

# Maningrida Saltwater Story

on the Importance of Seafood for  
Nutrition, Health, and Wellbeing

A booklet produced by researchers with  
Traditional Owners and the Bawinanga Aboriginal  
Corporation for Maningrida community in the  
Northern Territory, Australia.

Date: 2024

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ISBN [Insert ISBN/ISSN – researcher to obtain]

[An investigation of the Indigenous Knowledges and nutritional, health and wellbeing benefits and values of seafood for supporting Indigenous fisheries development]

[2019–143]

[2024]

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*Warning: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples should be aware that this report contains images and names of people from the central Arnhem Land Region of Maningrida and neighbouring homelands in the NT.*



## Acknowledgments

The information in this booklet was compiled from a research project conducted in Maningrida (Manayingkarirra) community located on the traditional lands of the Kunibidji People and several surrounding homelands including Nardilmuk, Ji-bena and Gupanga located in the central coastal Arnhem Land region of Northern Territory, Australia. We recognise the Aboriginal Peoples of this region, their continuing culture, connection to their lands and seas and we pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

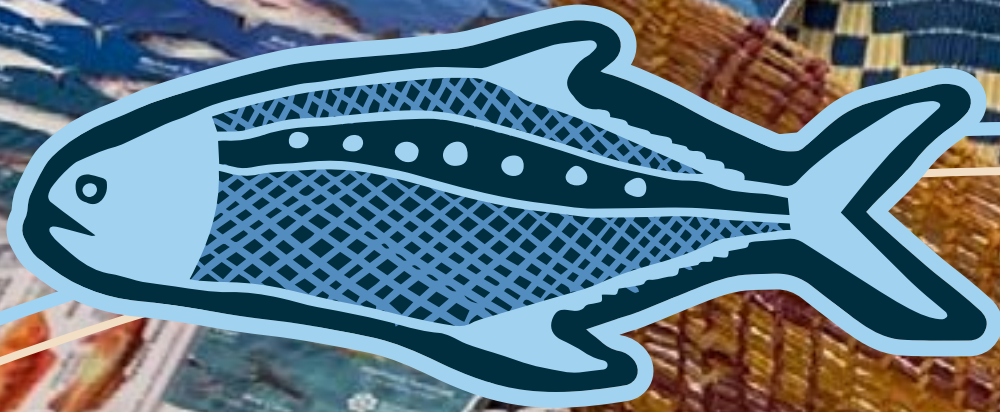
The research was conducted under the Fisheries Research Development Corporation (FRDC) Project 2019-143: An investigation of Indigenous knowledges and nutritional health and wellbeing benefits and values of seafood for supporting Indigenous fisheries. The Research provider was Monash University, with partners Charles Darwin University and Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) an Aboriginal controlled entity that represents the Aboriginal People of Maningrida and surroundings outstations and offers a range of services and administration. We acknowledge the staff at BAC including Ned Watt the Enterprise Development Manager, and Maningrida Arts and Culture Centre staff and sub-committee members for their generous support and cultural guidance for the research. We also acknowledge Michelle Culprit previous manager of the Maningrida Arts and Culture Centre who provided in-kind support and organised several sessions with participants at the Bábbarra Women's Centre and Arts and Culture Centre in Maningrida. We acknowledge Clément Bresson who was the Enterprise Development Coordinator at BAC prior to the commencement of the research project, who provided support, advice, and time contribution to the project development and implementation.



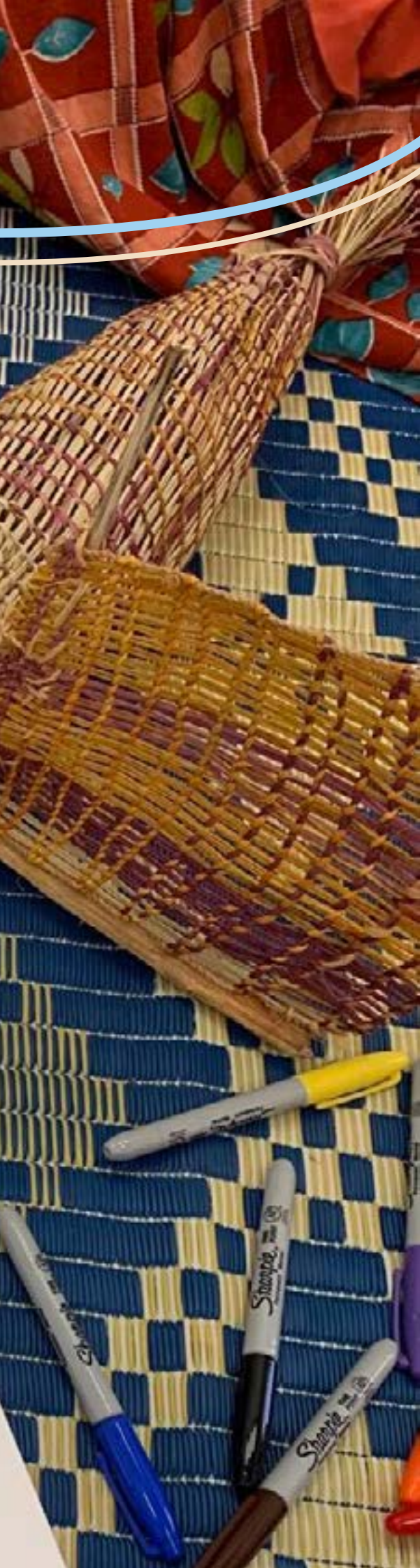


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ullet → give children Back tail Park  
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## The purpose of the booklet

This booklet was produced as a resource for the Fisheries Research Development Corporation (FRDC) supported Project 2019-143: An investigation of Indigenous knowledges and nutritional health and wellbeing benefits and values of seafood for supporting Indigenous fisheries. This project documented Aboriginal community perspectives on seafood to advocate for fisheries development, management, and policy to recognise the interconnections between seafood enterprises, culture, Country, and food systems.

This booklet documents the Maningrida Saltwater Story on the Importance of Seafood for Nutrition, Health, and Wellbeing Benefits by presenting a summary of a research project in Maningrida with Traditional Owners and BAC between 2020 and 2023. This booklet is intended for community members and organisations to communicate and share the Maningrida story of seafood to external people and organisations, including government, Indigenous agencies, and researchers working in fisheries business development and food security. This booklet complements other research outputs prepared and published as part of the project (Cubillo et al., 2023 & 2024).

### The booklet has five sections:

**Part one** provides a summary of why the research was undertaken, the research project, partnerships activities and location.

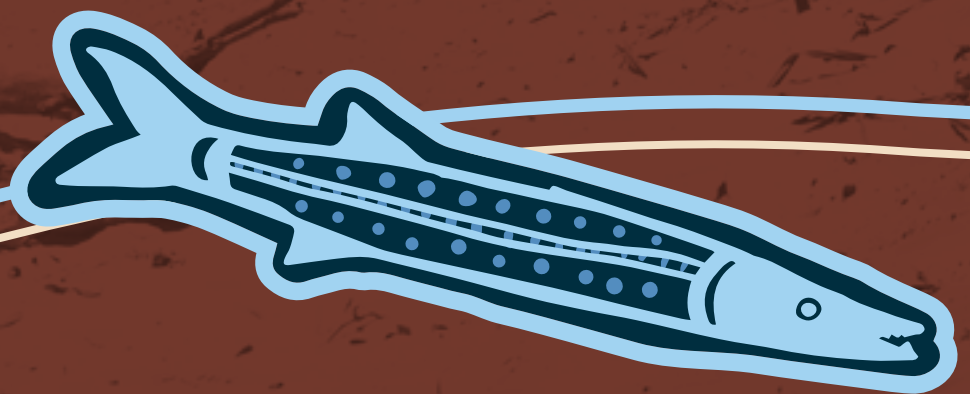
**Part two** describes the ethical approach and guiding principles, and the yarning method used for data collection.

**Part three** introduces the Traditional Owners engaged in the research and provides a short biography of several key Traditional Owners.

**Part four** presents information about Aboriginal connections to seafood in Maningrida. This includes knowledge about nutritional benefits of seafood, and many other interconnected values and benefits. In doing so, the researchers acknowledge the presentation of knowledge in separate themes does not always capture the interconnectedness of Indigenous ways of knowing and being and doing (Nakata, 2002).

**Part five** provides a summary of the research project.

# The research project and approach

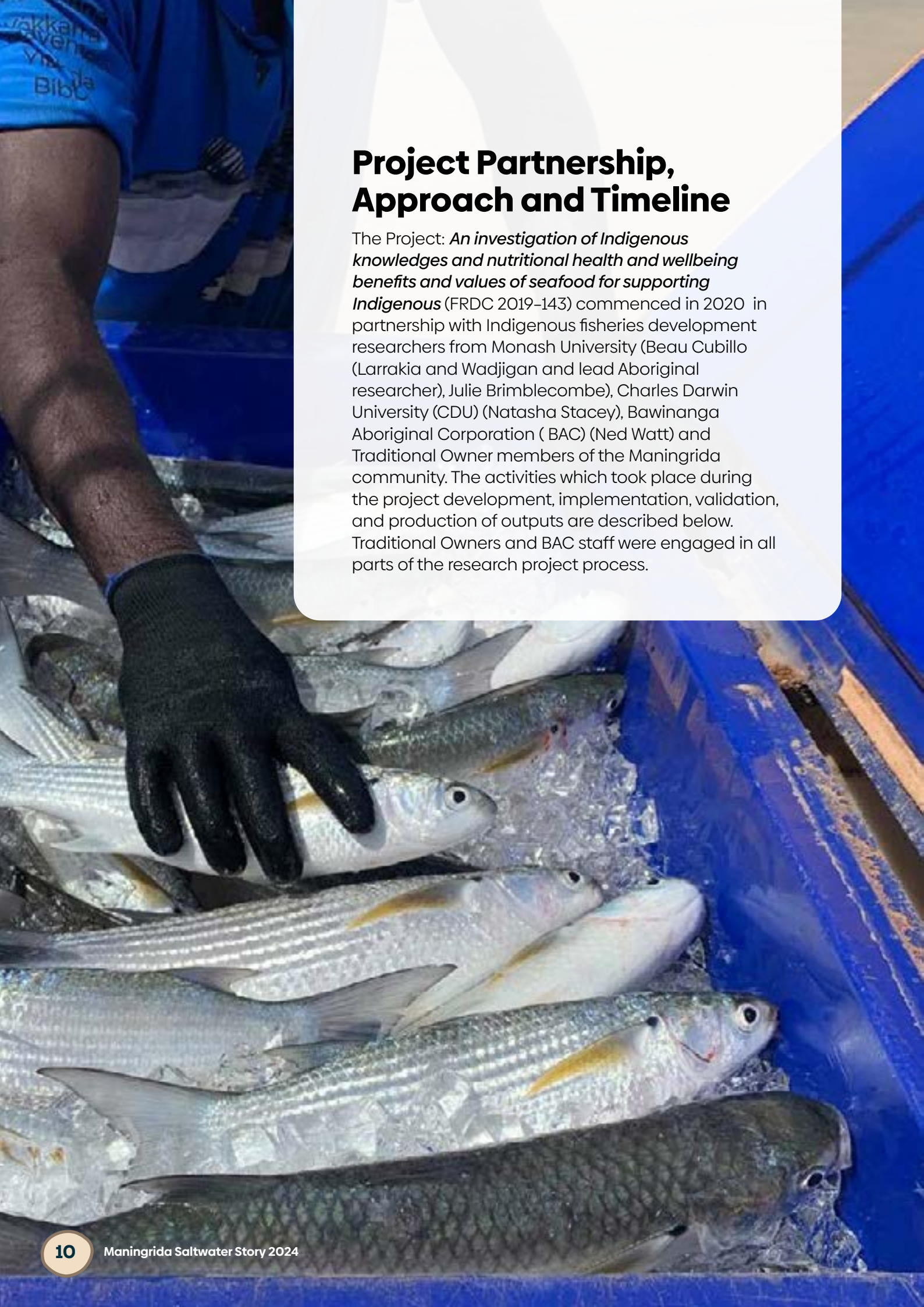


## Why the research project was undertaken

Aboriginal Peoples living along the coast of the Northern Territory (NT) of Australia continue to access seafood on their customary Sea Country as a source of food and to connect to cultural and social values linked to their Aboriginal Identity.

In the last decade, Traditional Owners of the Maningrida region with support from Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC), have developed a seafood enterprise targeting several fisheries. Several research projects have been undertaken to document Traditional Owners' story about the history, development, and benefits of locally led seafood enterprises (Stacey N & Van Wyk P, 2019). It is recognised that seafood enterprises can contribute to socioeconomic outcomes for Aboriginal communities including strengthening food provisions. There is however a need to further understand from an Aboriginal standpoint why seafood is also important for nutrition, health, and wellbeing outcomes. This is important as these benefits have not been fully considered within the Indigenous fisheries sector and research in Australia and such information could help strengthen outcomes and improve policy on food security, health and wellbeing aligned to Australia's National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Cubillo et al., 2024)



A person wearing a blue shirt and black gloves is handling fish in a blue container. The fish are silver and yellow, and are packed in a blue container. The person's hand is visible, touching one of the fish. The background is a white wall with a blue stripe.

## Project Partnership, Approach and Timeline

The Project: *An investigation of Indigenous knowledges and nutritional health and wellbeing benefits and values of seafood for supporting Indigenous* (FRDC 2019-143) commenced in 2020 in partnership with Indigenous fisheries development researchers from Monash University (Beau Cubillo (Larrakia and Wadjigan and lead Aboriginal researcher), Julie Brimblecombe), Charles Darwin University (CDU) (Natasha Stacey), Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) (Ned Watt) and Traditional Owner members of the Maningrida community. The activities which took place during the project development, implementation, validation, and production of outputs are described below. Traditional Owners and BAC staff were engaged in all parts of the research project process.



2009

- 1) In 2019, CDU and Monash University researchers travelled to Maningrida during the development of the research proposal to liaise with Aboriginal Coastal Licence (ACL) fishing business Traditional Owners to identify the research priorities with the assistance of BAC.
- 2) A draft research proposal was developed and shared with BAC and the Maningrida Arts and Culture Sub-Committee for review, who granted support in the format of a written letter signed by 11 senior Traditional Owners representing different regions of Maningrida. BAC agreed to be the Maningrida partner agency and helped facilitate the project start up activities and provide local contextual knowledge and resources.
- 3) In October 2020, the FRDC project (2019-143) commenced, which included support for the linked PhD project 'Nutritional, health and wellbeing of fish and seafood: An Indigenous knowledges position' by Beau Cubillo from Monash University which had commenced in early 2019.
- 4) The project included the following objectives: 1): To document Indigenous knowledges on the understanding of the nutritional health and wellbeing benefits and the value and meanings of locally caught and consumed seafood, 2) To develop a poster and booklet that integrates Aboriginal knowledge and nutrition profiling of identified seafood species for inter-generational knowledge transfer. An additional output was a review of the representation of Aboriginal health and wellbeing values within coastal, marine and fisheries policies (Cubillo et al., 2024).
- 5) In October 2020 the project obtained CDU Human Research Ethics, Committee Approval (#H20082) alongside an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Agreement between BAC, CDU, and Monash University, and a Northern Land Council permit.
- 6) Delays to project activities occurred due to travel restrictions due to COVID 19 Pandemic, with research activities occurring during 2021-2023.
- 7) During 2021-2023 Beau Cubillo travelled to Maningrida several times. With the help of BAC staff, five Traditional Owners from the fishing business as well as fishing workers, along with members of the Maningrida Arts and Culture Centre and Bábbarra Women's Centre, participated in activities. An Indigenous research method of Yarning was used in individual and group settings to encourage and privilege the voices of Aboriginal community members.
- 8) The information collected from Yarning sessions was recorded and notes taken of different stories and knowledge shared in 2021-2023. From this, key themes were identified by the researchers and then presented back to the Traditional Owners and other Maningrida participants with support from BAC to validate and finally approve the information that can be shared.
- 9) The information agreed upon has been included in this booklet. Other information from research activities conducted during the PhD and FRDC Project was included in academic papers, a PhD thesis at Monash University, and a FRDC newsletter article.

2020

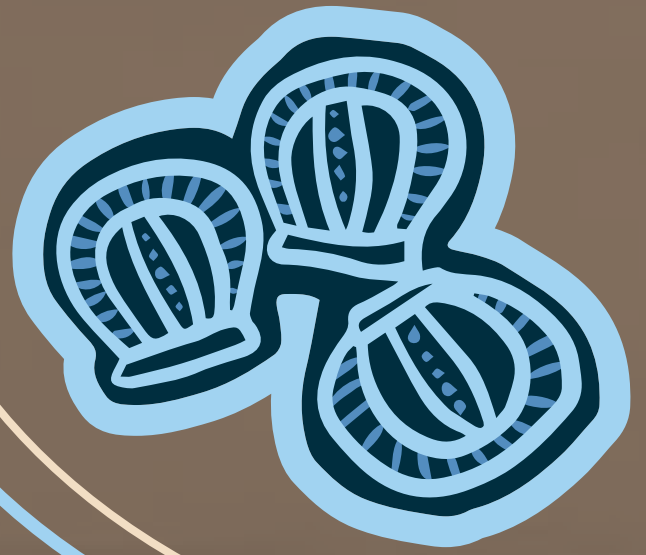
2021 -  
2023

# Maningrida region: locations of the research project

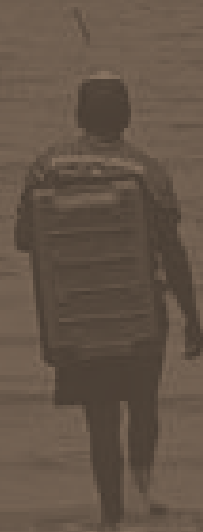


Figure 2: This map shows the locations the research project was undertaken in the Maningrida community and Nardilmuk, Ji-Bena and Gupanga homelands. Created by Moogie Down Productions





# Research ethics and guiding principles





Ethical approval for this research project was obtained through the CDU Human Research Ethics Committee (CDU-HREC-H20082) and permission to conduct the research on Aboriginal Lands granted by a Northern Land Council Research Permit.

In Australia when conducting research with Aboriginal People there are guidelines to help ensure research is safe and provides benefit to Aboriginal communities with no harm. The research project was guided by the six principles of Indigenous research by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Code of Ethics (AIATSIS, 2020), shown in *Figure 1: Six principles of guiding ethical Indigenous Research*. During the yarning sessions Traditional Owners shared many stories, experiences and knowledge on access and harvest of seafood. This included utilising traditional fishing methods like spears, nets, and traps as well as modern fishing equipment like nylon fishing line and nets, and an understanding of seasonal harvest. This Knowledge of how, where, and when to access seafood has been passed on for thousands of years. Out of respect for the custodians of this knowledge and for the protection of these sacred Knowledges, some information has been left out, such as the medicinal properties and cultural elements connected to specific species of seafood.

***Knowledge of how, where, and when to access seafood has been passed on for thousands of years***



Figure 1: Six principles of guiding ethical Indigenous Research

## Spirit and integrity

Ensuring Aboriginal values and Knowledges in Maningrida are respected and presented where appropriate and with permission.

## Respect

Give Aboriginal People an opportunity to speak and for researchers to listen and consider the relevant cultural, historical and political contexts.

## Reciprocity

Partnership with BAC and guidance from Traditional Owners for the research to support their aspirations. This included that the research support seafood enterprises, self-determination and create meaningful outputs such as this booklet.



## Survival and protection

Strengthening Aboriginal Knowledges and connection to identity and culture.

## Equality

Ensuring all Traditional Owners are treated equally and have the right to have their circumstances and opinions expressed.

## Responsibility

Researchers holding themselves accountable to do the right thing by Traditional Owners and Aboriginal culture and do no harm.

# Yarning as a research method





Yarning was the method used in this research project to provide the lead Aboriginal researcher (Beau Cubillo) a meaningful way to conduct research with Aboriginal People through purposeful sharing of stories and experiences that take into consideration the cultural, historical and political context related to seafood and its importance to nutrition, health and wellbeing (Atkinson et al., 2021; Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010).

Yarning allows for a two-way sharing of Knowledge and stories between researchers and Traditional Owners and is an important tool for strengthening relationships (Walker et al., 2014). It also provides flexibility and allowed the researcher to adapt and ensure each Traditional Owner was respected and considered. This research aimed to explicitly include Aboriginal voices represented through experiences and stories. Yarning as a method assisted with facilitating this.

***Yarning allows for a two-way sharing of Knowledge and stories between researchers and Traditional Owners***



## The Yarning sessions focused on four stages:

1.

### Social Yarning

This focused on building a relationship with Traditional Owners and finding out about each other through conversation. This included sharing information and stories about each others' Aboriginal language groups, Country, and family. This also involved providing an opportunity for questions to be asked.

2.

### Research topic Yarning

This focused on understanding the importance of seafood for nutrition, health, and wellbeing. This included questions such as *“What does nutrition, health and wellbeing mean for you?”* *“How do Aboriginal People connect to seafood?”* *“What do you believe the nutrition, health and wellbeing benefits of seafood are?”* *“What do you see as the benefits of seafood for the wider community?”*

3.

### Collaborative Yarning

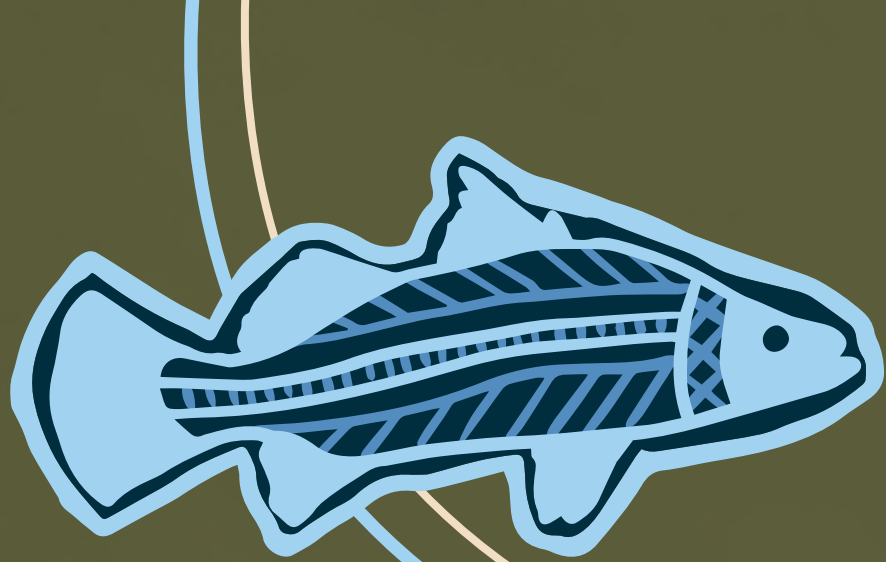
This involves further discussing the information and stories that were shared in the research topic stage. This was done to confirm and validate information but also promote discussions about the research topic. In addition to stories this included Traditional Owners sharing maps, pictures, artwork, and books that related to the topic which helped communicate the message to the researcher.



4.

## Therapeutic Yarning

This involves the researcher deep listening and providing support to individuals who shared personal stories that could help add depth and context to the research, by providing a platform to listen to what Traditional Owners felt was important for the research.



# Traditional Owners from Maningrida



Many Traditional Owners from Maningrida and surrounding homelands provided their time, Knowledges and lived experiences that contributed to the outputs of the research project and booklet between 2021–2023.

**Deborah Wurrkidj**

**Derek Carter**

**Dominic Moon**

**Don Wilton**

**Doreen Jinggarrabarra**

**Freda Wyertua**

**Jay Jurrupnla**

**Jimmy Olsen**

**Joy Garlbin**

**Michael Anjaramarr**

**Randal Darcy**

**Raylene Bonson**

**Sebastian Darcy**

**Stuart Ankin/ Yirawara**

**Transon Ross**

While it is acknowledged that many Traditional Owners were engaged in the research project at different times five people: Don Wilton, Jimmy Olsen, Stuart Ankin/Yirawara, Michael Anjaramarr and Randall Darcy significantly contributed to the design, research results, and outputs of the project. The next section provides a biography on each of the key individuals including their story, connection to seafood and what they see as the importance of seafood for maintaining nutrition, health, and wellbeing in Maningrida.

## Don John Wilton – Manjeriju (Ndjebbana)

Don is a senior Traditional Owner of Nardilmuk homeland, his Grandfathers Country, which is located approx. 25 kms from Maningrida township.

Don is a skilled fisherman who was taught by his fathers on how to fish and care for his Country. Over his life Don has refined his practices as a fisher using both Aboriginal traditional fishing methods like canoes, fish trap, spears, and nets but also modern equipment like fishing lines, nylon nets and motorised boats. He has passed this knowledge onto the younger generation so they can stay connected to their seafood. Don says this is because: *“Some younger kids here go to school, and they don't know our culture and they don't know what fish are called in their language”*.

Over the years, Don had noticed a lack of healthy options in the community especially in the takeaway shops. He envisioned selling healthy nutritious seafood from his Sea Country to Aboriginal People in Maningrida and the nearby Aboriginal community of Ramingining as well as sharing fish with his family. With the support of BAC and Northern Territory Government Fisheries Department's Aboriginal Fishing Mentor Program (AFMP), Don obtained a newly available Aboriginal Coastal License (ACL) in 2015. This allowed him to catch fish on his sea Country and sell it in the local community. Through this Don has been able to apply his knowledge and experience as a fisher to successfully operate a small-scale fishing enterprise on his homeland of Nardilmuk with the support of BAC.



“  
**We are trying to keep the community healthy; we are trying to keep them away from the greasy food... that is why we sell the fresh fish around the community here**

Don Wilton,  
HEALTHY STORIES = GOOD FOOD.  
(Monash University, 2020)

”

## Jimmy Olsen (Burarra)

Jimmy is a senior Traditional Owner of Ji-Bena and Gupanga homelands.

Jimmy has a lifetime of experience connected to the seas not only through his own customary Sea Country but also as a crew member aboard numerous commercial fishing, crabbing, and pearling operations. This includes working previously for the NT Government's Department of Aboriginal Affairs fishing and crabbing operations in Maningrida, as a diver with Paspaley Pearls and working aboard various commercial sea vessels. Aside from his professional career Jimmy maintains social and cultural connections to seafood on his Country through knowledge of traditional fishing equipment like woven nets, canoes, spears and connection to seafood and sea Country and cultural song lines. Jimmy has applied his knowledge as a commercial fisher to successfully operate and manage an ACL with support from BAC. Jimmy believes through accessing sea Country with his ACL he can partially fulfill his responsibility to teach young people from his Country about accessing seafood in the same way his older family members taught him. Jimmy understands the importance of seafood for nutrition, health, and wellbeing in which he states, "*fresh fish from salt water is good medicine for our people*". Jimmy believes that it is immensely important for Aboriginal People to be connected to their old ways of knowing, being and doing and to not lose sight of their Aboriginal connection to their ancestors fishing knowledge.



“

***Those knowledges are important and if I am still here, I can teach and pass that knowledge on, but I am getting older***

”

## Stuart Ankin – Yirawara (Burarra)

Stuart is a Traditional Owner from the Blythe River region and learnt to fish from his father who often took Stuart in a canoe to fish for many kinds of seafood including fish, dugong, turtle, and mud crabs.

Stuart has held various fishing licenses over the years such as a part quota of a Barramundi licence and an ACL. Stuart has deep knowledge of the Sea Country around Maningrida and several homelands. As such, Stuart in addition to his fishing activities is also a respected tourism operator for Outback Spirits Tours. Stuart learnt from his father and grandfather how to ‘dig out canoes’ [build dug-out timber canoes] and create fish traps. This knowledge transmission remains vital for Stuarts’ identity.

Stuart recognises the challenging health conditions such as diabetes and an unhealthy body weight that exist in his community. He reflects on his ancestors who did not have such complications *“in those days there was nothing”*. Stuart believes it is important that Aboriginal People in Maningrida continue fishing and providing their communities with Seafood like his ancestors would do and he sees the fishing enterprises in Maningrida as doing this. Stuart applies his knowledge of Sea Country and uses modern technology to obtain and distribute healthy food options like seafood to his community and make some extra money to provide for his family.



Stuart feels good knowing some of the younger generation have an interest in fishing like he did such as his family: *“Young granddaughter wants to go fishing all the time”*.

“

**Stuart wants the chance to get them (young kids) aside, take them to Sea Country and pass that knowledge on through stories**

”

## Michael Anjaramarr (Burarra)

Michael is a Traditional Owner of the Yilan outstation on the East side of the Blythe River and was taught by his father and grandfather about culture, language, and the importance of seafood for Aboriginal People in Maningrida.

Michael has experience with fishing and crabbing through both a lifetime of access to customary fisheries and more than 15 years within commercial fisheries. Michael has experience fishing in the Maningrida region and in Yurriwi and Galiwin'ku Country, two Aboriginal communities located on islands in the Arnhem Land region of the NT. Michael enjoys being engaged with the seafood enterprises in Maningrida as he believes the ACL business “let's you fish on Country and helps to learn”. Michael has primarily been involved in developing the mud crabbing enterprise in Maningrida and has developed skills such as crafting and maintaining crab pots which he is proud of. Michael like his fellow fisheries colleagues in Maningrida understands the importance of seafood such as fish, crabs, and mollusc such as long bums for health as he states, “*this is the good food and connects to culture*”. Michael believes it is important that the younger generation learn their culture and how to fish for food and access their culture the same way his family taught him.

“

***this is the good food and connects to culture***

”



## Randall Darcy – Bayaraga (Na-kara and Burarra)

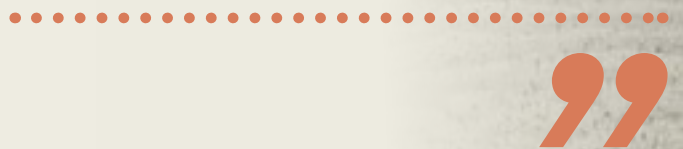
Randall is a Traditional Owner from Berraja outstation his mother's Country situated on the coast between the Liverpool and Blythe Rivers.

Randall learnt about his Sea Country and seafood through knowledge passed on through his family. Randall with the support of BAC has operated an ACL for the last few years. Randall believes this has enabled him to sell healthy nutritious food to Maningrida community members. Randall firmly believes that Aboriginal People must *"keep eating fish to stay strong and connected to their song lines"*. Randall has responsibilities within his own family to teach younger generations *"how to cook fish for them kids"* as he states, *"It is important to be on Country telling those stories to kids on the weekend about our family and Country"*.

Not only is accessing fish for food important for Randall but also having an ACL enables him to access his sea Country *"Reminds me of my spirit and why I must look after Country, which is my home and there are sacred sites that I also must look after"*. The ACL provides him the capacity to be on his own sea Country monitoring those sacred sites and fulfilling his cultural responsibilities. Randall also knows there are challenges with trying to access his Country and pass knowledge on to younger generations such as needing transport. Randall hopes that through the ACL he can continue to find ways to supply his family with fresh fish and access to Sea Country.




***"It is important to be on Country telling those stories to kids on the weekend about our family and Country"***





# Aboriginal connections to seafood in Maningrida



A person wearing a cap and a jacket stands on a sandy beach, looking out at the ocean. The image is in a blue-tinted color scheme. A white and orange curved line separates the image from the text on the right.

Aboriginal Peoples in Maningrida particularly those situated along the coast have a rich history of connecting to seafood which continues to provide nutrition, health, and wellbeing contributions to individuals, family, and community.

Seafood also connects Aboriginal Peoples along the coast not only to food provisions but to their cultural and social values that are intrinsically linked to their identity and the broader Indigenous knowledge system. These continue to govern the ways of knowing being and doing within community.

The Traditional Owners engaged in this research emphasised that it is important to continue to strengthen customary connections to seafood by passing this knowledge on to the younger generation. Maningrida Traditional Owners emphasised that seafood is only one part of the Indigenous food system and through Aboriginal world views, it is unnatural to separate individual meaning in isolation from the interconnected Indigenous Knowledge System. Traditional Owner Jimmy Olsen articulated this in a Yarning session and stated, “*Bush foods, with seafood, are just as important. This includes water lily, plum, variety of plants, apple - all is bush medicine*” (Yarning session, 2021). See Figure 3: Visualisation of Aboriginal nutritional, health and wellbeing values connected to seafood has been created from the Yarning sessions with Traditional Owners (Cubillo et al., 2023).

While Yarning, Aboriginal People in the Maningrida region expressed many different values and perspectives about seafood in the discussions about the importance of nutrition, health, and wellbeing. Traditional Owners shared specific values for different types of seafood, such as: their use as medicine for good health in general, wellbeing feelings associated with eating seafood, linkages to peoples Country, the respect and recognition of Elders and Ancestors, sharing and family, and Knowledge maintenance. Running a seafood enterprise in Maningrida is very important in being able to maintain these values and Indigenous Knowledge to seafood and for the future wellbeing of the community.

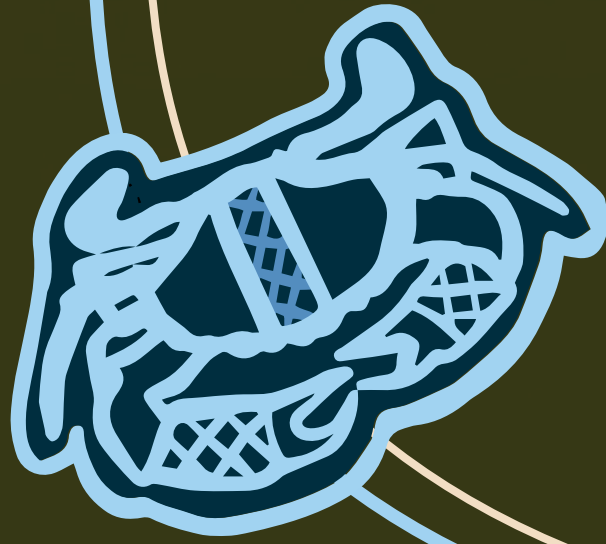
Figure 3: Visualisation of Aboriginal nutritional, health and wellbeing values connected to seafood



***Traditional Owners shared specific values of different types of seafood, such as: their use as medicine or for good health in general; wellbeing feelings associated with eating seafood; linkages to peoples' Country...***

.....  
**(Cubillo et al, 2023)**





# Nutritional benefits of Seafood



Seafood is an important source of food for Aboriginal Peoples in Maningrida that provides dietary nourishment and strengthens health and wellbeing.

Seafood in relation to nutrition is described by Traditional Owners as being a food preference, taste, hunger, longevity, energy levels, food security and providing health benefits. Many nutritional benefits of seafood have been documented such as providing a good source of protein which is important for building and maintaining muscle function and growth (FRDC, 2014). Essential good fats are found in many species and can contribute to reducing the risk of some chronic health conditions, especially by keeping the heart healthy. Seafood also provides a good source of calcium which maintains the strength of bones and helps the heart function (FAO & WHO, 2010). Seafood is a well-known source of complete iron that helps maintain healthy blood and provides energy (Hicks et al., 2019).

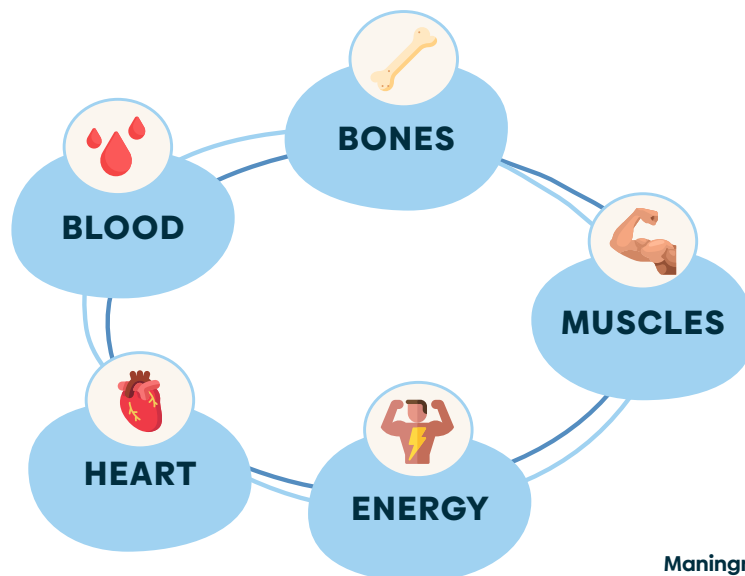
Traditional Owners have always known about the dietary benefits of seafood as Don Wilton described “*When we have fish, mud mussels, this is how we live, this is how we survive*” (Yarning session, 2023); and Stuart Ankin/Yirawara “*We used to live on mud mussels, very important in those days for health*” (Yarning session, 2023). Both Traditional Owners also know that the method of cooking is also important as Stuart Ankin/Yirawara articulated that “*Cooking seafood the traditional way in a ground oven is healthier than using cooking oil and frying and it is important to choose fresh fish over greasy foods*” (Yarning session, 2023). Traditional Owner Randall Darcy explained that “*When disconnected from bush foods and seafood you feel sick*” (Yarning session, 2020). Traditional Owners Doreen Jinggarrabarra and Freda Wyertua discussed the physical benefits of seafood, with Freyda stating that

“ **Important for cholesterol and diabetes and blood health**

(Yarning session, 2021)



Figure 4: Health benefits of seafood.



***Maningrida Aboriginal members who must relocate to the city for health care treatment still want a way of accessing their seafood medicine from their Sea Country for its health and wellbeing properties, to stay connected to their identity.***

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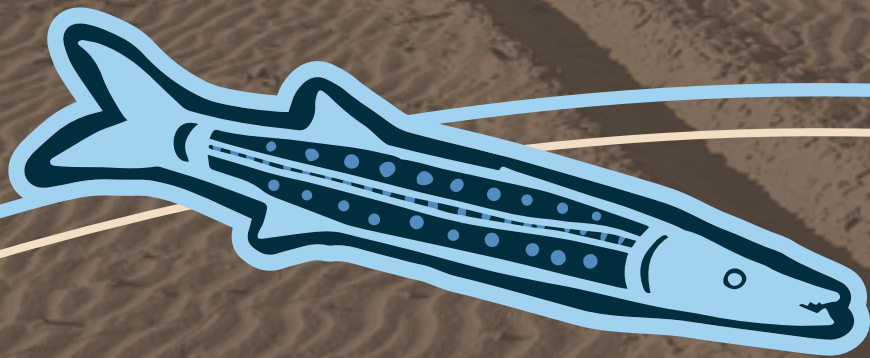
# Traditional Medicine (Bush Medicine)

Aboriginal Knowledge systems have been developed and refined over many thousands of generations including the Traditional Medicine knowledge [Bush medicine].

Seafood for People in Maningrida remains integral part of this system and different species have been described by Traditional Owners as providing treatment or cure for various health conditions or illnesses such as stomach-ache, diarrhoea, or child constipation. *“Fish and seafood are medicine”* and are often described as being part of the *“Bush medicine [Aboriginal Traditional Medicine system]”* (Yarning session, 2021). Seafood is described as a cleanser for the body with Traditional Owners expressing the contrast between the Traditional Medicinal system and Western medicine: *“sick of Western Medicine so go get seafood”* and *“patients at the clinic want bush food (seafood) to help cleanse”* (Yarning session, 2021). Maningrida Aboriginal People who must relocate to the city for health care treatment still want a way of accessing their seafood medicine from their Sea Country, for its health and wellbeing properties, to stay connected to their identity, and also for its importance to health and wellbeing outcomes.



# Cultural and Social connections to seafood





It is well understood that cultural and social values are important for health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal Peoples (Gee et al., 2014).

This is no different when considering the connection between seafood and nutrition, health, and wellbeing values for Maningrida Aboriginal Peoples. The Traditional Owners engaged in this research presented and described a range of key values that explicitly connect people to their cultural and social values through Seafood. This includes Sharing, Kinship, Family; Identity and Language; Culture, Song lines, and Ceremony. Traditional Owners stated that by accessing and consuming seafood, Aboriginal culture can continue to live on through those connections regardless of if seafood is accessed through traditional methods or with modern fishing equipment; the essence of the cultural and social connections remains important. Traditional Owners explained that the Aboriginal knowledge system and values are intertwined and deeply rooted into the context, land, culture, and language amongst other values. The connections people yarned about are discussed below.

***Traditional Owners stated that by accessing and consuming seafood, Aboriginal culture can continue to live on through Sharing, Kinship, Family; Identity and Language; Culture, Song lines, and Ceremony.***



## Sharing, kinship, family

An important part of Aboriginal culture is sharing foods and for families to share their seafood with neighbouring families and kinship groups. Working together and looking after each other has always been a part of Aboriginal cultural values. As Stuart Ankin/Yirawara stated that “*Sharing is part of the law*”. (Yarning session, 2021).

Fishers spoke at length of memories, stories, and experiences, when family members work together to gather food and prepare, cook, and consume seafood. Sharing of seafood connects Aboriginal People to their Country, culture, Elders and ancestors.

## Identity, language

Traditional Owners described the importance of Sea Country and seafood especially at Aboriginal homelands along the coast. Key development priorities for several of the senior Traditional Owners engaged in this research, such as Don and Jimmy, described the importance of the younger generation learning about seafood on their Country in their own family language. It was described that seafood is a part of People’s identity and keeps Aboriginal People connected to the wider Aboriginal Knowledge system physically, spiritually, and metaphysically, and this is expressed through language, song lines and sacred sites.

## Culture, song lines, ceremony

Traditional Owners emphasised culture, song lines and ceremony are connected to seafood and are part of Dhuwa and Yirritja Moieties and extend to wider Aboriginal law and are integral to the Identity of Aboriginal People in the Maningrida region. Traditional Owner Randall Darcy explained about connecting to your song lines “*fish dreaming is important to ancestors*” (Yarning session, 2021).

Traditional Owners at the Bábbarra Women’s Centre stated seafood is connected to “*culture through song lines, eating fish, and ceremonies*” (Yarning session, 2021). Traditional Owner and fish worker Sebastian Darcy stated “*seafood [is] connected to culture through song lines and eating fish at ceremonies*” (Yarning session, 2020).

# Intergenerational knowledge transfer

Traditional Owner Don Wilton recognises the importance for the younger generation to connect with their seafood on their Sea Country to learn about their culture.

*“When the younger kids walk with me on the beach, and we spear the fish they will ask the name of the fish, but they won’t keep that knowledge, they will forget. It’s very important for us to teach this. It’s our culture and Western culture, we think about coming together (the two cultures). Back in those days, the old people didn’t have any fish wire, they would just get up and fish, no coke, no tea, or anything. Our culture just lives on here. Today we are living among the non-Aboriginal people, but our culture is still here” (Yarning session, 2023).*

For Aboriginal People in Maningrida inter-generational Knowledge transfer is integral to the continuation of customs that are linked to Aboriginal values of nutrition, health, and wellbeing. The stories passed down remain a central part of the connections to fishing in Maningrida, *“Our great grandfathers and our dad showed us (seafood and Sea Country), and they said, when the Makassan (Sulawesi Trepong fishers) came and gave them fishing line, but in those days didn’t have clothes on and knew how to make trap for the fish – new generation today. Go out with 100m fishing net or whatever, but it doesn’t matter because still your mind your culture lives on the same as traditional way that our old people showed us – and we keep our cultures with us” (Yarning session, 2023).*



# Respecting Elders and Ancestors

Aboriginal People hold respect for their Elders and Ancestors and have important social and cultural values connected to these relationships. Cultural and social connections connected to seafood are intrinsically linked to community Elders and Ancestors both physically and spiritually.

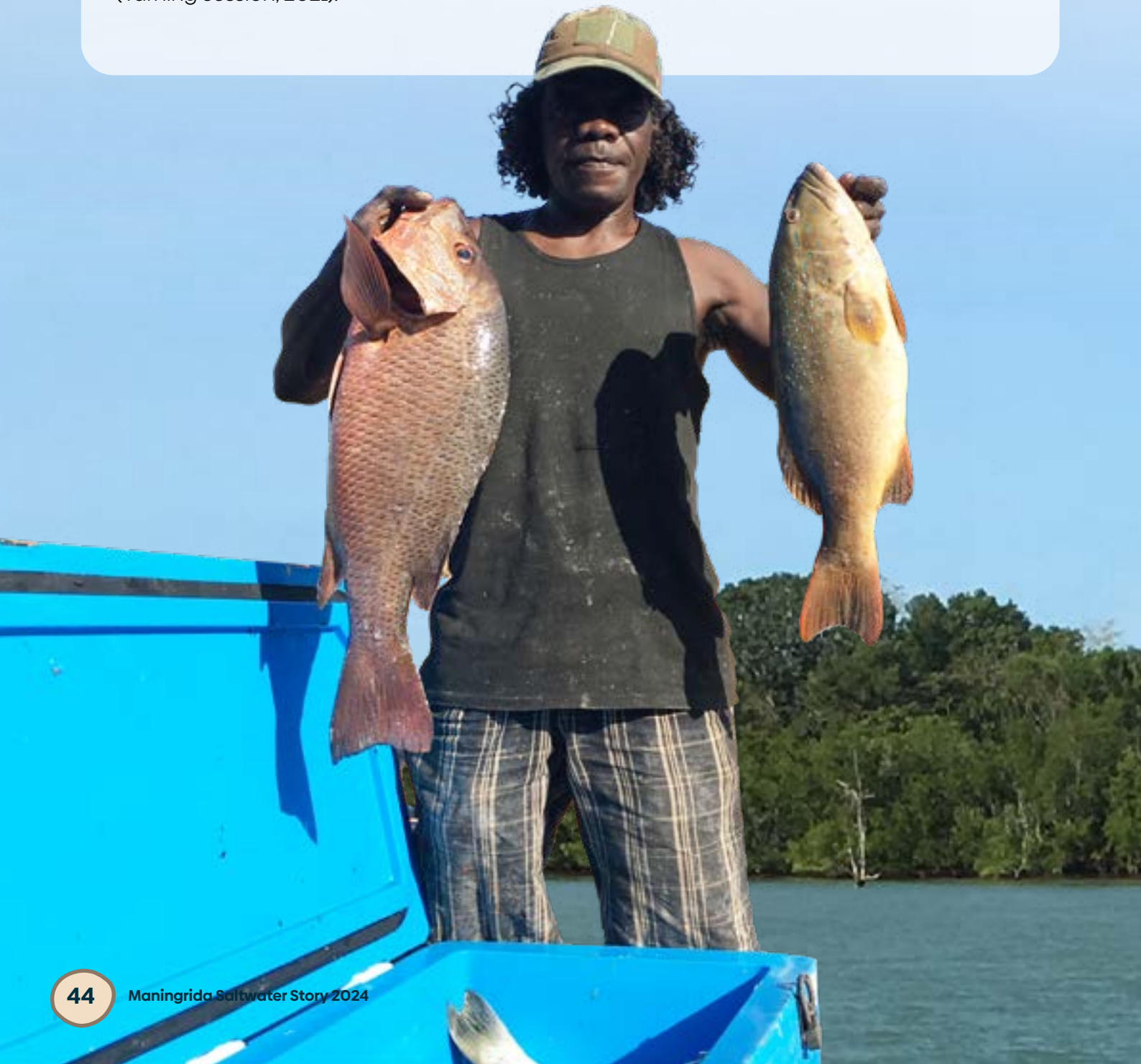
When connecting with and accessing seafood it is important for Aboriginal People to consider their Elders and Ancestors. It is important for people to get fish for their Elders *“Fish make old people strong and happy”* (Yarning session, 2021). As Elders are important within the community, Randall, as a recognised Knowledge holder and Traditional Owner, described while *“School is important for young kids to learn, old people need to teach the young ones about their ways like language and about bush foods”* (Yarning session, 2021). Senior Traditional Owner Jimmy Olsen stated Elders knew everything about seafood, the bush and *“old people knew their bush medicine”* and that *“Old ways the old people used to use poison berries to catch reef fish in rock pools and those old people knew which poison killed fish but was okay for people”* (Yarning session, 2021). Respecting Elders and Ancestors is an important part of connecting with seafood as described by Traditional Owner Stuart Ankin/Yirawara *“the legend lives on”* (Yarning session, 2023). Informants made it clear many Aboriginal people believed that *“fish made old people happy and strong”* (Yarning session, 2021) and this gave them ‘the energy’ to ‘go out walking’ which referred to their ability to complete daily activities. Several senior women described that Elders have preferences for certain fish species as they want to reconnect and consume the species they had grown up eating such as *“catfish”, “shark”* and *“sting ray”* (Yarning session, 2021).



# Connection to Sea Country

When Aboriginal People are on their Sea Country hunting, gathering, or fishing for seafood they are physically and spiritually connected to their Ancestors and their Indigenous Knowledge System.

Having access to Sea Country allows us to “walk in the footsteps of our Ancestors and to go to the fishing spots they showed us” and “Sea Country is our home and is connected to spirits and sacred sites” (Yarning session, 2023). It is important to care for Sea Country to keep Aboriginal People healthy and continue culture. “When Aboriginal People go to their Country in Maningrida it makes you happy but also makes your Ancestors’ spirits happy” (Yarning session 2023). For coastal Aboriginal People Sea Country is an important place for Traditional Owners to connect with their cultural and social values including accessing seafood. During the yarning session with Traditional Owners at the Bábbarra Women’s Centre, people described connecting to seafood through direct connection to Sea Country as a place of significance feelings “Beach Country place” is a “place connected to feelings” (Yarning session, 2021).



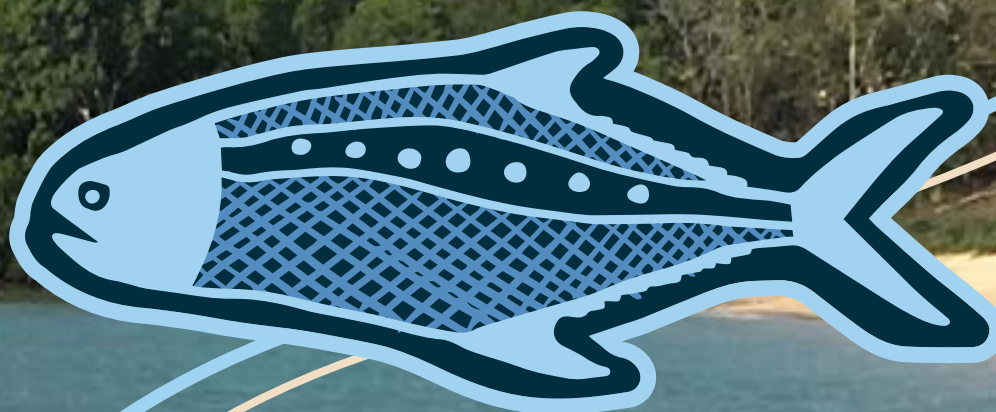
# Maningrida Seafood Enterprise

The Maningrida Seafood Enterprise comprises of several Traditional Owners who hold ACL and is operated by BAC who at the time of this study also held a NT commercial Mud Crab license.

The species targeted under the ACL at the time of this study include Bluetail Mullet, Diamond Mullet, Golden Trevally, Milkfish, Barracuda, Queenfish, Blue Threadfin, Whiting and under a restricted capacity also Barramundi, Giant Trevally, Spanish Mackerel, Beach Salmon, and Threadfin Salmon. There are many Aboriginal members of Maningrida who are part of the fishing team and assist the license holders in the fishing operations. The fishing enterprise provides Traditional Owners an opportunity to access their Sea Country to commercially harvest important seafood species that are sold in Maningrida and sometimes neighbouring Aboriginal community Ramingining.

The Maningrida Seafood Enterprise connects Aboriginal People to seafood and strengthens connections to cultural and social values on Sea Country. The enterprise provides take home fish for the fishing team, employment, income through fish sales and a sense of pride and achievement for the Traditional Owners and wider community. The enterprise provides access to fresh seafood for the community and families in Maningrida township who can experience barriers such as lack of transport to accessing their Country. The enterprise provides a local source of fresh and nutritious food “fish business, better nutrition” (Yarning session 2021) and foods of cultural and social significance linked to identity that can be used in ceremonies and for other cultural purposes to fulfil social and cultural obligations. The fishing enterprise provides the Traditional Owners a way to be on their Sea Country while also being engaged in a business supporting and strengthening self-determination while contributing to the nutrition, health, and wellbeing outcomes.

*“We sell the fish to the community. It’s good to get fresh fish and then the left over they cook them and sell them for \$5 and some people they go hunting themselves” (Yarning session, 2023). This included utilising seasonal and location knowledge to fish “Seasonal fish important for business because of the fat” (Yarning session, 2021).*





# Nutrition content of Seafood



While all seafood is important in Maningrida, during the research, Traditional Owners identified ten species that are commonly harvested through the fishing enterprises or regularly collected and important for nutrition, health, and wellbeing.

BAC and Traditional Owners wanted to know more about their seafood and nutrient content and to strengthen Maningrida Aboriginal Peoples connection to their seafood through Western Knowledge. This was important as nutrient content information for species harvested from coastal waters in north Australia is either not available or does not cover species that are important to coastal people in Arnhem Land. The 10 seafood species (listed below) were harvested by the Traditional Owners and samples analysed by the National Measurements Unit, Melbourne. Knowledge on their nutrient content was returned to the community. The information on nutritional profiles of the ten species will be presented in a poster.

**Barramundi**

**Giant Queenfish**

**Mud Crab**

**Fork Tail Catfish**

**Shark**

**Blue threadfin salmon**

**Mangrove worm**

**Mud mussel**

**Diamondscale Mullet**

**Bluetail mullet**

# Summary

The information presented in this booklet on the Aboriginal nutrition, health and, wellbeing values connected to seafood provides insight of the contributions seafood provides to nutritional, health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal People.

Seafood accessed in Maningrida and surrounding homelands through the seafood enterprise and customary fishing, continues to be intrinsically linked to Aboriginal identity. Accessing Sea Country, connecting to cultural and social values such as song lines, ceremony, language, Elders and Ancestors, and providing access to healthy traditional foods for the wider community can improve nutritional outcomes. A sense of pride and achievement is maintained through the Maningrida seafood enterprise in supporting community outcomes. There is need to continue to support Indigenous fisheries development and operations in remote Aboriginal communities for Aboriginal food security, health, and wellbeing and to progress Australia's National Closing the Gap targets.



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