

## 'Singing Not Crying' – from the Mardoowarra–Fitzroy River of Life!

By Dr Anne Poelina



Grace Mulligan (2017) *Story of Mijirrikan – Two Snakes Dreaming – Creation of the Fitzroy River.*

I am Yoongoorrookoo, Rainbow Serpent singing.  
Travelling high up in the sky and down through rivers, land and sea.  
I hear the humans crying now, how woeful their cries continue to be!  
What is happening in our nation state, our nation home, our country.  
I see below me ... floods and fires crisscross this torched country.  
Then the floods, then the drought, then more heat.  
Aboriginal leadership and water governance missing in action.  
Buried within – systemic racism, structural violence.  
Hidden at all levels of governance and bureaucracy.  
Wake up I say, you human beings wake up and hear me belly crawl.

Wake up maybe ... one last time and listen to Bruce Pascoe's call.  
There is a wisdom here heavily rooted intrinsically between Aboriginal nations.  
Their land, living waters, sea and the sky.  
Aboriginal voice muted in the management and protection of our rivers.  
Cry out '**we need to be recognised**'.  
Defrauded, dis-eased into staying quiet.  
Now through their mourning awakening others to their calling.  
Recognised, reconciled, healing, transformation in order to fully adopt a united Australian nation.  
Australia taken by theft from these ancient nations.  
It's time to pause and take a deeper breath.

### **Rivers MUST have the Right to Life.**

Balancing the circle of life.  
Some are fearful that the humans lead their own extinction.  
I have hope in human beings, they understand and believe, 'water is life'.  
It's their life they must save if they are to continue living on Mother Earth.  
Mother Earth covered in living waters cradled beneath the sky.  
I keep on singing as I believe a **Coalition of Hope** is coming.  
Mardoowarra, Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council is calling a Circle of Elders.  
Wise people from across the nation to come to our river country.  
Share the stories of development, protection, new economies.

Culture, Conservation, Science, Tourism, Renewable Energy; this is a great start.  
Let the policy reflect these Northern Development Indigenous dreams and business growth plans.  
Invest in growth of fair trade through Indigenous hands.  
Traditional owners are standing up, supporting economic growth and prosperity.  
God knows it they have been under attack.  
Enslaved, poisoned, imprisoned, dispossessed, disheartened.  
Stripped of their lands since **George Grey** 1837 expedition first mapped  
these western frontier estates.  
Surely in 2019, don't come to them with an 'unsustainable Fitzroy River Management Plan'.  
Stand together in good faith, free informed consent.  
Stand with the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council for a '**fair go**'.



Aerial view of the Mardoowarra by Magali McDuffie.



Mardoowarra in flood by Magali McDuffie.

A Circle of Elders could hear these stories and frame new ways to build the forever industries.  
Industries grounded in climate science, human rights and environmental justice.  
Co-operation not Conflict.  
Unity not Divide and Conquer.  
Collaboration not Manipulation.  
Cultural Synthesis not Cultural Invasion of these Nations.  
Done hand in hand with fellow Australians.  
Reach out to global networks to achieve the Paris targets.  
Transition from fossil fuels to renewables.

Valuing the sunk cost investment of this globally unique Fitzroy River.  
A riverine system not found anywhere else on the planet.  
Stop the invasion, the continuing colonisation.  
Let's recognise the original West Australians.  
Their right to freedom and justice upon their tribal estates.  
Forget the hunter gatherers framing.  
Recognise them for their collective wisdom.  
Science, farming, engineering, medicine and healing,  
trade and innovation – multiple diverse trade and ceremonies.

Move Freire's (1968) framework – Pedagogy of Oppression towards the Pedagogy of Freedom  
Kimberley Aboriginal peoples' home on the Fitzroy River must remain free.  
Indigenous nations believe they have a fiduciary duty as custodians and guardians.  
Legislate **River Protection Acts** across the whole country.  
This must be done before it's too late!  
Earth Jurisprudence, First Law, Law of the Land.  
This is the cry from the Aboriginal nations of this wide brown land.  
This has been the message championed through the Rivers of the Murray-Darling Basin, the MDB!  
"Rivers have the Right to Life"! They must flow free!  
This must become a nation's songlines if the Australian bloodlines are to hold the past,  
present and future strong.

I sing this song to you ... **"Singing the River Law song for ALL people and country"**!

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