

CommUnity

Communicating Unity

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2022



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JUST 30 SECONDS

Peace, patriotism and nationalism are strong emotive catchwords for August and September. They are intertwined in many ways.

At the global level, we have the **International Day of Peace**, an annual celebration held on 21st September with this year's theme **End Racism. Build Peace**. On our front, we celebrated our National Day (31st August) and Malaysia Day (16th September) with the theme **Malaysian Family, Strong Together**.

The practice of martial arts has been for centuries associated to patriotic upbringing but there is another aspect of martial arts, that is seldom highlighted – its role in fostering unity and harmony. Hence, for this issue, we decided to talk to two talented and skilled martial artists to share their experiences and perspectives on how martial arts can indeed promote harmonious relations in our society.

We also talked to **Mr. Richard Lon**, Director, Unit for Other Religions (UNIFOR), to share with us the roles of UNIFOR besides providing his insights and advice to our readers on maintaining and strengthening unity in the State.

I hope that as Malaysians and Sarawakians in particular, we will continue to enrich our unity and harmony journey together, as set forth by our forefathers, never forgetting their sacrifices, sweat and tears.

Thank you

Datu Aloysius J. Dris
Chief Executive
Yayasan Perpaduan Sarawak



YPS BOARD OF TRUSTEES & 28TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

Yayasan Perpaduan Sarawak (YPS) held its Board of Trustees and 28th Annual General Meeting on 24th September 2022 at the Official Residence of the Chairman, Tuan Yang Terutama Yang di-Pertua Negeri Sarawak, Demak Jaya.

The Chairman reiterated the importance of unity and harmonious relations for Sarawak and the crucial role that YPS is playing. Events such as the Regatta is one of the many channels that could bring together our people.



Inspirations

We posed the following questions to our martial artists.

1. What are the advantages of learning martial arts, and what initiatives have been undertaken to promote martial arts to younger generation?
2. Can martial arts be used to foster unity and harmony?
3. What is your hope and advice that you would like to share with our readers, especially to the youth?



Muhammad Khawar Hezazy bin Haji Uthman
Executive Secretary
Pertubuhan Silat Seni Gayong Sarawak



Yu Kok Lee
Founder
Sarawak Martial Arts Taekwondo
Association (SMATA)



Dana Yu Ping Sing
Instructor
Sarawak Martial Arts Taekwondo
Association (SMATA)



MASTER GEORGE (YU KOK LEE) & DANA YU PING SING

Martial art is fundamentally practised for the purpose of self-defence (or the defence of one's loved ones). Another advantage of learning martial arts is that it instils values in practitioners such as discipline, patience, and perseverance especially among young children.

Martial arts can and do foster unity among their practitioners. Students, regardless of ethnicity, religion, social class, or other factors, are accepted as they are in martial arts. Most martial arts place a premium on respect, which includes not only respect for instructors and seniors, but also respect for one's peers.

I hope that the younger generation will be able to appreciate martial arts in the years to come, and that they will carry on Sarawak's rich martial art as a cultural legacy. What matters is that they enjoy what they do, and passion will always follow.

MUHAMMAD KHAWAR HEZAZY BIN HAJI UTHMAN

Silat is a significant tradition and cultural heritage that has been passed down through generations until the present day.

Improvements are made in tandem with the progress of times. *Silat Seni Gayong*, for example, uses Sports Science-based training methods to ensure that the movement methods in *Silat Seni Gayong* can be adapted to the new millennium. *Silat* movements also helps in performing physical activities such as exercise and rigorous training. This type of training improves accuracy and agility while also benefiting the physical well-being.

Every martial artist is taught to be disciplined, not to use *silat* for personal gain, and to respect one another, particularly the teachers. In fact, patriotism can be used to develop that attitude so that every martial artist feels a sense of belonging to the nation's culture and a sense of love for the country.

The dress code used in the ring is one of the disciplines that is frequently used by *silat* practitioners. All practitioners are typically dressed in black or dark colours. This is based on the idea that "students are the reflection of the teacher's behaviour." What the teacher does, the students will imitate. Furthermore, the colour black represents secret. The secret can only be revealed if we work closely with the teacher. The colour black also represents the colour of the nursery. This nursery represents the students' readiness to gain knowledge in the same way that a nursery cultivates trees that benefit communities.

All *silat* practitioners believe in the concept of "*Bersatu dalam Gelanggang*." Everyone, regardless of race or religion, can learn martial arts together in the ring. Unity can be formed successfully if *silat* is used as a foundation.

There are no religious or racial barriers to learn *Silat Gayong Sarawak*. Although *silat* is synonymous with the Malay heritage, it also represents our identity as people of various races, particularly in Sarawak. With the inclusion of *silat* on the United Nations Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organisation's (UNESCO) Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, it is appropriate that *silat* be viewed as an agenda to further shape the spirit of unity.

What's also interesting is that other countries are willing to come to Sarawak to learn *Silat Seni Gayong* because they believe that it's very unique. Indirectly, we succeeded in promoting tourism for Sarawak and contribute towards the local economy. *Silat Seni Gayong* has spread rapidly throughout the world, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Saudi Arabia, and many others. We can spread the idea of unity regardless of skin colour or race even with *silat* alone.

According to our members registration statistics, 10% of the 7,856 Sarawak *Silat Seni Gayong* practitioners are non-Malays. The remaining are other ethnicities, with 634 being *Dayak*. Surprisingly, Chinese students account for more than 3% of all registrations. In fact, there is a court in Kuching with Indian students as well. Harmony! This is a parable that can be used to describe racial unity in this organisation.



OUR COMMON PURPOSE

Our Common Purpose endeavours to capture not only the programs and activities of YPS but also other organisations (government departments, NGOs, corporate bodies and individuals) in Sarawak that work towards one common purpose - enhancing unity and solidarity in the State.



1. ARCH UNITY LAB

ARCH (Advancing Racial Cohesion and Harmony) is a research project spearheaded by Yayasan Perpaduan Sarawak in 2021. Apart from the existing 9 locations - Limbang, Miri, Sibul, Mukah, Bintulu, Kapit, Bau, Kota Samarahan and Kuching, YPS has added four more locations to include Betong, Sarikei, Sri Aman, and Serian. The main purpose is to expand our reach and engage more Sarawakians to provide inputs on how we can better achieve unity in our state.



THINGS THAT BIND US

Rhymes
WEBINAR

THINGS THAT BIND US

Storytelling by Rhymes

The Oral Tradition We Know Today

Mr Ringah Kanyan
VICE-CHANCELLOR
Faculty of Education, Applied and Creative Arts
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Tuan Haji Yusuf bin Bugang
SARAWAK
Assistant Teacher
Department of Education
Sarawak Education Building
Kuching

Dr Elena Gregoria Chai Chin Fern
SARAWAK
Assistant Lecturer
Heritage Section,
Sarawak Tourism &
Cultural Industry and
Heritage Development

13 AUGUST 2022 (SATURDAY)
9.45 AM
bit.ly/3Pbr2B4

THINGS THAT BIND US

Pottery
WEBINAR

THINGS THAT BIND US

The Art of Pottery

The Evolution of Sarawak Pottery

Datin Rosemarie Wong
SARAWAK
Ceramic and Pottery
Curriculum Developer

Dr Franca Cole
SARAWAK
Curriculum and
Assessment Developer
Education Department

Nabliah Abdullah
SARAWAK
Ally, Heritage

Tuson Chong
SARAWAK
Curriculum Dev.

20 AUGUST 2022 (SATURDAY)
9.45 AM
bit.ly/ttbupottery

2. THINGS THAT BIND US

TTBU (Things That Bind Us) is a continuous initiative that aims to foster an appreciation for Sarawak's heritage and culture while highlighting its shared characteristics. This year, we have six webinars covering a variety of topics - Rhymes, Pottery, Martial Arts, Fishery Practice, Food Preservation and Weapons.

THINGS THAT BIND US

Martial Arts
WEBINAR

THINGS THAT BIND US

SARAWAK

The Revival of Martial Arts

From Traditional to Contemporary Art of Self-Defense

10 SEPTEMBER 2022 (SATURDAY) | 9.45 AM
bit.ly/ttbumartialarts

THINGS THAT BIND US

Food Preservation

THINGS THAT BIND US

Sarawak's Unique Delicacies

The Craft of Food Preservation

Nur Qamarayah Khan Binti Akhtar Khan
SARAWAK
Faculty of Education,
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Hellong Ajang
SARAWAK
PASTRY ARTIST

Limas Anak Jinet
SARAWAK
Culinary Artist

24 September 2022 (SATURDAY)
9.45 AM
bit.ly/ttbufoodpreservation



LEARNING FROM OUR ELDER'S 2
KABO PENDANT/ BEADED FUR WORKSHOP
 by Ulek@ Kau Libat



3. MYY LIVING ARTS – LEARN FROM OUR ELDER'S SERIES

The project's goal is to promote Sarawak's handicraft discussion, learning, mastery, and invention. Yayasan Perpaduan Sarawak and Mylivingarts, in collaboration with Artsy Tailor Craft, hosted a Kabo Pendant workshop on August 20th, 2022. Ms. Ulek @ Kau Libat from Artsy Tailor Craft instructed, guided, and discussed Kabo Pendant with the participants.

"We are happy that the federal government sees us as a model of unity. Sarawak has led the way in working toward unity and must maintain the diversity and acceptance that has been practised for generations."

"Sarawak has come a long way to get to this point in terms of collective unity. It is critical to ensure that this effort does not dwindle in the coming years."

YBhg Datu Aloysius J. Dris, Chief Executive of Yayasan Perpaduan Sarawak (YPS)

4. SEMARAK UNITI KELUARGA MALAYSIA (SUKM) 2022 MIRI

The Semarak Uniti Keluarga Malaysia (SUKM) 2022 was held in Miri City Fan from September 23rd to September 25th 2022.

The main highlight of the SUKM program is the exhibition of Rumah KAMI Keluarga Malaysia where the customs and culture and way of life of the various ethnic communities in the state of Sarawak such as the Jatti Miriek, Kedayan, Melanau, Cina, Iban, Kayan and Kenyah are exhibited. Other events such as Uniti Fun Walk, Citarasa Menu Keluarga Malaysia, Explorace Negaraku, Piknik Keluarga Malaysia and Pertandingan Mewarna Si Cilik were also held.



Photo courtesy of Ministry of National Unity

Conversations



**MR.
RICHARD
LON**

Director, Unit for Other Religions (UNIFOR), Premier's Department Sarawak

What is the main role of UNIFOR?

The main role of UNIFOR is to manage the needs of other religions in Sarawak. It acts as an official channel for other religions to interact with the government and provides a platform where conflicts and sensitive issues pertaining to other religions are discussed and resolved.

Would you like to share your experience as the Director of UNIFOR with our readers?

I took over the directorship of UNIFOR on the 2nd of January 2020. We were just shifting into full gear towards the end of the first quarter of that year when the COVID-19 Pandemic struck. It was a major challenge to me as a director when we were all forced to work from home.

As there were no precedence or experience operating under such conditions, I was grappling with trying to keep the office to stay in focus of our duties and tasks while at the same time providing directions to all the houses of worship on how to handle the situations never encountered before.

It was a challenging time for all of us but what came out of it was that we became closer to each other. As we have more interaction (mostly "online") during the pandemic, we understood each other better. Ideas were shared, consensus were made, all in the spirit of togetherness in trying to protect and keep our people safe especially members of our individual faiths.

The government under the Sarawak Disaster Management Committee (SDMC) tasked UNIFOR to manage the needs of the other religions during the pandemic. The trust was on me to lead but the strength came from all the leaders of the other faiths. The

undivided support they gave me throughout the pandemic managed to pull us through.

Leading UNIFOR as we strive to fulfil the needs of the other religions during the pandemic was an experience I will always remember, and now, as we transit into the endemic stage, we look forward to working even more closely together for the benefit and advancement of the other religions.

September 21st is celebrated worldwide as an International Day of Peace, it is an annual celebration, designated by the United Nations in 1981, to strengthen the ideals of peace among all countries and people. Can you share with our readers on how we can promote and spread peace.

I have always believed that Education is a powerful tool in promoting and spreading peace. Education progressively builds empathy and tolerance amongst our children. As they continue to grow and mature, education will ultimately cultivate a sense of respect for others, a vital trait, especially in a diverse society like ours.

Our leaders and forefathers have strived hard to build a peaceful and harmonious nation which we have inherited today and we should honour them for their effort. And in my opinion, the best way to honour them is to continue to build on this culture of peace that they have started.

Education too can help in raising public awareness about the need to have peace for the nation to flourish, thus encouraging them to live in peace and harmony.

When there is peace, there is stability. With stability comes prosperity as we are able to concentrate in the development of our economy as well as focussing on our social advancement.

Sarawak has been for some time regarded in many ways as a model state in promoting unity and good community relations. What roles can young people play in promoting peace?

We have always thought of our younger generation as potential leaders of the future. However, I personally do not see them as "leaders in waiting" but rather current leaders in their own right.

Our young people are full of energy and they are not only capable but are able to adapt fast to the latest technologies. Not all are born leaders but with some training, some if not most of them will be able to take an active role in promoting peace. They can even act as mediators in conflicts or undertake various community projects with the aim of promoting peace and harmony in society.

We recently celebrated our Malaysia Day. This year theme was Keluarga Malaysia Teguh Bersama (Malaysian Family – Standing Strong Together)

a. What are your thoughts on how we as a multiracial and multi-religious society can live harmoniously and stand strong together?

b. Do you have any advice to Malaysian on this important celebration?

There is a quote that says "a single arrow is easily broken, but not ten in a bundle" The more we band together, the stronger we are and the theme "Malaysian Family – Standing Strong Together" strikes this chord.

Coming together will result in trust. Standing together will seal this trust as we become more inclusive in our approach thus, promoting greater cooperation, peace and harmony. Alone we may not be able to do much but together we can do wonders for our country.

Thus, on this important celebration, I would like to invite every Malaysian and Sarawakian in particular to come together to work towards a country whereby peace and harmony triumphs over hostility.

Finally, what advice would you give to our fellow Sarawakians?

Our leaders and forefathers have strived hard to build a peaceful and harmonious nation which we have inherited today and we should honour them for their effort. And in my opinion, the best way to honour them is to continue to build on this culture of peace that they have started.



QUICK TAKE

Pesta Benak or Tidal Bore Festival is one of iconic Sarawak's events, which is centred around natural phenomenon (tidal bore) where water rushes up the Batang Lupar River, Sri Aman. Pesta Benak was recognised as a tourism event in 2001 and has then attracted all kinds of visitors and brought together Sarawakians from various walks of life.



Courtesy of Jabatan Penerangan Negeri Sarawak

Courtesy of BorneoTalk



Contact us

CommUnity is published once every 2 months by Yayasan Perpaduan Sarawak. We welcome any suggestions or contributions to further improve your experience with our newsletter.

Thank you.

Yayasan Perpaduan Sarawak

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DID YOU MISS OUT ON OUR PREVIOUS ISSUES?

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