



# THE COCO CANARY ANNUAL NARRATIVE

JULY 2025 - JUNE 2026

Written by: Molly C. O'Connor

[moconnor@cococanary.com](mailto:moconnor@cococanary.com)

[www.cococanary.com](http://www.cococanary.com)

 **Coco Canary**  
CONSULTING  
Evaluate Creatively 

“

*"I also had a chance to read through the full report, and I just want to say how impressive and comprehensive it is. The care, depth, and clarity with which the work is presented really highlight the significance of this study—not only for the Communications Program, but for the entire organization. It's a powerful example of what it looks like to center lived experience and equity in our evaluation efforts."*

Michell Mouton

Communications Program Manager at Hazardous  
Waste Management Program in King County

May 2025

”

# A Brief Narrative

Welcome to the 6th Annual Coco Canary Narrative! Below are business (and some personal) highlights from July 2025 to June 2026.

## Project Highlights

### 1. Using arts-based methods and a community taskforce to create a community engagement plan 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 two of our Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) project with the Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County (HAZ Waste). This is an “audience research study,” meaning we are working with HAZ Waste’s marketing and research departments to help them better understand the people who do (and don’t) engage with their services. This study builds on our Phase 1 Photovoice study, which we conducted last year, and aims to co-develop and implement a community engagement plan with community members and HAZ Waste staff. From June 2025 to July 2026, we brought together ten community members to join the taskforce and help us co-create the community engagement plan. We met six times and used several arts-based methods and activities as facilitation tools in our in-person and virtual meetings:

- **Collage:** Participants created visual artworks by selecting materials and assembling them into a new composition (Figure 1)
- **Found Poetry:** Participants review written materials, pick out words or phrases, and create their own poems.
- **Storyboard:** Participants develop a story, scene by scene, by pairing visual elements with a few sentences of description for context.
- **Creative Brief:** Participants use a template and question prompts to describe the audience, key messages, tone, related activities, and calls to action of a campaign idea.
- **Activities Calendar:** Participants brainstorm event ideas and then add them into a calendar.



**Figure 1:** An example of a collage

## 2. Using photo elicitation and a community advisory group to develop a tree action plan for the Chinatown-International District with the City of Seattle's Office of Sustainability & Environment (Seattle, WA)

As an Arts-Based Facilitation and Urban Forestry Advisor, I've been partnering with Sully Moreno and Jessica Werner to create a Chinatown-International District (CID) Neighborhood Tree Action Plan for the City of Seattle's Office of Sustainability & Environment (OSE). The CID has the second-lowest tree canopy in Seattle, and this project aims to engage CID residents through meetings, field trips, and learning labs to help OSE identify the community's priorities and vision for the CID urban forest, including preferred tree species, tree-planting placement, and more.



**Figure 2:** Community members reviewing a photo elicitation gallery. Photo taken by Jessica Werner.

**Arts-Based Facilitation Advisor:** Arts-based methods are useful when you want to facilitate conversations with community partners that not only elicit input on complex topics, such as urban forestry, but also infuse the process with creativity and joy. For this project, my main tasks were developing a facilitation guide for a photo elicitation exercise, compiling the photos and photo captions, designing the photo gallery posters (Figure 2), co-analyzing the rich qualitative data, and writing the photo elicitation results section of the final report.

| Tree Palette for CID 2026 - 2029                         |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                        |                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Species / Cultivar                                       | Photo                                                                               | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Size (Height x Spread) | NT Values-Based Criteria                                                                                                                                        |
| Heartland Catalpa                                        |  | Narrow form, upright, uniform branching and darker green foliage. It is more suitable for most landscapes and streetscape. Can grow to 50 feet tall.                                                                                                                                          | 50' x 25'              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contributes to a healthy urban forest ecosystem<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Has a cultural connection to the CID |
| Hot Wings Maple                                          |  | Shiny red autumn foliage. It is more suitable for most landscapes and streetscape. Can grow to 50 feet tall.                                                                                                                                                                                  | 20' x 24'              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contributes to a healthy urban forest ecosystem<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Has a cultural connection to the CID |
| *NEW* Japanese Stemata                                   |  | Camellia-like white flowers appear on this medium sized tree in July and August. Katsuragi-like fall color includes red, orange and purple tones. Beautiful cream and tan patches are revealed as its trunk exfoliates with age.                                                              | 30' x 20'              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contributes to a healthy urban forest ecosystem<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Has a cultural connection to the CID |
| Japanese Umbrella Pine                                   |  | Dark green glossy foliage, the tree becomes broader and more expansive with age. The tightly whorled needles resembling the spokes of an umbrella inspired the name for this unique conifer. Prefers acid soil but is tolerant of clay soils, wet sites and road salt.                        | 30' x 20'              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contributes to a healthy urban forest ecosystem<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Has a cultural connection to the CID |
| Male Goldfish (Autumn Gold or Friction Series) (obscure) |  | Named for its fan-shaped green leaves that turn to smoky golden yellow in autumn, this feature make selection a breeze in youth and broadens with age. This air pollution-tolerant tree performs well in compacted and alkaline soils, and is highly resistant to insect feeding and disease. | 40' x 35'              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contributes to a healthy urban forest ecosystem<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Has a cultural connection to the CID |

**Figure 3:** A snapshot of a draft tree palette developed by Molly O'Connor and Jessica Werner.

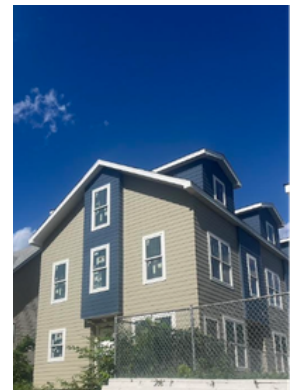
**Urban Forestry Advisor:** This project also included educating community members on relevant urban forestry topics through field trips and learning labs. So, I helped write curriculum that could both teach and generate insights on urban forestry topics. I also attended team meetings and acted as an urban forestry translator (of sorts) to make sure we made information accessible to community partners and the project team. Lastly, I co-created a Tree Palette that visually summarized the types of trees the community wants to see and steward in the CID neighborhood (Figure 3).

This project ends in December 2026, but our contract with OSE continues into 2027 because we will develop a Tree Action Plan for the Beacon Hill Neighborhood.

### 3. Evaluating and documenting a cooperative housing initiative with Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (Minneapolis, MN)

The [Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism](#) (BLUU) was co-founded in 2015 by Lena K. Gardner in response to a lack of support for Black liberation efforts in predominantly white Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations. Thanks to a generous donation, BLUU launched the [Housing Cooperative Initiative](#) (HCI) to improve material conditions for Black and Indigenous families. Through HCI, BLUU bought eight vacant lots in North Minneapolis to build 17 units of cooperative housing. After six years of dedicated work, their flagship site at 1338 Logan Ave is nearly complete (Figure 4)!

To capture learnings made and help guide strategic decisions for BLUU's remaining seven sites, BLUU hired Ray Martinez ([RM Methods](#)) and me to conduct an evaluation. To ground the work, we first developed a logic model, which is a basic visual representation of how a program works. Then, we facilitated an in-person meeting with BLUU and key partner organizations to assess what worked, what they found challenging, what lessons they want to carry forward, and, most importantly, to celebrate and express gratitude to one another. We synthesized these insights into a final evaluation report with recommendations to help BLUU finish the next seven sites with more ease.



**Figure 4:** BLUU's first co-op housing site

### 4. UMN participatory research about the benefits and burdens of urban trees in partnership with local forestry & water managers (St. Paul, MN)

Since January 2025, I've been supporting UMN researchers with an [NSF-funded study](#). Specifically, I've designed and facilitated five co-production sessions and managed participant recruitment and communications. Through these sessions, UMN researchers and community members developed two different research proposals. The next step is to secure funding for these proposals. So, the team and community partners will continue to submit these proposals to potential funders. Our final task is to publish the

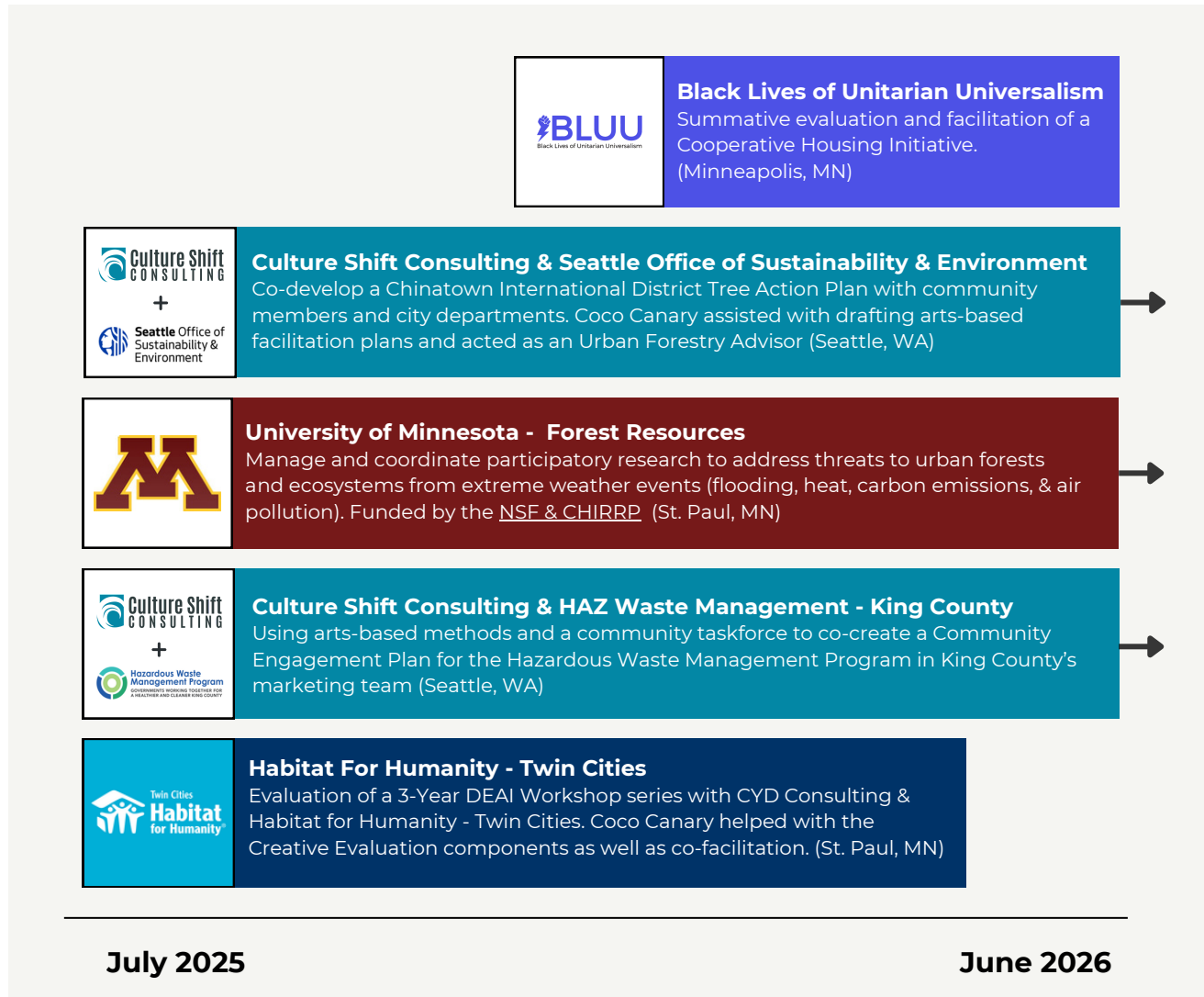
methodology and findings from this project. We hope that other university researchers will be inspired by our approach and consider implementing their own participatory co-production projects! Lastly, one takeaway from this project is that I will no longer take for granted how much urban water and forestry managers do to keep our city clean and beautiful!



**Figure 5:** Intro slide for the final co-production workshop

## 5. Visual summary of all 2025 - 2026 clients

For those who prefer visuals and TL;DR (too long, didn't read) posts, see below for a visual overview of our current and past projects.



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

Want to see projects we've completed in previous years? Then [click here](#) to see our full list of Coco Canary's current and past projects.



# Other Business Updates

## Presentations, Workshops, and Publications!

### Presentations

- **Arts, Culture, & Museums TIG's virtual "Pot Luck!"** (8/2025 - Virtual): Building Community Through Photovoice: A CBPR study with Hazardous Waste Management in King County
- **Arizona State University Evaluation Studies Class** (10/2025 - Virtual): Arts-based Methods and Approaches: An Introduction
- **University of Minnesota (Humphrey School) Evaluation Studies Class** (11/2025 - Minneapolis): Arts-based Methods and Approaches: An Introduction

### Publications

- Bustos, T.E., O'Connor, M., & Moreno, S. (2026). Strategies to Co-Create Participatory Dissemination. Journal of Participatory Research Methods, 7(2).  
<https://doi.org/10.35844/001c.162218>

### Workshops

**Our Roles in Community: Reflecting Together on the ICE Surge** (4/2026 - Minneapolis, MN): Facilitated by Molly O'Connor, Ilse Griffin, & Angela Allen. This workshop offered much-needed time for reflection and discussion in the wake of the Twin Cities Metro Surge.

**Arts-Based  
Evaluation  
Methods  
COLLAGE**

### Upcoming Workshop

**Arts-Based Evaluation Methods: Collage**

Oct 20th, 10 am - 12 pm  
Wilder Research (St. Paul, MN)

**Click Here to Register!**

**See workshop flyer on next page!**

# ARTS-BASED EVALUATION METHODS



**Are you interested in creative and engaging ways to gather meaningful feedback?**

Join us for a hands-on workshop exploring collage as an arts-based evaluation method.

**Who should attend:** Folx working in evaluation, research, development, leadership roles, or community engagement – or anyone looking for practical, creative ways to gather feedback and better understand people’s experiences and perspectives.



**OCTOBER 20, 2026  
10:00-12:00**

**Info & Registration:** Scan the QR code or go to [tinyurl.com/arts-based-method-collage](https://tinyurl.com/arts-based-method-collage)

**Figure 7:** A flyer for the Arts-Based Evaluation Methods: Collage Workshop ([Click here to register](#))

# 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 8:** Molly's band, Tree & Co, performing at a benefit concert at a local coffee shop in St. Paul, MN

### **Fundraised \$2,000 via a Benefit Concert to Fund Orgs Supporting Community Members Impacted by Operation Metro Surge**

In February, my band, [Tree & Co](#), turned one of our gigs into a benefit concert. We split all proceeds between two organizations supporting individuals directly impacted by the Operation Metro Surge. See below to learn more about the organizations and our impact.

**Yesod Fund (Minneapolis, MN):** These funds supported MN families and students directly affected by ICE, specifically through rent assistance and funds for food, gas, medicine, and other expenses.

**Annunciation House (El Paso, TX):** For over 50 years, this organization has offered shelter, food, and more to migrants, refugees, and economically vulnerable people of the border. Well, starting in January 2026, unbeknownst to them, they became the main drop-off location for individuals wrongfully detained by ICE agents. Overnight, they were housing hundreds of people from all over the USA, including many from the Twin Cities. These funds helped feed, shelter, and support these individuals.

### **A story sent to me from the founder of Annunciation House on 2/4/2026:**

*"Ana\*, in her forties and the mother of a 20-year-old pregnant daughter and an 18-year-old son, lived in Minnesota. One morning on her way to work, multiple unmarked vehicles stopped her car. Men with masks covering their faces opened the car door and arrested Ana. Ana and her two children fled Ecuador six years ago. Once in the U.S., she applied for asylum and fulfilled all the requirements of her asylum case. Ana and her children had been granted Employment Authorization Documents, given Social Security cards and Ana worked at a McDonald's Restaurant. Ana paid her taxes, had a Minnesota driver's license and received NO public benefits. She owned a used car that she drove to and from work. In other words, she was 100% compliant with all U.S. Immigration requirements and yet was arrested and detained in a manner that disregarded the laws of the government of the United States. Soon after she was*

*\*Ana is not her real name*

*detained, Ana found herself on an ICE plane to El Paso where she was taken to Camp East Montana, a huge ICE detention facility with capacity for 5,000 adult refugees. Once there, her attorney in Minnesota filed a Habeas Corpus petition, a federal judge signed it, and ICE released her and she found her way to our house but ICE did not return Ana's documents--placing her employment with McDonald's at risk.*

*The evening she arrived, I was listening to Ana cry as she told her story--the trauma of her ordeal was palpable. But the greatest pain Ana felt was that her 20-year-old daughter was so incredibly afraid of all that was happening and subsequently gave birth while Ana was in detention. Ana took my hand to thank me for receiving her at our hospitality house. 'I feel safe here,' she told me. When this mother from Ecuador was thanking me for opening our doors to her, she was thanking you and all who support our mission. Your kindness ensures that we can provide the much-needed assistance to all of the refugees who come to our doors."*

## 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 9:** A visual summary of donation distributions

## Environmental Impact

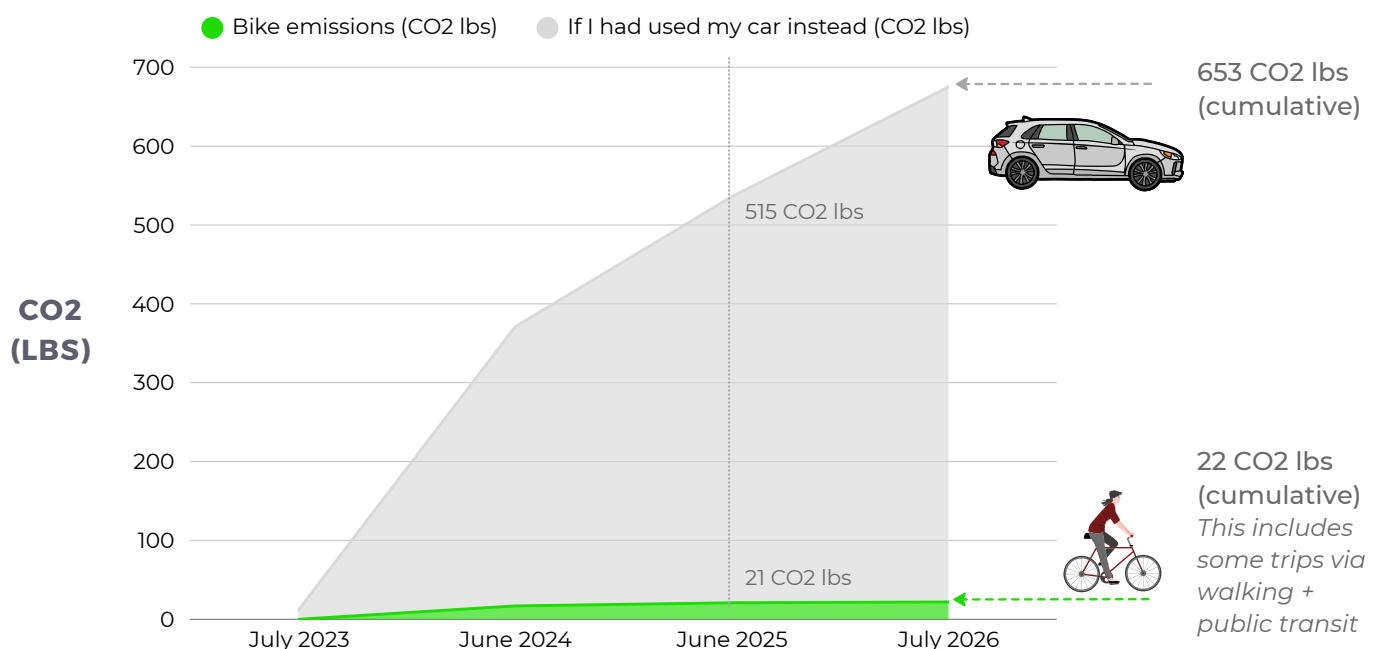
I am passionate about environmental justice, and as a small business owner, I have given considerable thought to my environmental impact. I have made efforts to reduce my carbon footprint by eating a mostly vegetarian/vegan diet, composting, biking, walking, or taking transit instead of driving. I also use [Ecosia](#) as my web browser, which invests its profits in tree planting and other conservation projects worldwide. My Ecosia searches funded the **planting of 5 trees this year!**

This is also my third year of quantifying my environmental impact, specifically how much carbon emissions I reduced by bike commuting. From July 2025 to June 2026:

- Molly **biked 142 miles** for work.
- In total, Molly **emitted 2.7 lbs of CO<sub>2</sub>** from her bike rides, **as compared to 138 lbs of CO<sub>2</sub>** she would have emitted if she had used her car (Figure 10).
- This is equivalent to recycling 5 trash bags instead of landfilling them, or growing 1 tree seedling for 10 years!

I biked less last summer due to a back injury, but I caught up this summer with my new E-bike. It is wild how much CO<sub>2</sub> 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 10:** Three years of my CO<sub>2</sub> (LBS) emissions from biking versus if I had used my car.

# Closing

## What I Am Looking Forward To

Professionally? 2026 to 2027 will be a year of creativity and trying new things.

- **Expanding My Arts-Based Methods (ABM) Toolkit:** I've taken many arts-based methods workshops and have maxed out what is available to me (other than doing a Theatre of the Oppressed / Forum Theatre workshop)! So, I've decided to take art classes to inform my arts-based evaluation practice. For example, I am getting certified to teach [DanceAbility](#), a dance method that uses improvisation to promote artistic expression and exploration between people with and without disabilities. I have been dancing in this framework for the last few years at Young Dance, and I am excited to use it in future arts-based research and evaluation projects!
- **Facilitating More Arts-Based Workshops in 2026 - 2027:** My friend and colleague, Ava Yang-Lewis, and I have led several ABM workshops for clients over the years, and now we are bringing them to the broader community! Our first one is on October 20, 2026, and will focus on the arts-based method of collage. [Register here!](#)
- **Integrating Urban Forestry, Community Engagement, & Evaluation:** I have really enjoyed working with the City of Seattle's Office of Sustainability & Environment (OSE) to co-create a Neighborhood Tree Action Plan. I'm grateful to keep doing this work with OSE for the Beacon Hill neighborhood, and I hope to take on more projects like this that have an environmental component!

Personally? 2026 to 2027 will be a year of expanding my creative practice!

- **Building Up My New Artist LLC, Coco Canary Creative:** I started a second LLC for my artistic practice. Now, when I lead or assist in the production of music, video, dance, and theatre, you can hire me as an artist. It also means I can apply for art grants now!



**Figure 11:** An illustration of the Tree & Co band (made by Molly O'Connor)

**Recording and Releasing Our First Studio Album and Music Video!** My friend Ilse, my partner Mike, and I are in a band called Tree & Co, and we released an EP and the single "Starfish" last year. We're also releasing our first studio album in 2027! You can stream our music on [Spotify](#), [Apple Music](#), [Bandcamp](#), and more! You can find out where we are playing next by following us on [Songkick](#). Lastly, if you want to join our band's email list, email [moconnor@cococanary.com](mailto:moconnor@cococanary.com) and we will add you!

Thank you for reading  
♥ Molly

# About

## What Does Coco Canary Do?

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



## Who is Coco Canary?



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

## How to Keep In Touch!



[moconnor@cococanary.com](mailto:moconnor@cococanary.com)



[cococanary.com](http://cococanary.com)



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## We utilize the power of art and community

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