YMCA's two Regional Committees met in Exmouth in May 2015.
Hello and welcome to the 27th edition of YMAC News, the newsletter of Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation.

We are very pleased in this issue to be able to share with you information about YMAC's new business arm, Knowledge Partnerships. We have already accomplished some great things through our partnership work, and we share a few of those projects with you on pages 7-9.

The fight continues to protect remote communities from being shut down by the State Government, and YMAC members and staff participated in rallies across the State on 1 May. We hope to see many more people out on 26-28 June for the next round of rallies.

As you'll see on the next page, YMAC has produced a booklet for Traditional Owners with vital information about shale gas. This is an introduction not just to the industry but also to the things native title groups should be asking companies about in negotiations. This booklet came about because of a request by the Yamatji Regional Committee for more information on this issue, so we are particularly pleased now that it has been released.

It is almost time for NAIDOC week 2015, with the theme 'We all Stand on Sacred Ground: Learn, Respect and Celebrate'. We wish the best of luck to Graham Taylor, who is a finalist for National NAIDOC Elder of the Year. You can read about his accomplishments on page 11.

We hope you enjoy this issue of YMAC News, and that you and your family enjoy NAIDOC celebrations wherever you are.
Western Australia potentially has huge resources of shale gas in the East Pilbara, Mid West and Kimberley regions. The amount of shale gas in WA is estimated to be double the amount of gas held in WA’s offshore conventional gas fields, and the Department of Mines and Petroleum estimates that significant commercial production of shale gas might start around 2020 or 2025.

It is important that Traditional Owners understand what this might mean for their Country, and know the potential risks and benefits. To assist in this learning process YMAC held a series of workshops in the regions in 2014 with two leading experts on issues around shale gas. Professor Damian Barrett of the Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (GISERA) spoke about issues surrounding shale gas, the exploration and extraction process and the potential environmental risks. Dr Tina Hunter of the Queensland University School of Law shared her knowledge about the legal and regulatory framework around shale gas, including what Traditional Owners should be asking companies about in negotiations, and the roles played by different parts of Government.

Following on from these workshops, YMAC has now launched a new guide to shale gas for Traditional Owners.

YMAC CEO Simon Hawkins has emphasised that YMAC does not advocate for or against the unconventional gas industry.

“There has been community concern about the effects of shale gas exploration and extraction, especially with all of the publicity around hydraulic fracturing, or fracking.

YMAC’s role is to make sure Traditional Owners engaged in negotiations with companies in the unconventional gas industry are informed about the processes, risks, and their legal rights. This booklet is one part of that process, and is a good starting point for Traditional Owners to learn about this industry and how it can affect Country.”

This free booklet is available from our website or in hard copy from any YMAC office.
On Friday, 1 May, communities across the world joined together in protest against the Barnett Government’s proposed closure of Aboriginal Communities.

This was the second wave of rallies organised by the group SOS Blak Australia. The protests occurred worldwide including in Los Angeles, London, Berlin and Christchurch, as well as all Australian capital cities.

Locally, rallies were in Perth and regional Western Australia, including Roebourne, Newman, Port Hedland and Geraldton.

The State Government announced in November 2014 that it intended to close up to 150 Aboriginal Communities in Western Australia. Seven months later, the Government has still not engaged in discussion with Aboriginal people on this issue.

The Barnett Government has not identified which Communities are under threat of closure and has not identified what will happen to those who live in the Communities following the closure.

This comes at a time when the State Parliament is considering changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act (AHA) that would make...
it easier for companies to legally destroy heritage sites, without defining a role for Traditional Owners in the decision making process.

To date, the State Government has led a deliberate campaign to exclude Land Councils from any form of genuine consultation on both the AHA amendments and Community closures. YMAC has committed significant time, staff and resources to fight these issues, including an extensive media campaign, direct meetings and lobbying with members of Parliament, providing legal advice on the proposed legislation as well as working with other Land Councils and associated groups to combine our efforts.

YMAC supports the efforts of groups like SOS Blak Australia and the Aboriginal Heritage Action Alliance taking action on these important issues.
In recent years we’ve entered a new era for Traditional Owners and we are working to strengthen our support and listen to these changing and growing needs.

We understand and respect that Aboriginal organisations want greater opportunities to develop their services and control their business into the future. As an existing long-term, not-for-profit provider we can join you as a strategic partner, offering independent advice to meet your objectives, backed by over 20 years experience working with Aboriginal communities.

The Knowledge Partnerships initiative creates ethical partnerships and collaborative projects to let Traditional Owners meet their aspirations.

We believe in the strength that comes from combining traditional cultural knowledge with the support of corporate and technical experience. We are problem-solvers who support our partners with a respectful and culturally-appropriate approach, stemming from years of experience.

Since the early days of delivering traditional native title services, we have grown to provide a holistic service menu with focus on country, culture and corporate development.

We understand that each project is unique and so we provide services completely tailored to your needs, including:

Knowledge Partnerships is a new business arm of YMAC but we have been working on partnership projects with Traditional Owners for many years. On the next three pages we have highlighted some of our recent achievements. Some of our other partnership projects have included:

- Working with Wajarri Yamatji Traditional Owners to successfully secure the Wilgie Mia National Heritage Listing
- Community projects with Yamatji Arts Centre, Magabala Books and the Film and Television Institute’s Indigenous Community Stories to promote local people and culture
- Corporate visual identity development for Nyangumarta Warram Aboriginal Corporation including logo, stationery, t-shirt designs and business cards
- Communications, coordination and logistics support for Gnulli native title claim representatives to provide cultural awareness training for Horizon Power staff
YMAC has acted as the representative body for native title claims in the Pilbara, Murchison and Gascoyne regions since 1999. In that time, research conducted by anthropologists with respected community members has documented the wealth of traditional knowledge about language, culture and significant places on country.

The resulting collection of oral history, cultural information and personal and traditional stories is an impressive, one-of-a-kind record of Aboriginal history in these regions.

At the moment most of the collection is used for native title research and access to it is limited. However, after the determination of native title each Aboriginal group, through their corporation, is able to decide what they wish to do with the research materials.

Through Knowledge Partnerships, YMAC has been leading the way in developing culturally appropriate guidelines and protocols in partnership with native title holders. This process has already been trialled with two groups and we have been sharing information about YMAC’s Return of Research Materials Policy with other native title representative bodies.

The material often includes sensitive and restricted information, so YMAC works with each individual native title group to design the best plan for accessing, handling and storing both physical and digital reports, maps, oral testimonies, videos, genealogies, photos, and records.

Native title holders can decide who can access and how they want to use their research material, whether that involves creating cultural centres, interactive databases, heritage projects, oral history projects, publications, multi-media projects, or language projects.

“This is a valuable resource to Aboriginal families and communities as well as to future researchers,” said Simon Hawkins, YMAC CEO.

“We are working with Traditional Owners to make sure these collections are held safely and accessibly for those with rights to use it.”
In April 2015, the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura (PKKP) native title claim had the opportunity to go on Country with a film crew to make a video to be shared with future generations.

The film was part of a salvage project with Rio Tinto Iron Ore (RTIO) to record the stories and elders’ knowledge about a site of particular significance to the Traditional Owners before the site becomes part of the Brockman 4 mining development. For thousands of years, the Purlykuti site was an important camping ground and a pass through the Ngarramiju Range for Traditional Owners travelling through their Country on foot.

The aim of the film is to record the place, what it looks like, the stories about it, and all of the different elements of the site that make it a place of great significance to the community. The film crew recorded six Traditional Owners as they walked the land, told its stories and sang its songs.

Simon Hawkins, YMAC CEO said that he was glad that RTIO was willing to send out the film crew with support from YMAC.

“When this film is completed it will be the property of the Traditional Owners to use however they think it will most benefit their community. It will be a powerful learning tool for younger generations and an important historical record.”

Sandra Hayes, a Puutu Kunti Kurrama traditional owner said of the project, “The area that we went to is very important to the Puutu Kunti Kurrama people, and for generations in the future to see what it was like before the mine.”
Earlier this year, YMAC and the Nyangumarta Warrarn Aboriginal Corporation (NWAC) were highly commended at the 2015 Australian Coastal Awards presented by the National Sea Change Task Force. The award recognised the planning for the Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) at Eighty Mile Beach.

In a five year long process, YMAC and NWAC consulted extensively with the traditional owners of an area of land including 110 kms of coastline, stretching between Broome and Port Hedland. This process has resulted in a plan to contribute to the management and protection of Eighty Mile Beach, which is one of the most important sites for migratory shorebirds in Australia, and is recognised as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The plan is aimed at addressing key threats, such as unregulated access to sites of cultural significance, and visitor impact on the landscape, plants and animals within the Nyangumarta country, including water bird and flatback turtle nesting sites. An important part of the project is to collect the Nyangumarta people’s knowledge of the local environment so that the knowledge can be used to manage and care for the areas and be passed down to future generations.

IPAs protect Australia’s biodiversity while providing training and employment for Aboriginal people doing work that they love on their own country. When Indigenous landowners decide to declare their lands an IPA they agree to manage their country for conservation and to meet international conservation standards.

Charlie Wright, a Nyangumarta Traditional Owner who worked extensively on developing the plan for the IPA said, “We want this project to teach our young people and for the old people to pass this education down... This has come from the people here and they came up with the process themselves. We watch our waterways to ensure they don’t fill up with weeds. We go and help the pastoralists maintain the areas where we have people buried.”

Many Nyangumarta people were born on and have been buried on the stations adjoining Eighty Mile Beach. There are several ceremonial areas within the nearby pastoral leases that are of particular significance to Nyangumarta people. The coastline too is dotted with sites of special significance; several of these sites are associated with the Dreaming.

The IPA will not only protect unique marine environments for migratory birds, flatback turtles, dugongs and other species, but it will also allow the Nyangumarta people greater control over these culturally important places.

The Indigenous Protected Area was officially launched on 23 April this year and will be recognised with a dedication ceremony on Country in July.
The City of Greater Geraldton has been making significant progress implementing their Reconciliation Action Plan. Consultation with the Aboriginal community has been a key factor in the success of projects such as the Welcome to Country Guide and The Aboriginal History of Geraldton (Jambinu) and Surrounding Areas Booklet.

YMAC worked in collaboration with Geraldton’s Reconciliation Committee to develop the City of Greater Geraldton’s Welcome to Country Guide through careful consultation with the Amangu, Naaguja, Mullewa Wajarri, Wajarri Yamatji and Widi people. This guide provides a reference to community members on how to select an appropriate person to deliver welcome to country, how to thank a Traditional Owner and when an acknowledgement of country is appropriate.

Although it is yet to be published, the guide has already received praise from the local community, with suggestions that it may be replicated across Australia. Nola Gregory, Aboriginal Community Development Officer for the City of Greater Geraldton explains that, “if people are going to consider copying our book … the key is to include native title groups in every part of the project.”

The inclusion of the Aboriginal community has been integral to the development of another project, the Aboriginal History of Geraldton (Jambinu) and Surrounding Areas Booklet. This will be the 13th addition to Geraldton Regional Library’s Mid West Heritage Booklet Series which consists of short, engaging historical resources about Geraldton.

YMAC Project Officer Derek Councillor is a member of the community reference group which has overseen the whole process from selecting historical researchers Stan Gratte and Dale Forsyth, to approving the graphic design and content of the booklet. Derek believes that by exploring Aboriginal history prior to settlement, the booklet fills a void in Geraldton’s history records.

According to Trudi Cornish, Geraldton Regional Library’s Coordinator of Heritage Services, “this project supports key elements of the city’s Reconciliation Action Plan in that it will promote shared knowledge and understanding.”

YMAC looks forward to the launch of both publications later this year.
Community profile: Graham Taylor

Graham was born in Three Springs and grew up in Coorow. After attending an agricultural School at Pallottine Mission, Graham and his mate decided to join the army. In 1971, at the age of 19 he was deployed to Vietnam. Graham speaks fondly of his platoon, which consisted of men from different backgrounds, including Dutch, English and Aboriginal. According to Graham, they could have been mistaken for the ‘United Nations’ rather than the Australian Army. Their green uniforms were a sign of unity, ‘there was no colour bar, no animosity between us … we were mates forever.’ Graham went on to serve six years in the army including six months as an airport guard in Malaya.

Today, Graham is a member of the RSL and is committed to commemorating Aboriginal veterans from the Mid West. He was instrumental in dedicating a plaque on the RSL’s Wall of Remembrance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have served their country. This year he was a guest speaker at Geraldton’s ANZAC day ceremony and each year he travels to schools across the region to speak at their ANZAC services. Graham believes that the army is a good career path for young people because it provides opportunities to gain qualifications and trades.

In July this year, Graham will be accompanied by his son as he travels to Adelaide for the National NAIDOC Awards. Graham’s selection as a finalist is a tribute to his enormous dedication to his community.
ABOUT US
YMAC News is produced by the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC).
We are the native title representative body for native title claims in the Murchison, Gascoyne and Pilbara regions of Western Australia.
We work with Yamatji and Marlpa (Pilbara) Aboriginal people to pursue:
- Recognition and acceptance of Yamatji and Marlpa culture in country
- A strong future for Yamatji and Marlpa people and country

MEMBERSHIP
YMAC membership is open to all adult (18+ years) Yamatji and Marlpa people. Our membership also includes people who live in other areas but who have a traditional connection to Yamatji or Marlpa country.

SERVICES
Our work includes:
- Providing legal representation and research to assist with native title claims
- Negotiating land use agreements
- Heritage protection services
- Community, economic and environmental projects

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