Building Bridges Within A Multicultural Community

Annual Report 2018
Dear friends

OUR 15TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR IN REVIEW

As president of The Palapa Society of Todos Santos, A.C., I am so proud to join with our entire community in celebrating our 15th anniversary as a Mexican non-profit. While our founders, Jean Cordova and Lynn Ballen, may not have foreseen the scope of all we have accomplished and continue to accomplish together, I know they would be pleased we have remained true to our original mission: improving educational opportunities for the youth and families of Todos Santos.

Our organization has had many homes over the years. We began in donated space in a small bookstore in the historic district of Todos Santos. When our after school English program began, we quickly needed more room and moved to the back patio of what was then a community center. When the demand for the English program grew and space for a community library was needed, we rented our own little building—complete with leaky roof and difficult landlord. After several years of making do, we were fortunate to receive the gift of a free rental in the San Vicente barrio. Now we could offer classes in dedicated rooms on two floors as well as under a large outdoor palapa that we constructed for this purpose.

In 2017, thanks to a most generous gift, we moved to a new home: a purpose-built, state-of-the-art learning center comprised of three separate buildings. The Puente building houses a children’s library, the after school English programs for children, and the evening program for adult English instruction. The Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska is a bilingual community library of over 9,000 volumes and is available to all members of the Todos Santos community. The third and largest building houses our most ambitious program: The Palapa School, a private middle school that will add one grade per year, eventually resulting in a high quality, comprehensive middle school and high school unlike any other in Baja.

The improvements in our physical space are mirrored by the growth all our programs have experienced over the years. In the following pages, we will highlight each of our primary programs and introduce you to some of the key people responsible for their success. We will also share the highlights of our new Palapa Learning Center. Of course, as an ambitious and growing organization, we face many challenges. We will share those with you as well and let you know how you might help.

Together, we will continue our mission to provide quality educational opportunities for the youth of Todos Santos. I am reminded of the following wisdom from Paulo Cohelo: “And when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you achieve it.”

Saludos a todos,

Erick Ochoa
President, The Palapa Society
Board of Directors
The Palapa Society of Todos Santos, A.C.

The Palapa Society of Todos Santos, A.C. is transforming lives in our small community of over 6,000 residents in Mexico’s state of Baja California Sur (BCS), located between the state capital La Paz and the resort community of Los Cabos.

The Palapa Society is cultivating the future leaders of Todos Santos, Mexico, and the world by providing a 21st century education for local middle school students since 2017 and high school students starting in 2019. The Palapa Society also continues to offer quality educational programs and cultural experiences for children and their families since 2003.

In the last 15 years, a rapid population boom in Todos Santos has evolved the local commerce from agriculture and fishing to construction and tourism. As a result, there is an increased demand for higher education, offered locally, to empower the youth to participate in the changing economy.

Nationally, Mexico’s public education system faces enormous challenges which are particularly severe in rural areas. Required fees for public school uniforms and books can be an insurmountable barrier for children from lower-income families to attend school. Many schools lack modern teaching materials and equipment including computers and science labs. Mandatory education extends only through the age of 15, with the final years focused on vocational training rather than university readiness. These challenges are addressed by The Palapa Society by making the best possible education available to all young people in our community. The progressive curriculum offered at The Palapa School enables academically gifted students to master vital skills in preparation not only for university, but for their lifetime. This includes interactive learning guided by accomplished teachers using successful teaching methods, plus opportunities for growth both on and off campus. The blind application process for The Palapa School is based solely on academic merit, and not on the family’s ability to pay the tuition.

Now in its 15th year, the Beca program provides scholarships for public school fees as well as tuition support for public universities in Mexico.

The Palapa Learning Center serves the community of Todos Santos. The campus includes the Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska, the largest bilingual library in BCS, plus additional classrooms for multi-level English courses for children and adults, and children’s art and environmental awareness programs.

All educational opportunities respect the principles of equity, quality and inclusion, to give the people of Todos Santos the ability to forge the future that our community deserves.

The Palapa Society of Todos Santos, A.C. Our Impact by the Numbers

- 9,000 English and Spanish books in the Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska
- 150+ Children
- 200+ Children
- 170 Children
- 1,000 Palapa School, public School, and university scholarships distributed since 2003
- 60 Volunteers
- 50+ Adults/year enroll in the Adult English program
- 22:1 Student to Teacher ratio
- 100% SEP Compliant
- 21st century education
- Middle school opened 2017
- High School opened 2019
- Palapa School tuition is $2,400, actual cost per student is $4,200
- Palapa School students study at a tuition cost of $2,400 per year
- 78% of graduates are admitted to universities
- 20+ Children studied Art after school since 2007
- Community Programs: 50+ adults/year contribute in-kind services and expertise to all programs
- 80% of children and adults contribute 80% of their time to programs.
OPENED IN AUGUST 2017, THE PALAPA MIDDLE SCHOOL HAS A 21ST CENTURY APPROACH TO EDUCATION THAT COMBINES THE BEST OF TRADITIONAL AND PROGRESSIVE TEACHING METHODS THAT NOT ONLY MEET BUT EXCEED FEDERAL SEP-CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS. ITS ACCOMPLISHED EDUCATORS DELIVER POWERFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES TO PREPARE TODAY’S STUDENTS TO BE TOMORROW’S LEADERS IN THE COMMUNITY AND BEYOND.

The Beca Program

The Palapa Society provides financial assistance in the form of scholarships (Beca means Scholarship in Spanish) for public school and University students in need, as well as tuition subsidies for Palapa School students. More than 90 scholarships are awarded each year, based on students’ financial need and previous academic accomplishments.

The Puente (Bridge to English) Program

Now in its 14th year, enrollment for The Puente program has increased by 70% because of parents’ desire for their children to learn English earlier in their development. Our Puente classes are taught by professional educators for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. Classsizes use a structured syllabus which incorporates songs, games, and art in a fun and creative, cross-cultural language learning program.

The Leadership Program

The Leadership Program is a unique, exciting and experiential learning environment that empowers students to develop into confident individuals, thoughtful, engaged citizens and outstanding leaders committed to serving the community and future of Todos Santos.

The Palapa Scholarship and Children’s Programs

**The Beca Program**

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*“Being part of the Beca Program was motivation to always give my best. I’m proud of my achievements but eager to keep preparing to help future generations have access to a better education.”*

~ Martha Elizabeth Pérez Díaz

**The Puente (Bridge to English) Program**

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**The Leadership Program**

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**After School and Summer Programs**

The Palapa Society also offers a number of programs to children in the community including Children’s Art, Water Safety, and Environmental education.
The Palapa Community Programs

Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska Infantil (Children’s Bilingual Community Library)

In November 2017, the library was formally dedicated in the name of world-renowned, award-winning author Elena Poniatowska, the “Grande Dame” of Mexican literature. Our adult collection, the most comprehensive bilingual library in the state of BCS, includes more than 9,000 books, magazines, and DVDs.

The Palapa Adult English Program

Our Adult English classes follow a similar structure and curriculum, geared towards older students who have completed the Puente program, and adults who wish to enhance their English and increase their employment qualifications. Classes are made up of parents of children who are learning English, plus business owners and employees who interact with the English-speaking community on a regular basis. There is a nominal enrollment fee with need-based scholarships available.

Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska (Bilingual Community Library)

The Palapa School Program

The Palapa School’s 2018 operating budget was $287,197 USD, with four primary sources of income:

1. Earned income including The Palapa School tuition and fees from the Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska and English programs.
2. Contributions from individual donors.
3. Fundraising events including the Tianguis (community flea market), the Carrera de Todos Santos 5k Run, Todos Santos Open Studio Tour and Historic Home Tour. The Todos Santos Music Festival had ended the previous year, making for a notable decrease in revenue in 2018.
4. The Palapa School Founders support funding for organizational stability.

Financial overview

REVENUE AND EXPENSES JAN-DEC 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Income</th>
<th>2018 Revenue</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income</td>
<td>$52,831</td>
<td>Tuition, Puente, Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska, English program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>$148,771</td>
<td>Contributions from individual donors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising Events</td>
<td>$22,336</td>
<td>Tianguis, Carrera 5k, Open Studio Tour and Historic Home Tour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Founders Support</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>Palapa School Founders funding for organizational stability</td>
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TOTAL REVENUE: $423,938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Expenses</th>
<th>2018 Expenses</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palapa School Program</td>
<td>$13,566</td>
<td>Tuition, materials, furniture, supplies, ongoing training, and scholarships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palapa School Staff Meals and Expenses</td>
<td>$3,961</td>
<td>Meals, supplies, materials, and transportation costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palapa Community Programs</td>
<td>$68,782</td>
<td>Tuition, English program, Beca, Puente, After School Programs, and Wins Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing and Fundraising</td>
<td>$7,200</td>
<td>Social media, accountants, posters, fliers, and event plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>$52,212</td>
<td>Marketing, website, supplies, marketing, and transportation costs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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TOTAL EXPENSES: $287,197
Partners, sponsors, major donors and staff

2018 Leadership Donors
Donations of $20k and higher
David and Cindy Higgins, Founders of The Palapa School
Peter and Chloe Buck
Peter and Pam McIntyre

International Community Foundation
As a multi-cultural non-profit Mexican Civil Association (A.C.), the Mexican equivalent of a U.S. nonprofit organization, The Palapa Society partners with the International Community Foundation (ICF) as our US fiscal agent. ICF accepts and processes donations on behalf of The Palapa Society, and conducts ongoing mentoring, monitoring and due-diligence of our activities. Thus, donations and grants from US-based funders are tax-deductible in full accordance with the IRS tax code.

Top Local Business Sponsors
Our community event fund raisers could not be successful without the generosity of our local business sponsors including restaurants, hardware stores, and retail shops.

Board of Directors
PRESIDENT: Erick Ochoa
VICE CHAIR: Kathy Wartert
TREASURER: Hal Butler
SECRETARY: Tim Sechrest

The Palapa School Faculty and Staff August 2017 - July 2018
Palapa School Director: Juan Diego González Castro
Educators: Ana Castillo Mercado*, Ana María Peters
Armando Vázquez García*
Francisco Javier Quirós González
Jorge Monteverde Torres
María Montserrat Sánchez Márquez
Odetta Ciancarelli
Staff: Cruz Torres Cadena
Alicia Montserrat León Valenzuela
Adela Patricia Castillo González
*Start date: August 2018

The Palapa Learning Center Program Directors
Director, Children’s Puente English program and After School programs: Jayna Schweitzer
Director, Adult English program: Kate Lewis
Director, Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska: Donna Schultz
Director, Biblioteca Infantil: Joy O’Brien
Educators, Children’s Art program: Jill Mollenhauer and Doug West

Parent Association
In 2018, the formation of the Parent organization allowed the parents to become actively involved in fund raising and support for student activities.

Volunteers
The Palapa Society is fueled by the passion of over 60 volunteers throughout the year including Librarians, Teaching Assistants, Event planners and workers, plus those who donate their unique skillsets for the roles of graphic designer, content creator, meditation guide, field trip chaperone, science lecturer, photographer, and more.

In helping to educate the children of Todos Santos, we are fostering and empowering the next generation of community leaders. Thoughtful, strategic, and visionary leadership is an urgent and growing need for Todos Santos and surrounding areas. The entire Baja peninsula is poised for tremendous development and growth. Todos Santos needs leaders who can shape the trajectory of that growth, balancing the benefits of development with potential issues such as water rights, pollution, displacement of historic industries, and overuse of a fragile municipal infrastructure.

It is the Palapa Society’s privilege to help our community grow, training the future leaders of Todos Santos and educating our children for future success in an increasingly global workforce.
WE ARE PALAPA

The Palapa Society of Todos Santos, A.C.
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Facebook: www.facebook.com/palapasociety.org
Instagram: www.instagram.com/palapasocietyoftodossantos/