

THE

neweurasian



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JAN - MAR 2019

100 years of the Eurasian Association 1919 - 2019



Orange Ribbon Walk • Eurasian Identity Dialogue • Project Ray Of Hope

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



EA President Alexius Pereira with staff and volunteers at the Association's booth at the Orange Ribbon event.

Dear members

Happy 2019! This is a special year for us, as it marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of Eurasian Association Singapore in July 1919. Our year-long celebrations give us pause – to reflect on what we have achieved, take stock and enable us to chart the future of the EA and the Eurasian community.

In our activities are recurrent themes, such as engaging Eurasians in Singapore to strengthen community ties, and enhancing a sense of belonging to the EA; raising awareness on Eurasian heritage and culture, and highlighting the contributions of Eurasians to nation building.

A major initiative is the opening of the Eurasian Heritage Gallery in September. To be declared open by President Halimah Yacob, the Gallery will chronicle the rich, colourful and diverse history of the Eurasian community. Another initiative, in October, is the launch of a book on EA's 100 years of service to both the Eurasian community and wider Singapore. In it, we recognise our community's pioneers for their vision in establishing the Eurasian Association – Singapore's first formal self-help organisation – and our subsequent leaders in making EA what it is today.

An anniversary is not just about looking back but also looking ahead. Our new logo, conceived by the EA Management Committee, shows our Association's modern and progressive approach – read more about it on Page 5. Similarly, we are introducing a fresh look for *The New Eurasian*. The children on the cover – from first generation Asian Caucasian to more than sixth generation Eurasian – represent our future, our hopes and dreams.

This year, the Eurasian Festival, to be held at Our Tampines Hub on Saturday 27 July, will be a revved up version of our previous one. And so it should be, considering that the festival will be the most important birthday party in EA's history. We are planning for our guest-of-honour Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to blow out 100 candles and cut the biggest birthday sugee cake ever baked! Please join us in celebrating this momentous occasion.

In closing, my wish for us is, as written on the cover, "Here's to the next 100 years!"

Dr Alexius Pereira

ON THE COVER

From first generation Asian Caucasian to more than sixth generation Eurasian, with Asian, Portuguese, Dutch and English ancestry, these youngsters offer a glimpse into what the future may hold for the Eurasian Association over the next 100 years. Front row, from left: Caden Sng, Timothy Cheong and Anakin Liev Zoisl. Back row, from left: Mikaela Saffron Kraal, Sarah Cheong, Cirrus Finn Zoisl and Elijah David Kraal. Photographed by Winnie Chin.

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THE neweurasian

Magazine of the Eurasian Association, Singapore

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* Dates may change

NEWS

Light Up for Christmas

EA members and guests from the People's Association and OnePeople.sg gathered at the Eurasian Community House on 8 December 2018 to jump-start the festive season. Once the Christmas tree lights were turned on for this annual EA party, it was time for some joyful carol singing. Among the evening's highlights was a hearty dinner served buffet-style by Quentin's Eurasian Restaurant. No party is ever complete without dancing and before long guests took to the floor, inspired by deejay Gerard Danker and music from SALT.



'Hark, the herald angels sing!'



Portuguese Ambassador to Singapore, Mr Luis Joao De Sousa Lorva (centre), with EA's 2nd Vice President Yvonne Pereira (4th from left), Julia D'Silva and 1st Vice President Vincent Schoon (6th and 7th from left) and other EA members and friends.



Happily dancing to music selected by Gerard Danker and SALT.



SANTA DROPS BY THE EA

The Eurasian Community House turned into Santa's playground for these youngsters attending the EA's annual Children's Christmas Treat on 16 December 2018. Aged three to 10, the children were from our Eurasian community as well as the three other self-help groups. With parents in tow, they had great fun at our games



stalls featuring various Christmas-themed activities. Percy Shepherdson as Santa Claus and Hershey Coleen Ramos as Santarina played their roles superbly. They made sure every child went home with a gift while performance group ToyBox and balloon sculptor Russell Oliveiro certainly put a smile on everyone's faces.

We thank South East Community Development Council for co-sponsoring our event; Focus Network Agencies for the chocolates; Quentin's Eurasian Restaurant for the popcorn stall; volunteers from the Julia Gabriel Centre & Chiltern House Pre-School; and the EA Secretariat for making the event a success.

Brilliant Start to the New Year!

More than 200 guests in a festive mood made their way to the Orchard Hotel to usher in the year 2019 in style. The occasion? The Eurasian Association's New Year Fiesta de Gala Dinner and Dance, which turned out to be an unforgettable year-end celebration.

The evening began with cocktails and the dashing emcee Christian Eber getting the party started. EA's President Alexius Pereira and 2nd Vice-President Yvonne Pereira bade a warm welcome to everyone before the commencement of an exquisite international buffet that came with free flow of beer, wine and soft drinks. With versatile musicians Ernesto Valerio, Gregory Anderson, deejay Bernard Jeremiah and The Music Men, guests were guaranteed a great time dancing the night away!

There was a short break from the festivities when Alexius unveiled EA's new logo and exclusive 100th Anniversary icon through a short video clip. The crowds gave it two thumbs up! Great prizes for the lucky draw included return air tickets to Bangkok and Phuket with accommodation sponsored by Kosmopolitan Travel. Consolation prizes included Tangs shopping vouchers, and bottles of champagne and whisky, among others.

Seconds before midnight, Old Father Time (Gerard Goh from the Secretariat in disguise) got the crowd ready, and New Year was ushered in with a drop of more than 600 balloons. The traditional Auld Lang Syne, a conga line and other countdown items added to a dazzling finale.



Emcee Christian Eber getting the party started.



EA President Alexius Pereira with (from left) emcee Christian Eber, EA 2nd Vice President Yvonne Pereira, EA GM Lester Low, and Melanie Rodrigues Smith and her husband Michael.



Gregory Anderson (left) and Ernesto Valerio.



Spotlight on the revellers.



Countdown to the New Year, followed by Auld Lang Syne and a conga line!

NEWS



Pledging their support for Rise Against Racism with Singapore President Halimah Yacob, Chairman of OnePeople.sg Dr Janil Puthuchery on her right and EA President Alexius Pereira.

ties that bind our nation



Participants of the annual Orange Ribbon Walk organised by OnePeople.sg gamely covered 3.8km around familiar landmarks such as the Marina Bay Sands, The Float @ Marina Bay and Esplanade Theatres on the Bay.



EA volunteers Tammy Desker, her mum, dad and brother helped to man the Eurasian heritage booth. The highlight activity was badge-making, where participants each received a souvenir.

More than 2,500 people turned up in support of the Rise Against Racism campaign at the Orange Ribbon Walk on 17 November 2018. Organised by OnePeople.sg, the annual event drew people from different racial and religious backgrounds. Singapore President Halimah Yacob, chairman of OnePeople.sg Dr Janil Puthuchery and EA President Alexius Pereira joined participants to walk around some of Singapore's best loved landmarks including the Marina Bay Sands. A Eurasian heritage booth at the event created awareness of Eurasian culture.

A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY, A LITTLE BIT ROCK & ROLL

Organised by EA 2nd Vice President Yvonne Pereira and popular musician Mel Ferdinands, the Performing Arts Chapter on 3 November 2018 drew almost 100 people for the Country Rock & Roll concert. SALT, Blues Express and Rani & Mel with Indopura wowed the crowd with their brand of music, which got the crowd tapping their feet. For refreshments, it was food and drinks sold at special prices by Quentin's.



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS WITH A NEW LOOK



The refreshed logo celebrates the legacy of the Eurasian Association, which is to further enrich its vibrant community, integrated with and contributing to a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural Singapore. As always, the Eurasian community is the anchor and strong foundation for EA's work.

The 'EA' symbol has been given greater prominence with the new graphic treatment – one that is approachable and warm. With the custom typography and calligraphic treatment of the circle, the logo represents the strong ties within the community, evoking cohesiveness and connection.

The bright maroon, incorporated as a new primary colour, stands out against the gold. It symbolises the passion, strength, and warmth of the Eurasian community. Gold reflects the deep roots of the Eurasians in Singapore.

This refreshed logo is a statement of confidence in the mission to build, enrich, and extend the Eurasian community. It is a commitment to continue to do all we can to help the vulnerable in our community to achieve their potential and live meaningful lives. It is the passion and belief that the Eurasian community will be a force for good in Singapore and beyond.

As we celebrate our 100th anniversary, let us look forward to a bright and exciting future for the Eurasian Association, and for the Eurasian community.



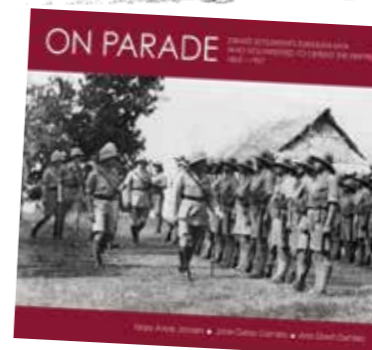
Author Mary Anne Jansen presenting a copy of the book to Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean. With them (from left) are co-authors John Geno-Oehlers and Ann Ebert Oehlers, Alvin Tan of the National Heritage Board and Prof Elvin T Lim of the Wee Kim Wee Centre, Singapore Management University. PETER KWOK

Paying tribute to Eurasian Volunteers, 1862 - 1957

Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, who is also Coordinating Minister for National Security, graced the launch of the book *On Parade: Straits Settlements Eurasian Men Who Volunteered To Defend The Empire 1862-1957* on 27 November 2018. Published by the Wee Kim Wee Centre, Singapore Management University and awarded a grant by National Heritage Board, the 412-page book honours the Eurasian men during the time of the Straits Settlements who volunteered to fight for the British Empire both at home and abroad. *On Parade* was painstakingly researched and written by three Eurasians: librarian-turned-author Mary Anne Jansen, retired mechanical engineer John Geno-Oehlers and homemaker Ann Ebert Oehlers.



Pictures from the book contributed by Eurasians include those of: Sgt Gerald Kraal (4th from left) and a contingent of D Company Volunteers, c. 1937, and D Company's New Year's Eve's Ball, 1934 (below).



On Parade: Straits Settlements Eurasian Men Who Volunteered To Defend The Empire 1862-1957 is available at major bookshops, including Books Kinokuniya. Recommended Retail Price: \$51.36.

THE INSPIRATION BEHIND 'ON PARADE'



Mary Anne Jansen (in blue) with co-authors John Geno-Oehlers and Ann Ebert Oehlers at the book's pre-launch held at the home of Louise Clarke. The medals belong to Ann's uncle, the late Gerald Clarke, and her father Earle Ebert, as well as to Harding Deans.

There are countless books about valiant men who risked life and limb for their country. **MARY ANNE JANSEN**, co-author of *On Parade: Straits Settlements Eurasian Men Who Defended The Empire, 1862-1957*, tells us why this book is different and why it should matter to us as Eurasians.

As researchers, John, Ann and I had collaborated with Dr Barry Pereira and Terry Foenander in the past. Both gentlemen, who have since passed on, were avid researchers of the activities of Eurasian soldiers in the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force, and are remembered with affection in the book's Dedication.

and John also used their extensive notes from their interviews of veterans and their relatives. Besides written references, I conducted my first FaceTime interview with Maureen, daughter of the late Ossie Aeria, one of the men featured in the book. She lives in Queensland and I live in Western Australia.

Where this book differs from those previously published, however, is in the way it places the activities of the Eurasian community in the bigger picture of global events. So we see the desire of Eurasian men to travel to Europe in order to volunteer for the Western Front in World War I, only to be rebuffed when they tried to enlist. We see the insistence among Singapore Eurasian men to form a defence force against the equally determined colonial rulers to keep them out of the defence structure. And while the men were the soldiers, the women were not left out. We see the women developing their social networks in support of their men, particularly in fundraising activities. As Prof Elvin Lim, Director of the Wee Kim Wee Centre, said: it is a 'micro-history' of a minority community within a 'macro-history' of global events.

Working on this project and the book allowed me to bring together the commonalities of the Volunteer experience, and to analyse, as John said at the launch, why these men kept coming back for more. It was clear that the reason the men wanted to serve was loyalty to the Crown, and it was equally very clear that the Crown expected loyalty, but gave them very little in return. Writing the chapter on *The Myth and Reality of Fortress Singapore* was indeed a salutary lesson for me, as it was quite clear that the Far East colonies held no priority in the eyes of the Home Government. Not only were those colonies (including Hong Kong) very poorly defended, but the non-European soldiers were treated very badly post-war. And yet, the British Treasury demanded a cash payment of GBP 1 million (Straits \$8.57 million) as a contribution towards the cost of the defence of the colonies post-war.

My own research was conducted in Singapore and in London. It involved reading Colonial Office and War Office files at the National Archives of the UK and in Singapore; listening to oral histories produced by both the Imperial War Museum and the National Archives of Singapore; and reading the private papers of people such as General Arthur Percival in the Imperial War Museum. While at home, I read newspaper archives and British Parliament debates and sourced photographs from archival and private collections online. Previously published sources, both in print and online, were also consulted extensively. Ann

Included in the book is an extensive roster of Eurasian Volunteers. It brings together the unpublished works of several researchers, who had used many different sources, on this subject. It is often the first bit that people turn to, to look for their relatives. Who among your relatives will you find there?

Published by the SMU Wee Kim Wee Centre, the book has benefited from a Heritage Participation Grant, which is awarded by the National Heritage Board. On Parade is available at bookshops and through the National Library.

Flying high with Boeing

A thrilling learning journey for those with a passion for aviation.

Eight students from primary to secondary school levels participated in an exciting learning journey to the Boeing Singapore campus at Changi North Rise on 30 November 2018. The trip aimed to instil positive values such as teamwork and a sense of responsibility in the EA beneficiaries, to motivate them to pursue their aspirations, and nurture those with a passion for aviation. The youths were introduced to the basics of flying and given a rare chance to test various flight simulators. A bonus was interacting with aviation professionals at the campus.

The learning journey was jointly organised by Boeing Singapore and North East CDC.



A soaring treat for these eight students visiting the Boeing Singapore campus.



Nurlesda (left) and Chanel Christine with the VIPs at the presentation ceremony.

Lending a helping hand

Buddhist charity awards grants to Eurasian students.

The Singapore Buddhist Lodge awarded bursaries to two tertiary-level Eurasian students – Nurlesda binte Ali and Roberts Chanel Christine – at its bursary presentation ceremony on 13 October 2018. Said Nurlesda, 19, who is currently studying at ITE College East: "It has helped me tremendously. I'm able to support myself in school, buy school stuff and even help my mum pay some of her bills," she said. "Without this assistance from the EA and Singapore Buddhist Lodge, I would not have been able to do these things." The Singapore Buddhist Lodge works with the different ethnic community groups in Singapore to ensure that students have access to a good education.

Bringing cheer

Project Ray of Hope helps students cope with education costs.

Twelve-year-old Tyler Mark Nicholas could not contain his excitement at the EA's Project Ray of Hope ceremony on 25 November 2018. He was at the Eurasian Community House to receive vouchers to purchase books and shoes.

"I am appreciative and thankful for the Popular bookstore and Bata Singapore vouchers," said Tyler. "The timing is perfect as I need to buy assessment books and stationery for the new school year. These vouchers also help to defray my family's expenses." He was one of 70 students who received the vouchers presented by Dr Graham Ong-Webb, chairperson of the EA Education Sub-Committee.

Held annually, Project Ray of Hope distributes vouchers, funded by Singapore's Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, to low-income students to help them cope with their education costs.



Left: EA 1st Vice President Vincent Schoon with winners of the Coral de Cruz Memorial Fund Award.



Above: Vincent with winners of the PK.P. Nair Memorial Fund Award.



Dr Graham Ong-Webb, chairman of the EA Education Sub-Committee, delivering his opening address.

EDUCATION



Tia Louise Rozario, recipient of the Joseph Schooling Sports Grant

The EA launched the Joseph Schooling Sports Grant in September 2018. It was set up after Joseph Schooling won Singapore's first Olympic gold medal at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games to recognise his achievement and to inspire young Eurasians to strive for sporting excellence.

The Grant, a cash award of S\$5,000, primarily serves to defray training and/or equipment costs a Eurasian athlete might incur in pursuit of high standards of achievement in his or her chosen sport. We wish to thank the Schooling family for donating an additional cash amount of S\$10,000 that will go towards the Joseph Schooling Sports Grant.

A total of three applicants were shortlisted for the interview, which took place on 29 November 2018. It was not an easy decision for the selection panel as all three candidates were similarly outstanding and impressed our interviewers with their brawn and skill in equal measure. After much deliberation, Tia Louise Rozario was selected to receive the grant.

Eighteen-year-old Tia is a Track and Field athlete from the Singapore Sports School, and was inspired by the sacrifices Joseph Schooling had made to develop his talent. "His passion and dedication for swimming shows through his ability to push himself to world class level. There is a lot I have to learn from athletes like him," she said. To her, the Sports Grant means more than just financial support, it is also a source of motivation and a commitment on her part to fulfil her dreams.

Tia knew that competition for the grant would be tough, but she was determined to stick with her passion for Track and Field. She said: "Before the interview, I tried to keep a clear mind to ensure that the conversation would flow well and that I could convey my message in the best way possible. The advice I have to share with others when it comes to such interviews is to be honest and stay true to yourself."

As the Olympic Games are still far off, Tia has resolved to enrol in a foreign university to gain greater exposure. She believes the different coaching methods will eventually allow her to compete at a higher level. "I believe that it will be the best platform for me to fully develop my skills while remaining invested in my own education before taking the next big step in my sports journey," she added. Grateful that the grant will go a long way towards easing her travel expenses, Tia intends to do it justice by upholding a positive image representing Singapore in the future as a proud Eurasian athlete.



EA EDUCATION SCHEMES 2019

The EA supports students throughout their academic journey, offering numerous awards, bursaries and scholarships for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels. Below is a table of EA Education Schemes for 2019, including criteria and application period.

S/N	Education Scheme	Level	Description	Quantum	Income Criteria	Application Period
1	Eurasian Community Fund (ECF) Education Awards	Primary, Secondary, Tertiary	A one-time monetary reward to students to encourage them to continue working hard	\$100 – \$300	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800 * Income criteria are only for Bursary Awards. Merit, Excellence and Distinction Awards do not have income criteria.	Apply by 28 June 2019
2	Project Ray Of Hope	Primary, Secondary, Tertiary	Disbursement of Popular and Bata vouchers to purchase educational items and shoes for the next academic year	\$250 – \$350	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 28 June 2019
3	Irene Joseph Memorial Fund & P.K.P. Nair Memorial Fund	Primary	A one-time monetary reward to students to encourage them to continue working hard	\$200	PCI range: \$626 – \$1,000 * For students not under MOE FAS	Apply by 28 June 2019
4	Coral De Cruz Memorial Fund	Secondary	Covers school fees, books, uniforms and transport for one academic year, to encourage Sec Sch students to study hard	\$1,200 for one academic year	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 28 June 2019
5	Merit Bursary Award	ITE and Polytechnic (NP, NYP, RP, SP, TP)	Covering the full cost of tuition and book stipend for the full duration of the course, to defray the cost of tertiary education	Cap ITE: \$1,600/year for a 2-year course; Poly: \$3,600/year for a 3-year course	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 April 2019
6	EA University Scholarship	University (NUS, NTU, SMU, SUSS, SIT, SUTD)	Covering the full cost of tuition and book stipend for a 3-year course, to defray the cost of university education	Cap \$10,000 per academic year for a 3-year course	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 April 2019
7	Oscar George da Silva University Scholarship	University (NUS, NTU, SMU, SUSS, SIT, SUTD)	Covering the full cost of tuition and book stipend for a 3-year course, to defray the cost of university education	Cap \$10,000 per academic year for a 3-year course	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 April 2019
8	Edward D'Silva Scholarship	ITE and Polytechnic (NP, NYP, RP, SP, TP)	Covering the full cost of tuition and book stipend for 1 academic year of the course, to defray the cost of tertiary education	Cap ITE: \$1,600/year for 1 year only; Poly: \$3,600/year for 1 year only	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 April 2019
9	Minnie Leicester-D'Rozario Award (for Literature in English at O-levels)	Secondary 4 O-Level student	A one-time award for a Eurasian student(s) who attained A1 for Literature in English at the Secondary 4 O-Level examination	\$1,000 If there is more than one candidate, the quantum per student will be decided by the Education Committee	Nil	Apply by 30 April 2019
10	Joseph Schooling Sports Grant	Ages of 14 -19 in calendar year of application	A one-time monetary grant to defray training and/or equipment cost in pursuit of sporting excellence	\$5,000	Nil	Apply by 30 April 2019
11	Rudolph Mosbergen Sports Award	ITE, Polytechnic & University (NP, NYP, RP, SP, TP, NUS, NTU, SMU, SUSS, SIT, SUTD)	A one-time award for a Eurasian student(s) who show(s) potential in sports and is pursuing a sports course at the Singapore Sports School, ITE, Polytechnic or University	\$2,500 If there is more than one candidate, the quantum per student will be decided by the Education Committee	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 April 2019

Note: GHI = Gross Household Income: Total monthly income of all working adults in the household. PCI = Per Capita Income: Total monthly income divided by the number of people in the household.

To apply, please contact Jolvin Wong at tel 6447 1578 (ext 205) or email jolvin@eurasians.org. Application forms can be obtained from the Secretariat office at Level 3 of the Eurasian Community House, 139 Ceylon Road, Singapore 429744 or downloaded from www.eurasians.org.sg/education/awards-and-scholarships/

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES



FSS Christmas Lunch beneficiaries in good spirits after meeting up with their many friends and making new ones.

A PERFECT TIME TO GET TOGETHER

... with a Christmas Party that makes sure no one is forgotten.

The EA's annual Family Support Services (FSS) Christmas lunch on 2 December 2018 brought Christmas cheer and smiles to families who are facing difficult times, and to the elderly who may be in need of company. More than 120 FSS beneficiaries enjoyed an afternoon of sumptuous Eurasian food, music, games and dancing.

EA President Alexius Pereira in his welcome speech said the FSS Christmas lunch was "a special occasion to share the Christmas spirit with the underprivileged in the Eurasian community".

He also thanked volunteers from the ISS International School for their dedication to help out at the event for the eighth consecutive year. "It is always great to see the joy they bring to our clients and

leaving them with special festive memories," Alexius added.

Edmund Rodrigues, who chairs the FSS Sub-Committee, had nothing but praise for the young volunteers: "We are indeed fortunate every year to have a group of young people who come faithfully to provide service and help the elderly during the lunch and who do so with such graciousness and kindness."

He also had some good advice for FSS beneficiaries. "Having more qualifications increases the potential for a greater income. If you have children, encourage them to go as far as their talents permit. If they work hard, nothing can hold them back. If expenses are a problem, consult us and we will work hand in hand with you."



ISS students receiving a token of appreciation from FSS Chairman Edmund Rodrigues (in red) and EA 1st Vice President Vincent Schoon (in checks).

"If you have children, encourage them to go as far as their talents permit. If they work hard, nothing can hold them back. If expenses are a problem, consult us and we will work hand in hand with you." – Edmund Rodrigues, chair of FSS

YOUTH

find your ikigai



This holistic initiative aims to help youth discover their life's purpose and empower them.

Have you ever wondered what makes successful people like Joseph Schooling tick? Whichever field they are in, whether business, government, entrepreneurship, research, the performing arts and sports, there are certain traits that define them: a clear idea of who they are, and a clear vision of the positive change they want to create in the world around them.

Now you too can uncover these traits within you with the launch of our new programme **Find Your Ikigai!**. Ikigai is a Japanese term which means 'a reason for being' or 'the things that make one's life worthwhile'.

Find Your Ikigai builds on the EA's signature Mentorship Programme by incorporating new and non-traditional elements such as small group life coaching, mindfulness, human library stories and specialised workshops. They are conducted by experienced, certified professionals and culminate in the exclusive opportunity to network with young professionals in your chosen field and to have one-to-one mentorship under the tutelage of an industry mentor.

Find Your Ikigai consists of the following components that are specially designed to help unlock your inner potential and lead you on the right path to success!

1) Self-discovery and Empowerment:

- Recognise your unique skills and talents
- Discover your life purpose
- Ascertain the challenges/obstacles that hinder you from achieving your life goals
- Write your personal success narrative and empower yourself to achieve it

2) Self-Mastery

- CV, resume-writing, interview and presentation skills
- Life-hacks workshop incorporating neuro-linguistic programming to improve your study skills and daily mindfulness practice to help you focus your mind on what's important

3) Career Networking and Mentorship

- Network with top young professionals in your field of interest
- One-to-one mentorship under the tutelage of an industry expert

This programme is held in partnership with South West Community Development Council and the youth wings of our fellow self-help groups such as CDAC, Mendaki Club (MClub) and SINDA Youth Club. Make new friends through this programme and together, you will each uncover your personal secrets to success and write your personal success narrative or Ikigai. **Limited spots are available so sign up now through our website (www.findyourikigaisg.com).**



Participants of the Young Eurasian Mentorship Programme on 19 May 2018.



Group discussion during the Young Eurasian Mentorship Programme on 26 May 2018.

Matters of the Mind

Lessons on the importance of mental health and how to live mindfully.



Will Beale engaging his audience in a casual setting.

World Mental Health Day is observed on 10 October every year. It aims to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilise efforts in support of mental health. Under the guidance of Deborah Emmanuel and Will Beale, participants learned how to use the expressive art form of poetry to achieve peace of mind.

Despite advances in the medical field, the human mind is still something of a mystery. Some of us encounter mental difficulties when faced with certain circumstances, and there are some who are constantly at war with their minds.

To help our youth better understand their minds, the EA Youth Sub-Committee and host Charlene Shepherdson organised a workshop on 10 October at the Eurasian Community House in conjunction with World Mental Health Day 2018.

World Mental Health Day is observed on 10 October every year. It aims to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilise efforts in support of mental health. Under the guidance of Deborah Emmanuel and Will Beale, participants learned how to use the expressive art form of poetry to achieve peace of mind. They were also treated to spoken performances by Deborah and Will.

Most people tend to prioritise physical care over mental health. Siobhan Coulter, supervisor at The Golden Space, explained the importance of self-love activities. Her mindfulness exercises dealt with ways to find peace of mind and de-stress.

Laika Jumabhoy, senior case manager at the Sexual Assault Care Centre at AWARE, spoke on cases she has encountered, and dispelled stereotypes surrounding trauma and survivors of sexual crimes. Varian Monteiro, counselling consultant at The Relational Counselling Studio, shed light on the different types of addiction,

the neurobiology of addiction, the challenges one may face going through addiction and how to get out of it.

“World Mental Health Day 2018 was a good starting point in educating people on mental health and challenging the stigmas surrounding it. Participants expressed their gladness to learn about the different facets of wellness,” said Varian. “It was a learning experience for the facilitators as well and it gave us the opportunity to share knowledge from our respective fields. Looking ahead, we seek to turn this into a bigger event and continue promoting wellness of the mind,” he added.



Deborah Emmanuel and Will Beale (both 3rd row, centre) with the workshop participants.



Left: Tiana Desker conducting the workshop. Above: With Hannah Hendriks (second from right) and several of the dialogue participants.

preserving the Recognising what it means to be Eurasian and the importance of being inclusive. eurasian identity

In this era of globalisation and amid Singapore’s multi-ethnic fabric, the Eurasian identity has found itself evolving. All too aware of this, a conversation on the evolving Eurasian identity was held at the Eurasian Community House on 20 October 2018. Participants of different ages and from different backgrounds came together to share their personal experiences of being Eurasian and interacting with Eurasians.

The afternoon began with an insightful sharing session by Tiana Desker, deputy director of the Digital Workplace Programme Office, on the early history of the Eurasian community in Southeast Asia. This keen historian’s fresh take on how the Eurasian community found its footing within Singapore’s history highlighted an integral quality of being Eurasian – hybridity.

After the session, participants broke up into smaller groups to talk about the Eurasian identity and community in the 21st century, touching on the past, present and future. The discussion highlighted another integral quality of being Eurasian – our heritage – with some participants emphasising the importance of using our heritage connection to reinforce our understanding of being Eurasian within contemporary

Singapore. An important point was made that the future of the Eurasian identity depended on ensuring that it remain open and relevant to our community, even if not everyone shared a similar understanding of its heritage. Through ensuring that the term ‘Eurasian’ remained inclusive and open to all, the community will grow positively within the Singapore society.

On plans for future events that focus on preserving Eurasian identity, Hannah Hendriks (EA Management Committee Member and Youth Subcommittee Member) and her team hope to engage youth to get their thoughts on how the community can shape itself in the coming years.

“We feel it is important that Eurasian youth be given the space to express their opinions and share their experiences of growing up as Eurasians in the present century,” said Hannah. She also hopes to push the boundaries of what it means to be Eurasian. “We believe it’s vital to broaden the term’s considerations beyond purely focusing on heritage as this will ensure that the community continues to grow within this globalised era,” she added.

When asked about plans for this year, Hannah said: “With 2019 being an important year for both the community and Singapore, we would like to welcome our youth to come forward to share their experiences of being Eurasian and their future hopes for the community.”

“With 2019 being an important year for both the community and Singapore, we would like to welcome our youth to come forward to share their experiences of being Eurasian and their future hopes for the community.”

– EA Management Committee Member and Youth Subcommittee Member Hannah Hendriks



Participants of the Eurasian Identity Dialogue on 20 October last year.

YOUTH



Enriching Experience



Professional counselling consultant Varian Monteiro likes nothing better than sharing his knowledge of mental health and dismantling the various stigmas surrounding it.

Volunteering is something Varian Monteiro feels strongly about. So when an old friend Andrew Pang suggested that he volunteer with the EA, Varian jumped at the opportunity. Andrew is an EA Management Committee and EA Youth Committee member. "(Andrew) offered to include me in his EA initiatives and it took off from there," said Varian.

Varian is a counselling consultant at The Relational Counseling Studio, where he helps clients manage their addictions as well as their relationship and emotional concerns. "It is a serious responsibility, but being able to actively take part in a person's recovery journey makes my work purposeful," he said.



A workshop held in conjunction with World Mental Health Day 2018 at the Eurasian Community House last October is one example of how Varian volunteers his time and knowledge.

There, Varian shared his views on his career and enlightened participants on the stigmas surrounding mental health.

"In the months to come, I would like to see more regular wellness talks at the EA. I am collaborating with some very capable people to organise such talks. Each will have a different theme, depending on the time of year, finally culminating with a World Mental Health Day workshop in October," he said.

Outside of his job and volunteer work, Varian enjoys travelling around the world in search of new adventures. "Travelling is necessary as it helps me unplug from work. That's why I try to travel as much as I can. Exploring other countries and immersing myself in different cultures is also refreshing for my mind," he added.

When not travelling, Varian keeps himself fit by working out. He especially enjoys swimming, lifting weights, and kick-boxing.

Varian encourages young people with a heart for the community to volunteer with the EA. "I found volunteering with the EA to be an enriching experience, so give it a shot if you have the time. The EA Youth Committee has various programmes that you can take part in, with more initiatives coming soon."

"Volunteering with the EA Youth Committee could be an immensely enriching experience, so give it a shot if you have the time. The EA Youth Committee has various programmes that you can take part in, with more initiatives coming soon."

– Varian Monteiro

FEATURE

How a short story helped rewrite the direction of THE EURASIAN ASSOCIATION

This year, the Eurasian Association celebrates its centenary. The path to reaching 100 has not always been smooth. As a new self-help group, it often struggled to stay afloat. There were other hurdles, of course, one of the biggest perhaps in 1989 when, fresh from the sting of being classified racially as 'Others', age-old prejudices of Eurasians surfaced in a work of literature to be taught in secondary schools.

From the book *Or Else, The Lightning God and in it the story of a Kenneth Jerome Rozario*, one pronouncement hit a raw nerve: "I tell you, Eurasians are like that." The story, selected as the 1981 Cambridge O-Levels examination syllabus text, told of a feckless drop-out and his guardian of sorts, a middle-aged aunt who did practically nothing all day but take swigs of whisky and cavort with her European lover; and of Eurasian girls being described by their teachers as 'bold and cheap'.

The distasteful comments galvanised sections of the Eurasian community to take up the matter with the Ministry of Education. At the EA headquarters itself there was an urgency to take a long, hard look at themselves. Now, 30 years later, the men who were at the helm remember how this chain of events spawned the Spirit of '89 and how it changed the course of the Association forever.



Browsing copies are available at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library in Middle Road.

Thirty years after the Spirit of '89 changed the course of the then 70-year-old Eurasian Association, its original revivalists still look back with wonder, excitement and satisfaction that they answered the call to serve. Victor Olsen, who was the EA president, defines the Spirit of '89 as "a powerful community revival driven by a shared vision and set of beliefs that charted new territory for the Eurasian Association and Singapore's Eurasian community in the 21st century".

"The year 1989 was when we decided enough was enough," said EA's Honorary Secretary Edmund Rodrigues. Never in its history has the community embarked on a slew of initiatives on such a scale. Recruiting Officer Evelyn Rodrigues said that the revival made the community realise they needed more than just good intentions to survive. "Eurasians from all walks of life came forward to support, build and achieve. We shall always play a significant role in Singaporean society."

Timothy de Souza, who became the EA President in 1991, summed up the situation in two words: taking responsibility. "We felt that we needed to do something for our Association, and ultimately for our community. We decided there was no

reason why we couldn't do it. We were there and decided to take responsibility. This defines the Spirit of '89," he said.

Struck by the Lightning God

Every trailblazing story has a tipping point.

For the EA, it was local author Catherine Lim's short story collection *Or Else, the Lightning God*, which had been placed on the 1981 Cambridge O-Levels examination syllabus by the Ministry of Education (MOE). Already peeved by their classification as 'Others' in Singapore's racial nomenclature, Singapore Eurasians felt aggrieved by the derogatory portrayal of Eurasian women in this particular story and its negative characterisation of its protagonist Kenneth Jerome Rozario.

Victor and his wife Joy learned about the book from Evelyn, who was also an English Literature teacher. This led to conversations with fellow Eurasians, many of whom shared Evelyn's concern. The Olsens, with John and Ann Oehlers, then met with the MOE in 1988 to register their protest and convey the community's sentiment. They also appealed for the book to be removed from the syllabus.

FEATURE

Victor and EA's Assistant Honorary Secretary Gerry de Silva met with the Association's Management Committee in late 1988 to discuss taking up the case formally. Said Victor: "When the Spirit of '89 team assumed office in March, we took up this matter in a quiet fashion with the MOE. The book was soon removed from the syllabus."

The Community's Awakening

That exercise lit a fire in the community.

"When we got involved, we found that there were like-minded people who thought we should do more for the community," Victor said. Treasurer Burton Westerhout recounted that moment. "We approached the EA committee then and asked for a few seats so that we could contribute," he said.

During the 1989 AGM, the 1988 committee saw that this younger group was serious, and decided to pass the baton. Victor stressed that this was not a dramatic takeover. "I was elected President at age 36. For me, it was quite surreal but in a positive

sense. We had no experience but we had a burning passion to serve." Timothy could not walk away from it either. "I felt I must at least give it the best that I could – and so I did," recalled the man whose 'best' turned out to be succeeding Victor to the presidency and leading the Association between 1991 and 1999. Under Timothy, EA was appointed one of the four ethnic self-help groups and granted the status of Institution of Public Character (IPC), eventually getting their own Eurasian Community House.

Membership saw a leap from 91 members in 1989 to more than 1,000 by AGM 1991. This was thanks in part to the first-ever EA News, forerunner of *The New Eurasian*, which was helmed by Straits Times senior journalist Gerry de Silva, a key founding member of Spirit of '89 and current EA Trustee. "We published the first-ever EA News in June 1989, and this persuaded many Eurasians to join the Association," added Victor.

Like No 'Other'

As a minority, there is a tendency to be overwhelmed.

The Eurasians have been around for as long – if not longer – than most Singaporeans, yet many fellow Singaporeans do not know much about the Eurasian heritage. Yet while Eurasians make up only 0.3% of the current Singapore population, the community has a place on the national stage, sparked in part by the Spirit of '89.

"Today, we have a Eurasian co-opted into the Ruling Party Central Elected Committee, a Supreme Court Judge, a

respected chairman of a few Public Enquiry Committees, top legal senior counsels and other professionals. And we have a Eurasian as our local mainstream media's editor-in-chief," said Victor.

Timothy pointed out that while Eurasians are now recognised as a unique demographic, there remains much to be done. "As the minority, if we stop working (at forging our identity), we will be overwhelmed by the rest. We have to make a lot more effort because we are so small. We don't have an identity crisis now. But if we stop the work, we will revert to the pre-1989 status."

While the Spirit of '89 manifesto saw many improvements, it stayed close to their common vision and shared beliefs, which guides successive EA Management Committees to this day.

Said Victor: "Our common vision and shared beliefs were, and still are, to offer tangible and visible self-help group support to all members of our Eurasian community, create greater positive public awareness of Eurasians and anchor Singapore Eurasians firmly into mainstream Singapore society through meaningful



The EA Management Committee at the 1989 Annual General Meeting. President Victor Olsen is seated centre.

"Our common vision and shared beliefs were, and still are, to offer tangible and visible self-help group support to all members of our Eurasian community, create greater positive public awareness of Eurasians and anchor Singapore Eurasians firmly into mainstream Singapore society through meaningful community contributions to our homeland."

– Victor Olsen, EA president from 1989 to 1991

community contributions to our homeland." Victor emphasised that they are resolutely convinced of the critical need for the EA to be politically synchronised with the nation's leaders and to actively support national initiatives.

An Undivided Heart and New Spirit

The EA requires a constant flow of good people to keep it going.

While the expectations tend to fall on younger Eurasians, Timothy noted that good people are more important than young people. Victor added that while EA needs the full range, younger Eurasian leaders can help fine-tune the Association's activities to meet demands of their generation. "Otherwise, the EA will lose its relevance as a respected ethnic community leader," he explained. He also sees the end of a male-dominated presidency, with more Eurasian women holding positions as trustees and key office bearer positions.

Timothy assures potential future committee members that their predecessors will be around to offer them guidance. "Our community's current standing is the result of those who took this up 30 years ago. It is worth your while."



The two key Spirit of '89 leaders, Victor Olsen (centre) and Timothy de Souza (right) with Minister Mah Bow Tan at a National Day celebration in August 1989.

For more on this fascinating period in EA history, look out for Spirit of '89 to be launched during the second half of the 2019 EA centennial celebration. Written by the original revivalists, the book, which will be available in both print and as an e-book, is an important record of what transpired, and will serve as an inspiration for generations to come.

The Revivalists

PRESIDENT
Victor Olsen

VICE PRESIDENT
Gerry de Vries

HON SECRETARY
Edmund Rodrigues

ASST HON SECRETARY
Gerry de Silva

HON TREASURER
Burton Westerhout

ASST HON TREASURER
David Oehlers

COMMITTEE
Dr Myrna Blake
LTC Timothy de Souza
Capt Duncan Trollope
Gerard Pereira

LEGAL ADVISOR
Carla Barker

ADVISOR
Chas W Meyer

CO-OPTED IN THE 1990/1991 EA COMMITTEE
Capt Robert Scully
Colin Pereira



SPIRITED MILESTONES

8 Dec 1989: EA's 70th Anniversary Celebration
Singapore President Wee Kim Wee and Mrs Wee grace a Eurasian celebration for the first time (above)

15 Jun 1990
EA President is invited as a forum panelist on 'Singaporean Singapore'

9 Aug 1990: Singapore's 25th Anniversary
Eurasian contingent joins the National Day Parade; Eurasians hold their First National Day Ball

24 Aug 1991
PM Goh Chok Tong is guest-of-honour at EA Orchid Ball, the first time a Prime Minister attends an EA Ball

11 Aug 1991
During the National Day Reception at the Istana, PM Goh Chok Tong announces that "Eurasians are free to assert their own identity", allowing the community to remove their classification as OTHERS in all official documents and other ethnic references

OUR STORIES

“I REMEMBER IT WELL”



The late Cuthbert Oswald Donough had always wanted to relate what happened to his group of ‘six Eurasian friends’ in the days just before the Fall of Singapore. Colleagues at Cable & Wireless, they were together when their office was bombarded. Cuthbert wrote his account in longhand, which his daughter Gerardine Donough-Tan transcribed for us.

Events Leading up to the Fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942: Period of 9 to 14 February 1942

When the Japanese forces attacked Malaya and Singapore on 8 December 1941, the Cable and Wireless submarine cable telegraph system in the Far East radiated from Singapore to: **Banjoewangi, East Java** then via Cocos Island to Cottesloe, Western Australia and on to South Africa.

Cape St James, French Indo China (Vietnam) then to Hong Kong.

Hong Kong, then to Manila, Philippines Island and via Sharp Peak (Foochow) to Shanghai.

Labuan, off North West British North Borneo (Sabah) then to Hong Kong.

Penang off North West Malaya then to Madras, India, Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Medan in North Sumatra.

To communicate with London via cable, traffic had to be routed via Cocos/Cottesloe and Capetown via the Pacific Islands and Canada. The cable route to London via the Mediterranean stations had been interrupted in June 1940 soon after Italy entered the war. However, direct HF Radio Circuits to London and Colombo were established as alternative routes.

The submarine cable between Cape St James and Hong Kong was cut on 8 December 1941.

Penang was over-run by the Japanese forces and fell on 16 December 1941, but the main cables were joined through and the joints were then buried.

The Japanese attack on Hong Kong began on 8 December and ended on Christmas Day, 25 December 1941, when the Colony surrendered. The submarine cable connecting Hong Kong with Manila was cut and within a few days the Labuan and Singapore cables from Hong Kong were cut, too.

The Philippines was invaded by the Japanese on 10 December 1941 and Manila was captured on 2 January 1942.

The invasion of Singapore by the Japanese forces from the shores of Johor began in the early hours of the morning of 9 February 1942 after heavy bombing and shelling the previous night. Heavy fighting was reported in the northern and western parts of the Island. At that time, the only submarine cable circuits left working in the Robinson Road telegraph office were to Banjoewangi and Batavia (Djakarta). The Wireless Telegraph (W/T) circuits had been put out of action. There were two local teleprinter circuits. One connected to the Navy Wireless

station at Kranji and the other to the Military Command Signal Centre at Fort Canning. The former was disconnected when the Japanese troops reached Kranji.

The advance of the invading forces was swift. There was daily bombing and shelling of strategic targets and their surrounding areas. There was no air defence as the airfields had been bombed out. By the morning of 11 February, the British and Allied troops had withdrawn to designated defence perimeter positions around the city. Staff living in the outer districts were unable to report for duty.

Late in the morning of 11 February, General Supervisor A.G. Blackwell came to the office and assessed the situation. He then sent the following message to Managing Director/London: “Japanese near. All Staff on duty. No orders re destruction of gear.” Evacuation of the Foreign Service Staff commenced that afternoon. A few stayed back.



Group photo of the Communications Department (submarine cable office).

The invasion of Singapore by the Japanese forces began in the early hours of 9 February 1942 after heavy bombing and shelling the previous night. Heavy fighting was reported in the northern and western parts of the Island. At that time, the only submarine cable circuits left working in the Robinson Road telegraph office were to Banjoewangi and Batavia.

On 12 February, the city area was being attacked by sporadic shelling and frequent bombing raids from the air. The main targets were the sea-front and harbour areas. All acceptance counters for telegrams were closed to the public and the Phonogram Service was suspended.

Only Government, Military and Press messages were accepted for transmission. All clerical staff of the various departments, except the operating and engineering departments, were released from duty that evening. All commercial offices were closed for business. Only one European staff reported for duty that afternoon. He was W.H. Lampen-Smith, a supervisor. He brought his wife along with him and told us he would stay on and would not be leaving with the others. He gave us much encouragement as he slogged on with us without much rest.

A small unit of RAF signallers led by Corporal Sharp had shifted from their base to our office to use our facilities. They set up their own circuits in the Instrument Room and camped in with us. They were not successful in communicating with bases in the region but remained awaiting further orders.

Then came that fateful Friday, 13 February. General Supervisor Blackwell came to the office in the early morning. He took down the names of staff working in the Instrument Room (operating staff) and Control Room (technicians). He then sent a message himself and destroyed the punched slip. He told us he was leaving and we would close down the circuits and go home. As he left, I called out to Ronnie Barth who was standing close to the outgoing monitor, which was still

By the afternoon of 14 February, it became apparent that the battle for Singapore would soon end... As a final gesture, we asked members of the military forces who were taking shelter in the building to come up and write out their last messages to their loved ones and we would have them transmitted. This they did with deep emotion.

switched on, to read from the outgoing slip what Blackwell had sent. Barth read it out. “To MD/London. Now closing down. Goodbye. Most unlikely (to) evacuate. Please inform wives.”

I punched an XQ (circuit note) on a KBP (keyboard perforator) and rushed it off on the Batavia/Banjoewangi circuit saying: Please keep circuit open. Staff still on duty.” Ronnie Barth, Dick Lesslar, Ken De Souza, Bruce Armstrong and I decided that we would stay on till the end.

That morning, the ack-ack (anti-aircraft) gun position just behind our office building was bombed in an air raid. The guns were destroyed and the gunners killed. Then came repeated raids by fighter planes machine gunning our building. We were thankful that our window panes were made of solid steel. The noise was both deafening and terrifying. At about noon, our building was bombed. One bomb fell on the rooftop but did not penetrate the roof. The other went through the air-well. The damage was not serious – only the Battery Room and the Carpenters’ Workshop were affected.

An army officer came soon after for Lampen-Smith and his wife. He had been ordered to fetch them for evacuation. Lampen-Smith said goodbye and told us to take care of ourselves. It was a sad parting.

Later that afternoon, an army major came with orders that we must destroy all the transmitting and receiving equipment in his presence. We protested, to no avail. We took heavy tools from the workshop and smashed all the transmitting



Cuthbert (centre) and Ronnie Barth (on his left), in the early 1960s. Cuthbert passed away in 2010, the last to go among the band of six Eurasians mentioned in the story. The others were Dick Lesslar, Ken De Souza, Bruce Armstrong and Louis Le Mercier.

and receiving automatic equipment. After the officer left, Bruce Armstrong broke down and cried, exclaiming: “Is this the end?” I comforted him, saying I’d find a way to resume circuit working using manual equipment. I spoke to senior technician Louis Le Mercier who told me he could start up and establish the ship-watch circuit but the working circuit cable terminal would have to be taken from its existing position and transferred and connected to the equipment on the ship-watch circuit. I told

him I could do that and promptly did it while he was setting up the necessary equipment. Within minutes, we made contact with Banjoewangi by slow-speed hand-sending and established a working circuit with Banjoewangi relay station, which agreed to receive our traffic for re-processing and re-transmission to destination stations. So we got cracking again, taking turns to do the hand-sending on the recorder keys, which was slow and laborious. We got ourselves organised and continued to accept Government and Press messages for onward transmission.

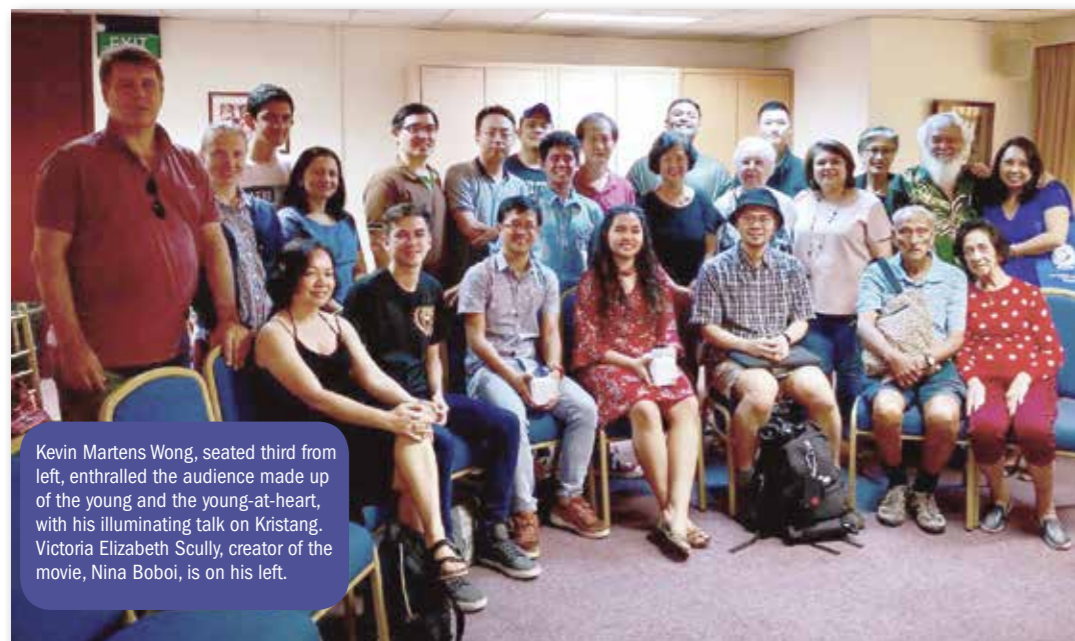
That evening, the teleprinter circuit to the Military Command Centre at Fort Canning went dead. The line appeared to have been interrupted. Messages were brought to us and later fetched by despatch riders.

By the afternoon of 14 February, it became apparent that the battle for Singapore would soon end. All messages on hand were cleared. In the evening, after transmitting the last communiqué on General Percival’s intended surrender to the Japanese commander on 15 February, we advised Head Office, through Banjoewangi, that we were closing down. As a final gesture, we asked members of the military forces who were taking shelter in the building to come up and write out their last messages to their loved ones and we would have them transmitted. This they did with deep emotion. We sent these messages off and closed down the circuit, leaving Le Mercier to dismantle the equipment. We then buzzed off before the Japanese soldiers got us. The rest is history.

Total Defence Day on 15 February commemorates the Fall of Singapore.

Before it all disappears...

Kevin Martens Wong is determined to unravel the mystery behind the language his great-great-great grandfather spoke. Thanks to his efforts, Kristang – a language spoken by fewer than 1,000 people across Malacca and Singapore today – is enjoying an exciting revival.



Kevin Martens Wong, seated third from left, enthralled the audience made up of the young and the young-at-heart, with his illuminating talk on Kristang. Victoria Elizabeth Scully, creator of the movie, *Nina Boboi*, is on his left.

“I was reminded of conversations my parents had with their relatives and friends whenever they met. These would occur at St Joseph’s Church after mass, at weddings and also at wakes. I recall some of the common phrases in Kristang. I find it such a cheerful language.”

– Percival Shepherdson, who was at the talk last November

Champurah, which sounds like *campur* or ‘to mix’ in Malay, is part of the dying heritage language of the Portuguese-Eurasian community called Kristang. It is a language spoken by fewer than 1,000 people across Malacca and Singapore today, and Eurasian-Chinese undergraduate Kevin Martens Wong has made it his mission to revive the language in Singapore.

As Director of Kodrah Kristang, Kevin has a chance to do exactly that. On 17 November 2018, he organised a talk at the Eurasian Community House on the history of Kristang. Attendees also viewed a screening of *Nina Boboi*, a touching movie about a Eurasian kampong girl who falls in love with a British man during World War II. The short film is the brainchild of Victoria Elizabeth Scully and her team.

It was a thoroughly informative session and the audience walked away with a greater understanding of Kristang and how it is still relevant in today’s society.



The writer’s family on his mother’s side, the Tessensohns. Reginald Tessensohn and his wife Annie de Souza (both seated) were Kevin’s great-great grandparents. COURTESY OF MAUREEN & PETER MARTENS

KRISTANG

the language of my forefathers

BY KEVIN MARTENS WONG

One hundred years ago, my great-great-great-grandfather, John Edwin Richard Tessensohn, founded the Singapore Eurasian Association. Edwin has long been recognised for this and other landmark contributions to the public life of Eurasians on our island; he has also been celebrated for his service on Singapore’s Legislative Council as its first Eurasian member, for example, and as president of the Singapore Recreation Club (SRC).

However, what is perhaps less well-known about Edwin is that in addition to his public service, he was also a speaker of Kristang, the heritage language of the Portuguese-Eurasian strand of our community, which he learned as a child from his mother Eliza. Indeed, Edwin even served as one of the patrons of a long-forgotten Kristang language theatre scene in Singapore at the turn of the 20th century that is only just now beginning to be rediscovered – much as the Kristang language itself, in Singapore, is today beginning to be rediscovered, appreciated and celebrated for its presence and value to the community and the nation at large.

In itself, Kristang is already a very uncommon entity, as a particular kind of language known as a creole that only appears in situations of close and sustained contact between speakers of two usually very different languages. A creole language incorporates many grammatical and lexical elements from both its parent languages, but is in itself a full and unique linguistic system on its own, as real a language as the two languages that led to its genesis, with its own system of grammar, phonology and other characteristics that linguists like myself use to define and analyse languages. In Kristang’s case, its parent languages were Portuguese, which

provided much of Kristang’s vocabulary, and Malay, which influenced much of Kristang’s grammar. Yet this language is neither Portuguese nor Malay, nor a corrupted or broken form of either, nor even an old or unchanged form of either. It is simply a separate language in its own right, much as its original community of speakers, the Portuguese-Eurasians, are a separate community in their own right who identify themselves as neither fully European nor fully Asian, but who claim descent from both.

Both the Portuguese-Eurasians and their language Kristang trace their origins to the 1511 conquest of Melaka by a Portuguese force led by Afonso de Albuquerque, emerging when these Portuguese soldiers settled in the city and intermarried with local Malay residents, creating a mixed class of citizens known as *casados* (a *casado* meaning ‘married person’ in Portuguese) whose descendants would become the Portuguese-Eurasians and Kristang speakers we know today.

Both community and language went on to survive the Dutch conquest and subsequent occupation of Melaka starting from 1641, with many Dutch-Eurasian families even assimilating into the Portuguese-Eurasian identity, and then the city’s handover to the British in 1824, with our Singaporean Portuguese-Eurasian community coming into existence from the 1820s after the British opened up the city for trade and many Eurasians migrated to Singapore in search of better economic opportunities.

In 1870, two of these Eurasians moving to Singapore were Eliza Tessensohn and her 15-year-old son Edwin. They, together with many of the other Eurasians who came to Singapore from Melaka, were Kristang speakers, and probably settled in the area around Middle Road and Victoria Street, which played

HERITAGE & CULTURE



home to the Portuguese Mission in Singapore, initiated in 1825 by Father Francisco da Silva Pinto e Maia with help from Dr Jose d'Almeida, another Eurasian pioneer. It was here that Kristang in Singapore flourished, with so many Portuguese-Eurasian families living side-by-side. Though the young Edwin (pictured here in later life with his mother and his young family) would have recognised the importance of developing

his capacity in English, the language of colonial administration and power, he would have almost certainly used Kristang and Bazaar Malay in his day-to-day interactions with those around him, including at home, in school and in church.

Indeed, by the early 1890s, both institutions of the Portuguese Mission – St Joseph's Church (founded 1853) and St Anthony's School (founded 1879) – were almost certainly hubs of Kristang-speaking activity, with some priests arriving at the Portuguese Mission explicitly being trained to speak "patois Portuguese" in Macau prior to being posted to Singapore. In July 1892, one even finds the Eurasian-run newspaper *The Daily Advertiser* chastising Father Jose Joaquim Baptista of St Joseph's Church for delivering a sermon in "classical Portuguese", a language that, according to the paper, barely anyone in attendance could understand: as the newspaper goes on to observe, when Father Baptista decides to preach in Kristang instead one week later, Kristang sermons are far more intelligible to the general congregation!

Sermons and even a Shakespearean play in Kristang

One wonders if Father Baptista really should have known better than to preach in Portuguese, considering that three months earlier, in April 1892, he hit upon the idea of rallying some of his parishioners to stage a play towards raising money for St Anthony's School, which unexpectedly unleashed a relative flood of Kristang-language theatre performances throughout the rest of the year as many Portuguese-Eurasians discover that the community is more than eager for shows in Kristang.

Though no scripts have come down to us, advertisements and reviews on more than 50 Kristang-language performances of plays and stories as well-known as *Ali Baba and the Forty Robbers*, *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* and William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* litter colonial Singapore newspapers over the next 40 years, with a litany of troupes such as the Star of Hope Amateurs, the Regina Theatrical Company and the Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company playing to patrons as distinguished as the Governor of the Straits Settlements and the Dato Mentri Besar of Johor. Edwin, too, served as a patron, especially supporting the Portuguese Amateur Dramatic Company in performances such as 1923's *The Sign of the Cross* till his passing in 1926. With other Eurasian enclaves forming at Katong, Serangoon and elsewhere on the island, it is no wonder that by 1937, a columnist in *The Straits Times* even declares that "everybody knows that an archaic patois is still spoken by the Portuguese Eurasians of Melaka and Singapore".

From everybody knows, to no one knows

Unfortunately, the decline of Kristang had already started in the second half of the 19th century, when widespread schooling in English had become accessible to many Eurasian families, and knowledge of English was seen as useful and critical to ensure one's upward mobility in life. However, Kristang's decline was really cemented following the end of World War II and our independence from the United Kingdom, as new language and social integration policies firmly entrenched Kristang's status as a minority language and broke up the remaining enclaves of Eurasians and Kristang speakers, distributing them throughout the island.

In my family, the last person fluent in Kristang was my great-great-grandmother, Edith Klass, who passed away in 1965. My great-grandfather Frederick Martens (right) and his wife Mabel Tessensohn (Edwin's granddaughter), their son and daughter-in-law, my grandparents, Maureen and Peter Martens, all had some knowledge of Kristang; yet once Edith passed away no one had any reason to speak the language any longer, since they were all far more capable and fluent in English.



The writer's great-grandparents, James George Danker and Hilda de Souza, on their wedding day. They were married in St Joseph's Church on 5 February 1935.

It only takes a generation. Kristang faded from view so quickly that by Christmas Day 1988, four years before I was born and just over fifty years after it had described Kristang's existence as well-known, *The Straits Times* mentions Kristang as an odd, forgotten curio that is "going the way of Latin". Nobody in my family mentioned Kristang to me growing up, let alone spoke it, not even as I graduated from school and entered university. It was only by chance, in 2015 in my second year as a linguistics undergraduate at the National University of Singapore (NUS), that I even encountered Kristang at all, when I happened to be doing research on endangered languages in the region and a mention that the Portuguese-Eurasians had their own language – *their own language!* – caught my eye.

Recognising the need to preserve Kristang

I was not the first to recognise the need to preserve Kristang for future generations of Singaporeans. At the Eurasian Community House, a group of dedicated ladies – Kathleen Woodford and Ruth Carroll, later joined by Theresa Pereira, Ivy Bohn, Valerie Scully and Catherine Zuzarte – ran Kristang classes themselves for more than a decade starting from 1994, with the latter two eventually publishing Singapore's first-ever Kristang Dictionary in 2004 based on material they had developed for the classes. The Eurasian Association, too, has continued to feature Kristang in its published material in *The New Eurasian* and at events. My own contribution

that builds on top of theirs is an independent, volunteer-led grassroots initiative for the revival of Kristang in Singapore known as Kodrah Kristang (Awaken, Kristang), which I began after discovering that my maternal grandparents, too, were Kristang speakers, and resolving to learn the language of my great-great-great-grandfather on my own and teach it to others.


My five-member Core Team has taught the language to more than 500 people since we began offering free adult classes in March 2016, and have also organised Singapore's first Kristang Language Festival, developed a Kristang board game, online dictionary and other resources for the language, and greatly raised awareness of the language in Singapore, having been featured by the BBC, Channel NewsAsia and other media outlets, and even raising mentions from Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean.

Like our Core Team, our initiative is multi-ethnic and young at heart, inviting everyone to come and learn Kristang regardless of their heritage and background – Eurasians and non-Eurasians alike. That is how Kristang, after all, got started, 508 years ago, and we believe that that's how it will continue. Like Kristang itself, like my great-great-great-grandfather Edwin Tessensohn and like so many Eurasians before us, like our Eurasian community and our island home, we are defined by our diversity, by the rich, different strands that make us up and are testament in our history and our culture.

It is my hope that Kristang, despite all the challenges it faces, will continue to be recognised, appreciated and celebrated far into the future, just as the community – which my great-great-great-grandfather envisioned – this year recognises, appreciates and celebrates its first, magnificent 100 years.

Kristang	English
papiah	to speak
linggu	language
podih	to be able to
isti	this
akeli	that
yo	I

You may still find copies of the Kristang Dictionary at the EA.



Kevin Martens Wong is a fiction writer, linguist and teacher, and the founder and director of Kodrah Kristang, the youth-led multi-ethnic grassroots initiative to revitalise the critically endangered Portuguese-Eurasian Kristang language in Singapore. His first novel, *Altered Straits*, was longlisted for the 2015 Epigram Books Fiction Prize and was published in 2017 by Epigram Books.



The EA's dance team in their bright and colorful costumes.

Baila*

For visitors to the One Community Fiesta at the Singapore Zoo, it was all eyes on EA's dance item and cultural booth.



The Eurasian Association set up a cultural booth and contributed a dance item for the One Community Fiesta at the Zoo. The event on 28 October 2018, whose purpose was to promote awareness of Eurasian Culture, was organised by Holland-Bukit Timah GRC.

EA Volunteer Peter Gordon and his son Wesley, together with EA staff, facilitated the booth, for which the highlight activity was the Eurasian cultural badge-making. Participants got to take home a free souvenir while learning a little bit about sugée cake and devil curry. The EA Dance Troupe performed the traditional Jinkli Nona, and two other Portuguese folk songs, Patuscada and Malhao Malhao.

From left: EA Volunteer Wesley and his father Peter Gordon together with EA staff and the dance team at the booth.

* Baila is the word for 'dance' in Portuguese

Celebrating the Eurasian Spirit with the West Coast community



In the run-up to the EA's centenary, we will be staging various activities and projects across the island. The purpose is to show that, despite the community's small size, it has had – and continues to have – a beneficial impact on the nation's history.

In collaboration with People's Association (PA), EA organised a Eurasian Festival at West Coast Community Club on 25 November 2018. Graced by Minister for Communications and Information, S. Iswaran, the goal of the event was to celebrate Christmas and get not only fellow Eurasians to join in the festivities but also the community at large.

There was a Eurasian dance performance where the troupe performed the traditional Jinkli Nona, as well as two other Portuguese folk songs, Patuscada and Malhao Malhao. The audience was also treated to a carolling sing-a-long session, led by the Craft @ EA group and Trevor Nerva. Everyone was delighted when Minister Iswaran joined the group on stage.

The highlight activities were games such as 'Pin the Nose on Rudolph' and 'Toy Soldier Bowling' in addition to various cultural exhibitions. There were also booths selling handicrafts, EA books and assorted merchandise. Mel Ferdinands serenaded the audience with catchy renditions of some oldies.

After the carolling, Minister Iswaran and Santa Claus went around the hall to give out candy canes to everyone. This festival is the fourth in the series of Eurasian Festivals which began in April 2017, and will culminate in a big festival in July 2019 to commemorate the EA's 100th Anniversary.





Eurasian Association

1919 – 2019



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Come Celebrate With Us!

EURASIAN FESTIVAL

Saturday, 27 July 2019 (Full Day)

Venue: Our Tampines Hub

Guest-of-honour: Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE EURASIAN HERITAGE GALLERY

Saturday, 21 September 2019, 3pm to 5pm

Venue: Eurasian Community House

Guest-of-honour: President Halimah Yacob

LAUNCH OF EA100 BOOK

Saturday, 12 October 2019, 3pm to 5pm

Venue: Eurasian Community House

Guest-of-honour: Minister S. Iswaran

For more information, log on to www.eurasians.org.sg