



Caracol
Youth Community
Development

New Year 2016



Hello again to Friends of Caracol and best wishes from Belize and Guatemala. It's been a longer time than usual since our last newsletter and so much has happened with the community work that we won't attempt to tell you everything. However, we'll try to bring you up to date with the major achievements of the last months and the changes that have taken place.

01. JADE

The most important development was the transition of the project in Arenal from a Caracol-YCD managed initiative to a collaborative partnership. Five youth coordinators who have been working with Caracol for many years founded an autonomous organisation called Caracol of JADE. For all of us in Caracol the aim has been to enable the young people to obtain their independence.

The group decided to keep the word 'Caracol' in their organisation's formal name in recognition of its roots, but they are informally known as JADE (in English, Youth of Arenal for Development and Equity). JADE is a precious (often green) stone, found in the region, that was of great importance to the Ancient Maya.

Since October 2014 JADE have been managing a two year grant, awarded through an application process as part of a larger project. Caracol continues to provide personal and group guidance and technical support, as well as financial review and auditing.



02. Teacher Training



Next you'll find reports and comments about our different activities. Best wishes to you all.

Claudia Orantes & Jon Ottley

Now that JADE has taken responsibility for the programme in Arenal, Caracol has been able to focus on new initiatives. In October 2014 we agreed a two year project with the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARS). This project includes a new activity, a university-accredited diploma course for teachers and community workers in Education Pertaining to Play & Artistic Expression (Educación Lúdica y Expresión Artística in Spanish). Caracol will award up to 100 scholarships to Belizeans and Guatemalans during the next two years.

JADE becoming independent and the delivery of the training course in arts and play are two long-awaited Caracol aspirations and we're delighted to share these positive developments with you. Thank you all once again for your support, which has helped make these advances much easier.

03.

Positive reaction to new Diploma Course

The diploma course in Education Pertaining to Play & Artistic Expression provides participants with the tools to teach their subject or grade using art and games. The course is based on an existing methodology developed by our partner Caja Lúdica, which Caracol has adapted to its local context by working with eight course facilitators. The Superior School of Art of the University of San Carlos, Guatemala endorses the diploma and Caracol has worked with the Ministry of Education in both countries to ensure that teachers who graduate obtain professional development credit hours in recognition of their efforts.

This is a way for Caracol to increase the impact of methodologies we believe to be positive for children's development, and introduce them in a way that reaches more children. It's important to emphasise, however, that this new initiative is in addition to our regular programmes, which are continuing as before.

As this is such a new activity for Caracol we asked participants to share their experiences so far. Here are some of their reflections.



The experience with Caracol has been motivating and positively educational, as it has opened my mind, imagination, creativity and intellect. The Diploma is a wonderful experience the likes of which I have not experienced previously.
Mariela Cocom, Participant

For me the Diploma course has been very important because I learn and teach what I have learned in many ways.

Modesto Lara, Participant

The diploma course has helped me have greater confidence when teaching and when speaking in public. When I am delivering my lesson to the cadets, to students, to children in the summer programs and other activities I feel the change in the classes I am facilitating. The games we learn in each module help me to eliminate tension in the children and encourage participation. I have noticed improvement in my teaching, body language, communication and drawing and in general I am more secure in what I am doing. I encourage others to take this course, which is so useful and fun it helps us lose the fear of trying something new and helps us develop skills we never knew we could.

Ricky Cunil, Participant

My experience has been fantastic. Since day one the diploma has been a positive energy of much enthusiasm, companionship, development surprises and, more than anything good fun and learning.
Rosalio Penados, Participant

04.

GUDIEL RUIZ

Caracol welcomes back an old friend

Some of you may recall the name. He was an original member of the group in Arenal formed in January 2005. Friends of Caracol in the UK raised funds to support him through high school. After graduating he obtained another scholarship and studied to be a teacher. Recently Gudiel carried out his internship in Arenal and is the first teacher from the community. It is a source of great satisfaction for us to have him participating in the Diploma Course, and he feels likewise: The years I was with Caracol have served me well because I learned many things I have been able to use in my life. I feel part of Caracol again thanks to this diploma course

that I am taking. Many of the activities remind me of what I learned in Caracol which I have put into practice in my profession as a teacher.



05.

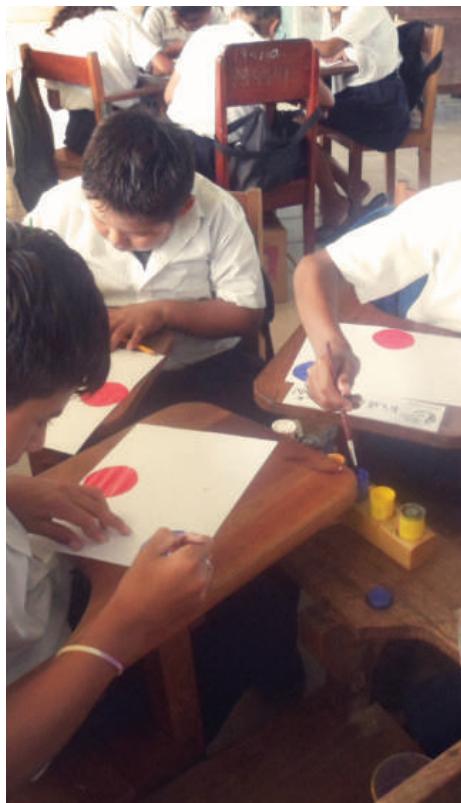
Carpentry proves its worth

The carpentry workshop started in 2013 and now serves a number of functions. With Rodolfo Marroquin in charge it's currently producing low cost furniture for sale in the village and items for use at La Casita. The workshop is also used for woodwork classes for children at risk from leaving primary school. Rodolfo is becoming a skilled carpenter and Caracol will continue to provide apprenticeship sessions with Don Jose Ascencio (our carpentry teacher), so Rodolfo will continue to develop this valuable skill.



06.

Arts in the Class // Murals



Rigoberto Chicoj, an urban artist from Guatemala, has been living in Arenal for nearly three years. A skilled painter and facilitator, Rigo or 'Nahual' (his artistic pseudonym) has been contracted by Caracol to deliver programmes of arts and games in two schools in the border area. Together with JADE youth coordinators he has led four courses in the last two years, all of which have included the creation of murals as their end product. Rigo is a positive addition to the Caracol family and his ability to share key values with children during his course has been a great gain.





The Chesham Rotary Club approved a grant for Caracol to improve the infrastructure at La Casita Youth Development & Community Arts Centre in Arenal. The project helped fund children's furniture, crash mats for training, water filters, and other general site improvements.

The British High Commission approved a grant for 2015-2016 to assist Caracol in meeting its obligations with the CARSI Project mentioned above. This has helped fund the costs of regional exchange, training, Arts in the Classroom and some equipment.

Our loyal friends in the UK, meanwhile, have raised over £17,000 in 2015. This amazing sum is in no small way the result of tireless fundraising by Myra Ottley and Liz Moulton, with the help of family and friends. As well as annual events like plant sales and coffee mornings, a special film show was held in the summer. We offer everyone involved our most sincere thanks.

07.

We are JADE A Message from the Caracoles of JADE

Caracol of JADE is a group of five young people, two from Arenal Guatemala (Dina and Rodolfo) and three from Arenal Belize (Aide, Delcy and Maritza) who have been receiving training in leadership and project management with Caracol-YCD. JADE became officially independent on 1 October 2014.

At the beginning one of the unusual things for us was the transformation into another organisation with its own identity. On 11 October 2014, during the first International Festival of Caracoles (FIC), JADE was publicly and officially introduced to the community. The Festival was entirely organised and produced by us with in-kind support from Caracol-YCD, the community, and local and regional partner groups.

One of the main challenges we've faced has been maintaining a focus on the work in the local community while continuing our participation in local and regional networks. The solution is that some JADE members will participate in networks with Caracol, rather than JADE applying for its own membership.

Other challenges have been managing our communications,

such as email and Facebook, and learning to distribute tasks fairly while taking advantage of each member's interests and skills.

Thanks to Caracol, JADE has the use of a fully equipped Youth Development & Community Arts Centre, La Casita, where most of our workshops are delivered. We have a two year work plan offering various programmes for the children of both Arenal Belize and Arenal Guatemala. Very importantly, JADE has the support of the families who continue to send their children to La Casita to receive workshops and school support in subjects including Homework Club, Playing Fair, Arts and Crafts, Juggling, Chess, Environmental Club and Carpentry.

As well as the activities at La Casita we also deliver programmes for the two primary schools in our village. These include Sewing, Arts and Play in the Classroom and Carpentry for Arenal Belize and Arts and Play in the Classroom for Arenal Belize and Guatemala.

A big thank you to all our friends who have supported our learning over the years.



08.

Arenal International Festival 2014 & 2015 & RGAC Festival Encounter

The first activity for JADE as an independent group was the production of the 2014 International Festival of Caracoles in Arenal. Young artists from Belize and Guatemala arrived for two days of workshops and artistic and cultural presentations. It was one of the most easy-going, well-produced events we have attended and was organised entirely by JADE. Claudia had the role of MC and Jon coordinated transport and immigration. Support was received from many community groups and individuals including ex-members of Caracol, who helped with temporary repairs to

the old community centre roof, and logistics. It was a big family celebration of youth community arts and more than 350 villagers came out to watch Marimba, Dance, Storytelling, Acrobatics, Theatre and Juggling.



9.

The event was such a success that the second International Festival of Caracoles took place in October 2015. Once again young artists from Belize and Guatemala came together to give workshops, parade and give artistic presentations.

In July 2015, Caracol also hosted a Festival-Encounter of member groups of the Guatemalan Community Arts Network providing the community with free arts workshops and a Cultural Night of performance.



RIGOBERTO CHICOJ

Now we are three

Caracol is now three groups of people in different points of the planet working together to promote the actions, values and objectives that define our work:

01.

Caracol-YCD (UK) – Assessing and promoting our “work in the field” through the Board of Trustees. The Trustees also motivate our support community through a range of fundraising activities that give life to Caracol in the UK.

02.

Caracol of JADE in Arenal is our main partner in Belize working along the lines of Community Development and Community Arts. They support Caracol-YCD initiatives in their community and outside.

03.

When JADE was born, Caracol-YCD (Belize-Guatemala), returned to being two members, Jon and Claudia, but since November 2015 has a new staff member Community Artist 'Nahual', Rigoberto Chicoj.



SANTIAGO

Caracol family

Aide Sanchez, original member of Caracol in Arenal since January 2005, had her first child in December 2014. Santiago is the newest addition to the Caracol family and is already on the membership list for all programmes.

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