Welcome to the 2022 Annual Report. It has been a big, exciting year for the Council. We are feeling very positive heading into 2023. Support for our work is growing exponentially and have numerous projects underway. These projects are creating sustainable economic opportunity for the people of the River, while ensuring Martuwarra’s right to live and flow. It has been an honour and a challenge to do this work. I could not do so without the guidance and cultural authority of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council Elders and the young leaders who hold on to hope. Together, our efforts are building new economies and transparent ways of doing business.

The world must make peace with Indigenous people, and with Martuwarra. Across the globe friends of Martuwarra are flocking to our cause. Those who see the River, and its culturally diverse peoples, as matters of public interest worthy of support. We are inviting the world on a journey to heal Country, heal People and heal Climate.

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The Elders have decided to focus on strengthening the Martuwarra Youth Council and developing sustainable economies for the people of the catchment area. We are offering a different approach to economic growth, advocating a cooperative knowledge-brokerage process for informed decision making. We believe development in the region should align with First Law.

MFRC’s guiding principles aim to adopt the customary Law system of both Wunan and Warloongarry. These ancient Laws recognise the diverse Indigenous nations of the catchment as one society. This society stands together to protect Martuwarra as a living ancestral being.

In our leadership and governance transition, Martuwarra Council acknowledged the need for Kimberley Prescribed Body Corporates (PBCs), the native title representatives, to be aligned with the Kimberley Land Council (KLC). The opportunities and investments of the KLC strengthen the capacity of PBCs to manage and develop their lands, for the greater good of their constituents. The efforts of the KLC, in promoting and protecting Martuwarra Country, has ensured Traditional Owners maintain a united position in safeguarding the River Country, in accordance with the Fitzroy River Declaration. The MFRC will continue to share our strategies with the regional stakeholders and Indigenous organisations, inclusive of PBCs.

In 2022 we have substantially grown MFRC’s capacity in the pursuit of Indigenous rights, climate, land and water justice. We have sparked partnerships with industry, universities and conservation groups. This collaboration has generated major investment in MFRC’s work and generated an extensive body of films, reports, published papers and international addresses. These partnerships recognise the threats to Martuwarra, but also potential for culture, science, and regenerative economies. Each project focuses on community led initiatives to transform living circumstance and economic wellbeing. They will ensure development that sustains both life-ways and livelihoods on Country.

The innovation, passion, and dedication to the MFRC efforts could not and would not be possible without the efforts of our dedicated project team. Guided by senior knowledge holders the MFRC team continues to bring national and global attention to Martuwarra and its People. Harry Jakamarrar, our Communication Strategist has taken our storytelling to a national and global level. This has been critical to securing state of the art film production equipment. MFRC now has the unique ability to produce cinema quality content in remote locations on extremely tight budgets. These efforts, and much more, will be showcased on the new MFRC website.

Lachie Carracher, our Project Manager has certainly been busy this year. Lachie secured investment from LotteryWest to purchase a vehicle and trailer, conduct a remote first aid training course for the Martuwarra Youth Council and traverse the catchment building strong relationships of trust with Country, Elders and communities. He has navigated systems to create transparency and integrity in our truth telling. His efforts are being directed towards working with diverse people and groups throughout the catchment towards UNESCO World Heritage Listing for Martuwarra. Lachie is a world renowned photo journalist and white-water rafting expert. He has led numerous expeditions down the River and his stunning images populate much of MFRC’s content. He has led numerous rafting expeditions down the River. His published articles share some of the secrets of the River in full flood.

This year, while volunteering at MFRC, Marliikka Perdrisat secured numerous grants and attracted important partnerships for MFRC. Marliikka has also established herself as a noteworthy, up and coming film director. I am excited to view her upcoming ABC documentary that promotes MFRC’s Martuwarra River Keepers to national audiences. This month, Marliikka and I will deliver Sydney University’s annual Wingarra Djuraliyin law lecture. Marliikka is Sydney University’s first Indigenous graduate with a Juris Doctorate of Law.

I have secured a highly competitive Australian Research Council (ARC) grant through my part-time role as Co-Chair of Indigenous Studies with the Nulungu Institute of Research, (University of Notre Dame). This funds a 3-year research project ‘Intergenerational Cultural Transfer of Indigenous Knowledges’ that aims to build a greater understanding of Aboriginal cultural systems that support Aboriginal wellbeing and address climate change, food insecurity, water scarcity and species loss. The continuity and integrity of these knowledges is of considerable concern to Aboriginal people, due to disruptions to Aboriginal lifeways by continued colonisation.

The Project will employ two Community Research Practitioners: Edwin Muligan and Hozaus Claire to broker and capture the research in partnership with the Martuwarra River Keepers and Martuwarra Youth Council.

Finally, I would like to extend a big, heartfelt thank you to all our donors, who continue to make this transformational work possible. Thank you for recognising the importance of protecting and promoting this globally unique, cultural-biodiversity hotspot. Together we are ensuring Martuwarra’s right to live and flow, for the benefit of all future generations.

Kaliya Maboo

Wagaba (Professor Anne Poelina)
COMMUNICATIONS

Our Communications Strategy has been kicking goals throughout 2022. We have landed major funding for a number of projects, gathered invaluable film content and seen a marked increase in donations.

A major Communications task this year has been the migration of all MFRC content to a new website. This website features greatly increased functionality, particularly in running campaigns to protect Martuwarra, fundraising and effectively communicating with our supporters and partners.

You can view the new site at www.martuwarra.org

SHARE IN OUR DREAMING

The Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council is an alliance of Elders from six independent nations of the Fitzroy River Catchment in the Kimberley, Western Australia. We are an entirely Indigenous led organisation, on the front line in the battle against climate change.
BUILDING INDIGENOUS YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Our Martuwarra Elders have identified the need to future-proof Indigenous leadership throughout the Fitzroy River Catchment. In response, MFRC is supporting Hozaus Claire and other emerging leaders to create the Martuwarra Youth Council. Building the capacity of the Youth Council is well underway, including a digital literacy training workshop which is set for later this month in Fitzroy Crossing. We have secured funding from WWF to strengthen and develop the Martuwarra Youth Council.

In May MFRC facilitated a Remote Area First Aid training course in Derby. The course provided comprehensive training to MFRC Youth Councillors, members and staff. This certification is crucial in developing sustainable tourism economies in the Martuwarra Catchment.

MFRC was recently awarded a grant totalling $225,000 from Lotterywest. These funds have allowed us to continue the employment of operations manager and world-class photo journalist Lachlan Carracher, until the end of 2022. We have also purchased a vehicle to support our on-Country operations. This includes cultural heritage mapping for a Unesco World Heritage application, and developing the Martuwarra Youth Council.
MARTUWARRA RIVER KEEPERS & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH WILDERNESS SOCIETY

In June 2022 the MFRC Chair and Communications Strategist negotiated an exciting strategic partnership with the Wilderness Society Aus. The Wilderness Society has committed $504,000 to the Martuwarra River Keepers Program for three years and conducted a major fundraising and matched giving campaign for MFRC totalling $25,000.

In July 2022 MFRC Councillor Patricia Riley and Yurlmulun Traditional Owners led Prof. Stephen Mueke (Notre Dame University) on a week-long, on Country feasibility study to develop the Martuwarra Walking Trail. Prof. Mueke was instrumental in establishing the highly successful Lurrujarri Heritage trail with Paddy Roe. In an interview with the MFRC Communications Strategist Prof. Mueke made clear the immense cultural, environmental and economic value of creating this walking trail.

In September 2022 MFRC Youth Council Leader Marlikka Perdrisat and the Communications Strategist will begin production of a short documentary about this project. This film is produced in collaboration Damon Gameau’s Regenerators program and is set to air nationally on ABC.

The Martuwarra Walking Trail Feasibility Study Team, including Yurlmulun (Pandanus Park) Traditional Owners Pat and Eileen Riley and Prof. Stephen Mueke.

Martuwarra Elder and Yurlmulun Traditional Owner Mervyn Riley speaks in an interview about the value of developing the Martuwarra Walking Trail.
MAPPING THE MARTUWARRA CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

In November 2021, researchers from Murdoch University, the University of Western Australia, Curtin University of Technology and Edith Cowan University, in partnership with MFRC Chair, travelled to Martuwarra Country.

This Research Team drafted a map in collaboration with Martuwarra Traditional Custodians. The draft map identifies many of the cultural and environmental values of the River country, and the threats faced from unjust development.

Senior native title holders on the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council (MFRC) have identified the need for regenerative development pathways for Martuwarra communities. They have directed the Research Team to co-design a pilot initiative with Yurmulun Pandanus Park that can be replicated along the length of the river and its catchment.

The Research Team in partnership with the community are proposing a co-designed programme of mapping and collecting ‘Country is Changing’ stories and riparian zone management through mechanical removal and burning along a 23 kilometre stretch of the River upstream of Yurmulun community. Using a co-design process, Yurmulun Indigenous partners identified the concept, ‘Maboo Liyan Booroo’, as good spirit Country. The Research Team will develop, document and communicate a replicable model for regenerative riparian, socio-economic management for Aboriginal research along Martuwarra.

The Research Team will present the Plan to the Yurmulun and Balginjirr communities. The Plan aims to secure education, research, and training investment to support the applied research work of the Yurmulun Martuwarra Fitzroy River Keepers.

The Research Team is currently seeking funding for this program of $750,000 for 3 years.
**BIENNALE OF SYDNEY**

Martuwarra participated in the ‘Voicing Rivers’ exhibition at the 2022 Biennale of Sydney. As part of this exhibit Edwin Mulligan and Hozaus Claire presented a seminar on Ancestral Personhood, speaking about their relationship with the River. Edwin and Hozaus also met with the star researchers who are furthering Ancestral Personhood at major academic institutions.

**WAKE UP THE SNAKE & UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE**

This year MFRC secured $40,000 from Pew Charitable Trusts for the ‘Wake Up The Snake’ project. This project will see a group of accomplished Martuwarra artists come together to create paintings of the River Country and share their stories about connection to Martuwarra. These artworks and stories will be recorded and compiled in a beautiful ‘coffee-table’ book. This will form essential evidence in our World Heritage Listing application to UNESCO.

**COMMUNITY FILM SCREENINGS**

MFRC has partnered with Common Ground to deliver film screenings throughout the Kimberley. With Common Ground’s support we have acquired a top of the range, cinema quality portable projector, screen and sound system.

MFRC Youth Council Leader Marlikka Perdrisat will present the series, ‘Joe Nangan’s Dreaming’ to over 20 High Court Judges this month at Yurlmulun. The series is based on Martuwarra First Law Stories that were handed down by Nyikina Maja Butcher Joe Nangan. The series has already had over 200,000 views and was delivered across numerous schools nationally.
LIVING LANDSCAPES - JANE GOODALL FOUNDATION

MFRC has made a significant contribution to the Jane Goodall Foundation’s publication ‘Living Landscapes’. This prestigious book features a comprehensive chapter on Martuwarra and the Council. It includes stunning imagery of Martuwarra and profiles many of the Martuwarra Elders and Youth Councillors.

GROUNDSWELL GIVING

In April this year MFRC was the recipient of a prestigious $40,000 grant from Groundswell Giving.

STRATEGIC CAMPAIGNS

This year MFRC has run a strategic campaign to protect Martuwarra from potentially dangerous diamond mine development at the top of the catchment. This campaign has seen MFRC strengthen relationships with key partners, such as Willigin Aboriginal Corporation, Environs Kimberley, Australian Wildlife Conservancy and the Environmental Defenders Office.

MFRC has been pushing for truth telling in unjust development procedures. In particular, the WA government’s Derby Water Allocation Plan and the Fitzroy River Management Plan.
OUR FINANCIALS

Investment in our work has nearly doubled in 2022. We are grateful to all our generous donors, partners and supporters for recognising the value of our work.

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**Operating Profit**  $99,609.46
MFRC CHAIR

The MFRC Chair, Dr Anne Poelina, in her role as Proffessor, Senior Research Fellow and Co-Chair of Indigenous Studies with Nulungu Research Institute (University of Notre Dame) has secured an Australian Research Council Research Project grant of $700,000 for three years. This will include a part-time position for two Martuwarra River Keepers as research assistants. This will build on the work of the Martuwarra River Keepers and strengthen partnerships with the University of South Australia, the University of Western Australia, Curtin, Edith Cowan and Murdoch, Universities.

WHERE TO NEXT...

We are currently seeking funding to continue the Communication Strategist position into 2023 and beyond. We have also identified the need to fund a Project Manager position going into 2023.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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