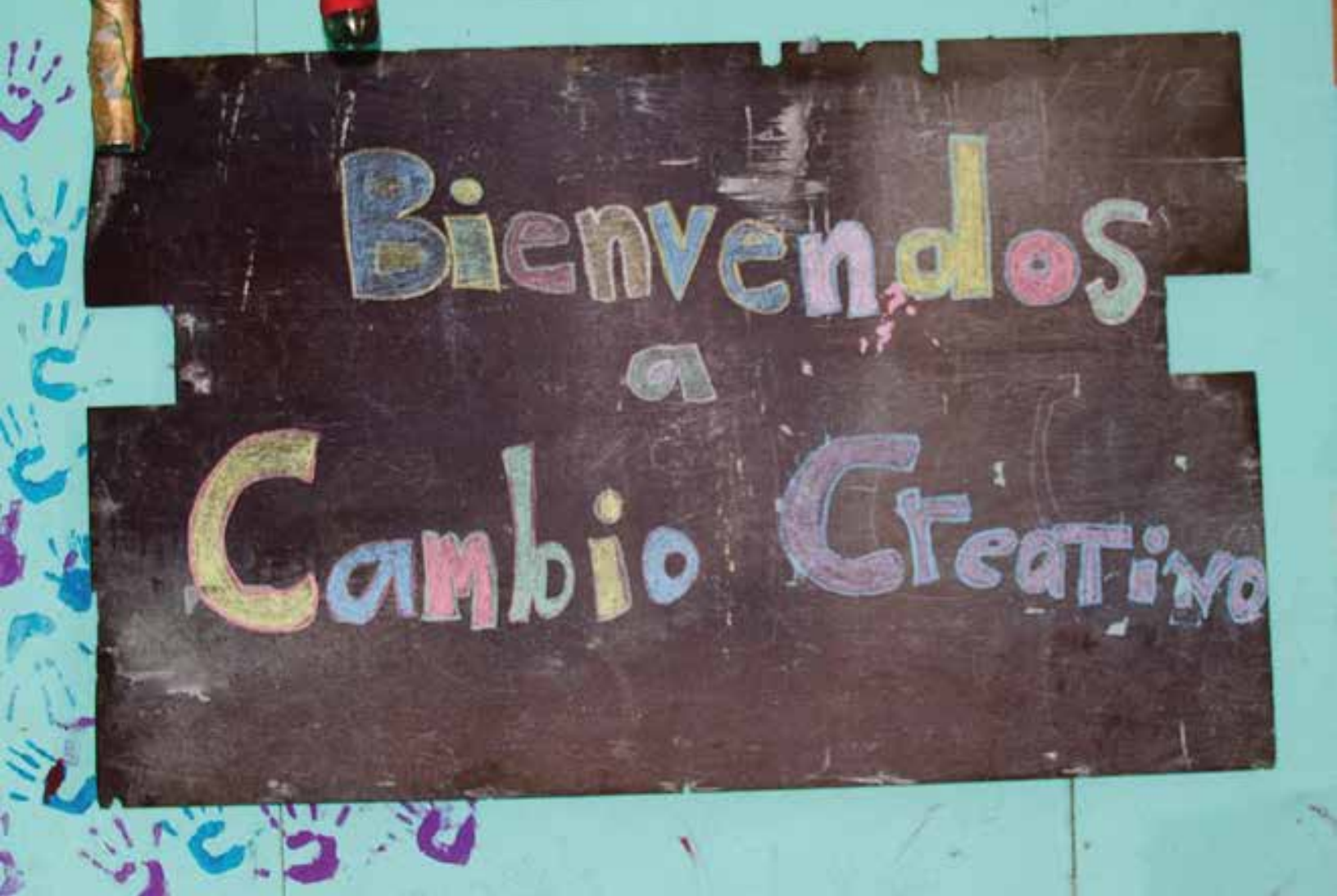




Cambio Creativo: An Organizational Overview





Cambio Creativo literally means "creative change."

Cambio Creativo began in 2010, serving the community of Coco Solo in the province of Colón, one of the poorest and underserved regions of Panama.

Our mission is to bring creative change to the heart of two communities in Colón, Panama by inspiring creativity and critical thinking among young students. We strive to empower future leaders who will be role models in their community and a driving force behind meaningful improvements for community members. Our organization has three program areas, which are education, spiritual and community development.

There are three major components to our education program:

- ✦ academic reinforcement through one-on-one tutoring;
- ✦ experiential learning through workshops and field trips;
- ✦ leadership development through interaction with inspirational speakers and teachers.

We also give students the opportunity to engage in cross-cultural exchanges by attracting professional educators, international scholars, and volunteers from prominent universities and institutions from around the world. The goal of our educational program is to help youth prepare for higher education so they can pursue stable employment and become a driving force for positive change in the community.



In 2014, Cambio Creativo began a student volunteer program to participate in our education programming.



We grew from an informal network of volunteers led by two committed individuals: Rose Cromwell, a U.S. Fulbright scholar and artist, and Michael Brown, a Coco Solo community and spiritual leader. Young community members and their parents welcomed Cambio Creativo's efforts to offer educational programming and services. We have grown into a formal for-purpose (non-profit) organization registered in the Republic of Panamá with a diverse and transnational team of volunteers and staff working for creative change. Our educational and literacy program is also a project of the 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization Empowerment Works, located in California.

The Coco Solo Region

To better understand the challenges faced by the community of Coco Solo it is important to know its history. Coco Solo neighbors the city of Colón, a major seaport located at the entrance to the Panamá Canal on the Atlantic coast. During the time the Canal belonged to the United States, Coco Solo was home to a U.S. naval base. The base ceased to exist following the transition of the Canal to Panamanian authorities at the end of the 1990s. After several houses burned down in Colón, the government moved citizens to Coco Solo as a temporary housing solution that has evolved into a decades-long wait.

Today the community of Coco Solo consists of 90 families, most of whom live in the former military barracks. These structures lack basic living conditions, such as running water and stable electricity. Over the last few years, many Coco Solo families have initiated a relocation process to the neighboring town of Buena Vista. The remaining families are expected to move next year. Cambio Creativo currently is working in both sites, and hopes to be permanently located in Buena Vista once the entire community has moved.



The developing community of Buena Vista.

The Problem

Children from marginalized Panamanian communities such as Coco Solo face multiples barriers in regards to education. These barriers stem from the parents' financial situation, access to schools, lack of focus on critical thinking and creative activities, and few role models the children can relate to, among others. For many families, the daily commute to and from school is a significant challenge for children and their parents alike. There is no form of public transportation in Coco Solo forcing children to either hitch a ride, take a cab or walk more than two miles to the main entrance where they would have take the bus to bus. The commute can often take up to two hours. If a child completes elementary and middle school, there is no guarantee s/he will continue on to high school because of the aforementioned barriers and the fewer number of high schools available to her/him.

Those who attend school usually don't get personalized attention with respect to their learning needs, which can elicit behavioral and emotional reactions from the students that brand them as "bad students" or "troublemakers."

Most importantly, there is a lack motivation and incentive to continue education beyond elementary or middle school. Their worldview is limited to their reality: higher education is uncommon and unemployment and underemployment is rampant in Coco Solo. Financial need also forces youth to prioritize low-paying jobs or occasional gigs over education. While youth may want to pursue higher education, they struggle to find a justifiable answer to a question they constantly aks themselves and others: "what is the point of having education?"

We want to inspire youth to feel confident about their futures by viewing education as a means toward a better life for themselves, their families, and their community. We do this by providing a safe, public space where they can develop self-confidence through positive learning and reinforcement. Cambio Creativo's after-school education program reinforces classroom learning and helps students to develop critical thinking skills while exploring their creativity. Cambio Creativo currently serves a group of 50 students who receive homework assistance and tutoring based on their individual learning needs. They are invited to participate in workshops aimed at building leadership skills, developing talents, and exposing them to different forms of arts, music, and sports provided by local professionals, artists and partner non-profits. We also provide supplemental nutrition.



Cambio Creativo's mission is to promote personal and community develop through transformative experiences and programming.

Cambio Creativo Educational Programming

After-School Program

The goal of such sessions is to reinforce classroom learning and to help youth maintain and improve their grades. These sessions are tailored to the individual learning needs of children and aim at providing personalized attention that students may lack at school. We have a full-time teacher on our staff who provides math and literacy tutoring, as well as help the students understand and complete their homework.

Workshops

Our workshops aim at achieving several key goals that include:

1. Fostering youth's creativity through such artistic disciplines as music, dance, storytelling, and crafts. Some of the workshops and projects we organized in the past include:

World Cup Art Project

Students used Chinese paper lantern to paint the colors of the countries participating in the World Cup, while other students painted the lanterns with their names.

Rhythm Workshop

Youths jammed with drums, guitars, shared their favorite songs, and practiced writing music. At the end of this two-day workshop students created a full song, with interactive movement and changing of hands to make a complete rhythm.

Video Workshop and Exhibition

This workshop was inspired by an invitation for Cambio Creativo youth participants to exhibit a video piece at The Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts in Toronto. The youth worked in production groups of 3-4 and each team member had a specific production role: videographer, director, or interviewer. In the final video piece, we are presented with the contradictions of youth and adulthood, positivity and negativity, aggression and sensitivity that these youth are navigating on a daily basis.

2. Developing and exercising leadership skills through peer-to-peer mentoring, community service work, and inspirational talks given by educators and respectable community members from across the Americas.

3. Raising environmental awareness and providing sessions in environmental literacy. Among our past projects related to the environment education were:

🌱 Planting Day of a Community Garden in Buena Vista with a group of 25 MBA students from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management.

🌱 Participation in a beach cleanup and environmental conservation workshop.



Cambio Creativo students attend workshops and classes on a variety of topics, including mathematics, literacy, computer skills, art, music, storytelling, sports, agriculture, history and geography.

Cambio Creativo Educational Programming

Supplemental Nutrition Program

Students can't perform at their best when they lack access to food, especially nutritious food. Cambio Creativo offers all Coco Solo students who participate in the after-school program a meal, as well as any community member who requests it. The organization currently serves approximately 40 people who have received about 190 meals per month.



Studies have found that low-quality nutrition during childhood can be detrimental to the development of cognitive capabilities, such as learning, problem solving and memorizing. Food insecurity and access to nutritious options is a challenge for the community of Coco Solo.

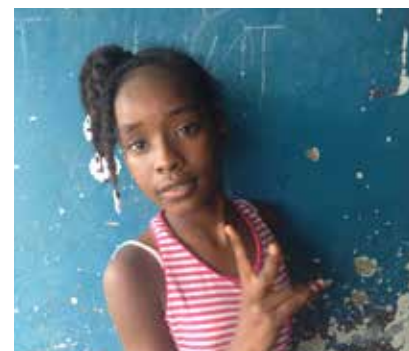
I like Cambio Creativo because they teach me to study and read. We like to make mini-murals and teach the smaller children.

Kivianis (age 11)



When I need something I look here and when I have homework they teach me here. I feel happy, content and joyful because they teach me and I can't do bad.

Yarielis (age 11)



Cambio Creativo in Numbers

Cambio Creativo has worked since 2010 with approximately 500 families from the Coco Solo community. In the last year alone the organization included 24 children of ages between 5 and 15. More details about the gender and ages of the children included in the program in 2015 are listed below:

Figure 1: Gender of beneficiaries (2015)

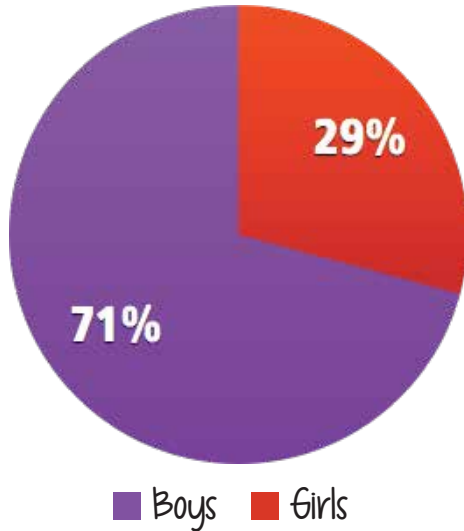
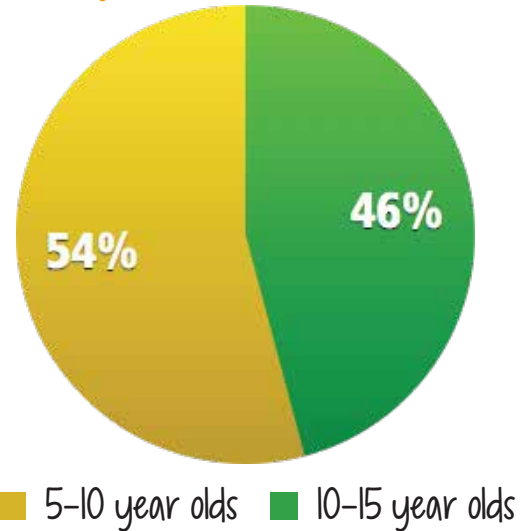
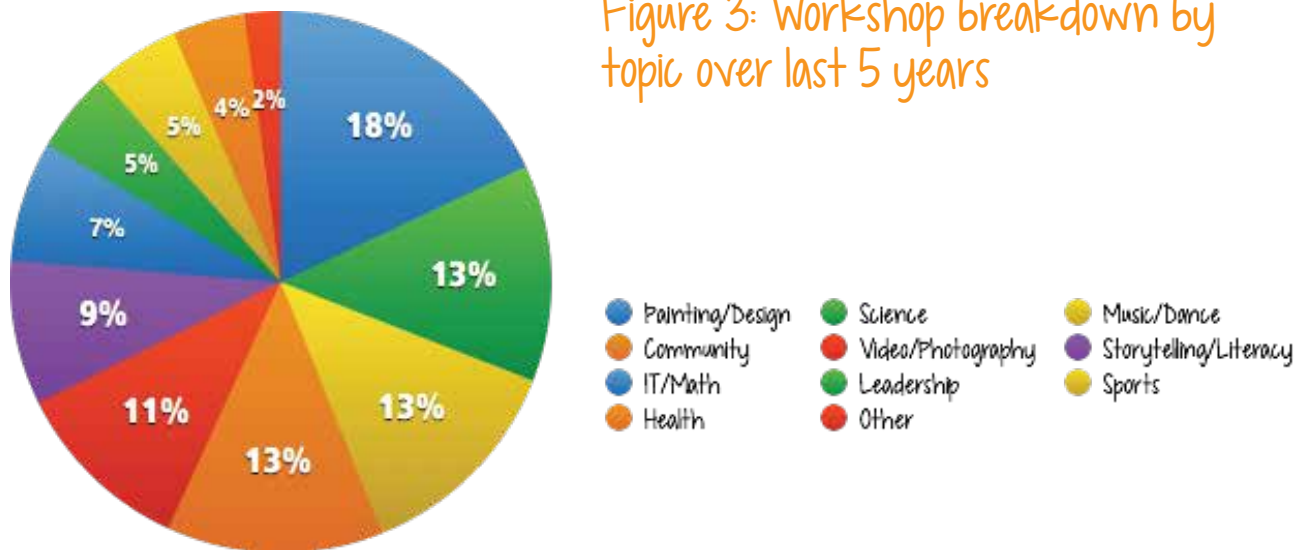


Figure 2: Age of beneficiaries (2015)



Over the last five years Cambio Creativo has hosted more than 45 workshops on different topics, organized on a monthly basis. The organization also provided after-school tutoring every day of the week. A leadership program, Jóvenes Luchadores, was launched last year among Coco Solo youth as a way to support and encourage each other to work toward, and reach their goals. Eleven youths have been involved.

Figure 3: Workshop break-down by topic over last 5 years



These programs have had significant impact on the students in Coco Solo, who were empowered to dream bigger and create a new path for others in the community to follow.

The Long-Term Impact of Cambio Creativo

The educational programs that Cambio Creativo offers empower at-risk youths, increase their self-confidence and prepares them for a life of economic security and success. The organization aims to work with a group of children from the time they enter primary school, all the way to the end of high school. This will ensure that the organization is able to monitor individual performance and push children to develop their talents and continue their education. The biggest challenge is to retain children from the Coco Solo community in school after they enter it. Constant support and education programming provided by Cambio Creativo ensures necessary continuity.

Cambio Creativo fills a gap that currently exists in the education system. The tutoring program is aimed at improving academic performance and more specifically, critical thinking and quantitative skills. In addition, the art workshops focus on developing the children's creativity and confidence while the leadership development help them define their values and leadership skills. All these factors are currently not addressed by the standard Panamanian educational system and Cambio Creativo's programs help develop well-rounded individuals.

These leaders will then feel empowered to continue their education and obtain solid employment that can provide them with a secure financial stability. In turn, they will be a source of inspiration for the rest of the community and will be able to lead change and create better conditions for the future generation.

The organization aims to reach the following targets:

- ✚ Access to education for 50 children
- ✚ Retention in the higher education for at least 25 children in the first years
- ✚ Lower involvement of young people in local gangs
- ✚ Higher success of local youth in the highly competitive Panamanian labor market
- ✚ Improved prosperity of Coco Solo community

Jesús Blanco lives in Coco Solo. He was one of the first group of students Cambio Creativo worked with. As he grew older, Jesús became a volunteer and the organization offered him a modest college scholarship. He recently graduated from the University of Technology of Panamá with a degree in Port and Maritime Operations. He now works at Oil Tanking Coassa as a Terminal Operator in Coco Solo. Jesús says Cambio Creativo helped him identify and strengthen his skills and talents. He is a member of Jóvenes Luchadores, a role model for the children of the community, and played an essential role helping to create our official after-school programming.



Cambio Creativo Budget

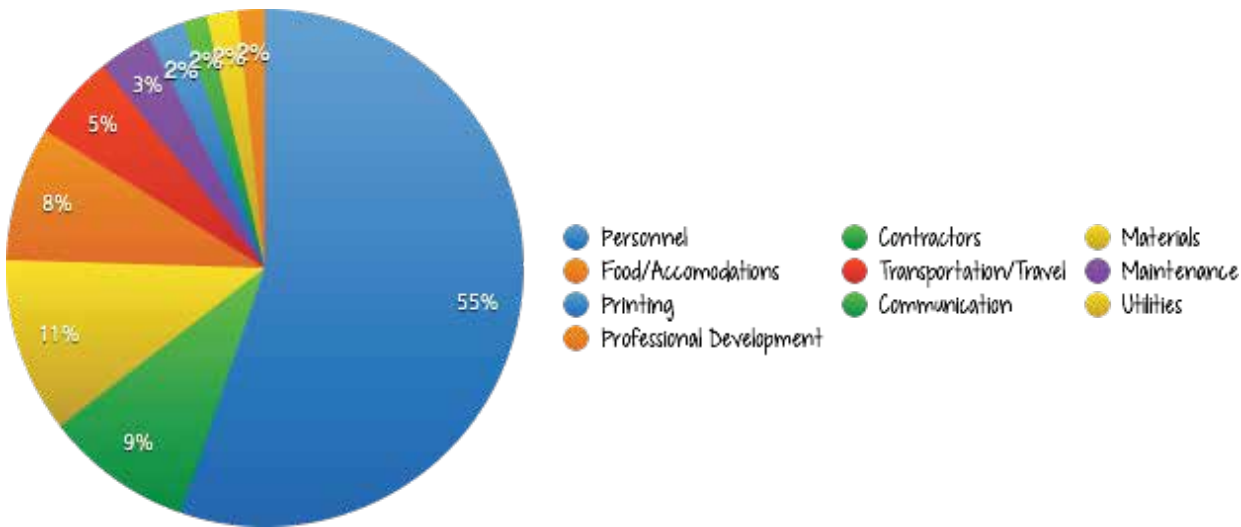
Cambio Creativo Executive Director Melissa Mazurkewicz is currently responsible for the financial accounting of the foundation. The accounting is done monthly, giving a detailed and clear overview of revenues and expenses and is presented on a quarterly basis to the Board of Directors.

The estimated expenses for the year 2015 are approximately \$23,700. Please see below a detailed breakdown of the different categories:

Figure 4: Cambio Creativo 2015 budget (USD)

Personnel	\$13,125
Contractors (workshop leaders, accounting, etc.)	\$2,200
Materials for after-school program and workshops	\$2,600
Food and accomodations	\$2,000
Transportation and travel	\$1,260
Maintenance and cleaning	\$800
Printing and copies	\$540
Communication (internet, telephone, etc.)	\$360
Utilities (electricity, water, etc.)	\$460
Professional development fund	\$400
<hr/>	
TOTAL	\$23,745

Cambio Creativo aims at raising funds in different ways to be able to cover the organization’s yearly expenses. We rely on individual donations, foundation and government grants, corporate giving and in kind support. Our 2015 operating budget is \$42,205. The funds are divided in the following categories to meet the organization’s needs:



Cambio Creativo Friends and Partners

Cambio Creativo wouldn't be able to fulfill its mission without the support from multiple friends and partners which comes in several forms: consultancies, in-kind donations, scholarships, and conducting workshops. Here is a collage with a few of our partners: (from left) Curtis W. Meadows, Jr. Social Enterprise Fellows from the University of Texas in Austin, Amanda Gabster (HIV clinician and public health promoter), La Escuelita del Ritmo (Portobelo), Ela Spalding (artist and cultural ambassador), the Wharton International Volunteer Program, Eduardo Arenas (musician), Rose Marie Cromwell (artist and social activist), Lorena Orejuela (artist), and La Tapa del Coco (Afro-Panamanian cultural movement).



Cambio Creativo has been a special partner of SAMAAP over the last few years. The organization has done a tremendous job promoting culture, education and community development within Coco Solo. Despite being a small organization, their commitment and passion for the community's well-being is strong and inspiring.

Verónica D. Forte, President of the Society of Friends of the
West Indian Museum of Panamá (SAMAAP)

The Cambio Creativo Team

Michael Brown, Co-Founder & Director of Community and Spiritual Affairs. Originally from Jamaica, Michael has been living in Coco Solo for the last 20 years. He is a trusted and respected community leader who has been a voice and advocate for the community over the last few decades.

Melissa Mazurkewicz, Executive Director. Melissa is originally from the United States. She received a B.S. in Horticulture at the Pennsylvania State University and has a Master of Science in Extension Education from the University of Florida. She served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Panama working in sustainable agriculture for 3 years. She currently lives in Buena Vista.

Beatriz Francisca Abre de Rivas, Education Coordinator. Beatriz is a loving mother of six children. She is from Colón and has extensive experience working within the public school system. Beatriz has a degree in General Elementary Education and currently lives in Nuevo San Juan, near Buena Vista.

Diana Moschos, Development and Financial Officer. Diana is a bilingual digital content creator who is committed to helping communities thrive. She currently lives in Panama City.

International Board Members

Maya DeVries. Maya deVries is a biologist with an active research program at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute's Galeta Marine Laboratory in Colón. For the past three years, Maya has been actively involved with connecting the Coco Solo community to the science education program at Galeta Marine Laboratory.

Blake Scott. Blake joins the Cambio Creativo team as a student and teacher of history. He is currently a PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin. He looks to the past to better understand the present of cross-cultural exchange. His work with Cambio Creativo is focused on youth literacy, and supporting the community's growing library of children and adult books.

Rose Marie Cromwell. Rose is a photographic and social practice artist and co-founder of Cambio Creativo. She has published and exhibited her artwork internationally. For the last 11 years, Rose has worked in art education and activism in various places around the world such as Baltimore, Maryland; Syracuse, New York; and Panamá.

Martin Danyluk. Martin is a geographer from Toronto, Canada who studies the impacts of global trade on everyday life in port cities. His work in Coco Solo has focused on fostering awareness of the area's history as part of the former Panama Canal Zone and its importance to the shipping industry.





Let's Keep in Touch

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