

# **The Role of Film in the Bayano Region of Eastern Panama**



**Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca**  
**Supervisor: Jorge Ventocilla**  
**Nina Sylvester**  
**PFSS McGill University, 2015**



Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca (JPNC) is a project founded in 2013 with a commitment to reconcile territorial conflicts and limit the environmental degradation of the Bayano region. The conflicts, mainly a result of the construction of the 1976 Bayano Dam, have been long standing between the three ethnic groups of the area; Emberá, Kuna, and Campesino. The JPNC is one of the first initiatives to engage the three ethnic groups and is in partnership with McGill University and STRI. JPNC inaugural programs are film workshops for youth in Bayano with the support of Wapikoni Mobile and an annual film festival to showcase their documentaries. My supervisor, Jorge Ventocilla is a JPNC founder and program and remains a crucial leader in the success of both the Wapikoni film workshops and the Bayano Film Festival.

**Work Days for Internship:**

13 days in Bayano

15 days in Clayton

5 days at STRI

**Contact information for host:**

Jorge Ventocilla

STRI: casilla 0843 – 03092

Balboa, Panama.

[ventocilla.jorge@gmail.com](mailto:ventocilla.jorge@gmail.com)

698-18283

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**Acknowledgments:**

I would like to extend my deep appreciation to my supervisor, Jorge Ventocilla. Jorge has been an incredible source of knowledge regarding the historical context and current social and political conditions of the Bayano. He was always available to advise, make introductions and help further my understanding. As an intern I could not have felt more supported. His commitment, focus and dedication to the Bayano area and JPNC will continue to inspire me well beyond this project.

I would like to thank Lady Mancilla for overseeing organizing the workshops as well as in all logistical aspects of this internship. Lady was always quick to respond (and with all the answers!) to any emails, and was very helpful organizing the use of the camera for filming for the documentary.

I would also like to thank Bonarge Pacheco and Ignacio Pérez for their openness and willingness to share in this project. Iván Jaripio was also a great help in knowledge and insight into his perspective of the workshops.

Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca was a wonderful project, Many community members in both Loma Bonita and Ipetí Emberá were very helpful. The youth in the workshops were great and open to sharing their experiences, as was Francois Laurent, the film teacher from Wapikoni Mobile.

### **Executive Summary:**

The 1970s was a time of great change for the residents of the Bayano region marked by the building of the Bayano Dam and the extension of the Pan-American highway towards the Darién. The Campesino, Kuna, and Emberá forced relocation, due to inundation and the encroachment of Campesinos from Los Santos and Herrera, resulted in tense relations between the three ethnic groups. The social tensions escalated into strong discrimination and racism and resulted in territorial claims that propelled the formation of Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca (JPNC) in 2013. The project was created by and for the three diverse groups in conjunction with McGill University and STRI. The three objectives of the project are:

1. Unify criteria between Indigenous and Campesino to resolve issue of loss of indigenous lands
2. Promote sustainable agriculture and find economic alternatives for the region
3. Contribute to the management and conservation of forests in the watersheds of Alto Bayano

A main initiative of the project, is to provide cinematography workshops for youth (with representation from each of the three groups), with the aim to produce short documentaries of their communities. Hosted by the Canadian NGO, Wapikoni Mobile, the goals of the workshops are to end discrimination and to promote reconciliation through artistic collaboration. Along with these workshops JPNC hosts an annual film festival to showcase the youth produced films. Summer 2015 will mark its third year.

The goal of this project was to analyze the transformational role that film has played in the community of Bayano. This involved investigating how film has been used, specifically during the 70's when GECU produced films on the construction of the dam); its current use; and what future uses film could offer the community. Following this analysis, to create a short documentary film that compares and contrasts the 70's GECU films and how film is currently used in the region.

My methods included a large literature review to understand the history of the area. This included both published and grey literature, as well as watching documentaries on the area. I studied both the 1970s GECU films and the films the youth of Bayano created to 2015. I attended both 2015 workshops. I observed and interviewed many of the students and conducted interviews outside of the workshops with head figures of the community. I also interviewed the historian, Francisco Herrera and the GECU director, Pedro Rivera. All interviews were unstructured and relatively informal with no written questions. That being said, most interviews were similarly themed and many questions were repeated across interviews. Almost all interviews was filmed.

Comparing the 1970s films to those produced currently in the area by youth demonstrated a dramatic contrast in intent and theme. Interviews and research revealed that government motivation in producing films differed dramatically from why the youth of today committed to film production. The 1970s films were propagandist. They celebrated Panama's reclamation of the Canal, Torrijos'

government, and promoted progression of an autonomous Panama. They profiled governmental officials and rarely, if ever, included indigenous or Campesino presence. The theme of the films were almost exclusively focused on the construction of the dam. In the interview(s) with Pedro Rivera, he emphasized the importance of understanding the political and social climate of Panama of the time. The context was the upsurge in nationalism and the films were in part an attempt to display Panama's pride in the construction of the Bayano Dam.

When asked, nearly all of the film students of the 2015 workshops said they wanted to use film as a means to demonstrate their culture and community's identity. The workshops also proved to be successful cultural exchanges in regards to the social dynamic between the three ethnicities. Often at the beginning of the workshops students would not talk and stay with those from their own communities, yet, by the end of the week many of them stated they had made new friends, gained knowledge on other cultures in the area, and felt as though barriers had been broken. The documentaries produced during the 2015 workshops fell under the themes of culture, discrimination, and deforestation.

Overall this research project showed that film can have a huge impact on an area. Film has been used as a way of reconciliation, empowerment, and expression within these workshops and it appears to be extremely successful in that regard. It has been interesting to contrast the use of film in the 1970s films to the cultural expression-focused films that have been produced from the Wapikoni workshops. Evidently, with these workshops there exists great potential for the marginalized voices of the community. Not only has this collaboration in film led to youth breaking boundaries through friendships but also the showcasing of these films in the summer film festivals allows each community a glimpse at how the other residents of the area are living and the problems they face. Through the skill of cinematography, youth in the area are able to access opportunities outside of their communities as well. One graduate of the workshops entered his film in the 2015 Panalandia's Cine Pobre festival and won first place. With that he won the opportunity to attend film workshops in Cuba this year. With my documentary created on the importance of film it is my hope that residents in the area are aware of the empowerment potential film has in the area and continue to support the presence of the yearly workshops and the efforts made by Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca.

For future year's internships I recommend the implementation of a 'launch pad' for the workshop participants, a way for them to go beyond Bayano in regards to film. This would start with the creation of a website for JNPC which could include pages to both the workshops as well as the Festival. On this page I would recommend a database of grants, festivals, and other workshops that these youth could perhaps enter in. Having an Internet presence would greatly benefit JNPC and make information more accessible for those wanting to learn more about what they are doing.

### **Resumen Ejecutivo:**

La década de 1970 marcó tiempos de grandes cambios para los residentes de la región de Bayano, ya que incluyen tanto la construcción de la represa de Bayano y la ampliación de la carretera Panamericana hacia el Darién. La reubicación forzosa debido a la inundación y la invasión de Campesinos de Los Santos y Herrera dio lugar a las tensas relaciones entre los tres grupos étnicos; Campesino, Kuna, y Emberá. Con la práctica continuada de la tala y quema la agricultura, así como muchos campesinos que hacen la ganadería, y la introducción de la tala de árboles para obtener madera, una tendencia a la deforestación se está produciendo en el bosque previamente en buen estado de Bayano. Estas tensiones sociales, que culminaron en una fuerte discriminación y el racismo, junto con la presión de la demanda territorial es lo que impulsó el proyecto Juntos para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca (JPNC) para formar en 2013. Al darse cuenta de que ningún grupo era dejar Bayano la organización fue creada por y para los tres grupos diversos en conjunto con la Universidad McGill y STRI. Los tres objetivos del proyecto son:

1. Unificar criterios entre Indígena y Campesina para resolver problema de la pérdida de las tierras indígenas
2. Promover la agricultura sostenible y encontrar alternativas económicas para la región
3. Contribuir a la gestión y conservación de los bosques en las cuencas del Alto Bayano

Una de las principales iniciativas del proyecto ha sido la de realizar talleres de cinematografía para los jóvenes (con representación de cada uno de los tres grupos), para producir documentales cortos en sus comunidades. Estos talleres, organizados por la ONG canadiense, Wapikoni Mobile, son una manera de romper la constante discriminación y promover la reconciliación a través de la colaboración artística. Junto con estos talleres JPNC también ha sido sede de un festival de cine anual para el que se exhiben este filme.

Para analizar el papel del cine en la comunidad de Bayano. Para investigar la forma en que se utiliza, cómo se está utilizando (como se ve en la década de 1970 películas Grupo Experimental de Cine Universitario (GECU) producen durante la construcción de la presa), y qué usos futuros película podría tener para la comunidad. Con este análisis crear un cortometraje documental creando un vínculo entre las décadas de 1970 películas y el uso que el cine tiene actualmente en la región.

Mis métodos incluyeron una revisión de la literatura grande para entender la historia de la zona, esto incluía ambos publicados y literatura gris, así como documentales de observación en la zona. Estudié tanto las películas de 1970 GECU, así como todas las películas de la juventud del Bayano había creado hasta 2015. Asistí a los talleres, observé y entrevisté a muchos de los estudiantes, así como entrevistas llevadas a cabo fuera de los talleres con las figuras centrales de la comunidad. También entrevisté el historiador, Francisco Herrera y el director GECU, Pedro Rivera. Todas las entrevistas fueron relativamente informal sin preguntas escritas. Dicho esto, la mayoría de las entrevistas tenían temáticas similares y muchas preguntas se repitieron a través de entrevistas. Casi cada entrevista fue filmada.

Comparando las películas de 1970 a las películas producidas actualmente en el área mostró un contraste sumamente drástico en la manera que la película se utiliza en la zona. A través de mis entrevistas y la investigación se hizo evidente que la película había sido utilizada de una manera muy específica por el gobierno con el fin de promover las ideas en las décadas de 1970 y el mismo instrumento fue utilizado para objetivos completamente diferentes por la gente en el área ahora. Las películas de la década de 1970 se tenían carácter propagandista para ellos, ya que estaban celebrando la recuperación del Canal, el gobierno de Torrijos de Panamá, y la progresión esperada de un Panamá autónoma. Estas películas apenas incluyeron cualquier presencia indígena o campesino y eran principalmente funcionarios gubernamentales o los relacionados con la construcción real de la presa. Después de hablar con Pedro Rivera se hizo evidente a reconocer la importancia del clima político y social de Panamá durante ese tiempo. Era un resurgimiento del nacionalismo y orgullo en el país y las películas eran en parte un intento de mostrar esto a través de la construcción de la presa de Bayano.

Cuando se le preguntó, casi el cien por ciento de los estudiantes de cine de los 2015 talleres dijeron que querían usar el cine como medio para demostrar su cultura e identidad de la comunidad. Los talleres también demostraron ser los intercambios culturales exitosas en lo que respecta a la dinámica social entre los tres grupos étnicos. A menudo, al principio de los estudiantes talleres no quería hablar y se adhieren los de sus propias comunidades todavía a finales de la semana muchos de ellos declararon que habían hecho nuevos amigos, alcanza el conocimiento de otras culturas de la zona, y se sentía como barreras ha roto. Los documentales producidos durante los 2015 talleres cayeron bajo los temas de la cultura, la discriminación y la deforestación.

En general este proyecto de investigación mostró que la película puede tener un enorme impacto en un área. El cine ha sido utilizado como una forma de reconciliación, el empoderamiento y la expresión dentro de estos talleres y parece ser un gran éxito en ese sentido. Ha sido interesante contrastar el uso de la película en las películas de la década de 1970 a las películas de expresión centrada culturales que se han producido a partir de los talleres Wapikoni. Evidentemente, con estos talleres, existe un gran potencial para las voces marginadas de la comunidad. Esto no sólo ha de colaboración en el cine llevado a límites de jóvenes rompiendo amistades, sino también el lucimiento de estas películas en los festivales de cine de verano permite a cada comunidad un vistazo a cómo los demás habitantes de la zona viven y los problemas que enfrentan. A través de la habilidad de la juventud cinematografía en la zona son capaces de acceder a oportunidades fuera de sus comunidades. Un graduado de los talleres entró en su película en el 2015 Cine Pobre El festival de Panalandia y ganó el primer lugar. Con eso se ganó la oportunidad de asistir a talleres de cine en Cuba este año. Con el documental creado en la importancia del cine es mi esperanza que los residentes de la zona son conscientes de la película potencial empoderamiento tiene en la zona y que sigan apoyando la presencia de los talleres anuales y los esfuerzos realizados por Juntos para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca.

### **Introduction and Context:**

Figure 1: Timeline (Herrera 2010):

1934: Demarcation of Kuna, Bayano Comarca

1950s-1960s: Emberá begin to enter Bayano, previously inhabited by Kuna

1968: Military Coup, Gen. Omar Torrijos installed as president of Panama

1969: Beginning of the construction of the Bayano Dam, the Bayano Bridge, and  
the extension of the PanAmerican Highway

1976: Completion of the Bayano Dam and the Bayano Bridge

1978-1990 Campesinos begin to enter and occupy territory in Bayano, resulting  
in territorial conflicts

1993: Creation of 'Comision Mixta'

1996: Law 24 of 12 created

2013: Creation of Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca

2013: First Wapikoni workshops and inaugural year of the Bayano Film Festival

2014: Second Wapikoni workshops and Bayano Film Festival

2015: Third Wapikoni workshops and Bayano Film Festival

National Context:

1968 marked the year of the successful military coup, led by Gen. Omar Torrijos (U.S. Dept. State 2013). This brought about great changes in the political climate of Panama. With the treaty signed between Torrijos and US President, Jimmy Carter, in 1977 to completely hand over power over the canal to Panama within twenty years, Panama began an up rise in nationalism and spirit of autonomy (U.S. Dept. State 2013).

During this time, the government made huge strides to prove to the people that Panama was on an upsurge and could stand alone. The new military government undertook large projects, such as the Bayano Dam and the extension of the Pan-American highway to do just that. The Bayano Dam, deemed the second largest project after the Canal in Panama, was to supply a vast amount of electricity to Panama's power grid (Wali 1989). These nationalistic tendencies and dreams of a future Panama can be seen in the 1970s films I reviewed for this project such as *¡Bayano Ruge..!* (1976), *La Quema de Bayano* (1977), and *Bayano Prioridad Uno* (1975) all by the Grupo Experimental de Cine Universiatario (GECU) of which, Pedro Rivera was both a founder and director.

Unfortunately this surge in independence and national pride was directed at Latino Panamanians, and within that focused on urban centers. As seen in the aftermath of the Bayano Dam, indigenous and rural communities were not prioritized during this time.

#### Bayano Area History:

The Bayano region of Panama is located East of the Panama Canal with borders starting at the town of Cañitas and stretching eastward to the province of Darién (Wali 1989).

In 1934 the Panamanian government recognized and demarcated this land to become a Kuna "reserve" (Wali 1989). The dimensions of the reserve have shifted since being inundated by the Bayano Dam in 1976, and still stand as a contentious issue today (Amado et al. 81). The current designated Kuna land is named the Kuna Comarca of Mandungandi (Amado et al 81).

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Originally in the area, land use was based primarily on horticulture and the indigenous people of the area practiced swidden, or slash and burn, agriculture to sustain themselves (Wali 1989). The original reserve, now basin for the Bayano Lake, was used for many years as the land was known to be incredible fertile in that area (Wali 1989).

Although its original inhabitants were the Kuna people, Emberá communities began to enter the land during the 1950s and 1960s (Herrera). The construction of the Hydroelectric Dam coupled with the expansion of the Pan-American highway made the Bayano and Darién forested areas much more accessible than previous times. This brought an insurgence of migration from Campesinos into the area, mainly from Los Santos and Herrera provinces (Herrera). Currently the Bayano region is home to these three main groups, Kuna, Emberá, and Campesino.

#### Results of Dam:

The construction of the Bayano Dam had huge repercussions for those living in the planned reservoir areas. The creation of Lake Bayano flooded roughly 35,000Ha of land which inundated 80% of the previously existing Kuna inhabited lands(Wali 1989). This caused the forced relocation of over 4,000 people mainly consisting of Kuna and Emberá (Wali 1989). A new Comarca was established with new territories as well as including that which has been flooded although this has been a long process and the boundaries are yet to be clearly defined in law (Amado et al. 82). Residents of the proposed reservoir were offered either monetary compensation or plots of land close to the small cities of Chepo and Canitas from the government (Amado et al. 82). After moving to new

lands it was discovered that they were significantly less fertile than those previously inhabited (Amado et al. 82). It has been said that none of the indigenous families have actually received exactly what had previously been promised to them as compensation for their losses in full (Amado et al. 82). The indigenous of the area found the large influx of Campesinos to be unfair and the rapid deforestation of the forest cover mainly due to cattle raising concerning which fueled a strong social dislike between the groups (Amado et al. 83). To avoid migration barriers from the government, Campesinos began to organize themselves, forming five different syndicates in order to gain a political voice and to counter the indigenous push for them to leave (Amado et al. 83). Under pressure from the Campesino politicized groups, the Corporation of Bayano, an initiative created to oversee the management of the affected areas, allowed the Campesinos to continue to move into the region with no restraint (Amado et al. 83).

These territorial conflicts continued to escalate and by the 1990s, violent outbreaks were beginning to be seen (Amado et al. 83). Burned houses and protests closing the interamericana occurred, all results of this discrimination (Amado et al. 83). Gaining national attention, pressure was put on the government to pacify these relations and the 'Comision Mixta' was created (Amado et al. 83). The first official initiative to bring together members from the three conflicting groups, the 'Comision Mixta' in which discussions took place with the three groups expressing their concerns and needs (Amado et al. 83). This group met a number of times between 1992 and 1993 (Amado et al. 83). The group put forward seven recommendations including the lawful demarcation of the Kuna Comarca, Mandungandi which was recognized with

Law 24 of 12 in January 1996 although due to lack of clarity in its writing remains a contentious issue today (Amado et al. 83). Because of the lack of follow through on the governments behalf and the substantially lower standards of living due to the forced relocation, and the encroachment of Campesinos on indigenous territory, in 2014 the Kuna of Bayano filed a Human Rights complaint through the International Court of Human Rights (CIDH 2013). This document outlines the history of the inundation and Campesino influx which have resulted in mostly negative effects towards the indigenous communities as well as the governments lack of action regarding these issues (CIDH 2013).

Decision to make Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca:

Although previous non-violent initiatives, such as the government created 'Comision Mixta', appeared in the Bayano region there was no substantial grassroots progress in the local communities between individual confrontations. Despite the successes from the 'Comision Mixta' discrimination and territorial conflicts continued to persist in the region. From this communal concern, members from la Asociación Unión de Campesinos de la provincia de Panamá, la Organización Regional Kuna de Madungandi, la Asociación de Productores de Platanilla y la comunidad de Piriati-Emberá came together in 2013 alongside Dr. Catherine Potvin from McGill University to create a project to reconcile these three groups and work together toward protecting their lands (Estrella 2013).

The projects three main objectives were:

1. Unify criteria between Indigenous and Campesino to resolve issue of loss of indigenous lands

2. Promote sustainable agriculture and find economic alternatives for the region
3. Contribute to the management and conservation of forests in the Watersheds of Alto Bayano (Foro 2014)

To bring the three conflicting groups together under the cause of 'protecting their cuenca' JPNC decided to create a film festival in the region. As a means of inclusion and collaboration these film festivals would bring people together who may not otherwise have the reason nor the excuse to connect.

In conjunction with these film festivals, with the help of Canadian NGO, Wapikoni Mobile, two yearly workshops would give Bayano youth the opportunity to create movies for these film festivals.

Film was chosen for this project as it was able to create a space of social reconciliation through artistic collaboration amongst these young individuals (Ventocilla 2015). By attending these workshops youth were encouraged to interact with each other and all contribute to something collectively. These movies are able to show the three respective cultures to one another, their languages, dress and customs which may never had been witnessed before. These films could also be another form of dialogue in which the documentaries could address worries and concerns amongst the three groups.

Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca is a local based project that is working towards peaceful social relations in Panama and increased awareness amongst outside of the region Panamanians. Through attention garnered by the Bayano Film Festival, this is starting to be achieved.

**Question:**

What role does film have in the past, present, and future of the Bayano region in eastern Panamá?

Justification for this Question:

This question has arisen due to the incredibly transformative role film has taken in the Bayano region. Due to the implementation of the Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca's Film Festival and Workshops with Wapikoni Mobile, film is blossoming into an incredible tool and form of expression for the residents of this area. From historic, nearly propagandist, films of the 1970s to current day expression of indigenous and Campesino voice.

**Objective:**

The objective of this project was to analyze the different roles film has played in the history of the Bayano region. This includes the documentaries made by the Grupo Experimental de Cine Universitario (GECU) in the 1970s, to the present day documentaries created by the youth of Bayano. By studying the films made at different points in Panama's history, the objective was to figure out by whom they were made, for whom, in what political and social climate and to what ends were they created. Also within that what effects or results that these films had or could have. This analysis was to be displayed in a visual format by creating a documentary showing the links between the 1970s and now. In this regard the documentary could be shown to residents of Bayano who may not otherwise have looked into these connections themselves or been aware of the potential (or perhaps even presence) that film had in their area. Along with this product, a

secondary objective was to format hard copy DVD's of the past film festivals. This was to make accessible copies of the films so that those who were unable to attend the festival or perhaps wanted to see the films again, or show other friends and families could now do so. This could also be a promotional tool for the festival and a way of encouraging greater awareness and participation both in the workshops and attendance of the festival itself.

### **Methodology:**

The first step to my project was to collect and review all literature available to me that documented the history of Bayano. Specifically history related to land use and conflicts, the building of the Bayano Dam, issues resulting from this, and current publications on the Bayano Film Festival. This came in forms of news articles, web documents, official reports, published books, human rights claims, and grey literature. Many of these were supplied by Jorge Ventocilla and others resulted from personal research. Along with literature review I met with several scholars who had conducted extensive research and projects in the Bayano area who offered lots of information through informal conversation. These scholars included, Pedro Rivera, Amy Martinez, and Francisco Herrera.

The next step of which I took was to watch and analyze previous film surrounding my topic. This included the 1970s documentaries, created by Grupo Experimental de Cine Universitario (GECU) which there are clips that appear in my final documentary, the documentaries made by the youth of Bayano in the 2013 and 2014 workshops, as well as other Wapikoni workshop documentaries that were created in other parts of the world. This was to generate perspective

on the progression of different types of film and the topics that the youth of Bayano were interested in. A number of the youth which had helped in the creation of the 2013 and 2014 films were still present in the area so knowing who made which films aided in narrowing who to talk to once I arrived in Bayano for field research. Watching documentaries produced by Wapikoni outside of Panama was to gain a broader understanding of the types of films Wapikoni produces as well as to see any similarities and/or differences in the types of films which youth around the world were making in similar environments.

From there I began my field research in Bayano with an introductory meeting facilitated by Jorge Ventocilla, Javier Mateo-Vega, Lady Mancilla, and Lauliano Martinez. This meeting took place in Loma Bonita, Bayano and included the main coordinators and organizers of JPNC. Although the aim of the meeting was actually the organization of transportation for the upcoming workshops it was an introduction into the dynamics between the organizers and an opportunity to meet them in person.

Before using the camera and film equipment I consulted with STRI videographer, Ana Endara, creator of many documentaries including *CURUNDÚ* (2007) and *Reinas* (2013), both of which appear in the Bayano Film festivals. Ana gave insight into use of film equipment and the processes of making documentaries. She also advised me on methods of obtaining informed consent from interviewees.

My two next field excursions were attending both of the Wapikoni workshops that were held in the Campesino town of Loma Bonita and Ipetí Emberá. These were spent camping, eating, and being present in the workshops alongside the youth. Spending consecutive days with the participants was an insightful way to observe not only their learning but also the development of their interactions between each other. During these workshops I engaged in conversations with the youth, the organizers, parents of the participants, and the Wapikoni teacher, Francois Laurent, as well as conducted filmed interviews. These workshops were each 7 days in length. Throughout this time I also filmed the youth participating in the activities as well as the environment in which they were learning to put into my final documentary.

The final step of my methodology was to compile the video I had filmed into a coherent documentary, the final product was reviewed and approved by Jorge Ventocilla. To complete the DVDs of the previous festivals I designed the DVD pamphlet and menu options have received all necessary videos and festival posters from Jorge Ventocilla. Aside from background information to aid in the usefulness of the documentary, the literature reviewed has been cited and included in this final report.

**Accordance with McGill's Code of Ethics:**

Throughout this project I was sure to keep respect for the communities I was in and the individuals within them an utmost priority. I was briefed by Jorge Ventocilla before entering Bayano on the history and dynamics of each community and kept that in mind during my project. Before beginning the

project I reviewed the McGill, '*Protocol for Research in Panama's Indigenous Communities*' (McGill University 2006) document and made effort to abide by these policies throughout my entire internship. Appreciating the differences of each culture (including my own) was integral to having a positive interaction and an informative stay. Jorge introduced me to each group upon arrival in Bayano and my presence and objectives were explained before any filming was done. I reiterated to each group in the workshop what this film would be used for and if should they not want to appear in the final product simply to advise me and I would avoid filming them and make sure their request was respected. The product of my project is the property of Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca, it is up to the them regarding who they decide to show it to and will not be used for further research or data extraction by McGill University or STRI. All other footage that I obtained and did not use for my final documentary was given to Jorge Ventocilla.

### **Limitations:**

1. Because my field trips into Bayano were centered on attending the Wapikoni workshops, the individuals interviewed at those times were acutely aware of the workshops (if not participants in them). In this regard I limited the opinion of those outside of the workshops and perhaps those not directly connected to them. Therefore, communities outside of the two central locations of Loma Bonita and Ipetí Emberá do not appear in my documentary.
2. Although I attempted to gather an equal representation of each ethnic group within my film, due to audio or video quality of the footage taken

some clips could not be used. This also affected some of the information included. Inclusion in the final documentary also depended on pertinence of what was said in the interview and what was needed within the video.

3. Because of the brevity of the final documentary, this limited the quantity of interviews I could include.
4. Of the 1970s films that I observed and compared with present day documentaries, I did not have access to all that were produced at the time. Therefore analysis that was made was only on a selection of the historic films.
5. In comparison with the numerous interviews conducted with people regarding the current documentaries made, I was only able to converse with three historians who have broad knowledge of the 1970s films. This could have resulted in a skewed representation of significance of film within the two time periods.
6. Although unavoidable I consider the limited time period of the internship portion of the course to restrict the depth of research that could benefit this project.
7. Although initially I considered being an outsider with less than perfect Spanish to be a limitation for me, upon completing the project I feel as though perhaps it was an advantage. Not being from any of the three ethnic groups I feel as though individuals that were interviewed could give their opinion without feeling judged.
8. Finally, although having completed the packaging for the DVDs of the past two festivals and the compiling of the correct files, I have been unable to burn successful copies. This means that I will not be able to deliver part of

my final product to Jorge Ventocilla although he will have all the necessary files, photos, and information to make copies through another avenue, perhaps with GECU or a STRI videographer.

### **Findings and Results:**

Observing the 1970s Films:

Upon watching a number of the 1970s films, including *¡Bayano Ruge...!* (1976), *Bayano Prioridad Uno'* (1975), and others it is very apparent of by whom these films are made. Often these films focus on the rousing speeches of government officials, engineers, and in a number of the president Gen. Omar Torrijos himself speaking of the grandeur of what Panama will be. Images within these films show men working, army groups training in unison, and the Panamanian flag accompanied with confident, uplifting music. There is an incredibly nationalistic feel to the majority of these films and some give the feeling of leaning towards propagandistic. When present, there are only very brief shots of indigenous or Campesino peoples within these films and often they don't actually say anything. These cameos don't allow any agency or voice from the residents of Bayano with these films, an issue which Bonarge Pacheco speaks about (B. Pacheco, personal communication, March 2015).

Although this is the first impression from these older documentaries it is important to appreciate the larger context of which they were made. My interview with Pedro Rivera, one of the founders and creators of the Grupo Experimental de Cine Universitario (GECU) which created many of these films spoke at great length about this topic. The 1970s marked a great time in the history of Panama. The reclamation of the Panama Canal from the United States,

the first military government, and the expansion of the Pan-American highway all signified the growing autonomy of the country, Panama was finally Panamanian. These films aided in showing these ideals and confidence in Panama to the greater public to gain support.

Unfortunately the greater public did not include the residents of Bayano, and although directly affected by the construction of the dam and the progress which Panama was undergoing were not the subjects nor the audience in mind for these films. It is with the acknowledgement of the social and political climate at the time to not paint these 1970s films as 'bad' and the current documentaries as 'good'. There was a great movement happening in Panama during the time of the GECU films and the construction of the Bayano Dam, for many, signified a great step towards the growth of Panama as a country.

#### Current Film and Workshops:

Observing the workshops taking place currently in Bayano as well as watching the documentaries of the past two years provides a drastically different use of film in the region. The topics that the youth have chosen for their creations are often issues prevalent in their communities; examples are deforestation, discrimination, preservation of culture, and loss of land, among others. These short documentaries are being used as a medium to express local issues and share those with the community and as a way to voice concerns. These workshops also introduced youth to a new skills and knowledge about film. Because of the diverse nature of the workshops (with representation of the three groups) this fosters a sharing of different issues from three different perspectives. Campesino youth go into a Kuna community for the first time and

in the group are interviewing members of that area on issues that they are facing. These exchanges and introductions into new communities are happening across all three groups. These short films demonstrate not only the differences in problems each group is facing but also some of the similarities as well. This can be seen in the issue of deforestation which is affecting all three groups, albeit in their individual ways. The youth participating in these workshops stay with each other for the whole week, camping together, eating together, and creating together. In this sense these workshops have provided a space for this sharing of ideas and culture to go way beyond just the film and to foster friendship and understanding between the individuals.

Observing the progression of this cultural exchange from the beginning of the workshop to the end has been an incredible experience. Initially the youth would stick with the people from their own community, the atmosphere seemed awkward and almost frigid at times. By the end of the workshop everyone seemed very comfortable with each other, joking and laughing often. There were even instances of cultural exchange in the form of clothing, a Campesino girl borrowed a Ngobe dress, kids from Kuna communities received body paintings from Emberá youth.

Cultural exchange and sharing of ideas and information were not the only new things these children learned during the workshops. Most of these youth had never handled a film camera before and it was interesting to watch them become more comfortable with the equipment and more skilled in their recordings. These workshops gave, for free, the opportunity for these youth to try out something they had perhaps never even had interest in before. For some, it appeared that they discovered an area of study which they were extremely

passionate about. Instruction on audiovisual recording really excited some of the members of the workshops and when asked they were very enthusiastic to learn more. In past years it had been a struggle to maintain participation throughout the entire workshop and to get enthusiasm for the second workshop (which focuses on editing) yet this workshop had an overwhelming amount of youth wanting to continue onto the second portion on the workshops. Perhaps this is a sign of the workshops and JPNC gaining increased support from the community.

### **Implications:**

Film:

As mentioned above, having documentaries about local issues provides a medium for previously unheard, marginalized voices to express their opinions on issues in their area. This is a direct contrast to the films produced in the 1970s and exemplifies the flexible nature that film can have depending on who is using it and for what purpose. With the introduction of the film festival, these documentaries have garnered more attention for the area of Bayano, this can be seen in the news articles regarding the festival (Estrella 2013). Overall both the Wapikoni workshops and the film festival have huge implications for this region and have the potential for many great projects in regards to reconciliation, information, cultural sharing, and film opportunities beyond Bayano.

Currently there is fear in the indigenous communities of Bayano (and seen in other areas of Panama as well), that groups with oral histories are losing their stories (Ivan Jaripio, personal communication, March 7 2015). This worry was expressed by some of those interviewed during the first Wapikoni workshop. In this sense, film can have a large historical significance in preserving ethnic

history as those who know these stories are growing older and the culture of passing them on is becoming increasingly less apparent (Ivan Jaripio, personal communication, March 7, 2015). Educating youth on how to use film equipment and editing is a way of indigenous agency within the region so that they do not have to rely on external help to record and aspects of their culture. This could be useful across all of Panama for groups who feel as though their history is being lost as they do not write it and those who know it are disappearing.

With these learned skills students can take film to be a larger component in their lives. An example of this can be seen with Iván Jaripio, who has been a participant in the 2013 workshops creating his film, *Arimae*. This year Iván served as an assistant teacher for students in the workshops. He also entered his video, *Arimae*, in the 2015 Panalandia Cine Pobre Festival and won first place. This award includes a scholarship to attend, “Taller de Realizacion de Cine de bajo presupuesto, dictado en la Escuela Nacional de Cine y TV, en La Habana, Cuba” (Panalandia). This is one example of how these workshops have created opportunities for youth wanting to discover film and it bringing them to new places internationally. Having Iván, as well as another film student, Lauliano Martinez, as assistant teachers in this year’s workshops has been the first step in hopefully creating a roster of indigenous and Campesino film teachers for the area.

These films allow communities outside of Bayano to view a local perspective on the area and therefore create a greater awareness for those living in the region and the issues they face. This creates a better understanding of cultures not simply across the three present in Bayano at this time but for people living outside of the province as well.

### Social:

Aside from the benefits of film itself for the region there are huge implications regarding the social collaborative aspect of both these workshops and the Festival. As Juntos para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca is one of the first initiatives to bring together the three conflicting groups of the area, the film projects exemplify their aim and mission.

Having youth from the three distinct community live, create, and share together has resulted in an interruption of the continued discrimination that has existed. For many of these youth they expressed never really knowing much about each other's cultures before and since the workshops creating friends and breaking barriers of longstanding conflict. This reconciliation through artistic collaboration has brought hope to some of the Bayano area that reconciliation is possible between the three groups.

The film festival itself has also been a great way to bring people together who otherwise may never had a reason to be under the same roof. The Festival nights have offered a way not only for people to watch what the youth of the community have been making, and not only a glimpse into each other's cultures, but also enjoy an evening of diversity in culture amongst each other in the same room. This itself has great significance in the movement towards reconciliation between them.

### Future:

Juntos para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca and the workshops and Film Festival are still very young initiatives, this year will mark just their third year, yet already it

seems as though they've accomplished a lot. Ideally the role of film will continue to grow in the Bayano area and continue to serve as a tool in expression, preservation of culture, and social reconciliation. As popularity for the festival increases and the reserve of student documentaries grows I believe these will reach a wider audience and offer more Panamanians the opportunity to become more informed of the cultures and issues faced in the Bayano region. Coupled with this could be greater recognition from the state for increased support in the region. As popularity for the workshops has been growing over the three years it doesn't seem that the demand for them will decrease, if anything JPNC may encounter issues in having to limit participation. Hopefully this will be countered with the education and formation of local teachers.

### **Recommendations for Future Projects:**

I strongly recommend that this internship continue to exist within the options of the PFSS program. It is incredible engaging, interesting, and both Jorge Ventocilla and JPNC as a whole were incredible and a complete pleasure to work with. For future projects I recommend something to be put in place to bring both the Festival and the participants of the workshops more connectivity with opportunities outside Bayano. This could mean the creation of a website for Juntos Para Proteger Nuestra Cuenca with pages for the festival and workshops. This could mean a Vimeo account for students to add their documentaries and to share over social media/email. There needs to be some sort of a launch pad created for these students should they wish to go beyond the Bayano Film festival. I think the creation of a website for JPNC is crucial in itself for the organization to have an online presence. Although it is referenced in many news

articles that talk about the Festival there is nowhere to go further and find more information or direction on where to watch the youth documentaries online.

Many of these documentaries are on the Wapikoni website yet this site shows up in French which could deter those who do not speak French from using it. On the web page for the JPNC and the workshops I think it would be great to start compiling a database of film festivals, grants, and other workshops that these youth could watch or enter in.

For those interested in watching the youth documentaries some can be found on the Wapikoni Mobile website: <http://www.wapikoni.ca/>

The films:

Retratos de Bayano (2013)

Arímae (2014)

Nuestro Hogar (2014)

Akua Yala (2014)

Discriminación (2015)

Deforestación (2015)

La Casa de Nuestros Abuelos (2015)

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