

THE COCO CANARY ANNUAL NARRATIVE

JULY 2024 - JUNE 2025

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 **Coco Canary**
CONSULTING
Evaluate Creatively 

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"Molly O'Connor was consistently reliable, attentive, and responsive to the needs of the project. Her skill in facilitating meaningful discussions, as well as her commitment to equity and justice, were evident at every step of the process. I appreciated her dedication and the calm confidence she brought to our work. Her ability to navigate complex topics with clarity and composure helped create a collaborative environment. I highly recommend Molly to anyone seeking a knowledgeable, dependable, and gracious partner for community-engaged projects."

Roger J. Chin, PhD, Epidemiologist at Hazardous Waste
Management Program in King County
June 2025

”

A Brief Narrative

Welcome to the 5th Annual Coco Canary Narrative! Below are business (and some personal!) highlights from July 2024 - June 2025.

Project Highlights

1. Photovoice and Community-Based Participatory Research with the Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County (Seattle, WA)

Sully Moreno from [Culture Shift Consulting](#) and I have been busy finishing up phase one of our Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) project with the Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County (HAZ Waste). Technically, this is an “audience research study,” which means we are working with HAZ Waste’s marketing and research departments to help them better understand the people who engage (and don’t engage) with their services, which include hazardous waste drop-off sites, [DIY recipes for safer household products](#), and more! This study builds on four years of previous audience research, which was missing the perspectives of Black and Indigenous communities.

From June 2024 to May 2025, we brought together eight community members from these communities, who live or work in South Seattle, to help us explore the perceived negative impacts of hazardous waste in the area and what motivates them to take action to reduce their impact. Our overarching questions were:

1. Why does safely using and disposing of hazardous products matter to community members?



2. What messages and outreach strategies are effective to encourage community members to safely use and dispose of hazardous products?

Figures 1: Molly and Sully posing with gift bags at a 2024 Photovoice facilitation (Seattle, WA)

To achieve this, we used **Photovoice**, a qualitative, arts-based research method that utilizes photos taken by participants to address research and evaluation questions, to foster in-depth discussion, and promote social change. A total of 126 photos were taken, and 40 were printed and captioned for use in a “gallery walk” at the in-person focus group (Figure 2). Thanks to the photographs and the wisdom of the community members, we co-created 4 key themes, 8 communication insights, 28 suggested actions, and 35 communication strategy area improvements for HAZ Waste.



Figure 2: Participants engaging in a Photovoice gallery walk (Seattle, WA)

It is important to note that inclusion was a priority for this project. Some examples include: language access (Spanish & Thai), free public transit vouchers, and more. Since this was a CBPR study, community members not only participated in collecting data (photos) but also played a crucial role in data analysis, as well as co-writing and reviewing the final report. If you want to learn more about this project, [read the publicly available Phase 1 report](#) titled “Through the Lens of Community: A Photovoice Exploration of Health and Environmental Connection.” Sully and I are excited to begin Phase 2, which will be recruiting a task force to turn the recommendations into action!

2. Urban Tree Benefits & Burdens: An 18-month CBPR Study with the University of Minnesota’s (UMN) Forest Resources Department

Since January 2025, I’ve been supporting UMN researchers with an [NSF-funded CBPR study](#), specifically by designing and implementing focus groups and managing participant recruitment and communications. In this study, we are: (1) assessing how urban water and forest managers address four extreme environmental scenarios (ex., heat, carbon emissions, flooding, and air pollution), and (2) what current and future benefits (and hazards) do tree and urban forest management practices bring to these scenarios? By summer 2026, we aim to co-produce articles and research proposals in collaboration with local project partners to further this research.

For a full list of projects completed by Coco Canary, [please visit this page](#).



Figure 3: The title slide for the March 2025 UMN Urban Tree Benefits/Hazards workshop and focus group (Minneapolis, MN)

Other Business Updates

Presentations, Workshops, and Resources!

Since June 2024, I've presented eight presentations, co-facilitated two workshops, published one article, and even spoke on my first podcast! Check out the list below, which includes some available resources.

Presentations

- **Visitor Services Association Conference** (7/2024 - St. Paul, MN): Redefine Visitor Studies Using Community Storytelling: A Creative Evaluation Story.
- **Community Centric Fundraising - MN Chapter (CCF-MN) Conference** (7/2024 - Minneapolis, MN): Creative Evaluation & Community Centrism.
- **CA Library System** (1/2025 - Virtual): Creative Participatory Research & Evaluation.
- **Culturally Responsive Evaluation & Assessment Conference** (4/2025 - Chicago, IL): Building Community Through Photovoice & Storytelling: Two CBPR Case Studies with Public Health Seattle & King County.

Workshops

Our Roles in Community: Past, Present, and Future (2/2025 - St. Paul, MN): Facilitated by Molly O'Connor, Ilse Griffin, Cydnee Sanders, Carrie Pomeroy, & Angela Allen

- *"Drawing a timeline of my activist journey was really healing and the changemaker roles was super helpful in seeing where I fit in the greater scheme of things."*



Figure 4: Molly O'Connor & Meg Trowbridge leading an Improv workshop (Atlanta, GA)

Let's Laugh, Play Improv Games, and Learn Some Life Lessons! (6/2025 - Atlanta, GA): Facilitated by Molly O'Connor and Meg Trowbridge at the 22nd Century Initiative Conference (Figure 4).

Register for a Workshop Today! Our next workshop is on November 1st.

[Click Here to Register!](#)

Resources

Want to learn more about how to implement arts-based methods and CBPR?

[Check out this webinar](#) that Sully Moreno and I produced earlier this year (Figure 5). We hope to do more in the near future.

Community-based Participatory Research: Gathering Meaningful Data Using Creative Approaches

A Presentation By:

Sully Moreno, *Culture Shift Consulting*

Molly C. O'Connor, *Coco Canary Consulting*



Figure 5: Title slide of a CBPR and arts-based methods presentation

Publications & Podcasts

- O'Connor, M. C. (2024). [Lessons Learned: Creative Methods, DEAI, and Community Engagement Go Hand-in-Hand](#). AEA365.
- Boland, S. (Host). (2025, November 27). [Creative Evaluation with Molly O'Connor](#) (No. 192). [Audio podcast episode]. In Next in Nonprofits.

Clients, Timelines, & Project Summaries

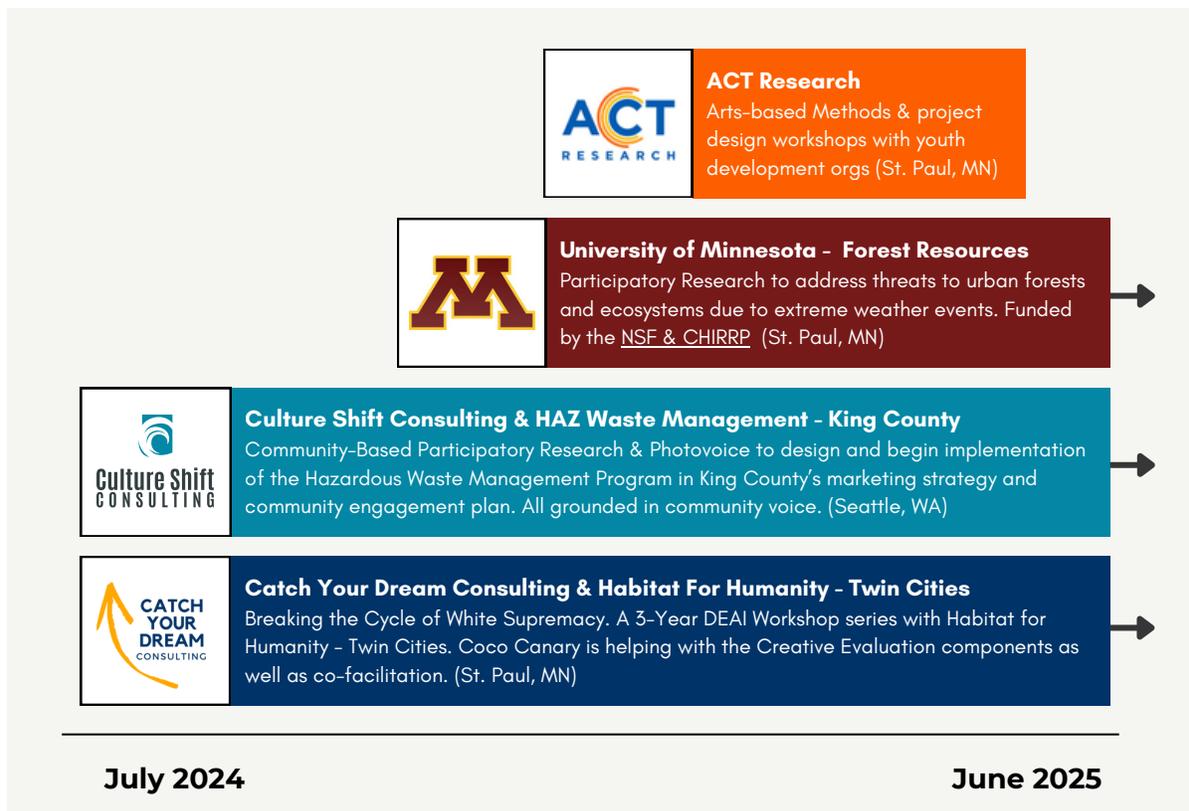


Figure 6: A visual summary of projects completed and in progress.

Our Impact

Coco Canary gives back via volunteering, moving money, reducing their carbon footprint, and more! Read below about some of their small-yet-mighty impact!

Volunteering Summary



Figure 7: Molly posing with Flava Café staff at a volunteer event

Led a Mutual Aid Campaign for Flava Café and raised \$4000 with the help of our community!

If you didn't know, one of my favorite places to grab food and coffee in St. Paul, MN, is [Flava Café](#). It's a social impact business that does AMAZING work with youth and its local community. Last year, Flava Café almost had to close due to unforeseen financial circumstances. Other members of Flava's advisory board and I came together to figure out how to keep this community gem open for business! Many ideas emerged from that meeting, and the one I led was a mutual aid campaign. Within 2 months, we raised nearly \$4000! Thanks to our teamwork, Flava is still going strong!

Offboarding as President of the Minnesota Evaluation Association (MNEA)

December 31st, 2024, was my last day on the MNEA board. My proudest moments from this last year are: (1) Creating a [MNEA History page](#), (2) Supporting the popular Indigenous Evaluation Series, and (3) Knowing that my "Making Connections" events will continue into 2025 and beyond. It was a pleasure serving as president for 3 years. I made dear friends, met fantastic evaluators based in MN (and worldwide), and I feel like I made a tangible difference for my community. I highly recommend joining MNEA either as a [general member](#) or [board member](#)!



Figure 8: Molly posing at the MNEA 2024 annual business meeting

Offboarding as Co-lead of Community-Centric Fundraising - MN Chapter (CCF-MN)

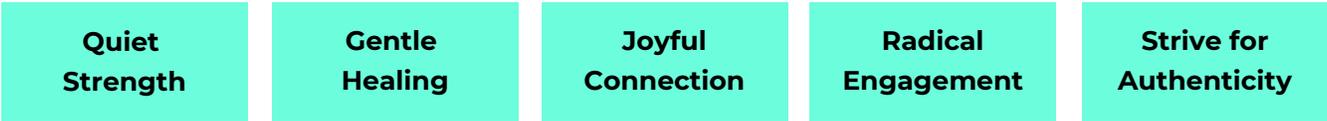
December 31st was also my last day as a co-organizer of [CCF-MN](#). I was involved for 4 years and am honored to have helped co-create this amazing community. I started with supporting admin tasks. Once it got too big for one to two people, I built a team of volunteers. Now, CCF-MN is in good hands. I am excited to see where the new leadership takes us, and I look forward to attending the CCF-MN's next Annual Convening.



Figure 9: Flyer for the CCF-MN 2024 Annual Convening

Distribution of Donations

Each year, Coco Canary donates a portion of its profits—or fundraising—to non-profits and mutual aid organizations doing systems change work. As a Social Impact Business, the organizations we donate to are guided by our five guiding principles:



We use them as a North Star for both our work and where we distribute our profits, such as the organizations below. [Learn more about our guiding principles here!](#)



Figure 10: A visual summary of donation distributions

Environmental Impact

I am passionate about environmental justice, and as a small business owner, I have given considerable thought to my environmental impact. I have made efforts to reduce my carbon footprint by eating a mostly vegetarian diet, composting, biking, walking, or taking transit instead of driving, and using [Ecosia](#) as my web browser to reduce carbon emissions. Did you know Ecosia is a carbon-negative internet browser that funds tree plantings worldwide?

This is my second year of trying to quantify my environmental impact, specifically how much carbon emissions I reduced by bicycling for work! From July 2024 to June 2025:

- Molly biked 166 miles for work.
- In total, Molly emitted 3.6 lbs of CO₂ from her bike rides, as compared to 161 lbs of CO₂ she would have emitted if she had used her car (Figure 11).
- This is equivalent to 6 trash bags of waste recycled instead of landfilled or 1.2 tree seedlings grown for 10 years!

I biked less this year compared to 2023—likely because I got a car in 2024—but I am still amazed at how much CO₂ emissions you avoid even if you bike for work a few times a year.

I hope this section inspires you to reflect on ways to reduce your carbon footprint.

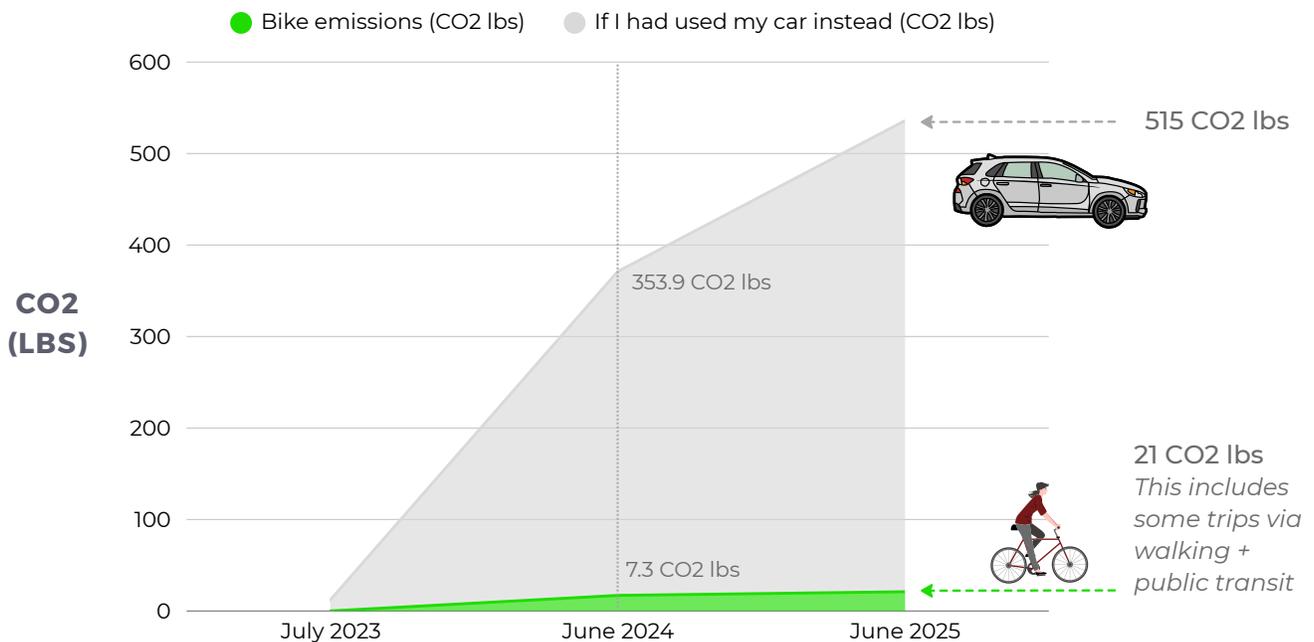


Figure 11: Two years of my CO₂ (LBS) emissions from biking versus if I had used my car.

Closing

What I Am Looking Forward To

Professionally? 2025 to 2026 will be a year for deepening and balancing.

- **Our Biggest Ever Arts and Community-Based Participatory Research Project got extended!** Remember how I said Sully and I will be coordinating a Taskforce for Phase 2 of a project? Well, the end product of Phase 2 will likely be a community engagement plan, and our client informed us that they want to extend our contract to help them implement the plan that the Taskforce creates (i.e., Phase 3)! [Sign up for my newsletter](#) to get project updates!
- **Facilitating More Arts-Based and Heart-Opening Workshops:** For the last three years, I have facilitated workshops for clients, which I truly enjoy. This upcoming year, I will be offering workshops to my clients AND the general public.
 - Check out the [Our Roles in Community](#) workshop (Nov 1st). We will reflect on (1) [the roles](#) you've been playing in your community, (2) discuss learnings, challenges, and why these roles may or may not serve you and/or your community, and (3) decide how you want to engage in community moving forward.
 - Keep an eye out for **Arts-Based Methods (ABM) Workshops (Spring 2026)**: My friend and colleague, Ava Yang-Lewis, and I have led several ABM workshops for clients over the years, and now we want to bring them to the broader community!

Personally? 2025 to 2026 will be a year of pushing myself to try new things!



- **Making More Music:** My friend, Ilse, and I are in a band called Tree & Co, and we have been releasing singles all summer! We will release the whole EP soon. You can find our music streaming on [Spotify](#), [Apple](#), [Bandcamp](#), and more! We also play out, find out where we are playing next by following our [Songkick](#).
 - Also, Jane Sapp and the This Is Real Ensemble got back together to sing at the 22CI conference in Atlanta! [Check out the video here](#).



- **Continuing to Find My Celtic and Nordic Roots:** I will be entering my third year of Cauldron, where I have been in cultural self-study with other folks with European ancestry. These last two years have been healing and transformative. My favorite parts are participating in Celtic and Nordic rituals (such as Samhain — pronounced “Saw-win”—and Beltaine). I am looking forward to being a part of event planning and ritual facilitation for this upcoming year.

Thank you for reading

♥ Molly

About

What Does Coco Canary Do?

We use arts-based methods and CBPR best practices to align, design, measure, and critically engage with your work. If you want to learn more, check out our [Services and Pricing Sheet!](#)



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Who is Coco Canary?



Molly C. O'Connor (she/her/hers) is the founder and principal consultant. She is an arts-based evaluator with a M.S. in Natural Resources Science & Management and a minor in Evaluation Studies. She has a professional background in ecology, environmental education, museum studies, and human services. She is also a musician, songwriter, filmmaker, and illustrator.

How to Keep In Touch!



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We utilize the power of art and community

to facilitate deep discussion, co-create equitable solutions, and be the change.