



SEKOLAH BINA CITA UTAMA SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

The First National Plus School in Central Kalimantan

BCU STUDENTS VISIT BUKIT BATU - DAYAK HISTORICAL SITE

January 2008



According to Dayak legend, the rocks at Bukit Batu fell from the sky during a lightning storm, and is the dwelling place of the son of an angel and a human. The BCU students visited this Dayak sacred site, located 40 kilometers north of the school, in order to learn about the significance of the site in the history of the province and also to commemorate the 50 year anniversary of founding of the province of Central Kalimantan in 1957.



As part of their English and Indonesian studies, the high school students researched the life of Tjilik Riwut, a national hero who was a Dayak that grew up not far from these rocks. From the age of 12 years, Tjilik Riwut would cross a large river and walk twelve kilometers through the jungle to meditate at this site. In the 1940's he became renowned as a freedom fighter against the Dutch, and is today celebrated chiefly as the founder and first Governor of the province of Central Kalimantan.

The high-school students studied the Indonesian texts and translated them into English. Using this research, they conducted a guided tour of Bukit Batu and presented their work to the younger students, staff and parents.

Tjilik Riwut was a true visionary in every sense of the word and from this field trip, the students were able to learn about their national hero, the history of their province and about the significance of the site.

The Dayak students (the majority of BCU students) were particularly excited and proud to share their cultural heritage with the other students, parents and visitors.

OUR MISSION

Is to develop a high quality learning environment which nurtures and educates children so that as adults, they will be able to make real and positive contributions to the development of their communities and the world.

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www.bcu-school.org

Secure credit card donations can be made through Susila Dharma International (SDI), earmarked for BCU.

Their website:

www.susiladharmaindonesia.com

"TRICK OR TREAT"



Rungan Sari was overrun with witches, ghosts, super-heroes and many other interesting creatures on October 31st . The students requested a Halloween celebration since almost all of them had heard of Halloween and trick or treating, but had never experienced it for themselves.

The teachers organized games, activities and costumes. However, in the week beforehand, the students had to research the history and meaning of Halloween as part of their English and social studies classes. They were unable to 'Trick or Treat' at night because most of the students live 40 - 50 km away. Instead, they walked around Rungan Sari in the full heat of the day, singing songs, collecting sweet treats and entertaining the locals; most of whom had never seen anything like it.

SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

BCU Scholarship numbers increased this academic year with three new students. Susilawati started in July, Maria in October, and Anik in January.

The scholarship program was established at BCU from the inception of the school, with the intention to ensure that the unique high-quality education offered at BCU would also benefit talented local children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The aim of the school is to have at least 10% - 15% of the student population on scholarship at any given time. The ideal length of scholarship would be no less than three years, in order that the student receives the maximum benefit from this type of education.

Currently four students are on full scholarship and one is on part scholarship.

The cost per child is approximately US\$ 1,500 per year. This provides the beneficiary with tuition costs, uniforms, books, lunch and school materials.

All donations received go into a specific fund so all contributions; large or small, are most welcome.

Thank you to all our scholarship sponsors for making it possible for these students to have this unique opportunity to study at BCU and learn English.

If you or a group of friends are interested in this program please contact Utami Geiger or Bachrun Bustillo at:

yayasan@bcu-school.org



Grade 9 Dayak scholarship student, Cristi Devi, receiving an award at school assembly from Pak Tomik Subagio, one of her sponsors from Adelaide, South Australia

MARIA began her scholarship at BCU in October. She is 10 years old and her parents are the caretakers of one of the houses in Rungan Sari. Her father is from Flores (an island in East Indonesia) and her mother is Dayak.



Maria (second from right)



ANIK (above right) started grade 4 just a few weeks ago and comes from the village of Suka Mulya, across the road from Rungan Sari.

SUSILAWATI

Sila has made good progress since she started at BCU in July. Her favorite classes now are English, math and swimming. She was terrified of doing swimming classes before she started at BCU, but now she is very happy in the water.



Her parents are amazed how much she has grown in confidence since she started at the school. Despite being top of her class in her previous school in the village, her parents said she has always been very quiet, shy and lacking in confidence.



Susilawati (front right) singing at the flag raising ceremony.

Both teachers and other students have noticed this change in her and are delighted to see her confidence growing.

Her parents said, "This is the first time anyone in our extended family has ever been to a school like this. We are very grateful that she has this opportunity."



Cristi Devi (left) with her classmate Cynthia on concert night



Fennysia (centre) is the beneficiary of a partial scholarship.

SCHOOL NEWS



Karim shows off the mural made by Pak Rashid's grade 5/6 art students.

We are now more than half way through our third year as a registered Indonesian School. It was a clear intention of the BCU founders not to start an International school for expatriate children, but instead to start an Indonesian school, registered with the Indonesian government, catering mainly for Indonesian students. The intention was to make a real contribution toward the positive development of the province of Kalimantan Tengah by providing quality

education to local children.

Also understood was that, as an integrated part of the local education system we would be better able to work with other schools providing them with teacher training and international educational resources.

As a teacher, one of the biggest challenges is to find meaningful contexts for learning. I'm constantly amazed at the opportunities for meaningful learning that present themselves to us here in the jungle. Last year we were able to participate in UNIDO's Global Mercury Project. The high school students went into the field to see first hand the devastating environmental effects of illegal mining. They also were privileged to receive UNIDO guest speakers about the health impacts of mercury; not only on the miners themselves but also on others in the province. They learned, produced posters and visited high schools in an illegal mining area, presenting information to the children of illegal miners about the health effects of using mercury and how simple devices can be used to trap and recycle the mercury.

This year another wonderful opportunity has presented itself. Yayasan Usaha Mulia, (YUM) a registered charity in Indonesia since 1975, has undertaken a large scale project to address the high number of deaths in the province caused by malaria. Again the issue is about education. At a meeting in a local village there was only one person who knew that malaria was spread by mosquitoes. YUM's directors, Olivia Reksodipoetro and Hannah Baerveldt, have invited the school to participate in much the same way we participated in the Global Mercury Project. Once again the children will have an opportunity to learn within a context that is meaningful and relevant to their lives. Moreover the children are learning (or being quietly taught) the importance of working to contribute to the development of their community.

Living and working in this context, I am quite shocked when I hear comments like, "You guys are just educating rich kids." I don't mind so much when I hear it from a man in a warung (food stall) in Palangkaraya, because he probably also doesn't know that mosquitoes transmit malaria. However, I'm really surprised when I hear it from an "educated" foreigner.

A "social project" is by definition is a project focusing on positive social development. YUM and the UN do it by saving lives through clean water, malaria, and mercury projects. We do it by educating and nurturing children, tomorrow's adults, to have noble aspirations and ambitions and the ability to affect positive change in their society. This is what the name "Bina Cita Utama" means. Like planting a forest, it's a long term project and the results are not so immediately

visible. It's true that the children at the school who are not on scholarship (85%) do come from wealthier families. It costs money to provide quality education. It's also true that most of our students are the children of the province's politicians and business leaders and, undoubtedly due to Indonesia's hierarchical social structure, will hold those positions in the future.

In terms of "social projects" affecting positive change and development, I think about the impact these high school students are going to have on Palangkaraya in ten years time. Although still teenagers, they already have good English, the ability to research, to think critically and to interact positively with foreigners. Just as importantly, they are developing a social conscience and an understanding of how corruption has slowed Indonesia's development.

"You guys are just educating rich kids."

BCU is a social project founded with the clear intention of bringing about positive social development in the province through quality education. It's a clear intention in the heart of every member of staff when they walk through the door of the school in the morning, and it was a clear intention of the school's founders.

The students at BCU also have the unique opportunity of having teachers from all over the world. They know that these volunteer teachers have worked hard and saved money in order to fly thousands of miles to work at their school. This gives the students a tangible example of social work and selflessness: seeing people who are willing to give of their time and skills without material reward.

Our volunteers this year are Mahrus Dewes from the USA who joined us as a volunteer key teacher in the high school. Mahrus has a degree in Latin and a passion for history and the classics, which he has been passing on to the high school students since his arrival.

Lucinda Young has joined us from Melbourne, Australia. She is a trained teacher who will be with us for a year as an "Australian Youth Ambassador for Development" and is funded through the Australian Government. Sylvana Gleeson comes from Los Angeles, has a degree in Global Studies and is teaching in the Grade 2 class and PE to all the students.

In December we said goodbye to Steven Bryson-Haynes. Steven was a BCU volunteer for almost a year and was an enthusiastic, cheerful and hard working member of the team, and a good friend.

Many of our volunteers are self-funded and our thanks go out especially to Rashid Carre, Redmond and Mardiah Gleeson, Raquel Alcobia, Alya Monnichmeyer and Davina Hartzmann for their invaluable help.

On behalf of everyone at the school I'd like to thank all of our friends and sponsors all around the world for their support over the last year, and wish everyone a very happy and prosperous 2008!

Karim MacDonald, Principal

STUDENT WORK

OUR VISIT TO THE ORPHANAGE

By Jonathan Rambang

On the 20th of September 2007, the grade 5,6,7, and 8 students from BCU School went to visit the Yayasan Pandohop Orphanage to interview the children and to learn what life was like there. Yayasan Pandohop means "Foundation for Helping" in Dayak.

We stopped at a shop on the way to the orphanage and bought lots of rice, cooking oil, milk and biscuits for the orphanage. Some students also bought old clothes and toys to give to the children.

After we arrived, we interviewed the children. I interviewed a boy called Frenky. He was nine years old. When I talked to him I felt happy because I could get a new friend in Yayasan Pandohop. When I interviewed Frenky I was excited because I could learn something new, but I also felt sad because he had no family. All the children at the orphanage wake up at 4:30 in the morning to do jobs before going to school. They go to school at 6:30.

After we interviewed the children we walked around Yayasan Pandohop with them. We saw a big room with many bunk beds. Then we saw the bathrooms. They are very small. Next we saw pigs, ducks, a puppy, fish ponds with many fish and a vegetable garden with corn and vegetables. They grow their own food to eat.

After that we went to the front of the Yayasan Pandohop and said good bye and took pictures together. In the car I felt sad for the children and lucky that I have a father and a mother.



BCU Students and friends in front of the orphanage



Jonathan interviewing Frenky



Sculpture by Andri
Grade 5

'Roy Fishing'

Drawing by Tania
Grade 2



Below:
Grade 2 students
performing at
assembly



ROY'S FISH

*A Collaborative Story Written
by the Grade 2 class*

One day a little boy called Roy went fishing. Roy knew there were many fish in the Sei Gohong River.

He wanted to take a fish home for dinner because his family did not have money.

Roy got a lot of fish because he had fat worms.

He took the three fish for dinner and he went to sell the rest at the market.

So Roy's family decided to raise fat worms for fishing.

After that day Roy's family got a little business in the market selling fish and then they always had some money. When someone has a good idea and wants to work then God/Allah always helps.

SEEING RED

By Mahrus Dewes

Mahrus is a volunteer from Portland USA who has been working with the high school students. He was able to come to BCU through the sponsorship of his ticket by the MSF Youth Travel Fund.



Mahrus and the High School students

One of the things I remember about tests in school was the dreaded "red pen". Our teachers would always correct our tests with big, red strokes. By the time we would get our exams back, our carefully written pencil would be covered with red lines, plus or minus points, and scribbled comments like "awkward", "needs work", or "good job" and "nice exposition". Even when we got good scores, there was always a certain amount of trepidation when we saw all the red on our papers.

When I worked in 2005 for Portland State University, I was assistant to the Latin professor. It was my job to grade all the quizzes and tests for his first and second-year students. He wanted me to grade with red pen, and I went one afternoon to the university bookstore and bought the nicest pen I could find. Though I thought I was lenient with my corrections, the professor's students always feared me with every batch of exams. Gradually, I was more careful with the red pen and the students relaxed.

Since then I have always used a blue pen. Having received and given the red pen, I understand the frightened look in my students' eyes before a test, even before just a small quiz which is not worth a lot of points. I see correction as giving students a gentle nudge in the right direction, not a way to shame them into giving the right answer. I believe this fits with our culture at BCU, that we do not tolerate abuse, verbal or physical, from teachers or students. Rather, we encourage self-correction, self-direction, self-initiative.

I notice red pens for sale in Palangkaraya, but I shy away from them. I like my blue pen better. I think my students do, too. Teachers will always give tests, and students will always complain about them. But at least I can give some respite to my class that their work will not be drowned in a sea of red.

STUDENT CHOIR WOWS VIPS IN RUNGAN SARI



BCU Student choir with dignitaries

The BCU Student Choir was invited to perform for the birthday celebrations of Hamid da Silva. Mr. da Silva has been a Founding Partner of BCU School since 2005 and is also the Indonesian Honorary Consul in Portugal. The event, held at the Kalimantan Meeting Centre was attended by more than 100 people. Among the guests were the Vice Governor of Central Kalimantan, and several members of the National Parliament in Jakarta.

The following day the government ministers visited the school and expressed their admiration for the pioneering vision and spirit of the school. They acknowledged that, although it was the government's responsibility to provide quality education, they were still far from being able to achieve this and therefore were very grateful that people both locally and internationally were willing to dedicate their

time, skills and money to help with this education project.

They also expressed their delight in seeing the students performing in Dayak, the theme song of Central Kalimantan' "Isen Mulan", which translates as, "Don't give up: keep on going, don't turn back", an appropriate message for all of us working in this remote area of the country with the many challenges and obstacles we face everyday, as well as the many blessings of the children that make it all worthwhile.

SEKOLAH BINA CITA UTAMA

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To support quality education in Central Kalimantan, secure credit card donations can be made through Susila Dharma International earmarked for BCU at www.susiladharm.org, or directly to the School at :

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