

Converting Cultural Capital into Living Heritage: Community Governance of Gendang Pampat among Urban Iban in Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia

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Abstract

Community participation is essential to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, yet the organisational processes that convert inherited knowledge, material resources and public recognition into sustainable practice remain insufficiently understood. This article examines how the Dayak Association Miri safeguards Gendang Pampat, an interlocking Iban drum tradition, in urban Sarawak, Malaysia. A qualitative single-case study was conducted between October 2025 and May 2026 using semi-structured interviews with ten Iban participants aged 29-76, field observations, and organisational and media documents. Thematic analysis was interpreted through Bourdieu's embodied, objectified and institutionalised forms of cultural capital. The findings reveal a conversion cycle in which practitioner expertise is transformed into structured classes and ensemble roles; instruments, ceremonial attire and digital recordings support repeated practice; and certificates, the Munsang Labang ensemble and public performances institutionalise competence and recognition. These mechanisms have expanded participation to nearly 30 course graduates and strengthened youth and public engagement. However, dependence on one principal instructor, costly instruments, informal archives and unstable funding create significant bottlenecks. The article proposes a community cultural-capital conversion model that explains safeguarding as the continuous organisation, circulation and reinvestment of cultural resources rather than the static preservation of a cultural form.

Keywords: Cultural Capital, Community Governance, Gendang Pampat, Iban, Intangible Cultural Heritage

Introduction

The 2003 UNESCO Convention repositioned intangible cultural heritage (ICH) as living practices, knowledge and skills that communities recognise as part of their heritage and continually recreate in response to changing environments (UNESCO, 2003). This definition moved safeguarding away from a narrow concern with conserving objects and towards sustaining the people, relationships and conditions that allow a practice to remain viable. Article 15 of the Convention accordingly places community participation at the centre of safeguarding. Yet the language of participation can conceal an important analytical problem: communities do not safeguard heritage automatically. Participation must be organised, expertise must be transmitted, material resources must be maintained, programmes must be financed, and recognition must be converted into opportunities for continued practice.

This organisational problem is especially visible for Indigenous performing traditions in rapidly urbanising settings. Urban life can widen audiences and institutional networks, but it can also weaken everyday transmission within families and longhouse communities. Formal work and schooling compress the time available for practice, while digital entertainment competes for young people's attention. Community associations consequently become heritage intermediaries. They connect elders, practitioners, young learners, public agencies, audiences, and digital platforms, while translating a practice historically learned through community life into classes, rehearsals, festivals, and recordings. Van der Hoeven (2019) describes comparable developments as networked practices of intangible urban heritage, but the internal mechanisms through which a local association assembles and circulates cultural resources remain under-examined.

Gendang Pampat provides a revealing case. It is an Iban ensemble tradition performed on single-headed drums commonly called *Ketebung* or *Ketebong*. The music is created through interlocking rhythmic parts rather than a single uniform beat. A group may include several performers with differentiated functions, and the tradition is historically linked to social, ceremonial and spiritual contexts, including *Miring* and Gawai observances. Acoustic and compositional research has documented the physical and interlocking musical properties of the *Ketebong* (Sinin et al., 2024), while Iban studies have described its cultural and ritual significance (Anak Osup, 2017; Tutom & Kamil, 2019). What remains less understood is how *Gendang Pampat* is governed as living heritage when its transmission shifts from the longhouse to an urban voluntary association.

The Dayak Association Miri (DAM) offers an analytically significant example. Situated in Miri, Sarawak's second-largest city, the association organises cultural activities for the Dayak community, including *Gendang Pampat* classes, workshops, competitions and performances. It established the *Munsang Labang* ensemble, which provides graduates with a route from learning to public practice. DAM also uses Facebook, TikTok, YouTube and WhatsApp to advertise classes, circulate recordings and document performances. These activities show that safeguarding involves more than retention: it requires the conversion of knowledge, things, relationships and recognition into a self-renewing cultural system.

This article asks: How does a community association mobilise and convert embodied, objectified and institutionalised cultural capital to safeguard *Gendang Pampat* in an urban Iban community? It makes three contributions. First, it brings cultural capital theory into direct dialogue with community-centred ICH governance. Second, it provides empirical evidence from an under-researched Indigenous music tradition in Borneo. Third, it proposes a community cultural-capital conversion cycle that identifies both the productive links and the bottlenecks within safeguarding. Rather than treating cultural capital as a stock possessed by individuals or institutions, the article demonstrates how its forms must be repeatedly converted and reinvested to sustain living heritage.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Community-centred safeguarding and its organisational gap

UNESCO defines safeguarding broadly to include identification, documentation, research, preservation, promotion, transmission through formal and non-formal education, and revitalisation (UNESCO, 2003). The breadth of this definition is important because no single activity guarantees viability. A recording may document a performance without producing new performers; a festival may increase visibility without transmitting technique; and a class may teach technique without sustaining the cultural meanings that make the practice significant. Effective safeguarding therefore depends on relationships among activities rather than isolated interventions.

Critical ICH scholarship has also warned that community participation may be asserted rhetorically while decision-making remains dominated by states, experts or cultural elites (Deacon & Smeets, 2013; Eichler, 2021). Lenzerini (2011) argues that the living character of ICH requires respect for community agency, while Lázaro Ortiz and Jiménez de Madariaga (2022) note continuing tensions between UNESCO's participatory ideals and institutional practice. Community involvement is thus not merely a method for implementing externally designed protection. It concerns who defines the heritage, determines legitimate change, controls representation and benefits from safeguarding.

At the local level, however, community authority still requires organisation. Gwerevende and Mthombeni (2023) show that Indigenous music, dance and language are sustained through interconnected cultural ecosystems, not through isolated preservation. Malaysian research similarly emphasises active community participation and intergenerational transfer in safeguarding practices ranging from customary traditions to music (Radzuan et al., 2024). These studies clarify why communities matter, but they offer less explanation of how an association turns dispersed community capacities into recurrent programmes, recognised roles and durable pathways for participation.

Cultural Capital as a Safeguarding Process

Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes three forms of cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital comprises durable dispositions, knowledge and skills incorporated through time and practice. Objectified cultural capital resides in cultural goods such as artworks, instruments, books and recordings, although their meaningful use requires embodied competence. Institutionalised cultural capital gives recognised and comparatively durable form to competence, classically through qualifications but more broadly through authorised positions, credentials and organisational recognition.

This tripartite framework is well suited to *Gendang Pampat*. Embodied capital includes the ability to produce named rhythmic patterns, occupy particular ensemble positions, recognise appropriate contexts and conduct associated protocols. Objectified capital includes the *Ketebung*, traditional attire, written or audiovisual records and the physical rehearsal space. Institutionalised capital is visible in the association's programmes, instructor appointments, completion certificates, ensemble membership, government invitations and public recognition. Yet applying the categories as a static inventory would miss the central issue. A drum without skilled players cannot reproduce the tradition; knowledge held by one elder is vulnerable if it is not taught; and a certificate has limited significance if it does not lead to continued practice.

The concept of conversion is therefore crucial. Bourdieu emphasises that forms of capital can be transformed, although conversion requires time, labour and institutional conditions. In community safeguarding, the key question is how embodied expertise becomes teachable; how objects and recordings enable that teaching; how learners acquire socially recognised status; and how recognition generates resources and motivation for the next cycle. Cominelli and Greffe (2012) similarly view ICH as a source of creativity whose vitality depends on conditions for transmission and innovation. Shakya and Vagnarelli (2024) further demonstrate that ICH can create social and cultural value when stakeholder collaboration makes it accessible while retaining benefits for heritage communities.

This article therefore treats cultural capital not as an outcome to be accumulated but as a circulating safeguarding process. The analytical focus is placed on four movements: mobilisation of expertise, materialisation of practice, institutional validation and reinvestment. Breaks between these movements are conceptualised as conversion bottlenecks.

Gendang Pampat as Embodied, Material and Social Practice

Gendang Pampat cannot be reduced to the drum as an object. Sinin et al. (2024) demonstrate that ketebong size and construction affect timbral properties and that the ensemble depends on interlocking rhythmic composition. The present study's participants similarly described named patterns and differentiated parts, including *Ngelaki*, *Ngindu*, *Malut* and *Nanjat*. Performance requires multiple players to coordinate their parts; knowledge therefore exists in bodies and relationships as much as in individual memory.

Its ritual associations add another dimension. Earlier Iban scholarship identifies drums, chants and ceremonial specialists as elements of a wider cosmological and social system (Anak Osup, 2017; Tutom & Kamil, 2019). Safeguarding must consequently retain sufficient contextual knowledge for participants to understand why the tradition is performed, not only how to reproduce its sound. Deacon and Smeets (2013) caution against imposing a rigid, expert-defined authenticity on living heritage; communities themselves must negotiate value and legitimate variation. This is especially relevant when *Gendang Pampat* moves across regional lineages, religious affiliations and urban stages.

Methodology

Research Design and Setting

The study used an interpretive qualitative single-case design to examine DAM as a bounded community organisation involved in safeguarding Gendang Pampat. Case study research is appropriate when a contemporary process is inseparable from its organisational and social context (Yin, 2018). Fieldwork was undertaken in Miri, Sarawak, between October 2025 and May 2026. The principal field site was the Dayak Association Miri premises, where cultural administration, meetings, instruction and rehearsal took place. Relevant performances and public cultural activities were also observed or documented.

Participants and Data Sources

Ten Iban participants were selected purposively for their direct knowledge of the association and its cultural work. They included organisational leaders and administrators, ordinary members, a Gendang Pampat instructor and practitioners, a cultural or ritual knowledge holder, and a younger participant. Participants ranged from 29 to 76 years; nine were men and one was a woman. The age range enabled comparison between long-term cultural memory and more recent experiences of urban participation.

Table 1 summarises the study's principal data sources and their analytical purposes.

Table 1

Data Sources and Analytical Purposes

Data component	Scope	Analytical purpose
Semi-structured interviews	10 participants; ages 29-76; leadership, administrative, practitioner, instructor, ritual and youth perspectives	Experiences of governance, transmission, resources, recognition and constraints
Field observation	Association premises, classes/rehearsals and cultural activities	Verification of organisational routines, ensemble learning and interaction
Document and media analysis	Programme materials, posters, photographs, press items, recordings and social-media content	Triangulation of events, public visibility, documentation practices and organisational history

Interviews explored DAM's role, programme planning, training, documentation, public performance, youth engagement, customary practice, effectiveness and resource constraints. Interviews were conducted in the language most comfortable for participants, primarily Malay with culturally specific Iban terminology. Quotations presented in this article were translated into English and lightly edited for readability without altering meaning. Participants are identified as P1-P10.

Analysis and research quality

Interview recordings and field notes were transcribed, read repeatedly and coded manually. Analysis followed the recursive phases of thematic analysis: familiarisation, initial coding, theme construction, review, definition and writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis was both inductive and theoretically informed. Initial codes stayed close to activities and participant language, such as “three sessions per week,” “one instructor,” “YouTube reference,” “certificate,” “invitation” and “expensive drum.” These codes were then interpreted through the three forms of cultural capital and their conversion.

Credibility was supported through triangulation among interviews, observations and documentary evidence; comparison across participants of different ages and roles; and attention to disconfirming or cautionary statements. For example, public invitations were not interpreted as unqualified success because participants also warned that stage visibility could become detached from customary meanings. Rich description and an explicit audit trail from codes to themes were used to strengthen transparency, consistent with qualitative quality principles (Tracy, 2010). All participants received information about the study and provided informed consent. Identifiers used in the article are pseudonyms.

Findings*The association as a community heritage intermediary*

Participants consistently positioned DAM as the principal organisational platform for *Gendang Pampat* in Miri. Its role extended beyond hosting events. It assembled teachers, learners, instruments, space, schedules, publicity and performance opportunities. P1, an active cultural-section member and instructor, described the association as a pioneer that had organised numerous classes to prevent the tradition from disappearing. P2 estimated that more than 30 people had participated in or completed classes, while P8 and P10 traced the current organised training cycle to 2022.

The association embedded *Gendang Pampat* within a broader cultural ecology that also included *betabuh*, *ngajat* and Iban-language activities. This mattered because participants did not regard the drumming as an autonomous musical product. It was connected to dress, customary etiquette, collective identity and other expressive forms. P7 called DAM “the main catalyst in Miri for bringing Iban musical heritage back to life.” The organisation therefore operated as an intermediary in two directions: inwardly, it organised community knowledge; outwardly, it represented that knowledge to institutions and publics.

The establishment of *Munsang Labang* was central to this intermediary function. The ensemble provided a recognised structure through which trained participants could continue practising and represent the community. P10 explained that the group supported safeguarding through stage performances, while P6 linked classes, the ensemble and competitions as complementary activities. The movement from class participant to ensemble member transformed learning from a temporary programme into an ongoing social role.

Mobilising embodied capital: from tacit expertise to structured learning

Embodied capital initially resided in experienced practitioners whose knowledge had been acquired through family, longhouse and regional lineages. DAM mobilised this knowledge by appointing recognised instructors and converting tacit competence into a sequenced programme. Participants described a two-month course held three times a week. The first week introduced the physical instrument and basic striking technique (*nempap*), followed by named rhythmic patterns including *Kantu Tunggal*, *Kantu Seretai*, *Gendang Alu*, *Tunggang* or *Chungking*, *Binsai*, *Pelanduk Tinggang Batang* and *Dumban*.

The conversion was not a simple transfer from one teacher to individual learners. *Gendang Pampat* was taught collectively because an ensemble needed at least five or six players and each position contributed a distinct rhythmic function. P1 explained:

Every position must be filled, such as *ngelaki*, *ngindu*, *malut* and *nanjal*. Each player has to learn the beat for the position; otherwise the whole performance sounds wrong. (P1)

This arrangement embedded cooperation, listening and mutual dependence into the pedagogy. Embodied capital was thus distributed across an ensemble rather than accumulated only by individuals. Regular weekend rehearsals and monthly sessions reinforced retention after the formal course. Participants also described annual or term-based planning by a committee, showing that the association converted individual expertise into an organisational routine.

Teacher selection served as an authenticity and quality mechanism. Participants emphasised that instructors were not appointed randomly but because the community recognised their knowledge and lineage. The main teaching repertoire was associated with *Batang Oya* and *Tatau* in the Sibu region and had been learned from older longhouse practitioners. P2 stated that the techniques used “the beats of the elders,” while P7 cautioned that different places have different names and patterns. DAM therefore authorised a situated lineage rather than claiming a single standard for all Iban *Gendang Pampat*.

Activating objectified capital: instruments, attire and records

The material form of cultural capital was visible most obviously in the *ketebung*. Participants treated traditional drums as acoustically and culturally consequential, not interchangeable equipment. They distinguished older instruments from modern substitutes and warned that unsuitable drums could alter the sound and technique. Traditional attire (*ngepan*) also made Iban identity legible in public performances. At larger events, the combined visual and musical presentation intensified audience recognition.

Digital records formed an expanding category of objectified capital. DAM and Munsang Labang recorded classes, rehearsals and performances as photographs, audio and video. Materials were shared in WhatsApp groups for participants, uploaded to Facebook, TikTok and YouTube for public outreach, and revisited to evaluate performance quality. P2 described recordings covering patterns “from *Pungga Kayu* to *Tunggang*” and explained that students used YouTube videos for home revision. P5 reported that weekly documentation was circulated to the learning group and selected items were published publicly.

These practices show that objectification did not necessarily freeze the tradition. Recordings could extend embodied learning beyond scheduled contact time, allowing repeated listening and visual review. They also supported organisational memory and promotion. However, participants repeatedly distinguished routine digital capture from a formal archive. Written explanation, systematic metadata, professional recording and long-term storage had not yet been fully implemented. Digital objects were therefore abundant but institutionally fragile.

Material scarcity constrained the conversion process. Traditional drums were difficult to source and cost approximately 500-800 Malaysian ringgit (RM), while complete ngepan was also expensive. P2 stated that few people still made older forms of ketebung and questioned the suitability of some modern drums. Limited instrument numbers restricted simultaneous practice and could make participation dependent on shared association resources. One participant described using polyvinyl chloride (PVC) training drums as an inexpensive rehearsal adaptation, while recognising that these could not replace traditional instruments in performance. Objectified capital thus enabled transmission but also produced an access bottleneck.

Institutionalising competence and creating recognition

DAM institutionalised cultural competence through schedules, instructor appointments, certificates, ensemble membership and public representation. Participants completed the training cycle with a cultural evening at which they performed and received certificates. Although these certificates were not equivalent to state qualifications, they gave visible recognition to learning and helped motivate participants. More importantly, competent graduates could be absorbed into Munsang Labang. Institutionalisation therefore linked symbolic validation with continued practice.

Public performance extended recognition beyond the association. Munsang Labang received invitations from government agencies, non-governmental organisations, weddings, corporate events and festivals. Participants cited performances at the Miri International Tattoo Festival 2025, Taste of Borneo 2024, a Chinese New Year bazaar and events associated with Shell and Petronas. P2 observed that Gendang Pampat had begun to appear at weddings, where it had rarely been presented previously. P8 and P9 also reported growing recognition among Malay and Chinese residents in Miri.

Recognition functioned as institutionalised capital because it authorised the group as a representative of Iban culture and generated repeated opportunities to perform. It could also reinforce community pride and attract learners. Participants connected the public profile of Munsang Labang with increased enrolment: early classes reportedly began with about seven mostly older participants, while nearly 30 people had subsequently completed training, including children and young adults. One participant identified the youngest learner as six years old. Nevertheless, institutionalisation remained partial. Programmes relied heavily on participant fees and occasional assistance from elected representatives. There was no secure long-term funding stream, and the association had only one principal instructor at the time of fieldwork. P4 warned that a class could be cancelled if that instructor was unavailable. Recognition had therefore not yet been fully converted into resilient staffing, instrument acquisition or archival capacity.

The community cultural-capital conversion cycle

The themes can be synthesised as a four-stage conversion cycle. First, DAM mobilises embodied expertise by identifying legitimate practitioners and assembling learners. Second, it materialises and reproduces practice through ketebung, attire, rehearsal space, schedules and recordings. Third, it institutionalises competence through certificates, ensemble roles, programmes and public representation. Fourth, it converts recognition into reinvestment by attracting learners, invitations, networks and potential support. Reinvestment then expands or replenishes the embodied and material resources needed for another cycle. The resulting model is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Community cultural-capital conversion cycle for Gendang Pampat safeguarding.

The cycle is productive only when its links remain connected. Classes without performance may create dormant skills. Performances without instruction may over-rely on a shrinking group. Digital visibility without community-controlled contextualisation may generate attention but not competence. Recognition without funding, succession and instruments may remain symbolic. DAM's achievements arose from connecting these stages, while its vulnerabilities appeared at the points where conversion was incomplete.

Discussion

From participation to community governance

The findings support UNESCO's principle that communities should have a primary role in safeguarding, but they sharpen the meaning of participation. DAM did not merely attend programmes designed by external institutions. It selected instructors, determined the repertoire, organised pedagogical sequences, negotiated ritual practice, certified learners and represented Gendang Pampat publicly. This is community governance: the capacity to make and implement decisions about continuity, legitimate knowledge and cultural representation.

The case also demonstrates why local associations matter in urban contexts. Van der Hoeven's (2019) notion of networked intangible urban heritage emphasises how professionals and publics interact across physical and digital spaces. DAM performed a comparable networking role from within an Indigenous community. It connected longhouse-derived knowledge with urban learners; cultural practice with schools, agencies and festivals; and embodied performance with digital media. The association thereby compensated, at least partly, for the weakening of everyday family transmission in the city.

Community governance should not, however, be romanticised. Eichler (2021) shows that participatory heritage regimes can reproduce inequalities. In this study, governance capacity was unevenly distributed: nine of ten research participants were male, knowledge was concentrated in a small number of older practitioners, and access depended on scarce instruments and free time. These conditions indicate that community authority is necessary but not sufficient. Inclusion, succession planning and resource distribution must be addressed within the community as well as between communities and institutions.

Cultural capital is viable only when it circulates

The article extends Bourdieu's framework by showing that the value of cultural capital for living heritage lies in its circulation. Embodied skill remains vulnerable if it cannot be converted into teachable routines. Objectified resources remain inert without competence and access. Institutional recognition remains superficial if it cannot support new learning, material provision and continued performance. The empirical cycle makes these dependencies visible.

This process perspective also explains why public visibility is neither inherently beneficial nor inherently commodifying. Invitations to multi-ethnic and international events created social recognition and encouraged learners, consistent with research linking ICH to social and cultural value (Shakya & Vagnarelli, 2024). Yet participants recognised the need to preserve customary meaning and rhythmic integrity. Public recognition becomes safeguarding capital only when it is reinvested into community-defined continuity, rather than substituting stage display for practice.

The Munsang Labang ensemble was particularly important because it connected institutionalised and embodied capital. Certificates validated course completion, but ensemble membership transformed validation into sustained practice. The ensemble also created a public identity through which invitations and recognition flowed back to DAM. This finding suggests that safeguarding programmes should design post-training pathways; graduation numbers alone are a weak indicator if learners have no continuing role.

Conversion Bottlenecks and Safeguarding Risk

Three bottlenecks require attention. The first is the expertise bottleneck. Reliance on one principal instructor concentrates embodied capital and increases cancellation and knowledge-loss risk. A deliberate apprentice-instructor scheme is needed in which advanced graduates co-teach, document lessons and progressively assume responsibility. Such a scheme would convert learner competence into instructional capacity.

The second is the material bottleneck. Traditional ketebung are costly, scarce and linked to specialist making knowledge. Instrument safeguarding should therefore include an inventory, condition assessment, maker identification, repair workshops and a lending system. Training substitutes may widen entry, but clear protocols should distinguish rehearsal aids from performance instruments to avoid unintended standardisation of sound.

The third is the institutional bottleneck. Digital files are plentiful but lack a formal community archive, while funding remains episodic. Pietrobruno (2013) shows that social media can act as an informal archive, yet platform visibility does not guarantee preservation, contextual integrity or community control. Recent work on Indigenous data sovereignty further warns that digitisation can expose community knowledge to appropriation and decontextualization (Spano & Zhang, 2025). DAM therefore needs community-approved access levels, contextual metadata, consent procedures and redundant storage. A small digital archive governed by the association would strengthen objectified capital without transferring authority away from knowledge holders.

Implications and Recommendations

The conversion model offers a practical diagnostic for community organisations and supporting agencies. Safeguarding plans should evaluate not only the presence of activities but the links among them. Table 2 translates these links into priority safeguarding actions.

Table 2

Safeguarding Conversion Links, Current Strengths and Priority Actions

Conversion link	Current strength in the case	Priority action
Expertise to teaching	Recognised instructor; sequenced classes	Develop at least two assistant instructors and a documented teaching guide
Teaching practice to	Rehearsals, cultural night and Munsang Labang	Formalise a graduate-to-ensemble pathway and regular performance rotation
Objects to access	Shared drums, attire and digital recordings	Create an instrument inventory, lending system and maker/repair programme
Records to knowledge	Frequent video/audio capture	Establish a community-governed archive with metadata, consent and access rules
Recognition to resources	Frequent invitations and public visibility	Negotiate multi-year partnerships that fund teaching, instruments and archiving
Participation to inclusion	Growing youth involvement	Expand recruitment of girls, young women and families; monitor retention, not enrolment alone

For cultural agencies, support should be directed towards conversion capacity rather than one-off events. Funding an isolated festival may increase visibility, but funding instructor development, instrument provision and community archiving strengthens the full safeguarding cycle. Schools can provide recurring access to young learners through co-curricular clubs, while DAM retains authority over instructors, repertoire and cultural protocols. Universities can assist with documentation standards, acoustics, metadata and evaluation without displacing community decision-making.

Evaluation should also use multidimensional indicators. Suitable measures include the number of active rather than merely trained players; diversity and retention of learners; number of competent assistant instructors; condition and availability of instruments; completeness and controlled accessibility of records; frequency of culturally appropriate practice; and the proportion of external income or support reinvested into safeguarding. These indicators reflect viability more accurately than audience numbers alone.

Limitations and Future Research

The study is based on one association and cannot represent all Gendang Pampat lineages or Iban communities in Sarawak and Kalimantan. Most participants were association insiders, which provided detailed organisational knowledge but may also have encouraged favourable assessments. The gender distribution was uneven, and the study did not include a systematic sample of audience members, parents, inactive learners or external funders. Claims of increased recognition and participation are based on participant accounts and available documents rather than longitudinal attendance and financial records.

Future research should compare urban and longhouse transmission, examine regional rhythmic lineages, and follow learners longitudinally from enrolment to ensemble participation and teaching. Social-network analysis could test how invitations, partnerships and digital circulation affect resource flows. Participatory action research would also allow community members to co-design archive governance and safeguarding indicators. Comparative work across Indigenous associations in Borneo could determine whether the conversion cycle travels beyond this case or requires context-specific modification.

Conclusion

The safeguarding of Gendang Pampat in Miri is not a process of holding a tradition still. It is an organisational achievement through which inherited expertise, instruments, records, recognition and participation are continually assembled and converted. DAM has transformed tacit practitioner knowledge into scheduled collective learning, connected learners to the Munsang Labang ensemble, and used public and digital visibility to expand recognition. These linked activities have created new practitioners and a stronger urban presence for Gendang Pampat.

At the same time, the cycle remains vulnerable where expertise, material resources and institutional support are concentrated or insecure. The model's transferable proposition is that Indigenous living heritage remains viable when embodied, objectified and institutionalised cultural capital circulates under community authority and recognition is reinvested; conversion bottlenecks reveal where this cycle may fail. Its enactment remains context-specific: DAM's authority, the Munsang Labang pathway, the Batang Oya and Tatau lineage, ritual meanings, ketebung and ngepan belong to the urban Iban setting, while other communities must define legitimate custodianship, protocols, resources and recognition. For Gendang Pampat, the decisive question is whether the community can keep converting cultural inheritance into future practice.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is declared.

Ethics and Consent

Participants received information about the study, participated voluntarily and provided informed consent. Identifiers P1-P10 are pseudonyms. The applicable institutional ethics approval or formal exemption status will be reported through the journal's confidential submission documentation.

Permissions and Image Provenance

Figure 1 is a conceptual illustration developed from the study analysis, with AI-assisted presentation disclosed below; it is not a documentary image of participants, a field site or raw data. The tables were constructed from the study findings. No previously published third-party figure, table or extended text passage has been reproduced.

Data Availability

De-identified excerpts supporting the findings are included in the article. Full interview materials are not publicly deposited to protect participant confidentiality and culturally sensitive information.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, was used during manuscript preparation to assist with manuscript structuring, synthesis of thesis-derived material, language refinement, academic presentation and development of the conceptual illustration. It was not used to collect or generate primary research data, conduct interviews, determine participant responses or independently establish the study's findings and conclusions. All AI-assisted content, including factual statements, interpretations and references, was critically reviewed, verified and revised. Full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity and originality of the final manuscript is retained.

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