



Dear Friends and Supporters. Here is our latest newsletter sharing with you some of the wonderful moments at Caracol. With the support of Claudia as editor, the texts and photographs have been produced by Aide who now coordinates Caracol's communication with the regional networks.

Caracol contributes to community development and social transformation through long and short-term arts-based programmes, public presentations and intercultural exchange in Belize and in Central America.

One and a half years ago we started the Caracol Working Scholarship programme with three working scholars – young people who earn a monthly stipend while learning how to design and coordinate project activities (a bit like an apprenticeship). Today we have seven working scholars and eighty members just in Arenal! We also run workshops outside of our home community and collaborate with other groups in the area with whom we hope to establish permanent links. Since October 2010, a United States Embassy initiative, the CARSI project, has been supporting our programmes and will do so for two full years.

Once again thank you for your continued interest in our project and our goals. We all continue working hard to make sure more and more children benefit from the Caracol methodology of youth and community development. **From everybody at Caracol, Belize-Guatemala**

II International Conference for an Integral Life

Between 25th and 28th October Caracol participated in this conference in Guatemala City. The conference brought together more than three hundred people from all over Central America to discuss new regional laws on youth. The conference also aimed to share effective methods of youth development and ways to increase youth security and their involvement in community.

Presentation for Belize Telemedia Limited

At the invitation of the Town Mayor Caracol stilt walkers and clowns took over the streets of Benque Viejo del Carmen for the reopening of the Belize Telemedia office by participating in a Grand Parade with marching bands.

FemFoto Exhibition, Barcelona

Caracol youth coordinators Aide Sanchez and Maritza Barrera participated in a collective exhibition of female Central American photographers in Barcelona in December 2010. Aide presented views from Arenal and Maritza presented images captured with her homemade pinhole camera. The exhibition curator, Lucía Morán writes; "Six young photographers show their work in this exhibition, taking the audience closer to distant realities and inviting reflections from a distinct angle. Contemporary realities born from the cultural diversity of Central America; as complex as it is intense."



Beyond the Borders

Más Allá de las Fronteras, or Beyond the Borders, was the name of an art show that took place in Chetumal, Mexico where Caracol's Living on the Borderline Exhibition came back to life. Caracol played a central role at the collective, as the

central topic was the culture of cross-border community. Other participants and audiences were visibly impressed with Caracol's work and we took the opportunity to talk about the Central American networks we work with. It was the first time for Caracol to be part of an international collective show representing Belize.



Creative Exchange

The bimonthly workshops delivered at the OAS Adjacency Zone September, November, February and April have seen the continuation of a 'Creative Exchange' between young people from Melchor de Mencos (Petén, Guatemala), Benque Viejo del Carmen and San José Succotz (Cayo District, Belize) delivered by young Arenal Coordinators. On 16th April the facilitator team included four young Caracol coordinators, having Maritza, Kevin and Hugo delivering activities, Aidé coordinating the logistics and supporting the facilitators, as well as documenting and leading some games. The numbers of participants always fluctuates, but there is already a sense of ownership shown by the behaviour of most participants. The recycling crafts and the exchange allows this small group of youngsters to enjoy their opportunity for peaceful living and sharing together.

Independence Day Celebrations

On the 21st of September Caracol paraded along the streets of Benque Viejo del Carmen at the invitation of the Town Mayor. The names of 'Caracol' and 'Arenal' were honoured by the young Caracoles' performance. The crowds lining the streets showed their excitement and respect for our work congratulating us during the parade and cheering the group all the way around town.



A History of Arenal by Mr. Giovanni Pinelo

We invited the Caracoles' parents to a presentation on the history of western Belize. Mr Giovanni Pinelo, historian and history teacher at Our Lady of Mount Carmel High School, presented findings of his Masters thesis. Parents were impressed because they identified some of their relatives in the ancient documents. Many young Caracoles were also present. After the presentation we talked about the importance of knowing our history and documenting events. The dialogue between parents and Caracoles started when memories of their parents came to mind and they shared them with all.

Jugando Limpio (Playing Fair)

On 2nd October nearly eighty girls and boys from Arenal Guatemala and Belize gathered in the football field to play traditional games of Arenal. They were separated into four groups. The activity, named Jugando Limpio por el Mopan, was organized by Caracol and we talked about the importance of recycling and conservation. Prizes of school supplies were given to all participants for first, second, third and fourth places awarded for group participation and performance. All participants of each group received the same prizes. Some parents even forgot about their daily concerns and came out to enjoy the games. At the end of the activity a snack of banana and sweet potato pudding, made by Caracol mums, and lemonade was served to the participants.



Chitic Stilt Walker Festival 2010

At Caracol we ended 2010 with presentations and workshops. The stilt walkers received theatrical workshops by Braulio Padilla (student of the National School of Dramatic Arts,

Guatemala) in preparation for the 7th Chitic Parade. Thirteen Caracoles went to Esquipulas, Chiquimula, in Guatemala representing Arenal, Caracol and Belize. Nearly three hundred stilt walkers from Central America met in Esquipulas. The judges recognized our group work and we brought home three awards, Best Ecological Costume, Best International Parade and Best Female Stilt Walker.



Calle, Fuego y Tambor

Between 8th and 12th December Calle Fuego y Tambor, a group of young artists from Costa Rica, visited Caracol in Arenal to deliver workshops on juggling, acrobatics, and clown. Two half-day sessions were opened to the whole community for the workshops. The rest of the days were dedicated to the Caracoles. A meeting was organized for the Arenal community, especially the parents of the stilt walkers, to publicly present the Chitic awards and to thank them and other people for their support to Caracol. On the same day the video documentary produced by Chanel 15 of the University of Costa Rica, *Caracol Arte Comunitario que Transforma*, was shown to the community. The workshops, given by Calle Fuego y Tambor, ended with a short show for the parents with the children showing acrobatics exercises they had learnt during the week; everybody was impressed.



The Importance of Playing

To end the working year, Caracol's coordinators received a three-day methodology of play workshop delivered by Marco Antonio Leonor, director of Caja Lúdica of Guatemala. The workshop was designed to help us make use of "ludo-pedagogy" or teaching with games, when we deliver our activities. During the workshop we had the chance to review theory, improvise games and invent new games. We learnt the rules of many games and how to modify them when necessary.

Peña Cultural

The first Peña Cultural organized by Caracol was held at the Centennial Park in Benque Viejo del Carmen. A Peña Cultural is a spontaneous free event that brings people together to experience performances by local artists. Calle Fuego y Tambor did a clown and acrobatics show including juggling. Local artist Ian Hernández played his flute, Euphoria dance group delighted everybody and two rapper duets made their voices heard. The video *Caracol Arte Comunitario que Transforma* was also shown and Caracol stilt walkers presented their costumes created for

Chitic 2010. For this occasion Caracol provided a bus for the Caracoles and their families from Arenal who were invited to attend the cultural night.

Toilet Construction

The construction of the toilet with recycled bottles by Julio Garcia and other Caracoles is now finished with only the decoration and landscaping details left to complete. Plastic bottles (known as eco-bricks) were used as filling for the walls. This recycling technique was learned by Julio at the School of Mime and Comedy in Nicaragua and he also used it for the construction of a bench in the garden at La Casita. The



Caracoles who worked on the construction received a plastering workshop by Julio, which enabled them to complete the project. The funds for the construction were donated in memory of Mrs Audrey Willmott and by friends of Caracol through efforts coordinated by one of our trustees, Mrs Liz Moulton.

RAPP

Recycled Art Permanent Programme is the name of a new activity organised by the coordinators of Caracol. It includes arts with recycling materials and video projections. La Casita de Caracol is where more than 70 Caracoles receive their workshops every two weeks. On Tuesdays they receive a hands-on activity where we talk about the importance of recycling. On Thursdays a movie or a documentary is projected and at the end all participate in a discussion about what was shown so that we all understand that every movie has a message.



Make up and juggling are new workshops that are being delivered to Caracol's members by facilitator, Maritza Barrera. The ten participants in the makeup workshop are being trained to be the makeup artists for the Stilt walker group and for future Caracol events. There are sixteen participants in the juggling workshop, which also forms part of RAPP.

Parents Meetings

We continue to meet with the parents of the Caracoles at our little house, La Casita de Caracol. We talk about what we have been doing recently and of our future plans. At the meeting in February we also talked to them about the responsibility that we have assumed with Deacon Cal, Manager of the Immaculate R.C School (the Arenal Belize Primary School), to support the children with a homework club. At the end of the meeting we served some snacks and showed them the finished toilet construction. Some parents said they feel very happy having their children as part of Caracol and that they are certain their children are learning something good instead of wasting time out side on the streets learning things that will not benefit them.

Visitors

Our trustees from England Mrs Myra and Mr Stuart Ottley visited la Casita de Caracol in February. We had a meeting, requested by them, to talk about our experiences as Coordinators of Caracol and our future vision of Caracol. Mrs Myra delivered a workshop on knitting for the Caracol youth coordinators and when the mothers heard about the knitting workshop, they asked to have one for themselves! Our other Trustees Mrs Liz and Mr Brian Moulton also visited la Casita de Caracol in March. Mrs Liz delivered a card-making workshop using tea bag folding for the Caracol youth coordinators, and a session on knitting for those mothers who wanted to learn how to knit.

Networks (RGAC & MARACA)

Between 24th and 27th of March was the coordinator's encounter of the Guatemalan Community Arts Network (RGAC) in two different locations in Guatemala. Kevin Guerra, Aide Sanchez, Caracol Youth Coordinators and Ms Claudia, Caracol Director participated. Ms Claudia and Kevin went to San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango to the encounter where work-groups were defined for a Festival-Encounter that we, as network members, will be coordinating with other groups. The festival will take place in June 2011 in Huehuetenango, Guatemala. This was Kevin's first encounter and he did a good job representing Caracol. Aide was in Guatemala City in a communication workshop with other members of RGAC. The Caracol blog was activated and the first note uploaded. Both activities were considered as one because the communication between the two groups was active, and the overall objective was the same for the two venues.

Jugando Limpio for Your Rights

The second edition of Jugando Limpio (Playing Fair) was dedicated to Childrens' Rights. Around seventy children attended from Arenal Belize and Arenal Guatemala. We played some of the games we had learnt at the workshop with Antonio Leonor the director of Caja Lúdica last December. The coordination team was separated into four groups and each group had their colour; blue (air), green (water), red (fire) yellow (earth) and we distributed the participants into these groups. Information about the Rights of the Child was shared and the groups were able to comment and think of rights they believe children should have. The comments the children gave were very impressive as they clearly reflected their particular understanding of life. Reflections and creativity were motivated around four elements that, according to the Maya cosmivision, give life to everything existing in our Universe; Earth or Soil, Water, Wind or Air and Fire. Songs, rhymes and posters as well as acrobatics, mime, and choreographies were produced and presented.



Festival of Lights

With high energy and enthusiasm the Caracoles presented for the second time at the Festival of Lights in Cristo Rey. The presentation included juggling, acrobatics and the increasingly famous stilt walkers. The group of jugglers presented for the first time outside Arenal. In the acrobatics presentations all jugglers and stilt walkers participated. The stilt walkers performed a choreography wearing the costumes produced for the Chitic Festival.



The new face painters helped to face paint all Caracoles for the first time since their workshops began. This was an excellent opportunity for them to broaden their work as a team by helping the production as well as actually presenting. The audience was very impressed and commented on the good job Caracol did. Four Caracoles also participated at a mini chess tournament and two showed their fire-spinning skills. Parents and other relatives of the participants were invited to attend. Some of them went and proudly enjoyed the presentations.

MARACA, Methology Encounter in El Salvador

With love and enthusiasm around seventy people from Central America got together in San Antonio los Ranchos in El Salvador for a methodology exchange. From Caracol Maritza Barrera, Kevin Guerra, Claudia Orantes and Aide Sanchez participated. Maritza delivered a pinhole camera workshop with the support of Ms Claudia; Kevin participated in the Capoeira and Sea-Life Crafts workshops. Aide worked with the communication team documenting the event.

Alternative Photographic Techniques Workshop

Laura Blacklow, profesor from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, visited Caracol for a second time in April. During five days she taught antique photographic techniques – Van Dyke Brown and Cyanotype – which were originally invented 170 years ago. With these techniques we used large negatives (printed digitally) and combined them with drawings, flowers and leaves and then placed them in the sun to expose. The final compositions, combined with the rich colours of the exposed chemicals, were very artistic. Laura also showed us how to draw using the contour technique which helps us pay attention to detail. On the final day Laura shared her methodologies for teaching and evaluating art.

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