



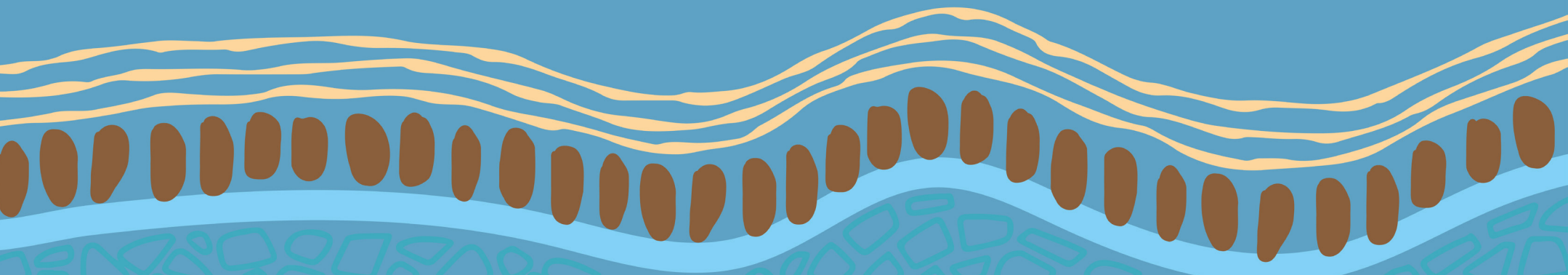
International Funders
IFIP
for Indigenous Peoples

Sharing Circle July 2024



OUR MISSION

Our Mission is dedicated to shifting power, mobilizing resources, and building partnerships to amplify Indigenous leadership and to support the self-determination and rights of Indigenous Peoples, their communities, lands and territories worldwide.





Leah Armstrong, Regional Manager, Australia

Transforming Philanthropy: A Call for Indigenous-Centric Approaches in Australia

It has been a busy and exciting time since starting as the Regional Manager, Australia for the International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP) in late February. This role has brought a whirlwind of activities and opportunities to engage deeply with the core issues facing Indigenous philanthropy.

In my first few months, I had the privilege of attending the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. This forum was a powerful experience, highlighting the global importance of Indigenous voices in shaping policies and frameworks that impact their communities. It reinforced the urgent need for a shift in the philanthropic landscape to prioritize Indigenous self-determination.

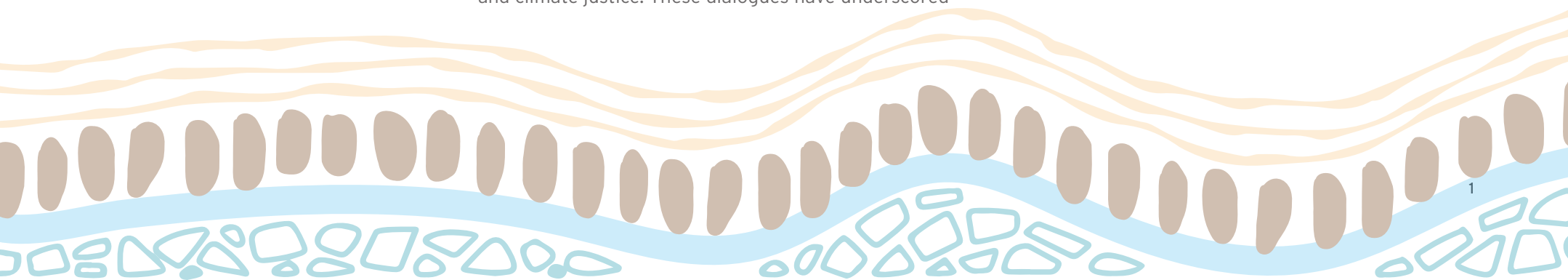
Back in Australia, the engagement with funders has been equally invigorating. Through the Australian philanthropic networks, I have connected with passionate individuals and organizations committed to making a difference. One of the standout moments was convening a workshop with the IFIP Australian Working Group, bringing together funders and Indigenous leaders in philanthropy. These conversations have been critical in shaping a collective understanding of how we can better support funders and Indigenous peoples and their communities.

The past three months have been filled with conversations on centring Indigenous Philanthropy and climate justice. These dialogues have underscored

the need for a fundamental shift from a donor-centric model to an Indigenous-centric approach. The current philanthropic landscape is fraught with challenges that hinder the progress and potential of Indigenous communities.

A recent report by the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities (GATC) has highlighted the inadequacies in current systems for documenting and delivering climate aid. Even when donors recognize the importance of Indigenous contributions, they often lack awareness of the capacity and needs of Indigenous organizations. This results in scarce direct funding and frequent exclusion from critical discussions about funding allocation for Indigenous Peoples and organizations.

There is an urgent need to change the narrative in philanthropy. We must open the doors and embrace Indigenous Peoples as equal partners who bring solutions from the ground up. This shift involves concepts like reciprocity, redefining success from Indigenous perspectives, and promoting truth-telling and advocacy. It's about capturing and amplifying the stories of Indigenous communities to influence funder practices. Supporting organizations in effectively telling their stories is crucial to highlight their impact and emphasize the importance of Indigenous perspectives in philanthropy.



The narrative around Indigenous philanthropy must be reframed to recognize the vast potential and strengths within Indigenous communities. The Indigenous estate covers around 50% of Australia's landmass, presenting significant opportunities for economic development. Notably, 43% of the clean energy infrastructure required to achieve net-zero targets will need to be sited on Indigenous land, necessitating Indigenous-led decision-making.

Recognizing traditional and cultural knowledge and values as the basis for managing Country is crucial. However, there are danger signs that we may be repeating colonial practices with the rush to a green economy, such as land grabs, displacement of Indigenous peoples, and exclusion from benefits. This phenomenon, known as "green colonialism," must be avoided by ensuring Indigenous communities are at the forefront of decision-making and benefit-sharing.

Stark Imbalances in Funding

The statistics are revealing. Of the historic \$1.7 billion pledge announced at the 2021 UN climate conference, only 2.1% of the \$494 million delivered in 2022 reached Indigenous groups directly. Globally, a mere 0.6% of philanthropic giving benefits Indigenous Peoples directly, with even lower support for Indigenous women. In Australia, only 0.50% of funding reaches

Indigenous communities directly. These numbers highlight the significant imbalances that require urgent attention.

One of the primary obstacles for Indigenous communities in securing philanthropic funding is the lack of mutual understanding between funders and Indigenous groups. This gap often leads to a power imbalance, hampering the development of trust and meaningful relationships. Furthermore, a substantial portion of funding meant for Indigenous needs is often diverted to non-Indigenous organizations, perpetuating a colonial mindset and failing to address the unique requirements of Indigenous communities.

Structural and Systemic Issues

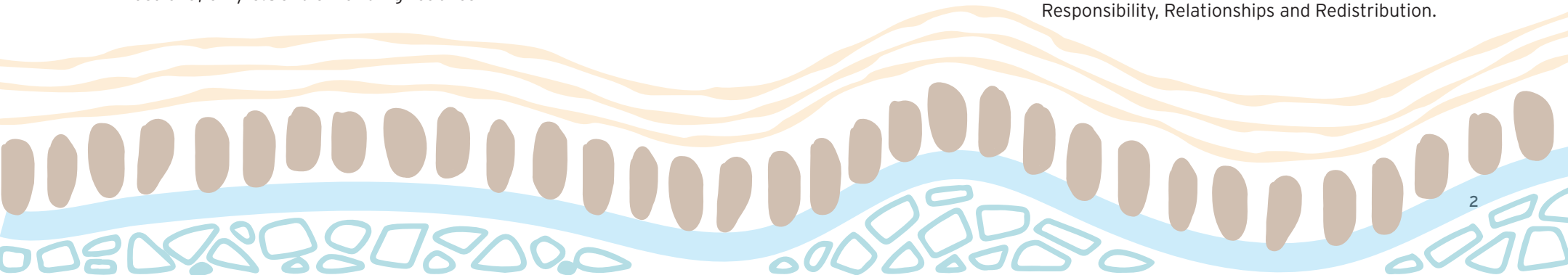
Structural and systemic issues exacerbate these challenges. The scarcity of Indigenous People in decision-making roles within philanthropic organizations reinforces existing stereotypes and disconnects. Many Indigenous groups feel invisible within the philanthropic ecosystem, marginalized by a system that does not fully recognize or support their contributions and potential. These barriers highlight the urgent need for systemic change to ensure more equitable access to resources and opportunities for Indigenous communities. Equity in Indigenous philanthropy emphasizes redistributing resources to Indigenous

communities and inclusion of Indigenous peoples in decision-making of grant approvals. This involves setting minimum giving targets through influence and relationships among funders to ensure that Indigenous communities receive the necessary financial support. The goal is to create a more inclusive and equitable funding environment where the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples are at the forefront.

Changing Funder Practices

Changing funder practices involves implementing an Indigenous framework designed by Indigenous people in philanthropy as is embodied in the IFIP 5R's of Indigenous Philanthropy. This includes developing case studies, best practices, and key points of contact, as well as robust reporting and data collection mechanisms. Collaboration and convening peer groups on national and global levels are essential for creating a unified approach to funding. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on transparency, accountability, and developing reporting templates and matrices that centre Indigenous perspective of impact. Advocacy by influential individuals in philanthropy is crucial to shift funder practices towards Indigenous-led funding models.

IFIP influences funders to practice a new paradigm of giving based on Indigenous values, "The Five R's of Indigenous Philanthropy –Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility, Relationships and Redistribution.



Growing Indigenous-Led Funds

Indigenous-led funds require growth in funding, capability, and visibility to effectively support Indigenous communities. These funds should be recognized not just as financial mechanisms but as strategic and thought partners at every intersection. Developing sustainable business models is crucial for their long-term success.

In conclusion, the past few months has shown me the incredible potential and urgent need for transforming the philanthropic landscape to better serve Indigenous communities. By prioritizing Indigenous self-determination and equitable access to resources, we can address global challenges more effectively and equitably. This is not just a necessity but an urgent call to action, and I am committed to continuing this vital work in partnership with all those dedicated to creating a fairer and more inclusive society.



Image Description: Australian Working Group and Regional Workshop, Sydney Australia



Disrupting Paradigms in Australian Philanthropy

By Kerry Klimm. Kerry works with CAGES Foundation telling their story and the stories of the communities they have the privilege of supporting. She is a Koko Lamalama and Gugu Yelanji woman of Far North Queensland and grew up on Yidinji land, Cairns. She is a communications and media specialist and has worked for more than 20 years in mainstream and First Nations' communications and media industries. Kerry runs Flashblak a Communications, Media and Creatives company.

When CAGES Foundation started in 2009, our vision was 'for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to have the opportunity to reach their full potential.'

The irony that we had no relationship with First Nations' peoples or communities, but deemed this our vision, is not lost on us 15 years later.

CAGES Foundation acknowledge our historic practices have been at times problematic.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations, our partners have been incredibly patient with us. We listen, learn, make mistakes and correct our failings. Each time doing and being better partners.

Over the years we've become more curious with how we question and challenge ourselves and the sector. Unpacking the ongoing impacts of colonisation, we've come to realise there are problems in philanthropy that need addressing.

It's a highly judgemental system where people of wealth, privilege and power ask communities to present themselves through a deficit lens. A system that judges what success looks like. A system that demands complex applications and reporting systems. Meanwhile, only a small fraction of funds distributed from philanthropy in Australia reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled organisations.

We are shifting practices and granting systems. Our due diligence is aligned to values and informs decisions around who we want to fund. We do not take on a role of judgement.

"Funding applications are usually premised on your worst day; CAGES Foundation asks you what your best day could look like." (Jen Wickens, Director of Learning Support, Awabakal Preschool)

CAGES Foundation has embarked on an intergenerational approach to disrupting philanthropy towards equitable funding practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Centering First Nations Voices in Philanthropy

We recognise First Nations' power and wealth of culture, knowledge and connections has been passed down for 60 thousand years, living harmoniously with and caring for lands, waters and sky.

CAGES Foundation is shifting its mindset from deficit to strength-based. From assumptions around inherent risk, to recognising Aboriginal organisations are best placed for investment as they represent and are accountable to their community. From a western lens, which is disempowering, to respecting and amplifying First Nations' ways of being, knowing and doing.

CAGES Foundation are investing in First Nations people and community organisations with autonomy.

CAGES Foundation is working with Kowa Collaboration to develop community led methods of Understanding, Measuring, Evaluation and Learning (UMEL) approach which empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the knowledge holders and experts whose voices CAGES listens to, is guided by, and amplifies through our spheres of influence.

"CAGES listens deeply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners who determine the rules of engagement, and they respond in ways that are meaningful and relevant to each organisation and community. CAGES understand their privileged position in philanthropy, and ability to influence and accelerate opportunities as determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples." (Skye Trudgett, CEO, Kowa Collaboration).

It's about putting values into practice, providing autonomy and agency for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and for us to be held to account in the process.

Empowering First Nations Led Economies

CAGES Foundation funds through a social justice lens. Economic empowerment, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wealth distribution and creation is critical to addressing the impacts of colonisation.

We have made it a priority to contribute to a First Nations led economy. This includes support for Indigenous led philanthropic vehicles and First Nations owned and led entities who are reclaiming and creating wealth opportunities in their communities.

"CAGES Foundation aligned with the purpose of First Australians Capital to back First Australians' cultural, creative and economic strength to become full, free agents in driving our own economic futures. CAGES Foundation's funding was completely unrestricted allowing us self-determination in our work as a catalyst for radical change in investment markets." (Brian Wyborn, Managing Partner, First Australians Capital)

We are redistributing wealth to be determined by First Nations' people who are the experts with knowledge, skills and wisdom to know what is best for their communities.

"Culture is critical to the future. Our culture has been the foundation for thousands of years prior to European arrival and is still there 250 years later. Solutions to keeping culture alive and our people strong and resilient has to come from us. We have the skills, knowledge and ability to use our culture in today's society and economy to take our people forward. These opportunities will be realised with investment in Indigenous people and organisations." (Peter Cooley, CEO, First Hand Solutions)

We believe investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations will lead to sustainable, robust and effective systems within their communities.

We believe our accountability to our partners is a critical and constant process of listening, learning and evolution.

We believe we must hold the sector to account by using our sphere of influence to disrupt the power and practice of philanthropy.



Image: Peter Cooley working Indigrow, a social enterprise from First Hand Solutions Aboriginal Corporation. It sustains people, land and culture through the propagation and growing of native plans including bush foods.

Photo courtesy of: First Hand Solutions



"Kowa Collaboration"

Image description: The Kowa Collaboration team. Kowa Collaboration is a First Nations business supporting communities to amplify their voices and change-making efforts through First Nations-led impact measurement, evaluation and learning.

Photo Courtesy of: Kowa Collaboration

Centering Indigenous self-determination and economic opportunity in Australian agriculture and food systems transformation

By **Michelle Gortan**, CEO of Macdoch Foundation

The Western industrial agricultural system, with its practices of extraction, individual ownership, and overdevelopment, has been a significant contributor to climate change, pollution, land degradation, loss of biodiversity and the displacement of Indigenous peoples globally. The growing population has intensified the demand for food and resources, exerting immense pressure on natural ecosystems. The effects of climate change are already being felt in the sector, compromising food security and creating more fragile supply chains, highlighting the urgent need for transformation.

The industrial system starkly contrasts the Indigenous system in which Indigenous peoples, through their knowledge systems and practices, have lived a reciprocal, harmonious relationship with nature and sustainably managed natural resources for thousands of years. Presently, there are an estimated 370 million Indigenous peoples worldwide. Indigenous lands cover about 20% of the Earth's expanse, stewarding 80% of the world's remaining critical biodiversity, which is crucial for our strategies to address climate change and to support life on Earth. In Australia, about 40% of the country is covered by Native Title, both exclusive and shared titles. However, Native Title is a colonial concept distinct from Indigenous land rights. Native title does not preclude extractive industries from operating on native title lands, and First Nations people have typically been excluded from benefiting economically from those activities.

At the Macdoch Foundation, we focus on transforming agriculture and the food system towards one that better supports people, nature and the climate. In doing so we recognise the importance of centering the deeply interconnected issues of Indigenous land stewardship, food security, food sovereignty, cultural identity and well-being against the backdrop of Australia's colonial history and displacement of Indigenous peoples.

Our challenge—and opportunity—is meaningfully incorporating Indigenous knowledge and participation in negotiating a food system transformation. This is not simply a matter of the sustainability of our natural resources and

the resilience of our landscapes but of social justice and human rights. Embracing Indigenous wisdom in food systems can enrich non-Indigenous communities by promoting healthier, more sustainable, and culturally rich food systems that honour Indigenous knowledge, are more just, and contribute to a more resilient and interconnected world. But this should not be a one-way street. Integrating Indigenous knowledge in agriculture and environmental conservation can and should be a powerful tool to address existing inequities and power dynamics, creating real value for Indigenous peoples.

Promoting Indigenous knowledge needs to be more than symbolic. It requires a deeper understanding of and investment in those knowledge systems. It also requires more inclusive, Indigenous-led conservation and agricultural practices rooted in principles of Indigenous self-determination, economic participation, and wealth creation. With only between 1 and 3% of philanthropy going directly to Indigenous peoples, IFIP and the Australian Working Group members, including the Macdoch Foundation, have committed to continuous learning, shifting practice, increasing resources, and accountability in support of First Nations people.

Specifically, we, as a Foundation are seeking to:

1. Prioritise funding opportunities that empower Indigenous peoples to determine, lead and control their development;
2. Fund Indigenous-led organisations directly and avoid intermediaries. We will work closely with leaders to ensure that our interventions are respectful and effective;
3. Focus on building capacity and providing multi-year, flexible funding. We will take a more holistic approach that not only meets organisations' current needs but creates sustainability and security, respects their rights and values, and builds trust;
4. Embed Indigenous perspectives by working closely with IFIP and our grant partners to seek feedback and input into our grantmaking processes to better align with Indigenous ways of working; and
5. Foster a continuous learning and improvement culture within the Foundation staff and Board because cultural competency is ongoing.

In addition to growing our grantmaking to Indigenous-led organisations, we have also committed to allocating up to 50% of our new catalytic impact capital pool to support Indigenous agriculture and food enterprises in Australia.

We are in the process of developing our new 3- to 5-year strategy. Our membership of IFIP, our multi-year funding of the Australia Working Group, and our commitment to advancing IFIP's five principles of Indigenous philanthropy will enshrine greater transparency and accountability in our work. The journey towards better philanthropic practice is neither easy nor straightforward. But our hope is we will grow and learn as funders working to forge opportunities in food systems for Indigenous peoples in Australia in ways that centre justice and self-determination and that truly value the Indigenous knowledge systems that have co-existed with nature for thousands of years.



Image Description: Native Foodways Stall
Courtesy of: Native Foodways



Image description: Macdoch Foundation Chairman, Alasdair MacLeod, and CEO, Michelle Gortan, (R) visit Rumbalara Aboriginal Corporation's Starritt Road Farm
Courtesy of: Outback Academy



Image description: National Gathering skills and knowledge building workshop
Courtesy of: Outback Academy



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