



Friends of Caracol Newsletter

May 2007

A New Day and a new project for Caracol as Ak'Kutan FM at Tumul K'in Centre of Learning begins broadcasting.

From 5:00 am the voice of young radio presenters can be heard throughout the campus of Tumul K'in Centre of Learning in Blue Creek village, Toledo in rural southern Belize.

Ak' Kutan FM is a Maya language community radio station that was set up with a donation of equipment from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It has been eighteen years since the Toledo Maya leaders first saw the potential benefits for their communities of sharing their knowledge and experience using radio.

suitable site for the station and the necessary training and technical support.

It was decided that the equipment should be set up at Tumul K'in. This opened a great opportunity for the students to add radio to their daily studies. Tumul K'in is an inter-cultural Centre of Learning that combines the millenary wisdom and knowledge of the Maya with modern science and technology.

Students practice ancient and modern agricultural techniques early in the morning and receive classroom teaching during the afternoon and evening.

Radio now forms part of the daily curriculum for some students and provides daily entertainment for all.

Caracol is supporting Ak' Kutan FM with technical, management and production

'The Story of the Corn' required students to create a script from tales told by local Maya elders. Using basic recording equipment and audio software the play was produced during two workshops and presented to the Tumul K'in community.

Students who participate in the programme are learning skills such as interviewing, editing and "On-Air" broadcasting & journalism.

Caracol will continue to visit Ak' Kutan FM on a regular basis and work with staff, students and volunteers to help develop skills and a full broadcast schedule.

The station is in the process of raising the final US\$4000 to complete the antenna. If any Caracol friends have knowledge of community radio, training, funding or networks we would love to hear from you.



Ak' Kutan FM Radio Team in a Planning Session with Caracol
Getting the equipment in July 2005 was a big step and led to the communities coming together to find a

workshops. Our initial visits to the centre resulted in the first Ak Kutan FM radio play *The Story of the Corn*.

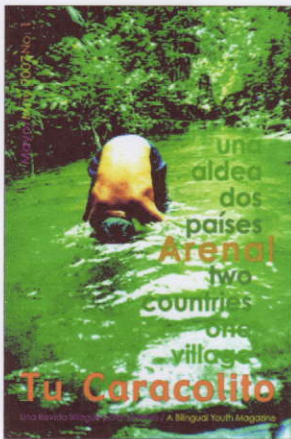


Radio Team Students in the broadcasting booth "On-Air"

Tumul K'in and *Ak' Kutan* refer to new light, new dawn or new day in Maya K'eq'chi and Maya Mopan, two of three Maya languages spoken in Belize.

"24"

Many of you will have seen '24' the exhibition at Amersham & Wycombe College and we thank you all for supporting the project. We also send thanks and best wishes to the staff and students at the College. We displayed the '24' images in Arenal on the 5th & 6th May when the Arenal Students mounted the 'Living on the Borderline' exhibition in their village. The same weekend we launched the first issue of **Tu Caracolito, Caracol's Bilingual Youth Magazine.**



Tu Caracolito

Now available in the UK for £5. Sales will go towards cost of printing next issue.

Just a thought...When we presented the magazine to the Caracol members in Arenal they were asked to sit quietly (with their eyes closed) thinking about their written homework of the past two years, and what could be done with it. They were just asked to think and pay attention to their thoughts.

When they opened their eyes they each had a copy of Tu Caracolito in front of them and were hooked by what they found; their own words in print. They sat and read in silence for more than 25 minutes.

How can we encourage children to read? Give them the opportunity to read their own words.

Caracol Launches *Tu Caracolito* Bilingual Youth Magazine

When Caracol was set up five years ago one objective was to establish a group of twelve young Belizeans to investigate and document life in their communities. They were to use the information in a bilingual magazine for their peers in Belize and the region. The group responsible for producing this first issue is made up of 22 Belizeans and Guatemalans living in Arenal Village.

The magazine includes self portraits of all the group members, documentary photography, as well as writings and stories from Caracol students in several communities throughout Belize. *Tu Caracolito* (the name of the magazine) translates from Spanish to English as "your own little conch shell" and reflects the importance of the conch shell as a cultural artifact and as a traditional tool of communication for the indigenous population of Central America.

For us, the publication of the bilingual magazine is a major goal especially as it was the initial idea that led us to set up Caracol. The magazine and new exhibition are the result of our student's determination to learn and share, and include work by children and young people from Arenal Belize, Arenal Guatemala, Crooked Tree Village and Benque Viejo del Carmen. We look forward to presenting some of this work to the Friends of Caracol in September this year.

Living on the Borderline – Exhibition Tour

On Saturday 5th May we launched the "Living on The Borderline" Exhibition Tour. This exhibition features photographs, self portraits and bilingual texts from 22 Caracol students from Arenal. It was on display across the Arenal football pitch for two days and opens in the Capital of Belize, Belmopan on 30th May, before moving to Guatemala City on 15th June. Four Belizean students will travel to the opening in Guatemala and receive training in Digital Photography at our sister project, Fotokids. The exhibition will be displayed in Chesham Town Hall on Saturday 1st September.

Best wishes Claudia and Jon

From the Trustees

Myra and Stuart have recently returned from nearly 5 weeks in Guatemala and Belize. They spent a lot of time with Claudia and Jon and learnt about a number of new and exciting projects for 2008. The highspot was time spent with the young people of Arenal, prior to their exhibition on 5th May.

Many thanks to Ken Rayne who cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats. Ken chose to be sponsored on behalf of Caracol - raising £1500 to date.

Our new "Basket Scheme" aimed at funding educational sponsorship has raised over £600 since February. This scheme places Baskets in staff rooms and similar workplaces for a period of time. We fill them with small saleable items such as toiletries, sweets, books etc. If you think you could place a Basket please let us know.

Dates for your diary

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| 18th May | Plant Sale at 12, Lye Green Road |
| 10th June | Caracol Table at the Donkey Derby, Botley Playing Fields |
| 18th July | Caracol Stall at Chesham Market |
| 1st September | Caracol Exhibition at Chesham Town Hall |

Contact Us:

Caracol YCD

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