Kong Film Awards. While not nominated for any awards for it, Varqa also makes a cameo in the film and his is the first voice you'll hear when you watch it.

Varqa's work on "*Better Days*" was nominated for Best Original Film Score at both the Hong Kong Film Awards and the Golden Rooster Awards.

Now living back in Kuala Lumpur after stints in Hollywood and Shanghai, Varqa says ISKL had an enormous influence

on his choice of career. He says, "At ISKL, the art, dance, stages were all professional level. I was exposed to a real professional environment, at a different echelon from anything I experienced before, and I took every advantage. I took a lot of art classes, was involved in *Grease* and *Little Shop of Horrors*, took graphic design class. I played violin and took music classes, and was in Choir. I was in heaven!"





## Alumni Move for Hope

ISKL Alumni from the Class of 2017 and 2016 this year put their energy and talents behind a fundraising campaign in KL, encouraging people to Move for Hope to help refugee students access education.

Move for Hope came about when fitness-loving friends decided to pool their talents and raise enough money to provide the

77 families of students at Hope Learning Centre with internet access for a year. Some 40 fitness instructors in KL and around the world ran classes, with participants making a donation for each session. Impressively, they exceeded their target.

Gerald Anyi ('17), who works as a freelancer in the ISKL Advancement Department, took on the job of marketing the project and enlisted fellow

ISKL Alumni volunteers, including Jaan Joseph ('17) and Dzaim Dzulkifli David ('16) who are responsible for digital marketing and content creation. They, along with volunteer videographer/photographer Danial Marzuki ('17) are all in Kuala Lumpur. United Kingdom-based Alex Webster ('16) jumped in to help manage the fundraising platform and instructors in that time zone, making it a truly global ISKL Alumni effort!

## Share Your News

Whether it's a new job, getting published, finishing your degree, being married, or a new enterprise, we want to hear from you. Share your news any time at [alumni@iskl.edu.my](mailto:alumni@iskl.edu.my), or directly on the website at [alumni.iskl.edu.my](http://alumni.iskl.edu.my). Don't be shy!

# New Faculty & Staff Alumni

With more than 200 years of service to ISKL among them, we are forever indebted to our retiring ISKL faculty and staff who now, along with those moving on, are officially joining our ISKL Alumni family. Thank you for all you have given to ISKL.

## Retiring Faculty

Carolyn Curtis - 27 years  
Bruce McDonald - 3 years

## Retiring Staff

Chen Siew Thai - 43 years  
Ishar Bin Ludin - 41 years  
Letchemanan Manikam - 40 years  
Jessie Leong Peck Hong - 35 years  
Eliza Leong - 25 years  
Alice Niap - 21 years



Carolyn Curtis



Chen Siew Thai

## Departing Faculty

Jay Peters - 21 years  
Lee Poh Yean - 16 years  
Kathryn Balsamo - 10 years  
Paul Balsamo Jr. - 10 years  
Ron Turner - 7 years  
Megan Turner - 7 years  
Jeffrey Ormrod - 6 years  
Timothy Fischer - 6 years  
Bonnie Lam - 6 years  
Chandra Pike - 6 years  
Wes Pike - 6 years

Matthew Durham - 6 years  
Shawn Staley - 6 years  
Rhonda Griffin - 4 years  
Jim Griffin - 4 years  
Nicholas Sprague - 4 years  
Vanessa Weber - 4 years  
Valeria Vieytas - 3 years  
Hannah Staley - 3 years  
Mark Mazzarol - 3 years  
Judy Priest - 3 years  
Alex Martin - 2 years

Jennifer Lemery - 2 years  
Graeme George - 2 years  
Susy Guidolin - 2 years  
Dania Peguero - 2 years  
James Daum - 2 years  
Matthew Bornstein-Grove - 2 years  
Praxia Apostle - 2 years  
Lauren Cuellar - 2 years  
Ashley Vaccaro - 1 year

## Departing Staff

Kanages Kasinathan - 27 years  
Yuko Miyamoto - 4 years  
Imran Bin Abdul Malik - 2 years  
Mohd Syafiq Bin Md Zohid - 2 years

Once a Panther,  
Always a Panther

# Looking Good!

Already three years old, our Ampang Hilir campus is flourishing, with new green additions enhancing the modern design.



Above: The ISKL Olympic-sized swimming pool and Zurich Field haven't seen much action this year, but are in pristine condition for when normal sports and competition is again allowed.

Right and Far Right: Sometimes less really is more, and the removal of shrubs between the music corridor and Elementary staircase has created a wonderful zigzag path for our youngest students. The addition of hand-painted Melawati stones (a memento brought from the old campus) makes the walk truly magical.



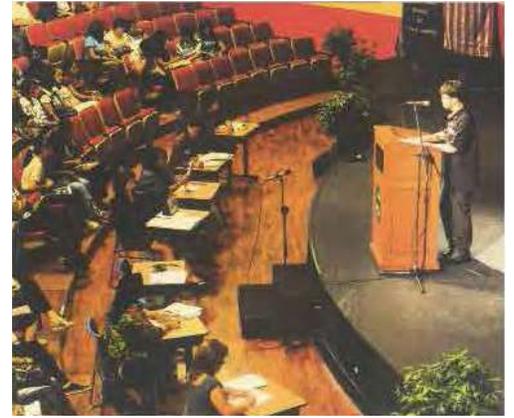
Left: The turtles from the Ampang campus have certainly made themselves at home and their pond is one of the most-visited places on campus.



Above: The edible garden at the Norma J. Hudson Amphitheatre has transformed the space into a community hub where anyone can tend to and harvest the wide variety of native vegetables and herbs.

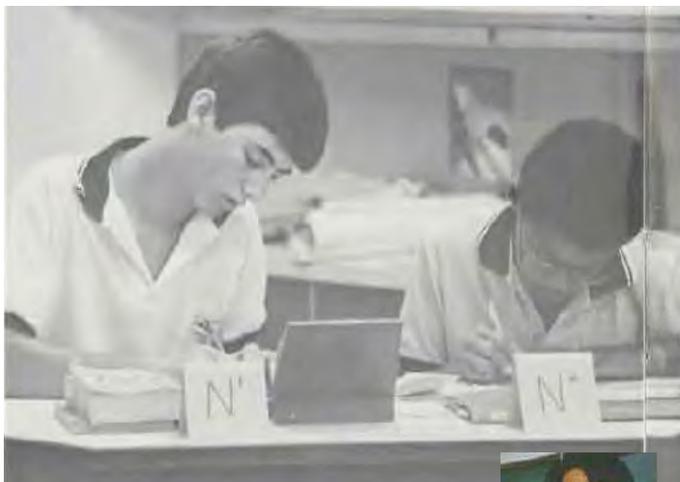


Above and Right: The “rewilding” of ISKL is moving ahead at a pace, with vines now providing shade and color to the High School walkway, and jungle walls making impactful entry statements both at the High School and Elementary School entrances.



# Four Decades of Forensics

Leslie Muri, ISKL Faculty Alumni, has been part of the ISKL Forensics family almost since its inception, including during her retirement. This staunch supporter remembers its proud history and the people who helped it thrive.



Hats off to Gail Schoppert, ISKL's fourth Head Master, for organizing the inaugural SEA Forensics Tournament in 1979. He had established two similar tournaments elsewhere fulfilling his belief that high school students should be able "to give a cogent short speech to persuade."

Gail and his wife, Ruth, were involved in the drama community in KL outside of ISKL and so there was an inherent interest in performing arts. He started his ISKL service in September, 1978 and by early '79 the first tournament was inaugurated. As a Canadian I had always used the term public speaking and understood forensics to mean what the Oxford dictionary defines as scientific techniques used in crime detection. A new word was added to my vocabulary when I learned the

Americans meant what Merriam-Webster refers to as belonging to public discussion and debate.

We were already on the Ampang campus in '79 and so we had a pool of faculty to serve as coaches and judges, as well as a theatre. By the second year Patti Buck, high school humanities teacher and wife of Dave Buck, high school principal, became the event's organizer.

Did Gail have any idea what Forensics would become? Initially there were five events; debate, original oratory, impromptu speaking, oral interpretation and duet acting. Solo acting and extemporaneous speaking were added later. His goal was to give ISKL students the opportunity to develop public speaking skills, but his amazing foresight in inviting other

Malaysian schools to take part made a huge impact.

## Connecting with Malaysia then IASAS

Forensics has always been one of the ISKL initiatives that truly reaches into the Malaysian community. Over its history, thousands of Malaysian students have spent time on our campus, and made friends with our students. The number of participants had always outnumbered IASAS exchanges. Some years ago, when I sat on the IB selection committee, one of our questions was 'how do you know about ISKL' and the inevitable answer was 'through forensics.' For several years, some of us who were coaches opened up our after-school training sessions to any of the Malaysian participants who were willing to take part. Not only did we get to know our 'competitors' but strong bonds of friendship and support were established and we all rooted for each other.

IASAS, always the domain of athletes and sports, started in 1982. By 1986 Cultural Convention was added to the IASAS calendar to feature the performing arts; dance, drama, music and forensics. Participation was always seen as the jewel in the crown for ISKL Forensics winners, who went on to represent the school at CC, which was a demanding forum with seriously high standards. "I am glad I became involved in forensics because I met new people and saw so much talent during the tournament that I have been inspired into an acting career," concluded Jean-Marc Gallois in 1994.

Coaches have been drawn from the ISKL faculty and initially so were the judges. Eventually



the judging pool was expanded to the ISKL community including parents and other interested supporters. Later on, participating schools were each asked to supply a number of judges. All judges were required to participate in training sessions for each of the events they were to judge. Initially student participants all wore their school uniforms, until it was decided that allowing students to abandon their uniforms in favour of regular dress would blur any distinctions between schools.

## New Experiences for All

Early on elementary school teachers were invited to act as judges, crossing over to the high school in their free periods. Frequently arrangements were made to have the student participants come to the elementary classrooms and perform there. This was such an advantage to all; more elementary teachers could be involved easing the demand for judges, the participants could perform before a live audience, the elementary students got to be involved and see what forensics was about.

One year, Emily Salim and I volunteered to judge oral

*“For me the thrill of Forensics has always been seeing the next generation of leaders in action today.”*

interpretation in our fifth grade classroom with our colleagues Jan Mannara and Bill van Zevern observing. The fifth graders were seated on the floor as a participant started reading his selection about a starving student returning to his university and a wet nurse on her way to her next posting sharing a bench on a train in France. At the mention of wet nurse, Emily and I glanced at each other in alarm but decided that fifth graders most likely weren't familiar with the term. It was a long journey and the student became hungrier and hungrier and the wet nurse became more and more engorged. His stomach was rumbling and she was bursting. Eventually by mutual agreement they met each other's needs; he was no longer hungry and she was no longer overflowing.

As the story progressed, more and more fifth graders figured out what was going on and they became deathly silent and absolutely still. By the time the reading was over there wasn't one fifth grader who did not

understand the service that wet nurses provide.

## Dedicated Leaders

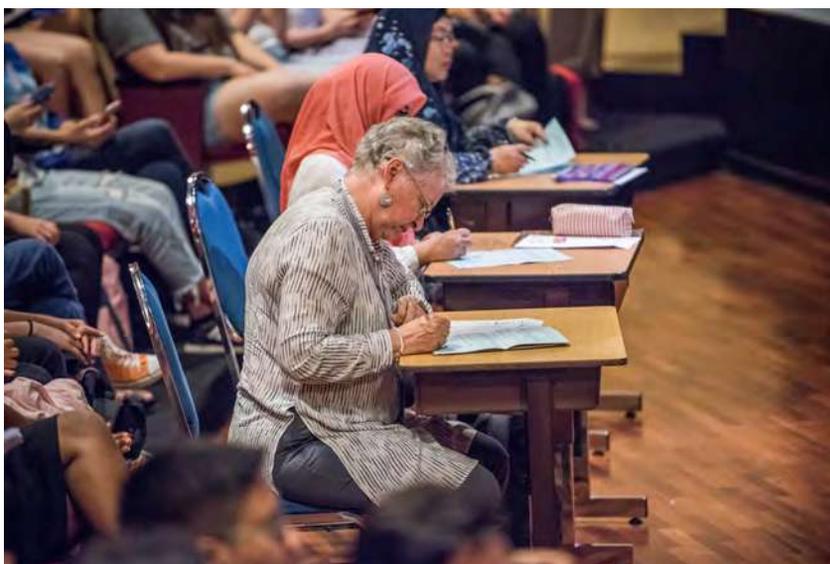
Over the years, some of the stalwart forensics organizers were; Anne Beerman, Judith Pearce, Charlu Malke and Michael Tan. After Anne Russell's many years of yeoman service, Mark Webber, the drama teacher stepped in briefly until he moved on. Then the post was vacant and there were questions and fear about the future of forensics. Those of us who were humanities or English types despaired that one of our favourite activities might not continue (not that any of us were prepared to take on a position which now required so much time and attention). Could there be life after forensics? Our saviour appeared when Alan McLean (a math and TOK teacher, no less) volunteered and stepped in to helm the tournament. We heaved a collective sigh of relief.

Alan continued as Tournament Director until his tragic passing in 2019. Alan didn't know how to say no. In his dealings with various schools, coaches, students and judges he was unfailingly sensitive and compassionate, couching his suggestions diplomatically with "Have you considered ...?"

Various awards were instituted over the years to recognize outstanding achievement. The Debate Speaker Award was one of the earliest, which went to the best debater. In 1997,



Left: Alan McLean, 2017



“Some years ago, when I sat on the IB Scholarship selection committee, one of our questions was ‘how do you know about ISKL’ and the inevitable answer was ‘through forensics.’ ”

the then Malaysian Minister of International Trade and Industry, Tan Sri Dato’ Seri Rafidah Aziz became involved and donated the Rafidah Award for outstanding participation by a Malaysian school. During my time the competition between St. John’s and V.I. for this award was electric. The best individual performance was recognized by the Anne Russell Award. The school with the best performance was given the Muri Award (I was honoured.) And now Alan’s amazing contributions have been recognized with the Alan Mclean Sahabat Award for students who demonstrate the spirit of engagement and positive leadership with visiting schools.

Dedicated students were the backbone of forensics. One year when I was coaching OI, one of my students excitedly came to me in the first week of school, “I know what I want to do for OI!” when the forensics season was months away. Her piece involved

a student and a teacher and to differentiate the two, she chose to have the student speak with a lisp, which took conscious effort. Imagine her distress when she found that one of her competitors actually had a lisp.

Nerves play a large part in participation. In 1994, Kevin Daniel observed that, “I would always start to shake before my turn.” Shirin Lim and Jasin Nazim concurred, “You don’t understand nerves until you’ve experienced forensics. In fact, after forensics, the nerves I had before my IB Spanish orals felt like nothing” (2005).

The eagerly awaited adjudication sheets were both a boon and a bane. One of my IASAS extempers had a score of 86% from one judge and 26% from another for the same speech. What does that mean? Sara Morling believed that, “It (forensics) teaches you how to discipline yourself.” Sometimes in large measure!

## In Good Hands

My involvement with Forensics started, when I was an elementary teacher, with judging, which was always interesting. Later on, when I applied to move to high school English from middle school humanities, Eric Sands, then high school principal, indicated that I needed to “pick up an extracurricular activity” and I was directed to coaching extemporaneous speaking. I knew nothing about extemp! The students saved me, everything I now know about extemp came from them – how to prepare files (in those days we collected hard copy articles from news magazines and newspapers filing them in manila folders), how to structure a speech, what to include, what to avoid, we practiced and commented on each others’ efforts, discussed current events...We soon realized that no matter what we personally felt was the right answer to the yes/no questions posed, we had to go with an answer that we could support by referencing our filed information.

After retiring in 2008 I continued to volunteer to judge and helped to vet speeches that had to be submitted prior to the Tournament. For me the thrill of Forensics has always been seeing the next generation of leaders in action today. To see kids who could confidently display their control over language with coherence, lucid thinking, poise at the podium and passionate energy was inspiring. I always felt that when the mantle ultimately falls to them, the world would be in good hands.



Leslie Muri,  
Alumni Faculty



# Rooftop Oasis

The brief for the upgrade to the ISKL Elementary School rooftop playground was simple: Create a green inspiring oasis in the sky.

As the reality of the 2020-2021 academic year started to sink in, ISKL leaders put their heads together to ensure that the money fundraised by our community, particularly the PTA, would still be spent on a significant project. Usually, that money, donated to the ISKL Inspiration Fund, would be

distributed in the form of grants to teachers for teacher- and student-led projects. However, with our reality of intermittent access to the ISKL campus, prolonged periods of online learning, and strict standard operating procedures (SOPs) when campus was able to be open, it became clear that almost

all of the grants would not be spent and a generous sum would be left sitting in the fund.

That's when creativity kicked in and we looked at the most pressing projects that would improve the learning environment for our students. The most obvious and necessary



among them was our Elementary School rooftop playground. By diverting Inspiration Fund money to the playground project, we were able to bring the upgrade forward at a time when capital works were on hold.

## Pandemic Project

It may seem overly optimistic to start a major project at a time of such unprecedented uncertainty, but as the saying goes, where there's a will, there's a way.

With the support of PTA leaders and Head of School, Rami Madani, a steering group consisting of the ISKL Alumni

and Development Department, ISKL Facilities Department and Elementary School leaders, Principal Julie Olson and Vice-Principal Azra Panthan, oversaw an extensive tender process to find a contractor with the vision and expertise to give the rooftop an extreme makeover.

Finally, following several rounds of interviews and presentations, international adventure park company, Sim Leisure, was the preferred choice. The company is based in Kuala Lumpur and has an impressive portfolio of major projects worldwide, including the award-winning Escape eco-park in Penang.

The project would be in two stages - design and concept; and fabrication and installation.

## Kids Eye View

Initial concepts looked impressive to the adults on the the committee, but what would the students and teachers think? Before settling the design, we undertook focus group discussions with these most important stakeholders. Were we on the right track?

Our plans included towers, climbing nets, monkey bars, swings, zip lines, low ropes, sand boxes, a suspended bridge and rope tunnel, a water course with waterwheel, and of course, lots of trees and plants, shady places to sit and fun elements to balance on. The preferred materials were natural wood, rope, brick and wood mulch flooring. Had we hit the mark?

Students and teachers from Grade 1-5 came armed with their wishlists and were overwhelmingly wowed by the concept. While not everything on those lists, like a petting farm and water park, were feasible additions, the palpable excitement among the students when the drawings were presented gave the steering committee confidence to proceed with the plans.

## Community Kicks In

The Inspiration Fund came close to covering the cost of the project, however we needed to raise additional funds for its completion. A special 55th Anniversary Pewter Panther fundraiser was launched in April 2021, with the aim of selling 55 Pewter Panthers and raising RM55,000 by May 5th. Through the incredible generosity of the broad ISKL family, current and

alumni, that target was reached and exceeded, with almost RM70,000 in total raised to complete the project.

ISKL parent Jaimie Chew stepped up, not only purchasing the last two available Gold Panthers to add to the total, but also donating one back to be resold. A final burst of giving was spurred by the generous offer made by Scott Roberts, Class of 1983, to donate RM10,000 if our community would match that amount by purchasing 10 ISKL 55th Anniversary Pewter Panthers. Within hours of the offer being sent, all 10 panthers were sold, plus several more.

## Masterpiece in Progress

The rooftop makeover commenced over March break, with the relocation of current playground equipment to other parts of campus and readying of the site. The scale of the site is vast, with this project encompassing the high and lower levels of the rooftop, and the first step was to demarcate spaces with edging and planter boxes.

By mid-May, most of the major elements fabricated offsite were ready for installation and were hoisted by crane onto the rooftop. Seeing a seven-meter tree flying through the air is a sight to behold!

Then, just before the end of term came another lockdown, preventing any work on campus for two weeks, possibly longer. With swing sets and towers already taking shape, we remain confident that the project will be able to be completed during the June/July holiday break, ready for the beginning of the next academic year.

Watch this space!

## Work in Progress



# In Profile:

## Nathaniel Zacharias



Joining ISKL as an IB Scholar in 2010, Nathaniel Zacharias encountered a whole new world of learning and experiences.

“Prior to the IB, I had zero exposure to Economics (whose reasoning I learnt to love), I did not think it was possible to learn a language from scratch at the age of 18, and I never questioned presumed knowledge. I loved the three subjects because they allowed me to see previously unseen things.”

An Engineering graduate of Durham University, Nathaniel now lives and works in Singapore as a Process Integration Engineer, overseeing the entire process flow of manufacturing an integrated circuit wafer. It’s data-driven work with clear outcomes and no room for subjectivity or, as Nathaniel describes it, whitewash. He says, “If only politics were like this!”

Coming from the Malaysian school system to ISKL, Nathaniel

says there were a number of notable differences to contend with, including the wide variety of spoken accents he encountered in a truly diverse international school. The style of learning in the IB was also very new. He explains, “The IB required a lot of personal input and independent thinking which was to be perfected through practice.” He continues, “The teachers made the subjects. Their charisma, knowledge, and clarity were inspirational.”

In particular, Theory of Knowledge, a cornerstone of the IB Diploma Program, was impactful in his career choice. Nathaniel elaborates, “My interest at the start of the IB was in physics but this interest ran dry when Theory of Knowledge started poking holes in empirical ways of knowing. I

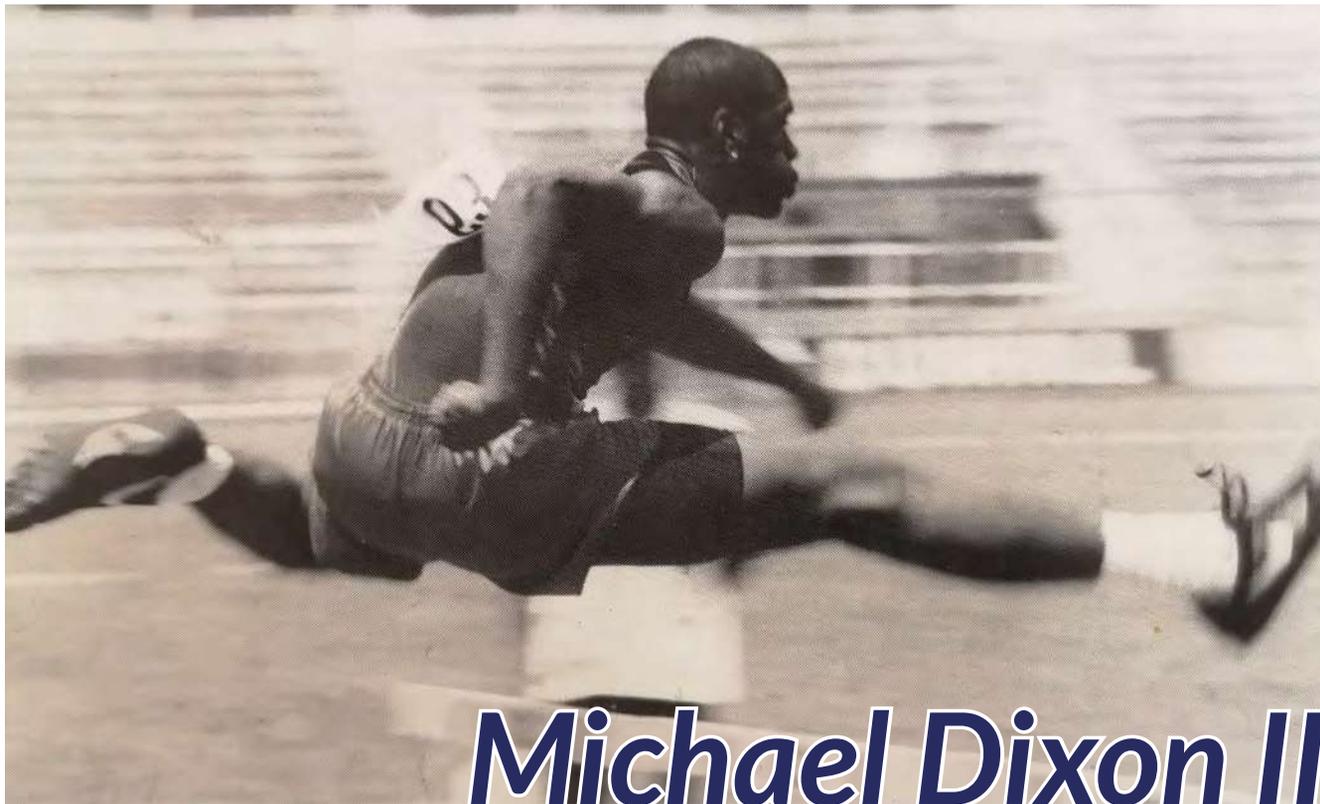
decided I would stick to the more applicable realm of physics and take up the sensible, jack-of-all-trades degree of engineering, which I also saw as having wider job prospects compared to a purely science degree.”

Nathaniel eventually specialized in electrical engineering and, in his final year at Durham, participated in the Solar Challenge which he describes as “a good way to apply our theory to a practical project without any boundaries to the problem”. Taking every opportunity on offer at ISKL, Nathaniel was one of our first Student Environment Officers, organizing carpooling and working to reduce waste, and was awarded the Robert B Gaw Citizenship Award in 2012 for this work. A two-year IASAS Forensics delegate, he also fondly recalls winning a slam poetry contest at IASAS 2012.

That sense of adventure and willingness to take on new challenges saw him walk the Camino de Santiago del Norte, the slightly less well trodden and physically more challenging northern section of the famous pilgrimage route, in the summer of 2019. In an effort to recreate the feeling of the Camino, he has recently taken up Nordic walking several times each week, walking 10 kilometers carrying a weighted backpack and using hiking poles. Then there’s swing dancing... and guitar...

Read more about Nathaniel’s journey at ISKL, professionally, and on the Camino de Santiago at the ISKL Alumni Community website at [alumni.iskl.edu.my](http://alumni.iskl.edu.my).

# In Profile:



## Michael Dixon II

Star athlete retains a firm grip on three IASAS Track & Field records set almost a quarter century ago.

There was never any question about what young athlete Michael Dixon II wanted to achieve at ISKL. Joining in his sophomore year in 1994, Michael's sights were firmly set on one thing - the Scott Smith Award, ISKL's highest sporting accolade recognizing the year's most outstanding athlete.

While Michael's athletic abilities might have defined him, he found the ISKL approach was to treat him as much more than a one-dimensional figure. He explains, "One of the things that always shocked me was how much of an interest faculty had in my success and shaping my life. From Ms. Palko showing me how to be yourself on stage to Mr Stupka taking a passion for drawing

and expanding my skills in the form of architecture, and of course, Coach Forsgren showing me that although track and field is comprised of individual achievements, it's even more rewarding when approached as a team sport."

In a senior year where he won six IASAS Gold medals and increased his IASAS record count to three, Michael did achieve his ultimate goal. However, such was the talent in the ISKL sporting arena at the time, he shared the Scott Smith Award with fellow athlete, Mark McElroy ('97). While Michael competed in Varsity Basketball, Volleyball and Track & Field, Mark also competed in three Varsity teams that year. "It wasn't until our

then headmaster, Dr Richard Krajczar, opened the ceremony mentioning there were two winners, Mark and I immediately looked at one another as to say congratulations! It was a goal I had set, worked hard at and accomplished. It was a great feeling," Michael recalls.

Those IASAS medals and record patches are proudly displayed in Michael's home today, a reminder of his incredible achievements. Michael says, "All three records are special in their own way. I set the high jump record in Taipei my junior year. The record had been standing for 13 years which was one of the longest at the time. I can remember the sense of expectation having almost broke

the year prior. The best part was receiving my medal and record patch from Dr Krajczar who was our travel sponsor/guest. It was great to win the championship with him there. The long and triple jump were set in Bangkok my senior year and are probably the most rewarding, because there was a lot of hard work put in with our jump coach, Coach Christopher Vonn.”

The experience at ISKL also taught him about teamwork. “It wasn’t until ISKL I realized what it meant to compete as a team,” he recalls. “Competing at ISKL meant more than taking the sum of our individual successes, but pushing each other to be better.”

After such a stellar senior year, Michael returned to his roots in Oregon, enrolling at the University of Oregon and with plans to study architecture and make the Olympic Track

“Competing at ISKL meant more than taking the sum of our individual successes, but pushing each other to be better.”

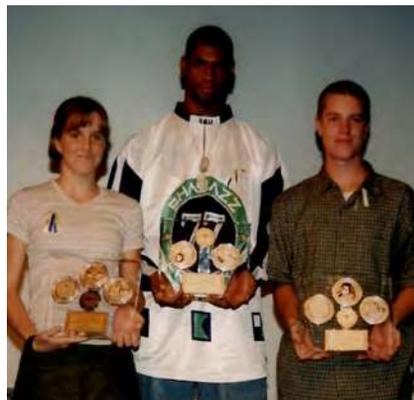
& Field team. A series of hamstring injuries brought his Olympic dreams to a halt, and he also decided to change focus, transferring to the Kennesaw State University in Georgia and graduating with a Bachelor of Business Administration focus on marketing. Michael recalls, “The ability to “move on” is something international students do all the time. I refocused my attention to my bachelor’s degree (and) kept moving forward.”

Riding the crest of the wave of digital marketing in the early “noughties”, his work included producing webinars for AT&T and even helping develop LeBron James’ first digital comic book

series with Powerade. Now, Michael is Marketing Operations Director for an in-house creative agency at Anthem, Inc.

Married with a young daughter, these days ISKL’s star hurdler has changed his stride, noting, “Ironically, Coach Forsgren could never get me to run anything longer than 400m, but today, I find my self enjoying distance running in the form of half-marathons and occasionally a full marathon. What can I say, I’m still addicted to medals.”

Read more of Michael’s story at the ISKL Alumni Community website Profiles at [alumni.iskl.edu.my](http://alumni.iskl.edu.my).



Clockwise from top left: Michael still earning medals today; Long Jump in his sophomore year; breaking the IASAS High Jump record; that coveted Scott Smith Award (1997); training with Coach Forsgren.

# In Memorium



## **Patti Ishii Halbmaier (1950-2021)**

Patti Ishii Halbmaier quietly passed on April 17, 2021. She was from the first graduating class of ISKL and always had such wonderful memories of life in Malaysia during the 60's. Patti's creative energy transformed into calligraphy, collage art, and the latest being art journaling. Patti and her husband Jim were celebrating 50 years of marriage. Patti, Jim and their daughter Julia have lived in Arizona for the past few years. Previous to that they were in the Pacific Northwest in the Seattle area. Patti's vibrant personality and kindness captivated so many hearts around her. She was loved wherever she went and will be greatly missed. (Contributed by Tobey Ishii Andersen '72)

In the course of trying to track down the members of ISKL's first graduating class of 1967, the Alumni Department was lucky to be in touch with Patti who is the young woman at the center of

the beautiful photograph. Patti shared her journey after ISKL, including returning to study in Iowa, meeting and marrying Jim Halbmaier in 1971 and moving with him to Germany when he was drafted. They returned to the US and settled in Washington before retiring to Arizona.

Patti recalled the special moment captured in the iconic photograph, and her time at ISKL: "We had a very nice graduation ceremony on the school grounds of the Istana. There were quite a few people there including the ambassador and his wife, family and friends. We had a nice reception outside and, as you can see, Mr Findley even found us caps and gowns. With ISKL just getting up and running, I guess you would call us upper class students an experiment. We took most of our core classes by correspondence. Americans kids through the University of Nebraska and the British kids through another program. We spent most of our day in a study hall upstairs with a

monitor. We were well behaved considering the situation.

"I think I felt like I was in another world in KL at that time 1966-1967. Things were developing so rapidly and families were coming and going all the time. We barely got to know someone and then the family was moved somewhere else. Very transient but we did make our friendships. I loved my life in KL those couple of years I was there. I still love SE Asia and have very fond memories. We'd been back to KL a number of times and each time we go back, it becomes less and less of the KL I remember. Those were the good 'ole days. Our campus was a one of a kind experience and can't even imagine going to your new campus now."



## Paul Lau (1961-2021)



Paul Lau passed on May 17, 2021, following a lengthy illness. While Paul didn't attend ISKL, his family has a long and proud history with ISKL. His mother, Beryl Lau, and sister Susan were both much loved art teachers and Susan, along with another sister, Caroline, designed the peace garden at Melawati. Indeed, their family home once sat on the current ISKL campus site, right where the Paul Chmelik Eco Garden is located.

Paul will be remembered for the magical legacy of the Wau kites in the main Admissions entrance, a piece commissioned for the opening of the new campus.

He studied engineering and product design in the UK and even worked as a kite designer in the UK before returning to Kuala Lumpur. He was also known and loved as co-founder, facilitator and leader of the Tugu Drum Circle (2002-2018). Susan says, "Paul was struggling with his illness as he designed and facilitated the fabrication of the ISKL kites. As a craftsman and designer, he was known for his passion, perseverance, perfectionism, and minute attention to detail. Hopefully he will be remembered for being so much more than all the suffering he had to endure."



## The ISKL Wau Kites

Wau kites originated in the state of Kelantan and are one of the national symbols of Malaysia.

The kite installation created by Paul for ISKL is called "Three Little Birds", and depicts the reunion of all ISKL divisions onto one campus, and the progression of students as they grow from children to young adults.

Each kite tells the story of a school division; Elementary, Middle and High School. The blue Wau Puyuh (quail) kite is titled "Be Good". It has passion flowers - young plants - woven through the design representing ISKL's elementary students - symbolising young people at the beginning of their school lives. "Do Good" is the title of the green Wau Bayan (parakeet) with its blue lotus plants and koi carp

swimming through a tranquil blue lotus pond and symbolising middle school students following their dreams.

Finally, the largest and highest of the kites is the dark red Wau Dodo Helang (hawk or small raptor) titled "Be Happy". Morning glory flowers adorn the kite, symbolising tenderness and tenacity. Morning glory, while delicate looking, is hardy and can withstand difficult living conditions. The message for high school students is to be gentle yet strong as they head out into the world.

Other imagery includes the pohon budi (tree of life) symbolising the cosmos, the beginning and the end, and mastery of self. Paul used the shape of the pohon budi as a window into the world of ISKL, with a bee (being industrious) a dove (peace and love) a tortoise (longevity, intelligence and wisdom) the carp (good luck) and a panther (school mascot). The koi carp and, of course, the turtles are also much-loved members of the ISKL community.

# Recognizing Our Teachers

If you ask almost any ISKL Alumni what made the biggest impact in their time at ISKL, the number one answer is always, the teachers. It's a sentiment shared by Kevin Gaw ('78), who tells a very special story of how his graduating class and friends came together this year to recognize the teachers of ISKL.

In 1965, the International School of Kuala Lumpur (ISKL) came into being and for fifty-five years, has been growing not only in size, but in identity. ISKL also promoted our individual identities to develop, and there's no question that the ISKL experience creates an indelible impression on the person and on the group. It is pretty hard (impossible?) to coast through ISKL, KL, and Malaysia without encountering real-world intrapersonal growth. This includes a very up close and personal understanding of one's own intercultural development and our own internalized "isms." The experience also fosters intercultural sensitivity, a deep

appreciation for difference, and a tolerance for ambiguity. ISKL sparks interest in others, in culture, in religion, in politics, and the world, and also a common bond to humanity. I know this sounds all poetic and ethereal, but I don't know a single classmate or fellow alum who would say different.

## My Story, Our Story

I arrived to Malaysia and ISKL in 1970 and graduated in 1978. I loved the old school, the Istana, and the "new" school was pretty cool, too (Literally! Classrooms were air conditioned!) With the exception of three classmates,

our graduating Class of 1978, 32 strong, has remained connected since we graduated. And just like how ISKL is like a family, our class extends our family roster all the way to our 1970 5th grade, when there were 42 of us (and 12 of us are still connected).

From across all those years, from 1970 to 1978, 63 of us keep in contact – that's 44% of us! And, we continue the search to find more of our "lost" classmates.

## Reigniting Bonds

The Class of 1978 held its first formal reunion in 1989 in Santa Cruz, California. Yes, it was our 11-year reunion. Why eleven years? Back then, when the planning started in 1987, the only way we could find classmates to organize the event was through our parent and classmate networks, telephone directory research and calls, and snail mail. There was no internet! So, it took an extra year to get enough classmates and friends (the Class of 1978 has always included other ISKL classmates,



Below from top: Charles Longbottom, Nancy and Bob Taniguchi, and John Stupka.



typically from the Classes of 1977 and 1979) to gather – from across the globe!

And what an inaugural gathering it was – not just because of the fun of reuniting, but also because of the reigniting of essential bonds with people who were part of our formative years, people who played critical roles in our development and journey to becoming adults. Reconnecting

## “This is why the golden Panther is for ALL ISKL teachers, past, present, and future.”

with classmates in 1989 affirmed our identities as third culture kids (now adults, some with families started). To say the least, the 1989 reunion was a powerful start to many wonderful reunions, gatherings, and Zoom calls to come, all the way to the current in-person gathering being planned for July, 2021. I am sharing all this to provide context to our gift of a golden Panther to the teachers of ISKL. It started with my own purchase of a commemorative pewter Panther, celebrating ISKL’s 55 years. I shared with my classmates how proud I was to have given to ISKL, in support of ISKL’s future, and asked classmates if they’d like to do a class gift. It was not hard to convince anyone!

### Our Panther Pride

Very quickly, the Class of 1978 raised over USD\$1,500 (the original goal was USD\$1,000) – all in recognition of the profound impact our teachers and the ISKL experience had on us. With the help of Lynette MacDonald, Director of Development and Alumni Engagement at ISKL, our class not only generated the funds for the golden Panther, but we could also give three additional pewter Panthers to teachers! I set about creating a nomination system with the donor classmates and that’s how we came to identify 4 teachers to recognize (from a very long nomination list!).

The golden Panther is being installed in a case for public display at ISKL and has the

following dedication: “..to the teachers of ISKL, to whom we owe so much...” The pewter Panthers have all been received by the teachers to be recognized: Charles Milton Longbottom; John Stupka; and Robert (Bob) and Nancy Taniguchi.

Reading the responses to receiving the pewter Panthers from these influential educators was humbling. Not only were they surprised we remembered them, but they were amazed we still feel this way, now, more than 45 years later.

### We Owe So Much

It is important to note that across our Zoom calls, our gatherings, and our formal reunions, all of our ISKL teachers are remembered and held in high esteem. I am proud of our fundraising effort, but even more proud we could honor some of our teachers with the gifts, and all of our teachers with our sentiments. They made huge differences in our lives and helped us launch into the world. We are forever grateful. This is why the golden Panther is for ALL ISKL teachers, past, present, and future. The Class of 1978 really does mean it when we say, “..to the teachers of ISKL, to whom we owe so much.”



Kevin Gaw,  
Class of '78

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