



PRESERVATION OF MANDAILING CULTURE THROUGH THE CONCEPT OF A CULTURE-FRIENDLY SCHOOL AT SD NEGERI 68 RUMBIO

PELESTARIAN BUDAYA MANDAILING MELALUI KONSEP SEKOLAH RAMAH BUDAYA DI SD NEGERI 68 RUMBIO

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Abstract

This community service activity aimed to introduce Mandailing cultural heritage to fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 68 Rumbio, Rumbio Village, North Panyabungan District, Mandailing Natal Regency. Conducted on 23 July 2026, the program involved 25 students and focused on the Tortor dance, Gordang Sambilan, traditional clothing, the Mandailing language, and values of respect and togetherness. The activity used interactive explanations, visual materials, demonstrations, and guided practice to make local cultural traditions accessible to elementary school students. Students observed illustrations, discussed the cultural elements presented, and practiced basic Tortor movements with guidance from the facilitators. Their participation was evaluated through informal observation and a brief oral question-and-answer session. Several students took part in the dance practice, while some were able to recall cultural examples during the discussion. These responses indicated immediate engagement and initial familiarity with Mandailing traditions. However, the absence of structured assessments and follow-up activities limited conclusions about learning improvement or lasting changes in attitudes. Continued collaboration between teachers, families, and local cultural practitioners is recommended to support cultural learning within everyday school activities and broader community learning opportunities.

Keywords : Mandailing Culture, Cultural Heritage, Culturally Responsive School, Elementary Education, Community Engagement.



Abstrak

Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperkenalkan warisan budaya Mandailing kepada siswa kelas empat di SD Negeri 68 Rumbio, Desa Rumbio, Kecamatan Panyabungan Utara, Kabupaten Mandailing Natal. Program yang dilaksanakan pada 23 Juli 2026 ini melibatkan 25 siswa dan berfokus pada tarian Tortor, Gordang Sambilan, pakaian adat, bahasa Mandailing, serta nilai-nilai rasa hormat dan kebersamaan. Kegiatan ini menggunakan metode penjelasan interaktif, media visual, demonstrasi, dan praktik terbimbing agar tradisi budaya lokal dapat dipahami dengan mudah oleh siswa sekolah dasar. Para siswa mengamati ilustrasi, mendiskusikan elemen-elemen budaya yang disajikan, dan mempraktikkan gerakan dasar Tortor dengan bimbingan dari para fasilitator. Partisipasi siswa dievaluasi melalui observasi informal dan sesi tanya jawab lisan singkat. Beberapa siswa turut serta dalam praktik menari, sementara sebagian lainnya mampu menyebutkan contoh-contoh budaya saat diskusi berlangsung. Respons tersebut menunjukkan adanya keterlibatan langsung dan pengenalan awal terhadap tradisi Mandailing. Namun, ketiadaan penilaian yang terstruktur serta kegiatan tindak lanjut membatasi kesimpulan mengenai peningkatan pembelajaran maupun perubahan sikap yang berkelanjutan. Kolaborasi berkelanjutan antara guru, keluarga, dan praktisi budaya setempat sangat disarankan untuk mendukung pembelajaran budaya, baik dalam kegiatan sehari-hari di sekolah maupun melalui kesempatan belajar yang lebih luas di tengah masyarakat.

Kata Kunci : Budaya Mandailing, Warisan Budaya, Sekolah yang Responsif secara Budaya, Pendidikan Dasar, Keterlibatan Komunitas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage includes practices, knowledge, expressions, and social values transmitted across generations. Its continuity depends not only on formal preservation efforts but also on opportunities for younger generations to encounter and interpret it in everyday life. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage emphasizes transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education (UNESCO, 2003).

Elementary education offers an important setting for such encounters. Children can learn about local traditions through stories, images, movement, language, and shared experiences that connect school knowledge with community life. Culturally relevant pedagogy recognizes the importance of students' cultural experiences in learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995), while culturally responsive teaching encourages educators to treat cultural backgrounds as educational resources (Gay, 2010).

Mandailing communities in North Sumatra maintain a rich cultural repertoire. The Tortor dance, Gordang Sambilan musical ensemble, traditional dress, regional language, and customary forms of respect are among the elements through which identity and social relationships are expressed. Cultural forms should be presented with attention to their contexts rather than treated merely as entertainment or decoration.

Tortor has ceremonial and philosophical dimensions in Mandailing customary life, as discussed by Dewi et al. (2022). Gordang Sambilan is likewise associated with Mandailing cultural heritage and local preservation efforts (Alwiyah & Rusdi, 2021). These examples provide accessible starting points for introducing children to both tangible representations and the meanings attached to local traditions.

Rapid social change and the circulation of digital media can alter the ways children encounter local traditions. Cultural change itself is an ongoing social process (Baharuddin, 2015). Therefore, school-based cultural education should not assume that traditions are static; instead, it can help students recognize continuity, variation, and respectful participation in community life.

In this article, a culturally responsive school refers to an educational setting that makes room for local cultural knowledge, respectful interaction, and opportunities for students to participate in age-appropriate cultural learning. This is an operational approach used for the present activity, not a claim that the school has achieved a formally assessed institutional designation. The broader value of



cultural diversity in education is recognized in international policy (UNESCO, 2005; UNESCO, 2015).

The community service team selected SD Negeri 68 Rumbio in Rumbio Village, North Panyabungan District, Mandailing Natal Regency, as the setting for an introductory activity with fourth-grade students. The original activity record documents the materials delivered and students' responses, but does not provide a formal baseline survey of cultural knowledge or evidence of an established school-wide cultural program. Consequently, the identified need is framed as an opportunity for cultural introduction, rather than an empirically demonstrated deficit among students.

This community service article aims to describe the implementation of a Mandailing cultural introduction on 23 July 2026, report observable student participation, and discuss the potential and limitations of using interactive and visual activities as an initial step toward a culturally responsive school environment. Its contribution is a transparent account of a small-scale school activity and practical recommendations for follow-up, not a causal assessment of educational effectiveness.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The community service activity was conducted on 23 July 2026 at SD Negeri 68 Rumbio, Rumbio Village, North Panyabungan District, Mandailing Natal Regency. The participants were 25 fourth-grade students. The activity was designed as an introductory, school-based cultural learning session rather than a controlled intervention or experimental study. The precise session duration and the number of facilitators are not documented in the available source material.

The preparation phase involved coordination with the school about the activity schedule, participants, and content. The team prepared age-appropriate explanations and visual materials about Mandailing culture. The instructional sequence was organized around the Tortor dance, Gordang Sambilan, traditional clothing, regional language, and everyday values such as courtesy and cooperation.

During implementation, facilitators first introduced the idea of a culturally responsive school in simple terms. They then used interactive explanation and illustrations to discuss the cultural topics. Students were invited to ask questions and observe demonstrations, and several students practiced basic Tortor movements with guidance. Gordang Sambilan and traditional dress were introduced through visual materials rather than hands-on instrument practice.

Evaluation relied on direct, informal observation of student engagement and a brief oral question-and-answer session at the end. The team attended to participation in activities, willingness to respond, and the ability of some students to recall cultural examples. No standardized observation checklist, written test, pretest–posttest comparison, or delayed follow-up was documented; therefore, no numerical learning outcomes or claims of attitude change are reported.

The available observations were summarized descriptively and interpreted in relation to the objectives of cultural introduction. The activity sequence can be represented as follows: school coordination and material preparation → interactive cultural introduction → guided demonstration and practice → observation and oral questions → descriptive reflection. This is a process summary, not a data collection instrument or a statistical analysis model.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The activity began with an introduction to Tortor as a traditional dance associated with Mandailing customary events. Students viewed images, listened to explanations about the dance and its meanings, and were invited to try basic movements. Several students participated in the demonstration. This observation supports a limited conclusion that the format enabled immediate participation; it does not show how much knowledge each student acquired. Cultural instruction that incorporates students' backgrounds can provide a meaningful entry point to learning (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995).



Figure 1. Introducing the Tortor dance to fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 68 Rumbio.

The next session introduced Gordang Sambilan, a traditional Mandailing ensemble comprising nine drums of different sizes. Facilitators used images to explain its appearance and customary uses. Students observed the illustrations and listened to the explanation. Because no instruments were played by the students, the activity should be described as visual familiarization rather than practical music instruction. This focus is consistent with accounts of Gordang Sambilan as a cultural heritage element requiring ongoing preservation (Alwiyah & Rusdi, 2021).



Figure 2. Visual introduction to the traditional Gordang Sambilan ensemble.



Traditional Mandailing clothing was introduced through images highlighting shapes, colors, ornaments, and customary contexts. The team linked the discussion to Tortor and Gordang Sambilan to illustrate how different cultural expressions may appear within ceremonial settings. This thematic connection can help learners recognize cultural elements as parts of a wider social practice rather than isolated objects. However, the available records do not establish whether students could independently explain these connections after the session.



Figure 3. Introducing Mandailing traditional clothing to students.

The activity also addressed the Mandailing language and everyday etiquette, including respect for parents, teachers, and peers. During oral questions, some students recalled cultural elements and offered examples of respectful behavior. These responses are useful descriptive evidence of immediate engagement and initial recall, but the absence of a structured baseline and follow-up means that knowledge gains and lasting changes in attitudes cannot be measured. In educational evaluation, claims should be proportionate to the evidence collected (Patton, 2015).

The experience suggests that local cultural content can be integrated into school activities through accessible visual and participatory methods. The culturally responsive school approach proposed here would require continuity beyond a single visit, for example through classroom projects, arts activities, appropriate use of the local language, and cooperation with families and cultural practitioners. Such continuity is compatible with approaches that place culture and community knowledge within education (Banks, 2008; Smith, 2012; UNESCO, 2003). These are recommendations for future practice, not outcomes already demonstrated by the present activity.

The main strengths of the activity were its use of familiar local cultural material, direct student participation, and a combination of images and demonstration. Its limitations were a single implementation, descriptive observations without standardized records, and no assessment of retention or longer-term school practices. Further activities could document participation more systematically, collect short before-and-after responses, and seek feedback from teachers and cultural resource persons, while obtaining appropriate school and family permissions for any student data or photographs used in publication.

4. CONCLUSION

The community service activity at SD Negeri 68 Rumbio on 23 July 2026 introduced 25 fourth-grade students to several elements of Mandailing heritage, including Tortor, Gordang Sambilan,



traditional clothing, the regional language, and values of courtesy and togetherness. The session combined visual explanation, interaction, demonstration, and guided practice.

The principal observable result was student participation during the session. Several students practiced basic Tortor movements, attended to the cultural illustrations, and answered simple oral questions. These observations indicate immediate engagement and some initial recall, but they cannot establish measurable improvement in knowledge or long-term changes in cultural attitudes.

A strength of the activity was its practical connection between local cultural expressions and age-appropriate learning experiences. Its participatory format provided opportunities for students to encounter traditions through more than verbal explanation. The activity also offered a starting point for discussing how local culture may have a place in school life.

The principal limitations were the one-day implementation and the reliance on informal observation and oral questioning. No standardized instrument, baseline assessment, comparison group, or follow-up was available. Accordingly, the findings should be understood as a descriptive account of implementation rather than proof of program effectiveness.

Future programs should involve teachers and, where possible, local cultural practitioners in sustained activities. Schools may consider cultural projects, arts practice, and respectful everyday use of local language and values. More systematic, ethically collected evaluation data would help determine whether these activities contribute to enduring cultural understanding and participation.

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