



Spring 2014

DRY SEASON

Hello once again to our 'Friends of Caracol'. This newsletter has been divided into two main sections; 'Caracol Far and Wide' and 'Caracol At Home' to reflect the growing involvement of Caracol in the Central American Region as well as Belize.



We receive a huge amount of support in Belize, Guatemala and in the UK and without networking – meeting, conversing, sharing and exchanging – over the past 10 years, Caracol would not have been able to have produced and participated in so many events, exchanges and workshops. By linking with like-minded organizations, groups and individuals, resources (human, infrastructural, methodological, financial) are distributed with greater impact. In the case of Caracol, we have enabled young people to participate in training that has never been available locally. We are able to take advantage of such opportunities knowing that partner groups will host us and facilitate training. Caracol is able to offer the same.

In a region where violence is increasing, the understanding and appreciation generated through harmonious, creative and peaceful exchange is a valuable and practical antidote. We start here by telling some of the exchange experiences of the last year.



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Caracol
Youth Community
Development





DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES, INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CAMP, BELIZE

In June 2013, Delcy and Maritza, two Caracol Youth Coordinators, participated for the first time in a Belizean Youth Camp. Their participation was important because they learned more about the country. During the camp they talked about Leadership, Youth Policies and the Referendum between Belize and Guatemala.

FEMINISM AT THE CROSSROADS

Feminism has become one of the topics we, as youth coordinators, hope to learn and understand more about. This is why we continue with the process Between Wishing and Needing (<http://entrequeresyquisieras.blogspot.com>). In June 2013, two female youth coordinators and our director traveled to Guatemala City to receive a workshop called Feminism at the Crossroads delivered by the Spanish Philosopher and Documentary maker Victoria Sendón. Topics discussed during the workshop were Violence Against Women and Holistic Feminism, which considers all aspects of being a woman including that we don't only see our reality but form part of our reality.

JUNTOS

In July 2013, artists and activists from South America met with organized groups from Central America in Guatemala City. They came to invite the Central American Community Arts networks to join the Juntos Network. Juntos has similar objectives; to exchange experiences and to work together on issues affecting young people and communities. Representatives from the Central American groups met to discuss their opinions on joining the Juntos Network. Their conclusion was that, in order to develop a presence in South America, they would need to reactivate and fully develop the Central American Network MARACA.

GUATEMALA COMMUNITY ARTS NETWORK

Caracol is a member of the coordinator team of this network. Since August 2013 we have participated in many activities including a Community Encounter in August 2013 (Muxbal, Guatemala City), a Coordinator's Encounter's (Copal AA, Alta Verapaz, and Chiantla, Huehuetenango, Guatemala) in October 2013 and March 2014. Caracol hosted the Annual Evaluation for the second year running in December 2013.

SEPTEMBER 2013

THE SOUND OF MARACAS!!!

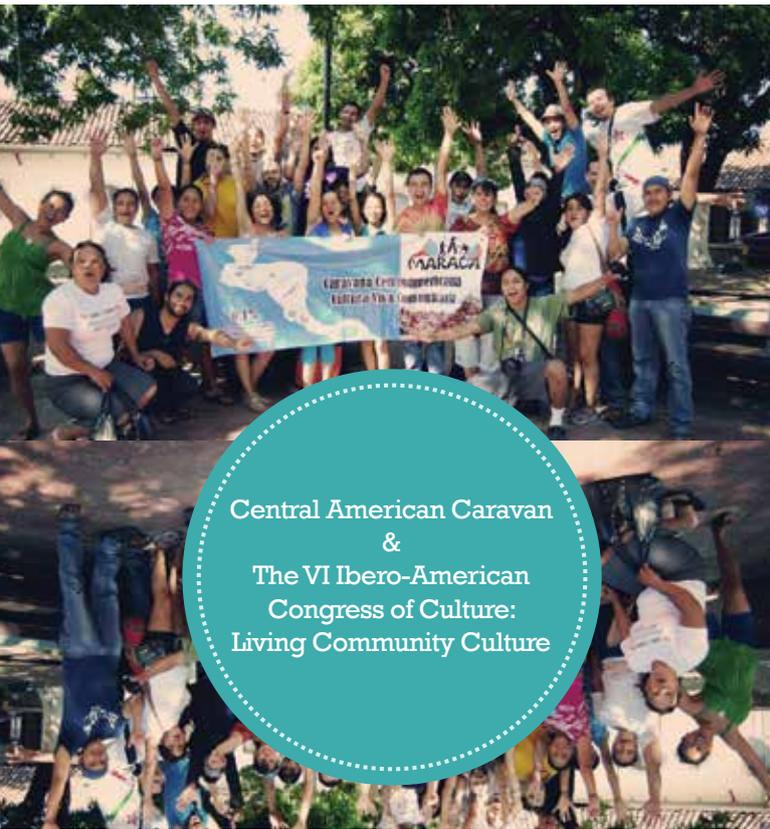
{ Central America Community Arts Movement }

In September 2013, after more than two years of silence, the MARACA Network was present in San Jose, Costa Rica to hold an encounter during the Costa Rican National Encounter of Cultura Viva Comunitaria. One of the youth Caracol coordinators was present to represent Caracol and the Guatemalan Network. The MARACA Network has expanded to include all 7 Central American countries as Nicaragua, absent for several years, joined again and Panama expressed that they will also join. The structure of the network was modified and the representatives returned to their groups and countries with greater commitment.



World WATER DAY

On 21st March 2014 the Stilt group travelled to the Yax Ha sacred Maya site to give an artistic performance to celebrate World Water Day (22nd March). The presentation we gave involved five performers, a friend of Caracol and another member who documented and narrated the show.



Central American Caravan
&
The VI Ibero-American
Congress of Culture:
Living Community Culture

During April 2014, five members of Caracol participated in the first Central American caravan that was initiated in Belize with the objective of giving greater visibility to the MARACA network. Along the route, each nation received the caravan with open arms, drums, stilt walkers, and joy and the participants shared festivals, rituals and cultural nights with the host communities.

The caravan reached Costa Rica and joined the VI Ibero-american Congress of Culture where Caracol members shared experiences of living community culture with participants from other countries. The member groups of MARACA met during the congress and, for the first time, each Central American country was represented. The meeting focused on the production of a recently approved project and the strategies to maintain MARACA, active. Thanks to the opportunity to interact with different people and methodologies this was a learning experience both intellectually and artistically.

CREATIVE EXCHANGE

Caracol
AT HOME



For the first time the Creative Exchange was delivered at San Jose Succotz on 7th of August 2013. The activity and methodology was led by the director of Caracol, Claudia Orantes, with the support of two Caracol youth coordinators. Previously the creative exchange took place at the OAS meeting room in the adjacency zone between Belize and Guatemala but the participation fell away. The program has now been moved to San Jose Succotz and is supported by the teachers of the primary school in the community. This program is held every two months.

Q'ANIL CENTRE OF
FORMATION,
HEALING &
INVESTIGATION
TRANSPERSONAL
RE-ENCOUNTER
WORKSHOP

In September the group of youth coordinators from Caracol received a personal re-encounter workshop at la Casita. This first workshop, delivered by Yolanda Aguilar a Guatemalan therapist, was an introduction and between January and October 2014 all youth coordinators will participate in the complete course. These workshops will be a process where we will explore our potential and heal the experiences that block our expression. They will also help us better understand our behavior and attitudes.



{ NOSOTRAS }

Nosotras is a monthly workshop designed for the Female Youth Coordinators of Caracol and is led by Claudia Orantes. This space was created, as there is a need for us women to meet and learn more about ourselves. It is a workshop delivered at Caracol's main office where we are able to discuss issues that we cannot discuss at home. By doing so we will be better able to work together on personal and social transformation.

INAUGURATION

The inauguration of the new building at La Casita de Caracol took place on 11th of October. Special guests from Arenal village, friends of Caracol and project partners were present. We were celebrating the new building that offers a comfortable and more secure space to deliver the programs and workshops of Caracol in Arenal. During the event teachers from Arenal Guatemala gave their impressions of the workshops they are receiving at Caracol. They emphasized that spaces like Caracol are very rare and asked all parents to keep supporting Caracol and sending their Children to La Casita.

Here are some comments from Nina Hernández, Country Director, Peace Corps Belize who attended the inauguration:
"I thoroughly enjoyed the event and am grateful to have been a part of it. Here is what I came away with:



 Caracol is a unique space for young people to discover the depth of potential they possess. I was incredibly honored to be present for the inaugural event, and to see the youth of Arenal thriving in a way that is sadly more the exception rather than the norm.

 There is something truly magical about what Caracol is doing, and it is a rare thing. There simply are not many youth organizations in Belize who are really harnessing the power of young people, and certainly none accomplishing this the way Caracol is doing so.

 A sense that the youth connecting to Caracol are more mature, more grounded, more optimistic, more who they are meant to be, because of their membership in Caracol.

 I have a young daughter and I can only hope that she finds a Caracol of her own to be a part of.

I was really inspired by the work you are doing in Arenal. There really should be a Caracol in every community. Keep up the good work!"





CARPENTRY

The youths from Caracol continue to receive carpentry training with our teacher Don Jose Ascencio. They have already produced a dining room table with chairs, easy chairs, turned bowls and storage furniture. The purpose of the workshops is that the youth coordinators learn to produce objects that can be sold and contribute to the sustainability of Caracol in Arenal. At first only the young men participated but since this January, two young women have joined in.

CHESS

Children from Arenal Guatemala, Arenal Belize and Benque continue to participate in the Chess program. Most Saturdays in 2013 children from Arenal traveled to the town of San Ignacio to receive training with the Belize National Youth Chess Foundation (BNYCF). The idea was for them to return and share their learning with their peers. Unfortunately the BNYCF has reduced its work and no longer offers the weekend chess training.



RAPP

The first Permanent Recycling Art Program 2013 was delivered between July and August during the school vacation of Arenal Belize. A second program was delivered between October and December during the Guatemalan school vacations. At Caracol we try to make sure everyone has an opportunity so for both programs children from both communities participated. During the activities the children had the opportunity to play and to produce items using recycled materials.



World Children's Day

Celebrated in Arenal Guatemala

The Primary School of Arenal Guatemala, Escuela Oficial Rural Mixta, celebrated the children's day on 1st October. The Caracol Stilt Walkers were invited to parade along with the pupils in the main roads of the village. There were cultural presentations given by the children from the host school, schools from nearby Melchor de Mencos Petén and Caracol. We presented an artistic mix including acrobatics, swing, hula hoop, and juggling. At the end of the presentation the mothers were asked to motivate their children's participation in all the activities Caracol organizes for the children of Arenal including the daily homework club at La Casita.



Homework Club

Recycled Crafts



The Caracol homework club is open everyday from Tuesday until Saturday between 2-5pm for all children of Arenal to come and do their school work. For most children in Arenal their parents do not speak or read English and most likely didn't attend school so they cannot get help at home. The youth coordinators share the responsibility to manage the club and help each child who needs it. All materials are provided as well as a nutritious drink.



Aide and Hugo facilitate this activity on the last Friday of the month at la Casita. The idea is to raise consciousness amongst the children about the importance of recycling. The workshops teach how we can all put recycled materials to use and benefit from reducing the amount of trash we create.

LOCAL BELIZEAN NETWORK

Since 28th November 2013 Caracol has been hosting monthly meetings at the House of Culture in Benque Viejo del Carmen. Youth groups and organisations that work in some way with young people in the area are invited to debate the idea of forming a local Youth Development Network. At this early stage the intention is to get to know each other, plan how we can work together and create a platform of exchange, where methodologies and hopes can be shared.



BASE LINE ANALYSIS

Marco Antonio Leonor (Executive Director of Caja Ludica of Guatemala) delivered his second workshop on Base Line Data in February 2014. The idea of these workshops is to create a system where we can start to measure the youth development outcomes that the activities we produce hope to deliver. This is a complicated process and especially so because impact in youth development is difficult to define, describe and measure. The process is proving to be a valuable exercise in strategic development both for the Caracoles in Arenal and Caracol staff.

Jugando Limpio

