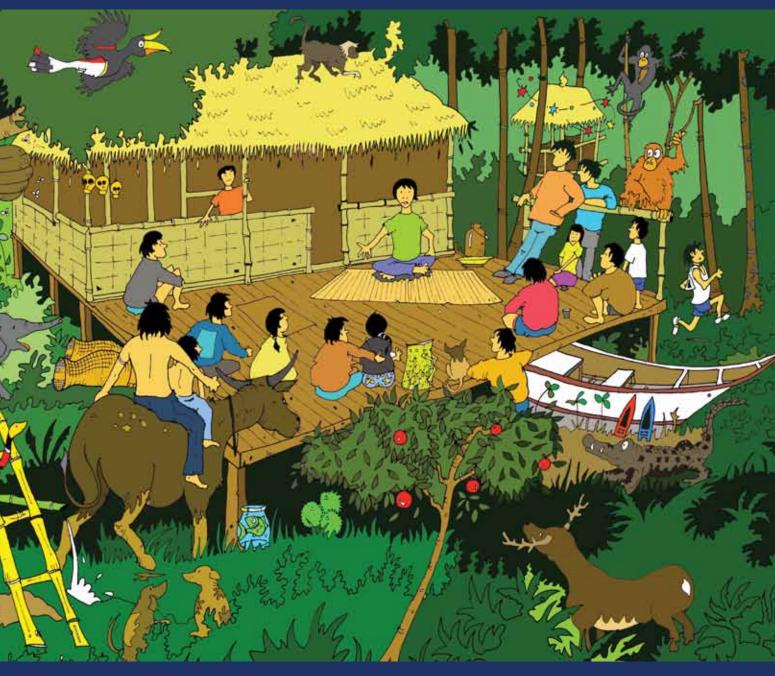
MANY CULTURES, ONE VOICE

Stories inspired by indigenous children in Sabah and Sarawak





Projek Kerjasama



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The copyright of this book belongs to the indigenous communities of Kg. Ampungoi, Pitas; Kg. Kiau Nuluh, Kota Belud; Kg. Bantul, Pensiangan; Ba'kelalan, Lawas; Kg. Punan Bah, Belaga; Kg. Jagoi Bogag, Bau; UNICEF Malaysia & Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia.

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Treat the Earth Well

It was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children.

Quote from a Native American Chief

Foreword

With every story there is a message.

Traditionally, Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, practices and stories are transferred from generation to generation verbally, through storytelling, usually by an elder often surrounded by children listening attentively. With the passage of time and with the pace of change, those traditions and stories are gradually being eroded or totally lost.

Many Cultures, One Voice, is the first attempt of its kind, aimed at capturing the wisdom of elders and the traditional tales and ways of life of Indigenous Peoples, in pictures and photographs – to live on in the hearts and imaginations of generations of children.

With every story there is a history.

In 2013, UNICEF supported Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia (JOAS) in a project entitled: Content Generation: Documentation of Indigenous Peoples' Stories, Practices and Knowledge in Relation to Children and Child Development in Sabah and Sarawak. That work was the product of an idea based on the theme of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples the previous year – indigenous media.

In remarks commemorating that day in 2012, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, said:

"Compelling stories tell of continuing struggles to overcome centuries of injustice and discrimination, of peoples standing firm for the resources and rights that will preserve cultures, languages, spirituality and traditions. These stories are in themselves a valuable resource for us all. They offer an alternative perspective on development models that often exclude the indigenous experience. And they promote the mutual respect and intercultural understanding that is a precondinition for a society without poverty and prejudice."

And so began a six-month project to document stories told by indigenous elders, relevant to the history and development of children from Ampungoi in Pitas, Kiau Nuluh in Kota Belud, Bantul in Pensiangan in Sabah and Ba'kelalan in Lawas, Punan Bah in Belaga dan Jagoi Gunong in Bau, Kuching in Sarawak. A significant highlight of this project has been the involvement of young people from different indigenous communities who were trained to document the stories through direct conversations and interviews with elders. Our hope is that through this involvement, these young people have been inspired to also pass on their traditions, life stories and what they have learned about their identity, to the generations to come. We believe these stories will introduce and inspire all readers to the rich traditions and heritage of the indigenous peoples and children in Malaysia.

That, would be a happy ending to this story.

Ms. Wivina Belmonte UNICEF Representative to Malaysia Thomas Jalong President JOAS

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We are highly grateful for the support from UNICEF Malaysia especially Ms. Wivina Belmonte, Dr. Victor Karunan who are the UNICEF Malaysia representative and deputy representative respectively and also Dr. Nur Anuar Muthalib. The agency's support has made it possible for an idea to develop into a project of this kind that we hope will inspire other initiatives in the future to benefit the indigenous children in this region.

We salute the six indigenous communities in Sabah and Sarawak who have welcomed us into their lives and shared with us their dreams and aspirations. We congratulate the project documenters who spent time with the communities to listen to their stories.

We appreciate the assistance from JOAS president, the secretariat team and members whose untiring commitment in championing the cause of Indigenous Peoples in Malaysia has been our inspiration in working on this project.

We also thank everyone who have contributed in so many different ways. Without them, we could never put all the bits and pieces together to form the big picture that the project aspires.

And most of all, to all indigenous children who have shared with us a worldview that we seem to have lost to adulthood. Such a worldview that offers plenty of opportunities to see things differently; so different that animals can talk and trees have souls. But it is true, isn't it?

Leonard Alaza & Irene Peter Project coordinators

About the project and book

In 2013, the UNICEF has supported the Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia (JOAS) in a project entItled: Content Generation: Documentation of Indigenous Peoples' Stories, Practices and Knowledge in Relation to Children and Child Development in Sabah and Sarawak.

The idea first came about the year before and the timing could not have been more perfect. That year, the theme of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples was on indigenous media. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon had said: "Compelling stories tell of continuing struggles to overcome centuries of injustice and discrimination of peoples standing firm for the resources and rights that will preserve cultures, languages, spirituality and traditions. These stories are in themselves a valuable resource for us all. They offer an alternative perspective on development models that often exclude the indigenous experience. And they promote the mutual respect and intercultural understanding that is a precondition for a society without poverty and prejudice."

After the idea was crystalised, the working partnership embarked on a six-month project to document stories, practices and knowledge of the selected communities which are relevant to children's development as an indigenous person belonging to a particular ethnic group. In this project, the selected communities are three each in Sabah and Sarawak namely Kampung Ampungoi in Pitas, Kg. Kiau Nuluh in Kota Belud, Kg. Bantul in Pensiangan, Ba'kelalan in Lawas, Punan Bah in Belaga dan Jagoi Gunong in Bau, Kuching. The selection was made based on geographical consideration and also the language of the communities.

One of the interesting parts of the project was the involvement of young people from the communities. Indigenous Peoples' stories, practices and knowledge used to be passed down from generation to generation orally. What often comes to mind when speaking about this oral tradition is a picture of an elder of a community sitting at the corner of an oil lamp-lit bamboo house telling all kinds of stories while a group of people including youths and children listening attentively. But as time went by when people's lives started to change, communities' eagerness to listen to the wisdoms of their ancestors was gradually lost. The involvement of young people in the project as documenters was a way to hint the possibility of reconnecting the old and young before the former is gone forever

and with him or her, the great wisdoms that have made his or her people who they are today. The youths' experience in implementing the documentation exercise is hoped to inspire a future generation of young Indigenous Peoples curious enough to start asking questions about their identity and purpose in life.

The outputs of this pioneer project under this partnership are a series of children's story books and a picture book. They may not be the best of works due to unavoidable limitations mainly due to the loss of the stories and storytellers, as well as other factors like time and skills. But what had been salvaged in the six-month period should be treated as a start of process that is challenging yet exciting. As with all kinds of stories, there is always a message tucked in them and is presented in the most entertaining manner possible to engage an audience. This is what the picture book is all about: a work of fiction but with a dose of reality told by the photographs. It is the hope of everyone behind the project to share the message that although the Indigenous Peoples' stories are centuries old, they are absolutely relevant to provide an answer some of the world's most complex questions.

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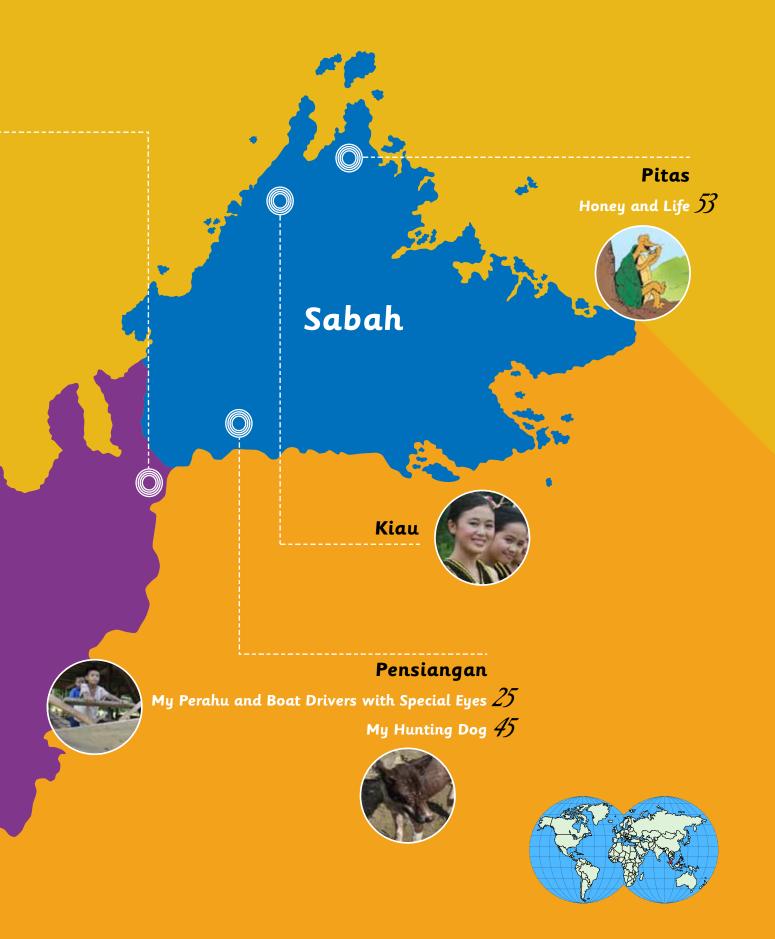


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Dear friends,

Do you like to listen to stories? Yes, me too. I have heard so many stories told by so many people during my travels. Now I tell them to you.

But my favourite storyteller is my father. He is a writer and an explorer. He reads a lot. He says reading is like going out on an adventure. The stories take him to exciting places and meet interesting people.

I have traveled with my father to some of the most exciting places in Sabah and Sarawak, two states in East Malaysia. We visited places that many of my friends have never been to: places like Bantul in Pensiangan, Kg. Kiau Nuluh in Kota Belud, Kg. Ampungoi in Pitas, Bung Jagoi in Bau, Punan Bah in Belaga and Ba'kelalan in Lawas.

Every place was exciting and full of adventure. In Bantul I went along hunting for a wild animal in the jungle; in Kg. Kiau Nuluh I had a close-up view of a mountain which according to the traditional belief of the people is where the souls of the dead would rest; in Kg. Ampungoi I went with friends to collect honey from a very tall tree; in Bau I stayed in an abandoned 100-year-old village on a hill and witnessed a skull cleansing ceremony; in Punan Bah I paddled a boat to set fishing traps and in Ba'kelalan I helped my friend's family prepare a rice field for planting and visited an apple farm.

We travelled long distances by car; flown over the clouds in a small aeroplane and taken longboats through dangerous rapids. We climbed mountains and hills; walked on foot for many hours to reach a village and slept in sleeping bags under the stars at night. Through all these, we have met so many exciting people like ritual specialists who could communicate with the spirits of the dead and people who have great knowledge about the forests, rivers, mountains and wildlife.

I have made new friends in every place that my father and I went to. They told me lots of exciting stories about their lives and things they like to do every day.

My father is pleased that I have made many friends. He says that the best thing that I can ever be is to be a child. He also tells me that every child, no matter where they are in the world, like to listen to stories. He says stories make their world a lot bigger.

That's how my father became a writer and an explorer. He tells me how, as a young boy, he enjoyed listening to my grandfather's tales.

As a writer, my father always take notes about what people have told him. He does that so he won't forget. I'm learning to be a writer just like him. I have taken many notes about the things my friends have told me. Now I'm telling them to you as how they have told me.

Have fun. Have an adventure. Be inspired.

Children's Activities Activities encouraging children's development





Children have the right to play.

Article 31 Convention on the Rights of the Child



Magic Hut



Stories inspired by indigenous children in Sabah and Sarawak Kampung Punan Bah, Belaga

Sometimes my parents take me to the farm when there are no other adults at home to look after all of us: my brothers and sisters and me. Since I'm the smallest and youngest, I get to sit inside the rattan basket that my mother carries on her back. She says that I'm too little to walk so far.

To reach our farm, we have to take a boat from our village and walk on foot into the forest. I always fall asleep inside the basket because it feels like being in my mother's arms.

My parents are traditional farmers. So are everyone else in our village. They plant rice for us to eat. They also plant fruit trees

and vegetables. Sometimes my father goes out to hunt for a boar or a deer.

Today my parents decided to repair our hut in the farm. The hut is used for shelter when it is too hot or when it rains. They also use it to store some things. Sometimes when there is so much work to do in the farm they would stay in the hut for the night.



While our parents work on the hut, we try to find things to do to keep us busy the whole day. My brother suggests we build our own hut. My parents allow him to use the parang for he is old enough to use it safely. He cuts some bamboo while the rest of us collect big leaves for the roof.

When our hut is done, we all get inside. My sister calls it a magic hut because it can take us to a magical land where there are plenty of fruits to eat and the animals can talk. But she says before we go on our journey we have to bring some food.



THESE RO(KS ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE THE POWER TO REPRODUCE THEMSELVES

My older brother starts a fire while the rest of us throw anything we can find around the farm: grass, branches, leaves and rocks. We play cooking with these ingredients.

Once we have our food packed, we squeeze inside the hut and poof!... We vanished.

When we reach the magical land, the villagers warned us about an evil king. My sister is right. This land is truly magical. It is so beautiful. There are so many kinds of fruits – all you can eat. When you pluck one from its tree, it grows again in a blink of an eye. But behind its beauty, there is an evil king who rules the land. The people say that he forces them to do things for him that they do not want to do. The people are afraid of him, so they just obey him. The king has evil friends. They destroy farms, forests and force people to move out from their land. But because the king is so bad, he has many enemies too. One of them is a warrior from another village. He is very powerful.

Villagers in the magical land tell us that the warrior will attack the evil king in a few days. They know that when that heppens their king will force them to fight against the warrior and his strong men. The villagers do not want to fight. They ask us to help them escape. We tell them that we can help them build a magic hut like ours. But it has to be a bigger hut to fit all of them. They say that in the forest near the village there are many animals that can talk to humans. They will help.

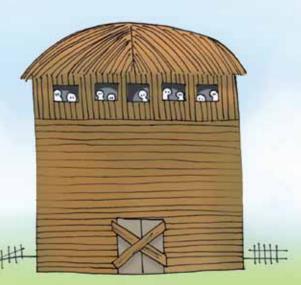


We secretly work day and night to build the big hut for the villagers. The talking animals are very helpful. There are big ones and small ones. They do not like the evil king and his evil friends too because they destroy the forest in which they live.

My sister says that I'm too small to help them build the hut. But she gives me a special leaf. She teaches me how to use it as a whistle. Then she tells me to keep a lookout. My job is to make a whistling sound to warn the others if I see strangers coming.



When we finish building the villagers thank us and the talking animals. They promise to come back and meet us again. They climb into the big hut and disappear. In the next few days, the warrior and his army of strong men arrive in the village and launch an attack.



By this time, the evil king and his evil friends realise that they have no one to fight for them. All the villagers have escaped in the big hut. The king and his friends are defeated, captured and forced to work as slaves for the warrior.



When we return to our farm in our magic hut, our parents are ready to go home to our village. My mother picks me up and put me inside her rattan basket. As we walk into the forest to where our boat is, I take another look at our magic hut. I hope my parents will take us to the farm again tomorrow.

Back in our village, my mother gets ready to cook for dinner. She asks my sister to help collect some fire wood from outside our

house. But before that, she places a leaf in my hand and says that it's the same one she has given me in the magic land. She says I can keep it.

FUN FACTS

Machete is an important tool for communities that depend on the forest for their livelihood. They will always bring machetes to the farm, the forest or to the river. Elderly children were taught to use them in a safe manner. Most of the Orang Asal children who live in the villages gain knowledge and skills not only from their parents, but from the communities they live in and their natural environment. Like in this story, children learn to build huts by observing their parents.

When

there is a dealth in the village, children are not allowed to be in the village. Their father or mother will bring them to the farms and stay there overnight. They will be brought home after the burial ceremony.



My Perahu and Boat Drivers with Special Eyes

Stories inspired by indigenous children in Sabah and Sarawak Bantul, Pensiangan, Sabah

ne morning when I woke up, I saw my father making a small perahu for me. I felt very excited because I have always wanted it. Perahu is what my people call a traditional longboat. My older brother has one but he never allows me to play with it. We always quarrel over it. My father was making it for me because it was my birthday.

Where I come from, children do not get a lot of toys to play with. So we make our own. We make small huts in the forest while waiting for our fathers to return from hunting. We play hide and seek or build sand castles along the river bank. A perahu would be fun to have. I love to see it glide on the water. Do you know that the perahu is very important to my people? I live in Kampung Bantul in Pensiangan, south of Sabah. Many people have not heard about my village because it is very far from the nearest town. To get here, you will have to travel by car for a few hours and then by longboat for about an hour, depending on the water conditions. If the water is shallow, the journey can take a few hours because at some sections along the river you and the rest of the passengers will have to pull the longboat. Sometimes the shallow river makes it dangerous to travel by longboat because there are strong rapids and big rocks. Only



a very skilled and experienced longboat driver can drive through the rapids and avoid crashing against the rocks.

My father is one of the most skillful longboat drivers in my village. Villagers ask for his help sometimes to take them to places they want to go to. They say that he is so good that



he can steer in the dark. I remember going with him once on his longboat at night. I could not see anything. But he drove us safely home.

I want to be just like him when I grow up. I want to



A BOY WITH HIS PERAHU

build my own longboat and go to see so many places. He promised me that he would teach me to understand how the river flows. He said that

I needed to have a special

eyesight to be able to steer skillfully. He told me all the skillful perahu drivers in our village had that kind of special eyesight.

The small perahu that my father was making for me was made of a piece of hard wood. As I sat next to him to watch, he told me that our ancestors had been making perahu for a very long time. It remains until this day our only means of transport. We use it to go to the other villages, fishing and hunting. But when he was a young boy, longboats were not powered by outboard engines. Villagers then had to paddle. I imagine they were very strong because it takes strong muscles to paddle against the strong currents.

Not long ago, a timber company had built a dirt road to our village all the way from the nearest town. It takes many hours' drive. But since the people in my village do not own any vehicles,

they still rely on the perahu very much. For us children, it is the best toy to have.

The small perahu that most children in my village have is made exactly like the real ones. It is about six inches long and tied with a string so they can be pulled on water. Actually, they are pulled everywhere all day long. Children like to mimic the sound

of the outboard engine while pulling their perahu. It makes it more real. My brother's perahu is painted red and green, the same colours as my uncle's. He always warns me not to play with it. He says I can only see it but never touch it. But when



(HILDREN PLAYING IN A LONGBOAT THAT IS STILL BEING BUILT

he is asleep, I always pick it up and hold it. But I will never take it to the stream in case he wakes up.

That is the best part; watching the perahu glide on the water. Although I don't have my own, I always enjoy watching my friends and brother play. I can sit for a long time just to watch them



When my father finished making the small perahu for me, he asked what colour I wish to have it painted. I asked for red and white just like his. After painting it, he took it out under the sun and told me to wait for a few hours for the paint to dry. It was



AN ADULT (ARRYING A YOUNG BOY DOWN THE HILL AS OTHER (HILDREN PLAY WITH THEIR TOY LONGBOATS IN THE STREAM

my best birthday ever. I can't wait to take it to the stream and join the rest of my friend and brother. I imagine being the top perahu driver in my village with special eyesight to see in the dark.

FUN FACTS

The boats or perahu of the Murut communities living along the Pensiangan River are long and thin so that they can move more efficiently on water. Rivers are very important to the communities. They are like roads that connect one place to another. Villages also depend on rivers for food. There are all kinds of fish in the river that they can catch. If the rivers and forests are destroyed, fishes will die and communities will have nothing to survive on.



My Large and Small Aquariums

Stories inspired by indigenous children in Sabah and Sarawak Punan Bah, Belaga, Sarawak

I live along the longest river in Malaysia. The river is called Rajang. The name of my village is Punan Bah. It is very far from the nearest town of Bintulu in Sarawak. To reach here you will have to take a four-wheel-drive in a journey that takes about six hours. If you travelled in an airplane from my village to another place in the same amount of time you would have already been very close to reaching Australia. It takes so long to reach my village because you will have to travel along a logging track. It is not a fun ride because it gets bumpy all the time. During dry season it gets very dusty. But in the wet season, the tracks are very muddy and slippery. You can also take a ferry



from another town called Kapit. It is a three-hour journey along the Rajang River. But still three hours by airplane can take you all the way to the southern part of China. My village is very far. And this is where I live.

I go to a school in my village. It is a small school but I like it because I have many friends there. I learn about many things everyday. One day our class teacher taught us about the two kinds of fishes: those that live in the sea and in the river. It was a very exciting lesson to me because I did not know much about the fish in the sea. But I know of some fishes in the river because my father goes out to fish everyday for our meals. He catches them by using fishing nets and setting fish traps. I like to follow my father when he goes out in the morning or evening to check the bamboo traps. I enjoy paddling the boat with him. But the best part is when he lifts the traps out of the water and there



are fishes inside. I can see how happy he is. But sometimes, he catches nothing.

Before class ends, our teacher told us to bring an aquarium the next day. I didn't know what an aquarium was, so she explained what it is. She said an aquarium is where people rare fish as pets. It is made of glass so they can see the fish swimming inside.

That afternoon, my friend and I decided to go fishing for our aquarium. After asking permission from our parents we grabbed

our bamboo fishing poles and set out to find earth worms as bait. I brought a glass bottle that my mother allowed me to use for our aquarium project. I always enjoyed going with my father to collect fish from the traps. But going out on a fishing mission with my friend was more fun.

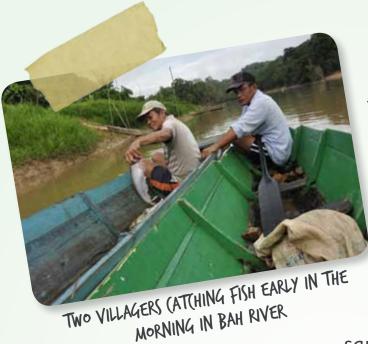
Our river is called Bah. It is a small river that branches out from the big Rajang. Not long ago, our river was



A VILLAGER RETURNING HOME FROM FISHING

Early morning view in Punan Bah. A villager is seen checking his fishing nets.





teeming with fish because my people took care of it. My father sometimes tells me stories about his fishing experience when he was a young boy my age. He says during the dry season, he

could fill up half a sack of fish by just casting the fishing net once in the river. He could cast the net a second time to fill up the whole sack if he wanted to. But he never does that for half a sack of fish is more than enough for our family to eat. Most of the fish that do not get cooked are smoked. We do this because we do not have a refrigerator to keep the fish fresh.

My grandfather once told me that everything that nature provides us including the fish in the river must be shared with others. My people, who are known as Punan, have been doing this for a very long time.



A YOUNG BOY SHOWING HIS AQUARIUM ON THE WAY TO S(HOOL

But Bah is no longer the same today. It's very dirty. Our community elders have said that it's because outsiders have come to cut down our trees and opened up lands for plantations. Ever since I was born, I have never bathed in this river. We all clean ourselves with rain water that we collect. It is also our drinking water. Sometimes I wonder how the fish can still live in our dirty river.

It took a long time before a fish took the bait. I quickly pulled it up. It was a big fish, the size of my palm. I put it into the bottle. It was a bit too big to swim around inside though. My friend said he was hoping to catch a fish just like mine and asked if we could wait a little bit longer. We waited and waited but he did not feel even a single bite on the bait. I said maybe crocodiles have eaten most of the fish except for the one that I had just caught. There are many stories about a giant crocodile living in the Rajang River. Because of its size, it has to eat so many fish to fill its huge stomach. But we are not afraid of it. What we are afraid of are bad spirits who take children away if they stayed out too late in the evening. I do not want to be taken away from my family. I will miss them.

When it was getting darker, my friend still had not caught anything. I told him that we could share the fish that I had caught. We could not wait to show our aquarium to our teacher.

In class the next day, our teacher was very pleased to see that most of us had brought in our aquariums. She gave marks for everything: the biggest fish, the smallest fish, the most beautiful fish and the most beautiful aquarium. A classmate brought a toad in a box. Our teacher gave a mark for that too under living-creature-that-sometimes-live-in-water. My classmate was very proud. But she reminded all of us to always feel very proud about our river, the Rajang and Bah. She said they are like giant aquariums. And just like aquariums, we must take good care of them and make sure they stay clean all the time.



On our way home after school, my friend and I returned to our fishing spot and released the fish in our aquarium. I hoped our river will once again have plenty of fish so that my father will always be happy with his catch.

Punan are often confused as Penan. They are two different ethnic groups FUN FACTS

When you go to Punan Bah village, you will not miss seeing tall wooden columns called 'Kerieng'. It is beautifully crafted by people long time ago. It is a place where the body of a deceased nobleman would be placed. Unfortunately, the servant of the deceased will also have to die so in the other world he will continue serving his master. Finally, a huge piece of rock would be placed on top of the column. This is no longer practiced today. But people are still amazed by the columns. They wonder how did the people long time ago craft the hard timber using very primitive tools. They are also puzzled as to how the people could lift the heavy rock to be placed on top of the column.

Children's Activities Activities encouraging children's development





Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their cultures and other cultures.

> Article 29 Convention on the Rights of the Child



My Hunting Dog

Stories inspired by indigenous children in Sabah and Sarawak Bantul, Pensiangan, Sabah

hen you travel to my village, you will see a signboard along the way that reads, ANJING KU MAHAL' (my dog is expensive). Anyone who hurts a dog in my territory will have to pay a heavy fine. Dogs are very precious for my people because they help us to hunt in the jungle. They help us find the food we need to eat. Our people have been using dogs to hunt for many generations.

I have a little puppy. His name is Berason. There is a story behind his name. When he was born, my father knew that he would be a great hunter. Do you know that our people can tell that by looking at the position of a dog's teats? This knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation. Soon after my puppy could eat solid food, my father fed him with rice mixed with some hot chillies. He did that to



DOGS (LIMBING INSIDE A PERAHU

make him grow as a hunting dog. Beras is what we call rice. I decided to name him Berason. My father thought it was a good name. I had pity on him as I watched him eating the hot chillies. It must have burned his tongue. But after a few drinks of water, he was alright. He still prefers his mother's milk than rice and chillies.

Berason's parents are great hunters themselves. Altogether we have ten dogs. Each one has a very unique name. Berason's father is their leader. Everytime they are taken out for a hunt in the jungle, Berason's father is the one who would be in the front, sniffing for a wild animal. When he senses a deer or a wild boar nearby, he would bark to call the rest of the pack and they would all go after the animal.



One day, my father asked me and my two older brothers to come along for a hunt. My father told us that we might have to walk very far into the jungle and stay for the night because wild animals were not as easy to find anymore unlike before. He had a feeling that the jungle around my village had been disturbed by outsiders. The sound of chainsaws and bulldozers had probably caused the animals to flee from their natural homes to deeper areas in the jungle. That was the reason why we had to walk for many miles inside the jungle in the hopes of finding an animal. Even so, if we could find any.

Because it was an

overnight hunting trip, my job was to carry Berason in a rattan basket so he could still feed on his mother's milk. We left the village in a perahu with all ten dogs and the three of us. I could



A HUNTING PARTY WITH THEIR DOGS

tell that Berason didn't like the sound of the roaring outboard

engine. But he had to get used to it just like the rest of the grown-up dogs in the boat when they were little puppies.

During the perahu ride, I remembered what my grandfather used to tell me. He said that there will always be food in the jungle. People only had to go out and get them. During his younger days, sources of food was not that difficult to find because the jungle had never been disturbed. Things have changed since

then. I could not help thinking what our jungle would be like when I reach my father's age. Maybe I will have to go even deeper inside the jungle to find an animal. Even so, if the jungle will still be there.

It took us a while to reach



(HILDREN (OVERING THEIR FA(ES TO PREVENT FROM INHALING DUSTS WHILE RIDING ON THE BA(K OF A FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE THROUGH A LOGGING (AMP IN BANTUL

a spot on the river bank where we would all get off and start a long walk into the jungle. I carried the rattan basket with Berason inside. He could not see what was going on as the mouth of the basket was too high for him to reach. But he could still see through some small holes of the basket. His father was already sniffing the entire area the moment we landed. I was certain that Berason was watching and learning.



A PERAHU TRAVELLING ALONG THE PENSIANGAN RIVER

After a few hours in the jungle, my father said we should stop and rest. My brothers took out some rice and fed all the dogs. They were all very hungry. I waited for Berason's mother to finish her food. In the mean time, we all ate our rice and fish that we had brought from home. We wrapped our food in big leaves. It was delicious. Berason't mother had finished her food by then and was resting on the ground. It was time for Berason to have his milk. I took him out from the basket and placed him near his mother. For a growing puppy, he needed his milk. Drink all you can, Berason, for the journey is still far. We continued our walk in the jungle until it was about to get dark. There was no sign of any wild animal. We cut wooden tree branches to make our beds. They were not very comfortable, I can tell you that. But in the jungle you have to make the best of everything. And also be very quiet. My father once told me

that the wild animals can sense the presence of a stranger long before he can find where the animals are. Animals are very good at hiding. That is why dogs are very useful for they have strong sense of smell.

The next morning, I was awakened by the barking sound of Berason's father. He had spotted an animal. The rest of our dogs ran to join him. Soon after,



A YOUNG BOY WATCHING A HUNTED DEER AND A WILD BOAR.

all the dogs were barking and our people have learned from experience to tell the differences of the sound of the dogs' bark. One particular sound would mean that they are already chasing or surrounding a wild animal. When we heard the sound coming from a distance, my father told us to head to a river down below. When we reached the river, we could hear the barking sound of the dogs approaching nearer. We all waited. My father was holding a spear. At any moment, the wild animal would appear from the bushes to escape the dogs and would go into the water.

It was a wild boar. Once inside the water, it was left totally helpless. Our dogs were surrounding it. My father threw the spear and killed it. It was a big animal and its meat would be enough to feed my family for many days until the next hunt. Our dogs will have their share too after all the hard work they had done.

All the while, I had been carrying Berason in my basket. Although he was too small to stick his head out, he saw everything through the tiny holes of the basket. It is just a matter of time before he is old enough to hunt. And what a great hunting dog he will become. I'm sure of that.



Forest-dependent communities need the forest and forest resources to survive. Without these their lives will be extremely hard. In Kg. Ampungoi, wild honey gives them some hope.



Stories inspired by indigenous children in Sabah and Sarawak Kg. Ampungoi, Pitas, Sabah

Honey and Life

I love adventures. Do you?

My favourite adventure is to go harvest honey with the older members of my community. I have many sweet moments that I can share with you about my experience as a honey collector.

One of those moments happened to me not very long ago. It was honey season. We had all been waiting for this moment. There was a bee hive on a very tall tree inside the jungle not very far from my village. The members of my community decided that it was time to harvest the honey inside it. Everyone was excited about it. Harvesting honey is hard work. Sometimes it can be dangerous because bees will sting when their nest is disturbed. Have you ever been stung by a bee before? It is very painful.

So why would anyone be excited about doing a hard and dangerous work? I used to ask the same question until I realised that honey had been our community's main income for a long time. They sell honey in order to buy food for their families and send their children to school. Without honey, they will not have any money. When I go to school, my mother would give me some lunch money. I always spend it wisely because I know how hard it is to get the honey for our money.

When it was time to go harvest honey from the bee hive,

my father gathered a number of people from the village. It takes a lot of team work for this job. Unlike my past outings, this time I was asked to be a water boy. My father told





me it is the most important task. I felt very proud.

We walked from our village to a rubber estate and into a patch of jungle. When we reached the tall tree, I could see the bee hive. It was as big as the tyre of the lorries that often pass through our village. The hive was hanging on a branch nearly 100 feet above. I could see thousands of



(HILDREN'S PLAY HUT

bees, all of them working just as hard to make honey for us.

We needed a tall ladder to reach the hive. So some of the strong men in the group set out to look for long bamboo poles. They are no longer easy to find because our jungle is not like it used to be. A lot of areas have been opened up for agriculture. The members of my community are afraid that sooner or later there will not be any tall trees left for the bees to build their hive. When that happens our community will lose an income. We will not have enough money to buy food and for education.

While the others were out looking for bamboo poles to make

the ladder, some older men and a few children including myself sat on the ground to wait. There was nothing much to do so the older men started telling stories to one another. As a water boy, my job is to fetch water from the water containers we had brought with us when they asked for it. While they were sharing stories, I listened intently.

One of the stories that I enjoyed most goes like this:

Once upon a time in a jungle, there was a group of animals. Among them was a tortoise which was out searching for food. When it found a tarap fruit and was eating it, a bear came. The bear was very arrogant.

"Hi tortoise. What are you doing?" asked the bear.

"I was hungry and went out to find food. I found this tarap, so I'm eating it now," answered the tortoise.

The tortoise offered some to the bear but he refused, "Oh, I don't want any because I have already eaten some honey."



As the bear was very arrogant, he proposed a challenge to the tortoise. "What kind of challenge," asked the tortoise, humbly.

"Let's set ourselves on fire. The one who doesn't die will be the winner," said the bear.

The tortoise was very afraid of the



bear because he was famous for being a bully. However, he knew that if he didn't accept the challenge, the bear would hurt him. Out of fear, he accepted. They agreed to meet again for the challenge.

On the day when the challenge took place, the bear asked, "Now, who goes first?" The tortoise kept quiet. "Why don't you go first," said the bear again, thinking that if the tortoise gets killed by the fire he would be the winner. The tortoise could not see how he could refuse the big bully bear. "OK. You will cover me with dead branches and light the fire," he said. The bear was very happy to do it. In his mind, the tortoise was a fool. What the bear did not realise was that the tortoise was far more intelligent than him. While he was delightfully covering him up with the dead branches and dry leaves, the tortoise quietly and quickly dug a hole in the ground and escaped.

After he finished piling up the dead branches and dry leaves, the bear lighted it up. While it was burning, the bear imagined that the tortoise had turned into dust. He smiled to himself and congratulated himself for being so smart.

When the fire had died, the tortoise emerged from the hole in the ground and out through the ashes. The bear was shocked to see that he was still alive.

"Now, it's your turn," said the tortoise.

Due to his arrogance, the bear had no choice but to take his turn. After all, the challenge was his idea. There was no way he could back out now. He was too proud to do so. The tortoise covered him up with dead branches and leaves, and started the fire. It killed him instantly. There was nothing left of the bear except for one piece of bone. The tortoise picked it up and used it as a musical instrument called Turuding in the

> Rungus language. With it, he sang his song of victory. "You bear

> > challenged me but in the end you got burned."

The nice melody of the Turuding was heard by other animals in the jungle including a group of monkeys. Their leader wanted it and told his followers to find it. The group of monkeys set out to look for it and found the tortoise which was playing it.

C

When the tortoise had fallen asleep, the monkeys stole it from him. The tortoise woke up to find the instrument missing and he felt very sad. He went to search for it and soon saw the leader of the monkeys on top of a tree, playing it. As he could not climb the tree, he asked a crab for help. "Please help me get my Turuding back. It was stolen from me," said the Tortoise. The crab felt pity and agreed to help.

The crab climbed the tree using its strong claws. Once on top, he clipped the leg of the monkey. In pain, the monkey screamed and let go of the Turuding while the tortoise, which was waiting on the ground, quickly caught it and fled away. The crab joined him later and from then on, they became very good friends.

When the story was over, I remembered what my parents always reminded me, that I must be humble and never take things that do not belong to me. I suddenly thought of the bees and didn't feel right taking the honey from them.

I asked an old man in the group and he said that what we were doing was not wrong. He explained that everything in the jungle has the duty of taking care of one another. "Honey is made by bees from the nectar of flowers. We take the honey so that we can continue to survive. However, it is our duty to take care of the jungle so that the flowers can live and grow and the bees can continue to take the nectar to make honey." I understood.

Soon after, the men returned carrying bamboo. They worked together to make a very long ladder to reach the hive. I too was busy serving them water. After they had finished, we waited until it was dark. While waiting, the storytelling continued.

When it was time, one of the men in our group set the ladder against the tall tree and started climbing. He took along with him a torch to scare away the bees while other men were sending smoke up to the hive from down below. The bees were flying all over the place. We all had to remain covered in darkness to prevent the bees from coming at us.

When all the bees had flown away, the man on top of the tall tree took down the hive. We packed and made our journey back to the village. Some women had been waiting for our return. They would clean the hive and share it equally among everyone. My mother was among the group of women. After she took our share, she looked at me with a sweet smile. She was happy that we still had honey to make some money. For me, I can't wait for the next harvest.



My Grandmother's Wedding

Stories inspired by indigenous children in Sabah and Sarawak Ba'kelalan, Lawas, Sarawak

y grandmother once told me a story about love. She said it was a different kind of love. Her story was about her big wedding day many years ago. She was marrying a handsome young man from another village who was a very hard working farmer. But she was not happy about the marriage because she was not ready to be a wife. To make it worse, she had never met him before.

The marriage was arranged by their parents. Out of respect, she could not refuse. Neither could her future husband whom she first met during their engagement a year earlier. On the wedding day, many people came from different villages. Some walked for many miles through the jungles and over many hills. It took them a few days to reach my grandmother's village. There was plenty of food and drinks during the wedding feast. There was singing and traditional dancing too. Everyone was happy except my grandmother. She didn't have a choice. Neither did my future grandfather. But she was a strong young woman. Her family members and guests didn't know that she was in sadness.

But when the time came for her to leave her family behind to live with her husband's family in his village, she finally broke down in tears. That was the hardest part for her. She cried and cried but there was nothing she could do. She didn't have a choice for it was the custom of her people for wives to go with their husbands. She would miss her family and village very much. During her long walk to her husband's village accompanied by his family members, my grandmother was crying non-stop.

Fifty years later after her wedding, my grandmother cried and cried again. This time, she was crying over the death of the man whom she was forced to marry; the hard working farmer who became my grandfather. Even until today, she misses him so much. When I wondered how she could live happily for so many years with a man whom she was forced to marry, she just smiled at me and said: "I think it was all because of the doll I made using a piece of cloth and our family paddy field." I didn't understand. She explained.

When my grandmother was a little girl, my great grandparents never bought her toys but she was very smart. She made her own toys to play with. One of her favourites was a doll she made using a piece of old cloth. She folded it in such a way to make a shape of a baby doll. She would carry it in her arms the same way my great grandmother carried her. She sang lullabies to put her baby doll, again in the exact songs that my great grandmother used to sing to her. She would feed the doll when it was hungry and nurse it back to health when it was ill. And she said to me: "That's how I learned to be a mother. By the time I had children, all my time was spent taking care of them for I loved them very much."

When she was little bigger, my grandmother had less time to play for she must help my great grandparents to work in the paddy field. It was a very hard work. Rain or shine, she had to be in the field to do she was asked of. Her family had to prepare the field for planting during planting season and no time should be wasted. After all the planting was done, she and her family would

plant other kinds of crops while waiting for the time to harvest. Harvesting paddy was hard work too. By the time the harvesting was done, it was back to preparing the field for planting again. All this had to be done because rice is an important source of food and income for her family. My grandmother then said to me: "That's how I learned to be patient and committed. When my children were growing up, your grandfather and I had more responsibilities. We had to give them education hopes that they would do well in future. Working as a mother is a full time job just like working in the paddy field and farm."

She asked if I understood her story. I simply nodded.

Although my grandmother was very sad on her wedding ceremony, deep down in her heart she was holding on to her mother's words. Those words gave her hope. The night before the wedding, her mother told her that she too had to marry a man not of her own choice but who later became my great grandfather. She assured my grandmother that everything would be alright in the end.

To this, she said there was something other than the doll and rice fields that taught her some important lessons about life:

apples. She explained that many people could not believe that apples could grow in a tropical country. On her wedding day, despite the assurance from her mother, she doubted that her marriage to a stranger would last. But just like the famous apples of Ba'kelalan, her love for him grew over time. And she gave me this advice: "When your turn comes, remember that it takes a lot of effort to make things grow just like when we plant paddy and apples. Sometimes you'll need to make the best of what you already possess, like the old cloth I used to make my baby doll."

FUN FACTS

The indigenous community here is known as the Lun Bawang.

Arranged

marriages were common long time ago. One of the reasons of this practice was to strenghten an existing good relationship between two unrelated families.

Apples do grow in Ba'kelalan. L-Although the area is in a tropical country, it is situated in the highlands and surrounded by forests. This makes the temperature a lot cooler, perfect condition for apples to grow.

Children's Activities Activities encouraging children's development





Children have the right to think and believe what they want to believe. And they also have the right to be listened to.

> Article 12 & 14 Convention on the Rights of the Child



I Saw Skulls on Bung Jagoi Day



Stories inspired by indigenous children in Sabah and Sarawak Gunung Jagoi, Bau, Sarawak

Have you ever seen human skulls? I mean real close. I have.

It was during Bung Jagoi Day. It was a day when people from all the villages near a hill called Bung Jagoi gathered to celebrate its origin. Bung Jagoi is a name of a 300 metre-something hill in

> Kampung Bogag in Bau, Kuching, Sarawak. I live in that village. There are other villages nearby. I have been told that all the villagers originate from a 200-year-old village on top of the hill. No one lives there now except for



a woman. I will tell you about her later. Also, about a mysterious old man.

The skulls that I saw that day had been taken out from a special room in a traditional Bidayuh Jagoi house called Baruk. They were placed in a wooden box. Just next to it I saw all kinds of others stuff. There was a chicken, its feet were tied with a string so it won't run away. The people were about to perform an ancient ritual to cleanse the skulls and the chicken was to be sacrificed for that purpose.

A ritual specialist arrived at the Baruk. My father, who was standing next to me, whispered to me that the old man was a knowledgeable person in the ways of the adat.

He was murmuring words that I did not understand. My father told me that he was trying to speak to the spirits using a special language. At that time someone picked up the chicken and slaughtered it. He gave it to the ritual specialist who held it and, while still murmuring, made



circular movements over the other stuff on the floor. When it was over, everyone left. The ritual specialist continued cleaning the skulls. I took another look at the skulls. I saw what looked like a horn. The man who had slaughtered the chicken said it belonged to a princess long time ago. When she died, people used the horn to foretell an event. If the horn stood erect, it meant that bad things would happen to the village.

As I was leaving the Baruk, I kept thinking about the skulls. Did they belong to enemies who tried to invade the village long time ago? Or were they Japanese soldiers whose heads were cut off by the brave men from the village? I have learned from history class that headhunting was very common in many parts of Sarawak. It was practised for different reasons but mainly during tribal battles. I was told that the fear of invasion and headhunting was the reason why my ancestors had moved to live on the top of Bung Jagoi. That was how the village came to be. It was only when there is peace that the villagers began to descend to build their homes and start new villages. My village is one of them. After some time, no one lives in the village on top of the hill anymore. Strangely, there is an old woman who still lives in our ancestral village on top of the hill. Every villager knows her for she is a very kind person who takes care of the village although no one lives there now. I think she is a brave person because her house is very close to the Baruk where the skulls are kept. She only uses a lamp at night as there is no electricity in that old village. I don't know why she is not afraid to live there all by herself. My mother once told me that we should never be afraid of anything if we have a pure heart.

That day when I saw her during Bung Jagoi Day, the old woman looked so happy to see so many of her families and friends. She was busy with the other women in the kitchen preparing all kinds of delicious Bidayuh Jagoi traditional food. My favourite was chicken cooked in bamboo.

But that was just a part of my adventure that day. Do you want to know how I got to climb that hill? I took part in a climbaton race earlier that morning.

Most of the participants had

camped at the foot of the hill the night before to prepare for the race the next morning. There were men and women, teenagers and children. Most of the people from the villages took part. There was a concert that evening at the foot of the hill. People were

singing and dancing all night long. I slept in a relative's house not far from the stage where the concert was held. The noise did not bother me. I went to bed early to be ready for the race.



The race was a 300-metre up the historic hill. It was a

EATING TOGETHER

steep climb underneath the canopies of big trees. Many of them are at least 100 years old. More than 100 participants took part in the climbaton. The moment the race official blew the horn, everyone was running as fast as they could to be ahead of the rest. I was not far behind. However, halfway through I was running out of breath. I was feeling very exhausted. By then, I was walking instead of running. To be honest, I was actually dragging my chubby body up the hill. I wished I could be thinner.



(HILDREN (LIMBING BUNG JAGOI

My family members sometimes make fun of my shape saying that I look like a jackfruit wrapped in a sack. I always laugh at myself when they laugh at me.

As I was struggling to push myself up the hill, I came across an old man. He was walking with a stick. I could tell that he too was a race participant for

he was wearing a number on his T-shirt. He turned and asked for my name, who my parents were and which village I came from. Older people always ask children these questions. I walked with him while he continued asking me other questions. When we reached a rest station, he asked if we could stop for a while. There was water that was running from long bamboo poles next to where we were sitting. It originates from the top of the hill. He drank it and sprinkled some on his face. He said the water was a gift from nature and told me to drink it too. It was like drinking cold water from the refrigerator.

He asked me if I knew the forest hold many secrets. I said I didn't know. Then he told me this story:

"I used to live in the village on top of this hill. Life was

very different when I was a young boy your age. I lived in a longhouse with my parents, my brothers and sisters. Our

neighbours lived in the same longhouse too. We took care of one another. I had many friends. We played a lot together. We didn't have many possessions but we were very happy. During fruit season, we would go out to look for durians. I always loved it."



(HILDREN TAKING PART IN THE 'JAGOITHON' RA(E

He paused and pointed to a durian tree not far from us and said: "Do you see that durian tree? It has been there ever since I was a boy. It was already there before I was born. When I grew much older, I helped my parents in the farm down below this hill. That's when I started climbing up and down this hill everyday. I would wake up very early in the morning to go to the farm and return home in the evening. This is the spot where I would stop for a drink whenever I felt thirsty. The water has never stopped flowing until today".

Article 17 CRC

Article 17 CRC 'Children have the right to reliable information from the media. Mass media should provide information that children can understand and should not promote materials that could harm children.'

124.1

BIDAYVH GIRLS PLAYING WITH A (ELLPHONE.

One evening, I was returning home from the farm a little bit later than usual. It was dark. I felt a strange feeling. It was as if someone was watching me and following me. The hair behind my neck began to rise. I thought there were spirits so I ran as fast as I could."

At this point of his story I was beginning to feel scared. I slowly moved closer to him. We were all alone.

"When I reached home, I told what had happened to my mother. She smiled and told me I had no reason to be afraid because sometimes the forests would reveal some of its secrets to anyone who has a pure heart. She explained that some spirits who dwell in the forest were meant to protect it and to make sure that it continues to provide for humans who live in it."

The old man took another drink from the bamboo pole, took out an empty bottle from his rattan basket and filled it up.

"This water never stops flowing because this forest is protected. That durian tree is still there because this forest is alive. This water has quenched the thirst of many generations of people. The same with that durian tree. Its fruits have been eaten by hundreds of people. The spirits have been protecting everything there is in this forest. Humans too must do the same. Anyone who does not respect this will fall ill. This is what my mother told me," said the old man.

By this time, a number of participants were approaching the station and urging us to continue to the finish line. We continued the climb.

When we reached the village, the names of the winners were being announced. The old man and I were the last to arrive. Suddenly, the old woman who lives all alone in the village came to meet the old man who told me his story. Apparently someone had been ill. Some believed the

person had been possessed by spirits. The old woman had asked the old man to heal her.

I saw how he healed her. All he did was sprinkle some water on her head and uttered some words. It was water that he had taken from the rest station. In a few



moment she was well again. When he turned to pick up his rattan basket, he looked at me and said: "I told you there are spirits."

At this time, everyone was leaving to the Baruk. That's when I saw the skulls and the ritual.

FUN FACTS

Even though it is 360 metres high, the climb up to the top of Bung Jagoi takes almost an hour long.

The traditional village called Jagoi Gunong was one of the earliest villages that existed since the 1800's. Majority of the population living here are from the Bidayuh ethnic group. Bidayuh is the second largest ethnic group in Sarawak after the Iban ethnic group. Jagoi Gunong village owes its origins from Bidayuh Jagoi and now there are 11 villages surrounding Gunung Jagoi. Tere are also 5 other similar villages in Kalimantan, Indonesia.



Miku Angik and His Grandson

Field Notes from Ik Wadel Ik Pahon Hutan Gunung Jagoi, Bau, Kuching, Sarawak

his morning, I was up in Gunung Jagoi and I ran into Miku and his grandson who is a Year One pupil. Both were wearing traditional costumes adorned with colourful beaded necklaces and armed with a parang (machete) and blowpipes. These weapons were passed down to Miku by his forefathers. Miku had wanted to show his grandson the traditional life of my people, the Bidayuh.

I could tell that Miku's grandson was a keen learner and curious young boy. I was told that he would never refuse his grandfather's invitation to go to their ancestral village located at the top of Gunung Jagoi. They have climbed the hill together



many times before. Although it takes about an hour of tough climbing, the 7-year-old boy hardly complained. Miku sees a lot of himself in his grandson for when he was a boy he too was eager to learn about the origin of his people and their way of life. This morning, Miku decided that he would pass down some knowledge and experience to his grandson.

I truly admire the young boy's willingness to learn. I wish more young boys from my community would be as excited about learning about their culture and tradition. I took this photo of Miku showing his grandson how to use the blowpipe. Don't worry, he was not aiming at any poor animal for hunting is not allowed in the community forest of Gunung Jagoi. But in the past, that was how our people survived. The forest provided all kinds of food for them to eat, water to drink and medicine when they were ill. Because of this, they really took care of the forest and in return, the forest took care of them.

> When we were on Gunung Jagoi, we saw what our people call singang singung. It is a millipede. Miku then told us this story:

SINGANG SINGUNG

According to Miku, singang singung is actually a spirit of our ancestor. Whenever it appears, it is a good sign for it wants to offer blessings to anyone who has a good heart. Such a person will always be protected from bad things and whatever he does will bring goodness to himself and to others. Miku also showed his grandson how to use the parang safely. Normally, young children are not allowed to handle any sharp object until they are old enough. Miku just wanted him to understand that for the Bidayuh people, the parang is an important tool. For our people who are still very dependent on the forest and everything in it, the parang is like a pencil that school children use to write. Without it, they can't find food to eat, open up lands to farm or make crafts. If the parang is their pencil, then the forest is their school.

Miku then showed his grandson some of the plants and trees in the forest that many of our people use to build houses, cure illnesses and for food.

I salute Miku for his willingness to pass down some traditional knowledge to his grandson so that it will not be lost. **•**



MIKV AND HIS GRANDSON (ARRY TRADITIONAL BIDAYVH BASKETS ON THEIR BACKS.



MANY CULTURES, ONE VOICE

Stories inspired by indigenous children in Sabah and Sarawak

This first ever collaboration was published through a project that was supported by UNICEF Malaysia. This project was carried out in six chosen locations, three in Sabah and three in Sarawak. The chosen locations are Kampung Ampungoi in Pitas, Kampung Kiau Nuluh in Kota Belud, Kampung Bantul in Pensiangan, Ba'kelalan in Lawas, Punan Bah in Belaga and Jagoi Gunong in Bau, Kuching. These choices were made based on the location and language of the chosen communities.

This pioneer project was aimed at documenting the stories, customs and the traditional knowledge of the Orang Asal that is part of the children's lives and encourages the development of children within their own communities.

Most of the stories, customs, and the traditional knowledge of the Orang Asal has disappeared due to modernisation and other factors. This effort of documenting these stories, together with the cooperation with the Orang Asal youth and their respective communities, is a starting point for encouraging communities to preserve their heritage and extensive knowledge, It is also our hope that the books produced will be shared among the general public as an interesting read.





Projek Kerjasama

