



Once again a big "thankyou" to the friends of Caracol for their continued support and may 2018 be a wonderful year for everyone.



Caracol
Youth Community
Development

Friends of Caracol,

Welcome once again to the Caracol Newsletter. In the last edition you may recall that Caracol had just finished producing the first Teacher Training Diploma Course in Education Through Arts and Play. At the time we were beginning the second edition of the Diploma. We are pleased to share with all our friends and supporters that the second course ended well and Caracol graduated 67 teachers from 18 communities and 20 schools in Belize and Guatemala.

This last year has been one of transition for Caracol. During the past 14 years the project changed, developed and grew into an organisation funded through grants from international donors with essential funding from our UK network. These funds, together with In Kind support from the Central American communities have helped increase impact and quality through exchange.

Caracol has been lucky with grant funders who have always been enthusiastic about the innovative design of the programs. More recently, funding has been harder to find and has become administratively "heavy" to manage. Caracol and JADE have decided to return to the essence of how Caracol originally came to life; working at a community level using the resources, volunteers and skills available locally and through exchange. During 2017 JADE continued operating using funds they had generated through artistic presentations and workshops. This transition has been a liberating experience; less time demands for administration and more ability to respond to opportunities that appear outside of strict project timelines.

Thanks to the tireless work of our Trustees in the UK and in particular Liz Moulton and Myra Ottley, as well as our supporters, Caracol is in a good position to continue its work in Belize and Guatemala. We are able to continue building new partnerships, to participate in regional networks and maintain our long term link with Arenal through La Casita and, more recently, through a grant to JADE.



★★★
 CONCLUSION
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Caracol- CARSI
 PROJECT

Caracol first began to work with the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) in 2010. We produced six years of continuous programs of youth development, community arts, teacher training, youth exchange and networking. By combining community In Kind contributions, Caracol’s own fund raising and CARSI budgets Caracol’s activities reached out to thousands’s of beneficiaries in more than fifty communities throughout the region during the six years. The staff administering the CARSI funding always offered the necessary support to Caracol and never required us to make changes according to their needs. In August 2017, the final sign-off letter was received to officially close the project.

Between February and May 2017 Caracol delivered advanced courses for graduates of the Diploma Course. Three subject areas were chosen based on participant preferences shared in evaluations, these included Music by Oscar Conde, Games & Play in the classroom and basics of Drawing and use of Colour by Claudia Orantes assisted by Nahual Chicoj.

UPGRADING
The Diploma
 CLASSES

These upgrading sessions were poorly attended and showed that teachers find it hard to free-up their time to participate in extra training without the benefit of Credit Hours. Nevertheless, an average of eight graduates (from a group of 67) participated in the two-day sessions and all expressed their appreciation during the evaluations. Caracol is not set up to do the work of the Ministries of Education and from this experience we have confirmed that the education systems in both countries are focussed on results and struggle to adopt more innovative learning experiences.

Caracol’s plan to train key teachers as facilitators to multiply the methodology in the Cayo and Petén areas of Belize and Guatemalan has proved very difficult to implement at this stage. However, we continue to look for allies who embrace this initiative and with whom we can work to continue implementing the teacher training programs.



Caracol of JADE

Activities During
2017

Since January 2017 JADE has been experimenting with our scheduling of activities to find the best model that suits the coordinators and their responsibilities to their families and homes. During the year we have produced the following programs using the funds we had saved through our presentations with support from Caracol and other organisations.



Circus

When Maritza returned from receiving circus training in Guatemala City she had learned many new skills and techniques. She was able to work with the children and young people in Arenal, especially the stilt walkers, and delivered workshops in aerial and floor acrobatics.



Jugando Limpio (Playing Fair)

With the participation of boys and girls from Arenal Belize and Arenal Guatemala we at JADE continue to produce this Playing Fair activity (in Spanish Jugando Limpio). One event was delivered at the Primary School on the Guatemala side of the village and had the objective of promoting Human Rights and responsibilities. We decided to have the event at the school because some children find it difficult to cross into Arenal Belize (despite there being no official borders). It was raining hard at the start of the event but we still had full participation and were able to promote the idea of the rights of the child, healthy friendships and a life without discrimination.

The next Playing Fair event was focussed on the environment and took place in Arenal Belize. The young people who currently receive leadership workshops were able to contribute to the production of the activity and helped document using photography and share out the prizes of school supplies to all members of the five teams.



Homework Club

The daily Homework Club has been one of the priorities of JADE for this year because, after so many years of providing this service, the activity has become a necessity for the children, young people and mothers of the community. The Homework Club provides a space, materials, internet and the experience of the JADE coordinators to children needing to complete assignments for school.



Saturday Workshops

Each Saturday children and teenagers meet at La Casita to participate in Creative Workshops during which they work and learn together. The coordinators prepare different playful activities as we believe that it is so much easier to learn through play.



III International Festival of Caracoles



In March the Third International Festival of Caracoles took place in Arenal. Once again artists from the region travelled to support the event with their performances, workshops and technical skills. The festival was organised by JADE with support from Caracol and many other organisations. Local businesses responded to letters sent out by JADE inviting donations of materials, groceries, loans of equipment, and everything else needed to produce the event. JADE also managed to obtain free passes for all visitors to visit the Sacred Maya Site of Xunantunich where the closing ceremony was held.

Pre School at La Casita

Two weeks of creative activities focussed on preparing children to enter primary school were delivered in August. This year, mothers had requested the activity after its success the year before. They had noticed that the process had helped the confidence of the children and had prepared them well for their first day of school. JADE offers a large, friendly space to play where the children can concentrate on being free with their ideas while learning through play.



Carpentry

Youth Coordinator, Rodolfo Marroquín continues to run the Carpentry Workshop and uses his time to produce furniture for sale in the local community and beyond. This activity generates an income for JADE, covers the cost of the workshop and creates a source of personal income for Rodolfo. Each week a small group of young men continue to receive woodwork classes, also with Rodolfo.



Parading

This year the teenagers from the new stilt walking group had their first participation in the traditional Independence Day Parade in the neighbouring town of Benque Viejo del Carmen. The team, made up mainly of young women, had been invited by the House of Culture and the National Institute of Culture and History. The group also performed in the Independence Day Parade with the Primary School in Arenal.



One day during the 2016 Christmas holidays I came across an advert for an intensive circus course offered by Batz, Guatemala's newly established Circus School. From that moment on I could not think of anything other than how to participate in the process. I started making calls. First to Batz to obtain more details then to JADE, the organisation I was working with and to Caracol-YCD the organization that has provided many years of training to the youth of JADE. Everything worked out and I was able to experience my circus training.

Going to live in Guatemala City for three months enabled me to live life from different angles. I made new friends and found old friends (from previous youth encounters) and at the same time had to find ways to cope with the challenges and abuse in the streets that we women live day to day.

During this time I got to know my body better. I discovered new weaknesses and new strengths. Working the body in a disciplined way was difficult at first and then became steadily harder, because in circus there are no limits as there is always something more to learn. It was enriching to learn from teachers who are experts in what they do and thanks to this opportunity and a half scholarship from Caracol I was able to not only receive classes but also live one of my dreams. Now I have access to the skills and equipment to continue my formation in circus.

Traditionally it is important to say "thank you" three times. Gracias, Gracias, Gracias. Thankyou to JADE, to Caracol, to Batz, my friends, to my class colleagues and teachers for making efforts to ensure that young dreamers, like me, can grow as human beings, as artists or whatever we want to be.



Caracol has gradually evolved in the last few years to become a 'non-physical' space for facilitating transformative-healing processes with a participative methodology that motivates creativity and expression. The activities are designed to help participants improve their own communities. In order to achieve these goals we need to offer each individual the space to firstly focus on their own wellbeing to go on to support, guide or accompany others. BioDance is a system designed to facilitate the balance of the body and mind through the use of music and movement that allow physiological changes that have a positive impact

For us working with communities, self-care and self-healing become essential tools both for our work and our daily lives; as individuals we are all solving 'issues' even when not conscious of it. More often than not, discomfort comes from within even when we place it somewhere else. Having the tools to reconnect with and perceive ourselves as the creators of our own life experiences gives us the personal space to find our strengths and weaknesses and makes us more capable of being the architects of our own lives. In the community-based work we have produced through Caracol the processes are the main focus rather than the results. In 2017, a four-year Professorship in BioDance started in Nicaragua, the only country in the region (except for Mexico) which offers the program. The first four modules have been delivered, and I was able to participate in three of them; I also participated in an International Biodance workshop in El Salvador (pictured above). Studying the method and having the regular BioDance practice has allowed me to experience an approach that has had an immediate impact that I recognize as positive in my work and my personal life.

In Caracol we believe that BioDance will bring a new set of tools to my portfolio of methodologies and techniques to engage children and young people in their own development. For this reason Caracol has provided me with a partial scholarship for this training.

SER NIÑO (TO BE A BOY)

Ser Niño is a recent program established in the surrounding areas of Antigua Guatemala and I was invited to deliver two sessions on violence prevention. Among the two groups of teenagers some were still aiming to complete high school. The two groups participated in the sessions playing games on confidence, group work and analysis of the term "violence".

A "Theatre-Forum" presented a young couple who become parents early-on in life and their terrible story ended in femicide, (gender-based murder of a female by a man). During the forum, the youth were able to speak-up and, by calling out "ENOUGH", would stop a scene and rewrite it in order to change the course of the story. I hope to continue working with Ser Niño during 2018.



CARACOL & THE YOUTH OF CAYO WEST From Claudia

Belize National Energy has a youth program called Energy For Life that is managed by the young members and organizes a Annual Summer Camp. They invited me to deliver a two-day workshop on album decoration and mural painting. Some of the youth leaders attended the Camp and were challenged to leave behind their regular behaviour of being quiet, shy and avoiding physical contact with each other. Friendly, respectful touch is necessary to motivate expression and build confidence among young people. By the end of the second day, each participant took home two or more pieces of paper crafts and we all completed an exterior mural at a local radio station.

Continuing with the collaborative agreements we have with Caracoles of JADE, I delivered a workshop with the Youth Leadership group that Aide coordinates in Arenal. I had a very beautiful "flashback" experience that took me back seven years to when Maritza, Aidé, Julio and Kevin started their leadership formation process. Their beautiful curious eyes would capture every word with careful attention, their shy smiles drawn and little by little they allowed themselves to express their opinions and doubts.

This year of 2018 will continue to provide us these occasions when we bring together needs and possibilities and attempt to offer other options for children and young people to express themselves, trust their futures, and dare to dream.





In April the first Living Community Culture Seminar (CVC in Spanish) took place in Guatemala's second city, Quetzaltenago. Maritza Barrera represented Caracol.

This space of exchange and dialogue allowed organisations that produce community-based cultural activities to share knowledge and better understand distinctive practices of organizations from different parts of Guatemala. These types of exchanges often help generate affinities and partnerships. At the end of the event participants generated a discussion to propose the following concrete actions to continue exchanging and to strengthen the CVC movement in Guatemala:

- Produce further opportunities for dialogue and methodological exchange
- Produce a national encounter of Living Community Culture
- Produce a second regional Living Community Culture seminars

Since June 2017, Claudia has been participating in regular meetings of the Guatemalan CVC Movement, including fund raising activities towards Guatemala's participation in the Latin American CVC Congress in Quito.



exchange
with
artzmosphere



Caracol has always worked through exchange with community organisations and this continues as JADE collaborates with local groups and through networking with groups in Guatemala. In San Ignacio town a new arts space called Wildfire Artzmosphere has opened to host workshops, performances and exhibitions. Virginia and Stephanie have worked in theatre and literature and currently self-fund their space. Sharing resources is a critical strategy for community projects and this year Artzmosphere provided the theatrical lighting for the International Festival of Caracoles in Arenal. Caracol loans our projector for monthly screenings at Artzmosphere and Nahual gave a live graffiti exhibition at an arts event.

The Guatemalan CVC Movement in Quito

The III Latin American CVC (Living Community Culture) Congress "Be Community" took place in Quito, Ecuador last November. After a thorough selection process Lisbeth Reyes and Pedro Ochoa from Caja Lúdica, Beatriz Sandoval from the Frida Khalo Children's Painting School, Byron Hernández from Festivales Ruk'Ux, Alfonso Rafael from Festivales Solidarios and Claudia Orantes from Caracol-YCD represented the Guatemalan CVC Movement. The Ministry of Culture sponsored the plane tickets leaving the participation, and other expenses to the organizations/groups participating. Eight hundred delegates attended from 18 countries.

Caracol-YCD and CVC Guatemala were represented in a round table called Complementarities: Gender and Diversities which had participants from 13 countries with a diverse range of experiences including; community education, art as a tool for transformation, empowerment of abused women, youth programs, maternity, strengthening masculinities, LGTBIQ groups, violence prevention amongst others.

Representatives from the Central American MARACA network were able to meet during the congress to discuss how to continue strengthening ties through exchanges. More activities for the regional CVC are to be delivered in 2018 and we hope Belize will be ready to host one of these encounters/meetings.



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