

# PROGRESS REPORT

## *OCT-NOV 2021*



Yayasan Pendidikan  
Budaya Mentawai





# FOREWORD

In October – November, the Mentawai Cultural Education Foundation team continued striving to deliver a successful indigenous education program for our growing number of students. Activities included delivery of a cultural-based education program across 6 villages; continued research and development of our Mentawai dictionary project; interviewing program teachers and other informants such as Sikerei to further strengthen our teaching materials; as well as other administrative activities. Again, we're very grateful for the longterm support of our Australian partner, the Indigenous Education Foundation (IEF).

## I. Increase student participation in our Mentawai indigenous learning hubs

Our Mentawai cultural and ecological education program continued for students on a weekly basis throughout October and November. The materials being studied in this second semester include Taboo (Kei-Kei), Mentawai's Traditional Medicine, Folklore (Pumumuan), Mentawai Traditional Musical Instruments, Traditional Tattoo Process, and learning about the Mentawai Uma (clan home). To further increase student participation and retention, studio teachers have increased practical, outdoor learning activities and also incorporated fun educational games with small rewards for students who engage best.

In addition, we have facilitated English language learning for three of the learning centers, Uma Jaraik Sikerei, Bubuakat Simalainge, and Pasigeugeu. In October, we welcomed a new English teacher to assist us in offering this program, Mrs. Maria Nova Isyadora. Our primary challenge in expanding this opportunity across all learning hubs relates to the limited number of English teachers available. At present, we are still discussing how best to move forward with the Totoirak, Baklu and Manai Simaeru' cultural school committees. We hope that by early 2022 we can offer English language learning to all of our program students, as this will benefit the students both in economic opportunity and also representation of their own identity. Documentation capturing our Mentawai cultural and ecological education program:



Photo: Bubuakat Simalainge studio



Photo: Pasigeugeu indigenous learning hub



Photo: Both the Manai Simaeru' and Uma Jaraik Sikerei student groups learning about Mentawai's plant medicine.



***Funds spent this month to further our target:***

***AUD \$ 40***

## II. Increase the number of Indigenous learning hubs throughout wider Siberut and the Mentawai Islands

The team continues developing and executing strategy to increase the quantity of Mentawai cultural learning hubs. Currently, our hubs are situated within the southern regions of Siberut Island, and we are working towards ensuring all villages within this region has access to learn about Mentawai's cultural and ecological knowledge.

We are observing that, with the six cultural learning hubs operating successfully across southern Siberut, other students, parents and community members are realizing the value and importance of this type education. People's levels of confidence and pride in our Mentawai identity are increasing and thus we are seeing much more support for our program.

Currently, residents of the Maseppaket village have approached YPBM and proposed us to assist them in establishing a Mentawai cultural and ecological school for their students. This is positive, but unfortunately - due to the current financial limitations of our foundation – we are yet to move forward with this activity. We are hoping that in 2022 we will be in a better position to help facilitate the opening of a Mentawai cultural learning space in Maseppaket.



***Funds spent this month to further our target:***

***AUD \$ 0***



### III. Mentawai students understand cultural knowledge and its value for the future

The YPBM team continued to strengthen the quality of our learning materials throughout October and November. This includes ongoing consultation with the various learning hub teachers, who are in a best position to advise on what the student groups are most interested in learning about and how best to deliver it. There has been a strong focus on teaching the moral values which are given via our traditional folklore. Other key focus areas this year include learning about Mentawai's plant medicines, so that the students can apply within their own lives when they or other members of their families are become sick. They're also very eager learning about Mentawai's traditional musical instruments, song and dance, as this gives them great confidence to perform at the many cultural events that are organised throughout the year. Mentawai taboos are also a key focus, as students want to know that they will be safe when participating in Mentawai cultural ceremony and general life. Lastly, learning to make Mentawai handicrafts is in focus as it is seen as a means to supplement their own economy into the future.

As a way to monitor the effectiveness of our program, and further encourage student engagement, the YPBM team has developed an exam for students at the end of each semester. The second semester exam will be held on November 15, 2021. The exams are conducted simultaneously for all six Mentawai cultural schools in operation. The exam consists of both written / oral and practical activity for each specific learning topic. As a result, studio teachers and assistants can clearly see the level of understanding and engagement for each student in learning about Mentawai culture. This enables our studio teachers and assistants to better evaluate the teaching and learning methods and to further develop strategy to improve the learning process for all involved.



***Funds spent this month to further our target:***

***AUD \$ 620***

#### IV. Increase economic capacity for students and the wider Mentawai community

In our efforts to increase economic capacity for our indigenous students and the wider community, the YPBM team always encourages and motivates students and the community to be culturally creative in their work. We've seen great results with the Pasigeugeu studio, who have continually increased their economic capacity through handicraft skills and the sale of souvenirs they craft themselves. The Pasigeugeu learning hub now has established a community fund for their future development. The Pasigeugeu cultural school community has excelled in managing and developing their community's cultural learning initiatives and is providing a great example to other cultural school groups across southern Siberut. The Baklu cultural learning studio is taking steps to follow in their footsteps, which is very inspiring.



***Funds spent this month to further our target:***

***AUD \$ 0***



## V. Strengthening indigenous learning hub materials for present and future generations

### 1. Mentawai Dictionary

Our language documentation team continued their work on the Mentawai dictionary project throughout October and November. In particular, the focus is on ensuring all words and definitions are accurate and easy to understand. Whilst this resource will be available for foreign tourists, we are focusing first and foremost on ensuring that our Mentawai students and broader community can understand the dictionary content. This dictionary will be a key guide for students learning about Mentawai culture. We are also conscious of the fact that every village across Mentawai has differences in dialect, which is particularly prominent in the Sarereiket region. Whilst quite close to the Sabirut region, the dialects differ quite substantially. Therefore, for example, this dictionary will be very beneficial for students raised in the Sabirut district but with many friends and family members from the neighboring Sarereiket district.

To improve the quality of this Mentawai dictionary, the team travelled into the hinterlands during October to conduct fieldwork confirming some questionable vocabulary and definition. This was achieved through a series of interviews with informants such as Sikerei, Aman Telephone (Buttui) and Aman Sasali (Buttui), and Elder Jablai (Ugai). The dictionary team is still gathering data from informants, managing new vocabulary and improving the descriptions to ensure non-ambiguous. Once this process has been completed, the dictionary will then be translated back into English.



## 2. Learning hub teaching materials

### Curriculum (semester 1)

At present, we are in the process of evaluating field research data gathered from a variety of Mentawai informants. Once this has been sorted through and adopted into the YPBM program curriculum (semester 1), we will print as textbooks for each learning hub teacher and student groups.

### Curriculum (semester 2)

We've also further developed our second semester curriculum, which consists of: Introduction to Mentawai traditional medicine, Taboo (keikei), Folklore, Mentawai Traditional Musical Instruments, Tattoo motifs and hand tapping process, and the Mentawai Uma (clan home). To strengthen, further interviews and consultations are currently being conducted with informants such Mr. David Lewat (Puro II), Mr. Julianus Liktek (Muntei), Mr. Agustinus Sagari (Muntei) and several other cultural experts. We are working hard to have this task completed before we reach second semester in 2022.

Further expanding the scope of our student education, in Oct-Nov the team began determining the most appropriate learning topics for semester 3 of their program. These topics include: How to process the Kabit (loincloth) material; Making women's hunting equipment, Tangguk/Subba; Traditional Hunting, including making natural poison (Muraggi); planting a root vegetable garden (Mugettek); gathering Sago grubs (Mutambra); Mentawai's Traditional games (Majas); Musoggunei; Mentawai Traditional farming techniques; Process of making dugout canoes (Abak); Mentawai Farming (Mutinungglu), How to make Mentawai traditional bow and arrow; and Mentawai traditional Eeruk ceremony (Pulaiijat Eeruk). We have now commenced our research and search for informants to capture accurate data on the 3rd semester topics, including Sikerei, Aman Lori from Ugai village, Madobag. This research will continue to be carried out into 2022.

## 3. Mentawai Tatto Documentation Project

During the Oct/Nov period, YPBM was also invited to attend the Mentawai Cultural Tattoo Exhibition, which was facilitated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. At this event, YPBM participated in a series of discussions about Mentawai Culture, Exhibition of Mentawai Traditional Tattoos, Planning for Mentawai Tattoos and Strengthening the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights of Mentawai Indigenous Peoples. YPBM team were also able to collaborate with other parties with plans to make tattoo books for future educational purposes. It is hoped that the development of a curriculum focused specifically on Mentawai tattoos can be realized by YPBM and partner associations.



***Funds spent this month to further our target:***

**AUD \$ 968**



## VI. Increase the organization's capacity to improve the administration, operations and financial security of our foundation

Our current YPBM team consists of three non-executive Directors, Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. We currently have four staff members and 15 learning hub teachers, with most hubs having 3 teachers (female and male). In total, we are a team of 27 people. With a very modest budget, our program continues to achieve so much for our 350+ students and their families. We hope that 2022 sees more opportunity for our Foundation and its stakeholders to increase funding and awareness for our cultural education program, as we are now in a strong position for exponential growth and widespread impact.



**Funds spent this month to further our target:**  
**AUD \$ 2,060**



## VII. Conduct and strengthen strategic and monitoring and evaluation programs

During October-November, the cultural learning teachers and management teams held an evaluation meeting to discuss current and future strategies surrounding the cultural and ecological education program, oral literature, program curriculum, ethnobotanical program and so forth. Teachers and community facilitators also discussed strategy surrounding best methods for dealing with situations when students face problems within the program. As a result, formalised procedures are currently being developed.

Further activity conducted this month to improve our capacity to evaluate and strategise moving forward included the YPBM Chairman attending Mentawai Oral Literature and Culture Seminar, organised by the Youth and Sports Tourism Department. The key of this seminar was on strengthening and developing Mentawai's cultural literacy. It is planned that in 2022 a Mentawai cultural oral literacy study will be conducted by the Mentawai government, YPBM, researchers and other Mentawai cultural observers. We believe it is very important to maximise this opportunity by involving traditional Sikerei and elders as key informants, as well as our cultural education program teachers. There was also key focus on increasing the participation of female teachers with expert understanding of Mentawai culture, which aligns with our own program strategy. Important, YPBM is in a great position to carry out further development for the Mentawai cultural sector in accordance with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.



***Funds spent this month to further our target:***

***AUD \$ 150***

***Total funds spent to further our target during Oct/Nov:***

***AUD \$ 3,838***





**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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