

Sponsor Information



The

KAYAN ARCHIVES

The Kayan Archives is a collaborative project of I/O Studio and the Kayan tribe of Borneo to document, study, and preserve Kayan culture.

Who We Are

I/O Studio Detroit is an American recording and film studio founded in Detroit, Michigan. A grassroots creative collective built by the Sheufelt family, I/O members have worked for the past decade in professional sound recording, commercial television and independent film projects, professional photography, and multimedia visual arts.



The Story

How did a handful of artists from the Midwest end up with plans to film a documentary about a little-known culture on the other side of the planet?

It started with a romance. We were invited by a Kayan family from the village of Long Pilah, Sarawak, to attend the winter celebrations and traditional wedding ceremony of our cousin, Cameron Sheufelt, and his wife Rebecca, who left Long Pilah to go to school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital and largest city. The two met in 2022 when Cameron followed an adventurous whim to go backpacking alone throughout Southeast Asia, and have since begun to build a life together in Kuala Lumpur.

The idea of the documentary was conceived as a way of recording Kayan wedding traditions for posterity. Prior to the rapid modernization of their lifeways in recent history, fueled by the creation of logging roads through the jungle and the expansion of palm oil plantations, the Kayan had little

contact with other cultures, and maintained primarily oral histories. As more modern lifestyles become increasingly available to Kayan youth, fewer are learning the older traditions, and tribal elders fear that these parts of their culture will die off if not archived.



The Plan

We are working to secure grant funding, donations, and sponsorships, both towards the development of a more in-depth cultural archive and to deliver necessities to the Kayan community in Long Pilah, which is situated in a fairly remote region of Sarawak along the Baram River.

To participate in and film the holiday celebration and wedding, our team will travel to Long Pilah this December, living in the village for ten days before returning to Detroit. In the following months, we will edit the footage into a short vignette documentary to be used as proof of concept to procure more extensive grant funding and return the following summer to film a feature-length documentary.

Despite being a small, family-operated studio, we are uniquely qualified to take on a project of this magnitude. Each member of our production team brings valuable knowledge, skill, and experience to the table. In addition to practical proficiency in cinematic direction, camera operation, and editing, various team members are equipped with skills in grant-writing, crowd-funding, and project management, as well as rugged backcountry travel and conversational fluency in the Malay and Kayan languages.

Beyond these basic essentials, we have a proven track record of getting things done, usually from the ground up with a little help from our friends. Our new and improved recording studio came together in three months, transforming from a bare set of walls in a light industrial building to a multifunctional creative coworking space with precision acoustic treatments, unique interior design and custom furnishing, and an extensive equipment library, and is rapidly gaining traction in the Detroit production scene.







A Brief History of the Kayan

The Kayan are one of several remaining tribes of the Dayak people, a group indigenous to the island of Borneo. They live in longhouse communities along the rivers of northern Borneo, but in recent history have congregated primarily around the Baram, Bintulu, and Rajang rivers in Sarawak, one of the Malaysian states of Borneo. They are known for being a warrior culture which formerly practiced head-hunting, as well as for their smithing and boat building skills, rice cultivation, and traditional tattoos. Today, the Kayan population is estimated at around 200,000.

Prior to the 20th century, their religion was based in animism, but many have since converted to Christianity and Islam, and pagan practices, including shamanism, were largely forgotten.



Today, the Kayan culture is threatened by modernization and the development of Borneo's jungles by the logging and palm oil industries. While many Kayan still live in longhouses and maintain quasi-traditional fishing and farming lifestyles, many others have left their tribal communities to take jobs in the city, on the palm plantations, or on oil rigs. In the community of Long Pilah, where our documentary will be filmed, only tribal elders are still fluent in the Kayan language, and older elements of the culture, such as ritual singing and chanting traditions, are known only to a precious few. The elders of Long Pilah have expressed a desire to rekindle interest in these diminishing practices among their increasingly modernized youth, as well as share their story with the world beyond Malaysia.



Help Us Tell This Story : Ways to Support the Project

Financial Sponsorship

As a small, grassroots organization, financial support at this stage is incredibly important. Not only will your donation help support important anthropological work during a time when the rapid progression of technology threatens traditional cultures worldwide, you will be also helping a local creative collective progress in the prestigious world of documentary filmmaking.

Sponsors who contribute \$1,000 or more will be given recognition in the documentary credits, as well as any related social media content.

We will also graciously accept smaller donations - any amount will help us reach our goal.

Equipment/Gear Donations or Loans

While we have been steadily accumulating quality audiovisual gear over the past ten years and making magic happen with what we have, there is always room for improvement. We are currently looking to acquire two new filming cameras and a drone, as well as some jungle-proof bags and clothing. If you are interested in discussing ways you can support the Kayan Archives with an equipment donation, we will happily arrange a conversation with the appropriate team member.

Spread the Word

If you're excited about what we're doing, share our content and links to our crowdfunding campaign @iodetroitstudio on Instagram or visit kayanarchives.org. We appreciate your support!

Fundraising Goals and Breakdown

Our goal is to raise \$26,000 to cover the costs of airfare, necessary equipment purchases, overland travel, and interim lodging during travel to and from the village.

Roundtrip airfare to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Approx. \$2,000	10	20,000
Sony FX3 Camera	\$2,000	1	2,000
Canon XA50 Camera	\$1,500	1	1,500
4K camera drone and recreational license	DJI Drone \$750 License \$250	1	1,000
Camera Accessories	Est. \$500		500
ORV hire to and from village, local lodging in KL and Miri, food	Est. \$1000		1,000
	Total		26,000

Thank you for helping us bring this collaboration to life.

The team:

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, Michael Sheufelt

CINEMATIC DIRECTOR/RECORDIST, Patrick Sheufelt

CREATIVE DIRECTOR/PRODUCER, Kristina Sheufelt (MFA)

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/INTL. RELATIONS, Cameron Sheufelt

UNIT PRODUCTION MANAGER, Caitlin Barrett (BBA)

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY, Nick Sheufelt

STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER, Phillip Sheufelt

KEYSET PRODUCTION ASSISTANT, Christopher Anderson (BFA)

FIELD BIOLOGIST/SCRIPT SUPERVISOR, Jessica Anderson

RESEARCHER, Jacob Zyrek