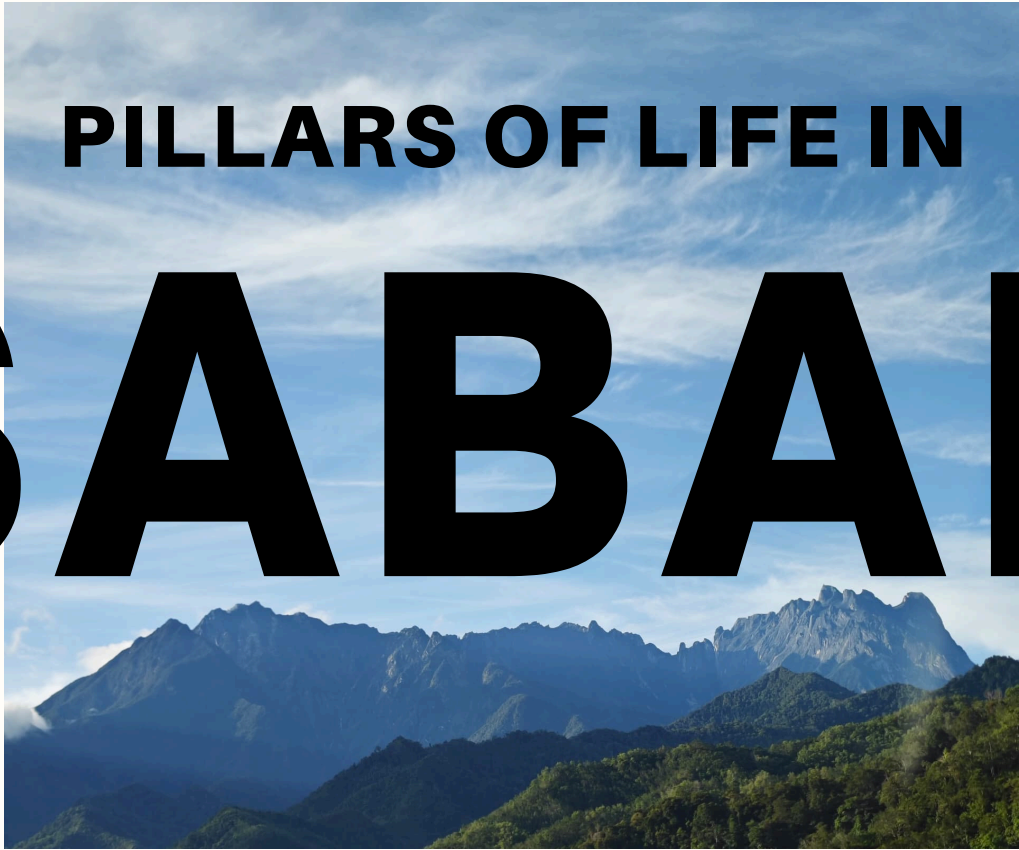


May to November 2025

PILLARS OF LIFE IN SABAH



By Sarah Pollard - CAPI Intern 2025



In care of the Lasimbang Family and Staff of PACOS Trust.



*Many of the photos featured in this album were taken by the
PACOS documentary team or by close friends.*

Halfway point Mount Kinabalu, June 2025.

The following photobook presents the major pillars of life I observed and experienced during my time in Sabah. These include art & tradition, relationship to the land and togetherness & intergenerational practice.



I feel deep gratitude to PACOS and Sabah as a whole. My time in Borneo has made me more confident, patient and curious. Continuing forward, I carry my memories and experiences, which now inform how I show up in the world. This book aims to document, visualize and hold space for how those values developed and grew.

Friends at PACOS playing the Tagung Gong, Kaamatan (Rice Festival), May 2025.

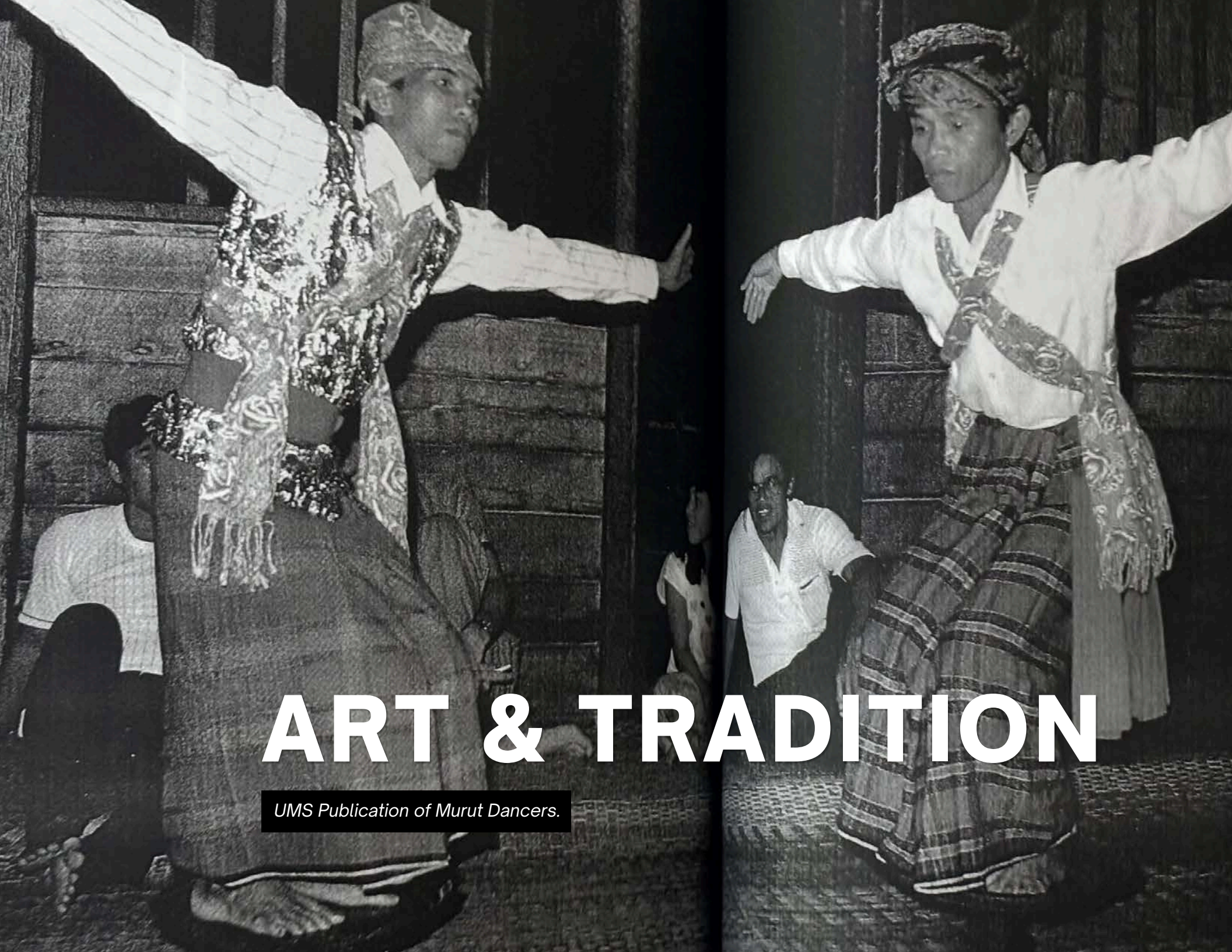


Mount Kinabalu, September 2025

Learning and growing from Sabah pushed me to question how my values are shaped by my environment. Now that I am home, I am eager to continue challenging my beliefs. I have been given context on just how small my understanding of our world and the people who inhabit it is.

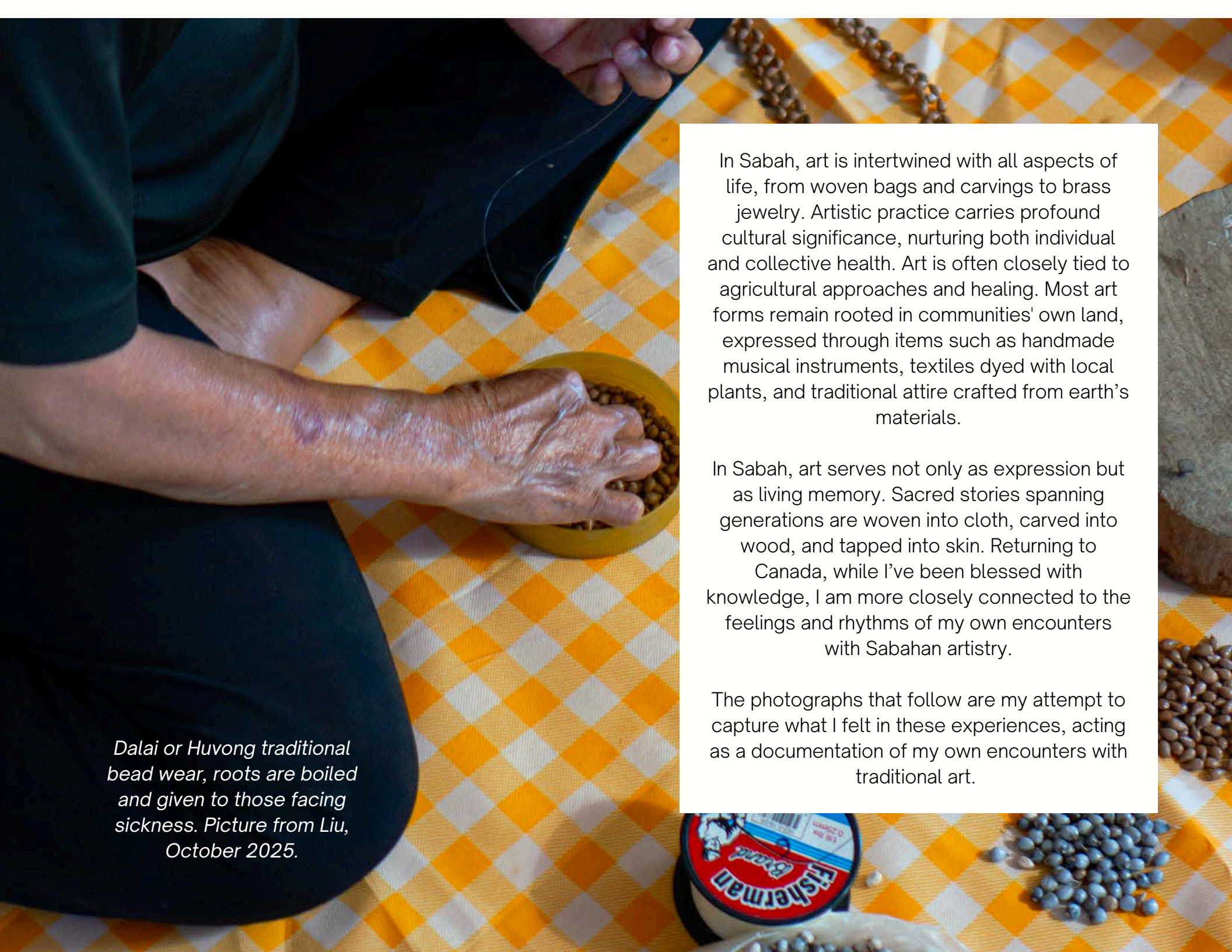
PACOS provided me with a thoughtful experience, and beyond that, they have also gifted me with growth in perspective. My experience with PACOS will always stay alive to me as its different ways of knowing are now intertwined into who I am. The universe brought me to Sabah with intention, and I carry my sights, sounds and experiences as a badge of honour.

To learn from immersion is an ultimate privilege that most don't experience; we must not forget to be reciprocal and keep the goodness modelled by our friends and neighbours alive in how we show up for others in our lives.



ART & TRADITION

UMS Publication of Murut Dancers.



In Sabah, art is intertwined with all aspects of life, from woven bags and carvings to brass jewelry. Artistic practice carries profound cultural significance, nurturing both individual and collective health. Art is often closely tied to agricultural approaches and healing. Most art forms remain rooted in communities' own land, expressed through items such as handmade musical instruments, textiles dyed with local plants, and traditional attire crafted from earth's materials.

In Sabah, art serves not only as expression but as living memory. Sacred stories spanning generations are woven into cloth, carved into wood, and tapped into skin. Returning to Canada, while I've been blessed with knowledge, I am more closely connected to the feelings and rhythms of my own encounters with Sabahan artistry.

The photographs that follow are my attempt to capture what I felt in these experiences, acting as a documentation of my own encounters with traditional art.

Dalai or Huvong traditional bead wear, roots are boiled and given to those facing sickness. Picture from Liu, October 2025.



My tapped Murut tattoo, Binulangawan.

Traditional tattoos are used to represent community ties, protect health, or mark a return from a journey. Knowledge of traditional tattooing is highly spiritual and continues to be passed down to younger generations.

My tapped Murut tattoo, Binulangawan, depicts flora associated with an aversion to illness, success in adventure, and the representation of skill and knowledge brought home from a journey.



Traditional Tattoo Party at Dr. Helen Lasimbangs House, Kivatu, October 2025.



Women of Pitas Weaving for PACOS Documentary, October 2025.
Typically, a role of women in the village, pieces can take weeks to many months, depending on the intricacy or story woven into the material.



Elder Weaving in Liu, Kudat, North Borneo, October 2025.



Elder Weaving in Liu, Kudat, North Borneo, October 2025



Women of Pitas Weaving for PACOS Documentary, October 2025

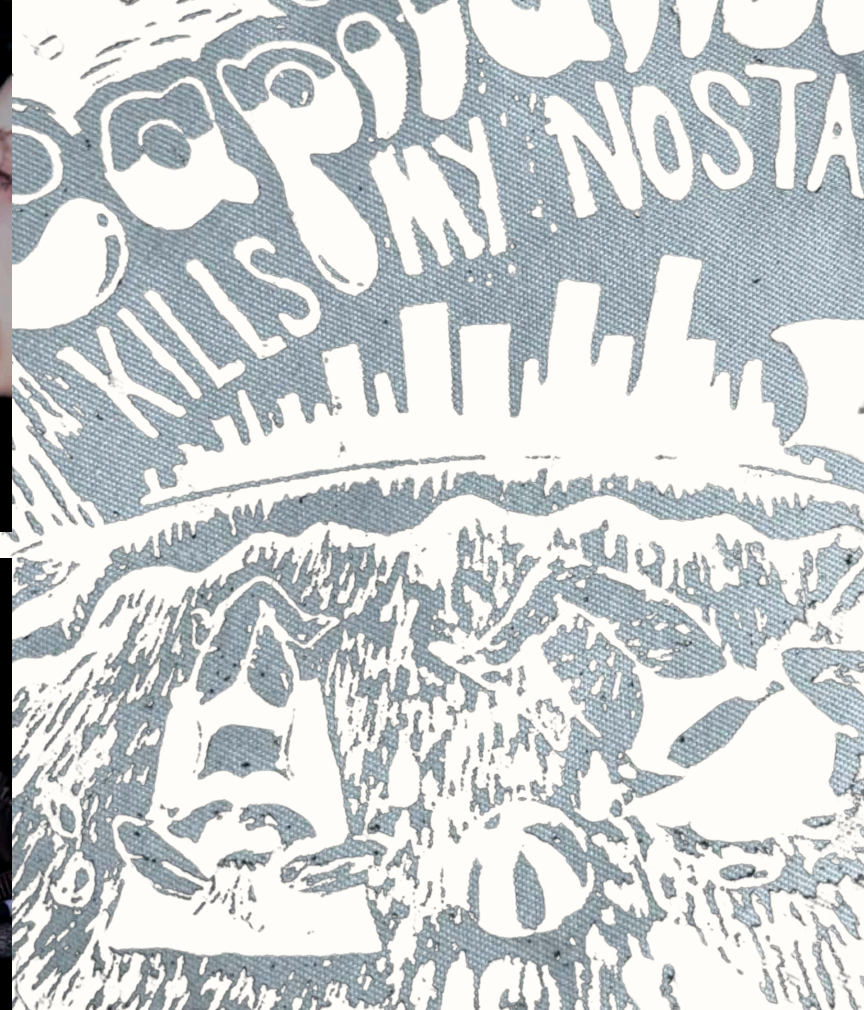




Friends of PACOS Trust preparing to dance the Sumazau, a traditional Kadazandusun dance, in which women move their arms in a bird-like motion while men roll their wrists, moving weight from foot to foot. *Kaamatan, May 2025, Penampang.*



Print purchased from Pangrok Sulap, September 2025



In Sabah, younger generations are not neglecting traditional art forms. I was lucky to attend punk and rock concerts that blended traditional elements with contemporary artistic expression. At every musical gathering, I was welcomed wholeheartedly by my friends and encouraged to feel the music deeply.

Dancing at a local punk show (misgive) with new friends, Donggonggon, August, 2025.

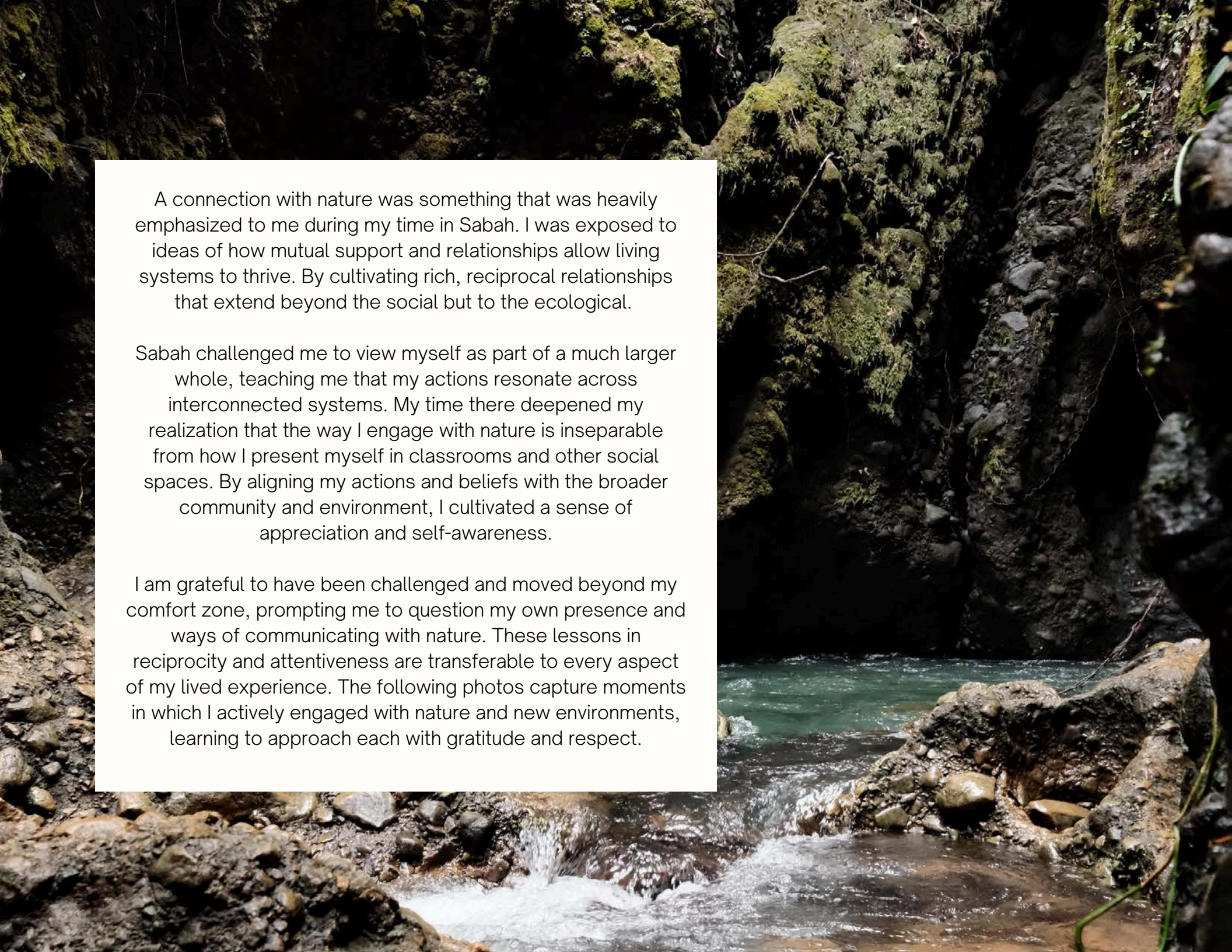
Yoith dancers at Kg. Tadam Hill (Outside of Kuala Lumpur), Indigenous Peoples Day, July 2025.



RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAND



Aura Montoria, Kota Belud, October 2025

A photograph of a natural rock formation. The upper part of the image shows a dark, craggy rock face heavily covered in vibrant green moss and small plants. A thin stream of water flows down the center of this face, creating a small waterfall. Below the waterfall, the water falls into a pool of clear, turquoise water. The foreground shows more rocks and the base of the waterfall, with white foam from the falling water visible. The overall scene is a lush, natural environment.

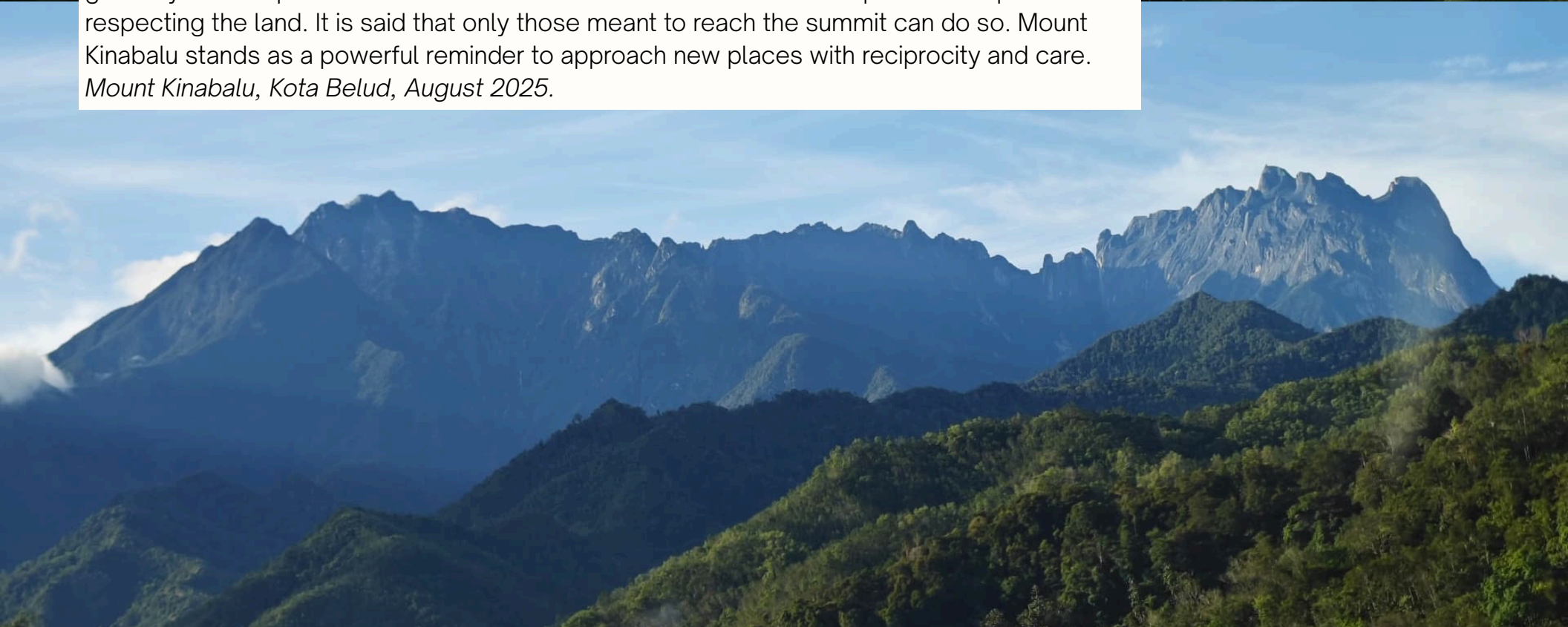
A connection with nature was something that was heavily emphasized to me during my time in Sabah. I was exposed to ideas of how mutual support and relationships allow living systems to thrive. By cultivating rich, reciprocal relationships that extend beyond the social but to the ecological.

Sabah challenged me to view myself as part of a much larger whole, teaching me that my actions resonate across interconnected systems. My time there deepened my realization that the way I engage with nature is inseparable from how I present myself in classrooms and other social spaces. By aligning my actions and beliefs with the broader community and environment, I cultivated a sense of appreciation and self-awareness.

I am grateful to have been challenged and moved beyond my comfort zone, prompting me to question my own presence and ways of communicating with nature. These lessons in reciprocity and attentiveness are transferable to every aspect of my lived experience. The following photos capture moments in which I actively engaged with nature and new environments, learning to approach each with gratitude and respect.

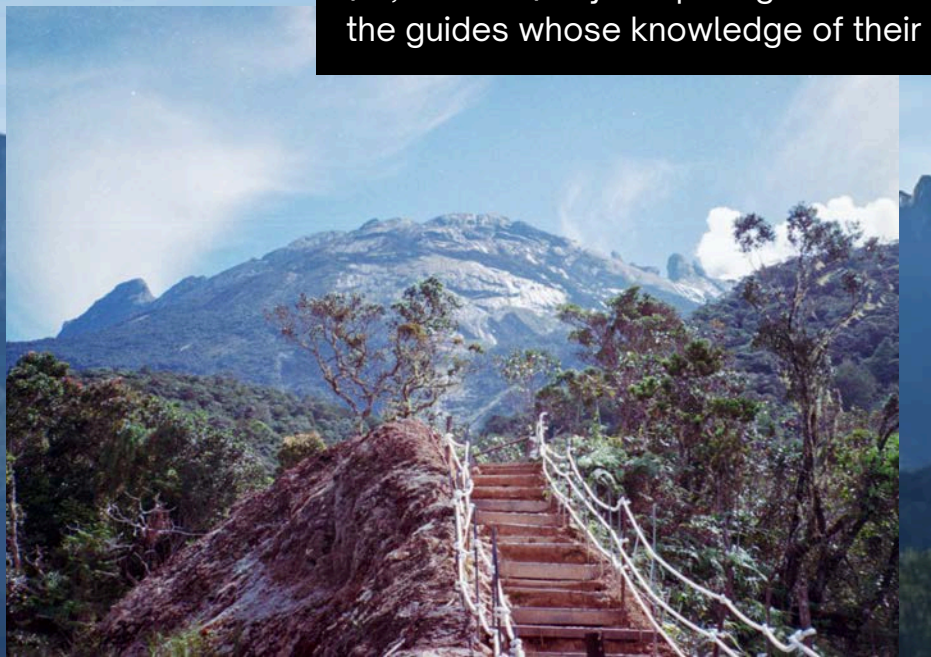


For Indigenous communities in Sabah, Mount Kinabalu is revered as a sacred space—the gateway where spirits ascend to heaven. This belief underscores the profound importance of respecting the land. It is said that only those meant to reach the summit can do so. Mount Kinabalu stands as a powerful reminder to approach new places with reciprocity and care.
Mount Kinabalu, Kota Belud, August 2025.





Mount Kinabalu summit, Ranau, June 2025. Pictured just before 6:00 am at 4,095 meters (13,435 feet). My deepest gratitude to the mountain for allowing me to pass through, and to the guides whose knowledge of their land enables us foreigners to experience the summit.





Waterfall, Kota Belud, October 2025.

Quiet moment by the river in Kota Belud.





Each day on my walk home in Donggongon, I passed a car slowly being overtaken by vines—a quiet nod to the passage of time.



Aura Montoria, October 2025

This day included bathing in mineral water downstream from Mount Kinabalu. I was advised to be cautious of what I touched, navigating with care and respect, as there was poisonous flora and fauna around.

TOGETHERNESS &



INTERGENERATIONAL PRACTICE

Weaver of 50+ years, Tadam Hill, July 2025.

Togetherness is a value that was consistently modelled for me in Borneo. Friends, coworkers, and neighbours continuously invited me to share meals, never expecting anything in return. I soon realized that my understanding of how I show up in communal spaces needed to be both challenged and transformed. Through acts of selfless care for strangers and unwavering demonstrations of reciprocity, I recognized that my well-being is intimately connected to the well-being of others.

Such values are passed down through generations, illuminating why communities care deeply for the collective—whether in harvesting rice or providing a meal to a friend. Tradition serves to strengthen these living systems, enriching and expanding the meaning of togetherness.

In Sabah, I was never alone; I was, and continue to be, embraced as part of a larger collective. I was constantly encouraged to eat more, drink more—always offered with generosity and never with expectation. The longer I immersed myself in these attitudes, the more inspired I became to embody reciprocity and engage authentically with care. The final segment of photos illustrates the many ways these values are put into practice, offering glimpses into everyday acts of togetherness and traditional practice.



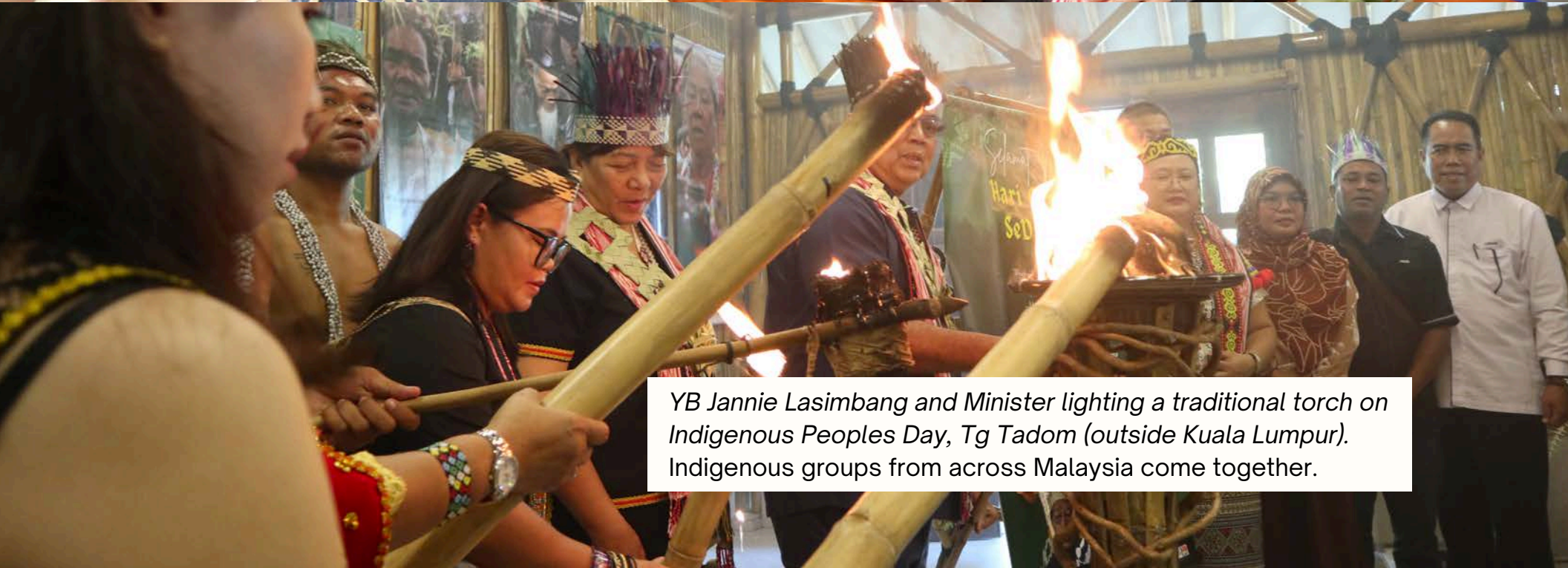


Local Rice Wine (Lihing or Tapai), Papar, July 2025.
Sharing rice wine and food draws people together,
intertwining bonds of celebration, care, and community.





YB Jannie Lasimbang and Junia Lasimbang, Indigenous Peoples Day, Tg Tadam (Outside of Kuala Lumpur).



YB Jannie Lasimbang and Minister lighting a traditional torch on Indigenous Peoples Day, Tg Tadam (outside Kuala Lumpur). Indigenous groups from across Malaysia come together.



Traditional Murut wear in Kudat, Northern Borneo.



Children in traditional Kadazandusun dress during Kaamatan, May 2025, Penampang.





Sharing food at Kaamatan, May 2025, Penampang.

Kudat, Northern Borneo, October 2025, pictured with community members and PACOS staff after filming a documentary piece. Welcomed once again into a new community.



PACOS Family in Kota Belud, September 2025



My deepest gratitude forever and always.



“We must part in order to meet again”

PUAN ANNE LASIMBANG, NOVEMBER 2025

