ABORIGINAL CULTURAL INCLUSION

GUIDE ONE: COUNTRY

How to engage respectfully with Aboriginal people while working in WA's tourism sector.

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Tourism WESTERN AUSTRALIA
WESTERN AUSTRALIA WALKING ON A DREAM
WAITOC.COM Ancient Tracks-New Journeys

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Tourism Western Australia and the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC) acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples of Western Australia. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal people in Western Australia, and we celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal people and honour their continuing connection to Country, culture, family, and community.

We recognise and appreciate the invaluable contributions made by Aboriginal people across many generations in shaping Western Australia as a premier tourism destination.

LANGUAGE STATEMENT:

We recognise the diversity of First Peoples living throughout Western Australia. This document uses the term ‘Aboriginal’ in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original people of Western Australia. At a regional or local level, the traditional language group name is often used.

Across Australia through government, the term for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may be referred to as Indigenous peoples. The diversity of terms used to acknowledge peoples continues to alter. The diversity of acknowledgement includes Indigenous, First Peoples, First Nations, Traditional Owners, Traditional Custodians and identification by the traditional language groups.

Note: It is always best practice to ask Aboriginal people or groups how they would like to be referred to.

ARTIST BIO

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Madeleine Edwards is a Jaru woman from the Kimberley region of Western Australia and the founder of creative agency Jalani Media. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Major in Marketing) from the University of Western Australia. Madeleine seamlessly blends traditional and contemporary techniques, honouring her cultural heritage while embracing modern storytelling. Her practice spans digital art and acrylic paintings on canvas, where she draws upon the natural beauty of Jaru Country.

Maddie designed the illustrations for each guide, drawing inspiration from its themes and content.

GUIDE INTRODUCTION

This guide is an educational resource designed to assist non-Aboriginal tourism operators to engage and work respectfully with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal tourism businesses.

It is one of four guides that advocates for Aboriginal cultural inclusion within the tourism industry. The guides collectively aim to:

- Remove barriers from learning about Aboriginal culture.
- Inform the development of best practice protocols for your business so you can work respectfully with your local Aboriginal community.
- Highlight the importance of Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) and how to ensure ICIP is honoured throughout the operation of your business.
- Promote the cultural safety and inclusivity of Aboriginal people in all areas of the tourism industry.

These guides are a starting point for learning and are living documents that may evolve over time. We recognise that English words are used across these guides to describe Aboriginal concepts that, like any language, might not specifically fit the English understanding of that word.

USE AS A HANDY REFERENCE GUIDE OR READ ALL GUIDES ONE TO FOUR CONSECUTIVELY TO MAXIMISE YOUR LEARNING OUTCOMES.

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DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this guide is for informational purposes only and should not be regarded as legal advice on any matter. It is recommended that independent legal advice is sought for your business where appropriate.

WHAT COUNTRY AM I ON AND WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY BUSINESS?

- Identifying Aboriginal people and the appropriate authorised person in the location your tourism business is operating (or planning to operate) is often the first step towards respectful engagement.

  There are differences between an Elder and a knowledge holder (also referred to as a knowledge keeper) in Aboriginal communities.

ELDER

An Elder (who may or may not be a knowledge holder) may be acknowledged by their community as a custodian of Aboriginal lore, custom and cultural knowledge, providing guidance on cultural matters and protocol.

An acknowledgement of Elders (past and present) is commonly placed at the end of a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country.

It is important to note, some Aboriginal Elders do not practice traditional culture but may still be referred to as an Elder as a sign of respect.

KNOWLEDGE HOLDER

A knowledge holder (who may or may not also be an Elder), refers to someone who has been taught by an Elder or a senior knowledge holder within their community to hold traditional knowledge and teachings, how to care for these teachings, and when it is, or is not appropriate to share this knowledge with others.

- ‘Country’ is the term often used by Aboriginal people to describe the lands, waterways, and seas they are connected to. The term contains complex concepts about lore, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family, and identity.[1]
- More than 60 Aboriginal nations and traditional language groups have been identified in Western Australia.[2]

Within several language groups there are certain people that are connected to a particular area of their Country.

These are the people that have the right and responsibility to speak for those places. For example, Noongar Country (also referred to as the Noongar Nation) in the south west of Western Australia, is home to fourteen language groups (which may be spelt in different ways) including: Whadjuk; Amangu; Yuat; Binjareb; Wadandi; Balardong; Nyakinyaki; Wilman; Ganeang; Bibulman; Mineng; Goreng; Wudjari; and Njunga.

Before British colonisation, over 250 language groups (with 800 dialects) were active across Australia, however only 123 Indigenous languages are spoken in Australia today. 109 of these are considered endangered, and all are under threat.[3]

EXAMPLE

You may be seeking to identify a culturally authorised ‘Whadjuk’ member of the ‘Noongar’ Nation to discuss a new tourism project in Perth.

1 | Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) www.aiatsis.gov.au
2 | Census 2016, Australia Bureau of Statistics
3 | National Archives of Australia www.naa.gov.au

- Awareness of Native Title determinations in Western Australia (assessing rights and interests in an area of land and/or water according to traditional Aboriginal laws and customs) is also important when identifying Country for tourism business. Native Title determinations fall under six broad regions.

1. KIMBERLEY REGION
2. PILBARA REGION
3. GERALDTON REGION
4. CENTRAL DESERT REGION
5. GOLDFIELDS REGION
6. SOUTH WEST REGION

The combined area of registered claims and determined Native Title covers about 86 percent of Western Australia's land mass, with some also covering intertidal zones and sea areas.[4]

It is important to note that sometimes it may be difficult to find out what Country and/or what First Peoples to acknowledge and pay respects to (e.g. if there are multiple Native Title determinations or debate in Aboriginal communities). In this case it is important you still acknowledge Country, and it is recommended you broadly acknowledge the First Peoples of the Country you are on. You may also like to extend your respect to all Aboriginal people with you in the meeting/location etc.

TOURISM TIP

Click **here** to find more information about Native Title determinations by region.

4 | Native Title Claims in Western Australia (at September 2019) - www.wa.gov.au

STEPS TO FIND OUT WHAT AND WHOSE COUNTRY YOU ARE ON

Identifying, or confirming Country and language groups isn't always a straightforward process, especially in some regional and remote areas of WA, so follow the steps below to assist you with your research.

1. Find your local/regional Aboriginal Corporation or Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) *Also known as a Registered Native Title Body Corporate.

2. Search the web for your local Shire or Council website. Often an Acknowledgement of Country and its People (or language group) are on the site. This is generally found on the home page.

3. Verify the status of any Native Title determinations on Country via 'Native Title Vision' — a free online visualisation, mapping, and query tool from the National Native Title Tribunal via the following steps:
   a) Access the **Native Title Vision portal**
   b) Select the Western Australia Map
   c) Type the place or name in the search box
   d) The status of any Native Title determinations in the area will pop up with links to further information.

OTHER VISUAL RESOURCES TO IDENTIFY COUNTRY

AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia

VIEW HERE

WAITOC Cultural Languages Map

VIEW HERE

TOURISM TIP

There are over 70 PBCs in Western Australia. Click **here** for more info.

WHAT DO I DO ONCE I KNOW WHAT AND WHOSE COUNTRY I AM ON?

It is important to have a clear understanding of Country and the appropriate language group prior to embarking on:

a) An Acknowledgement of Country for your business (written, spoken, or performed) by any person (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal);

b) A Welcome to Country (written, spoken, or performed) by an authorised Aboriginal person; or

c) Direct engagement with an Aboriginal person, business, organisation, community etc. to discuss tourism business interests on Country.

READ ON FOR FURTHER CLARIFICATION.

IDENTIFY COUNTRY AND RESPECTFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE

- Identifying whose Country you are on, the appropriate person who speaks for that Country, business, or community, and clearly explaining the reason for your meeting request prior to arrival is a great first step to planning a courteous engagement.
- Ensure a respectful acknowledgement is conducted upon arrival, for example, introducing yourself to and acknowledging an Aboriginal person, or starting with a statement.
- When establishing business relationships, be mindful that Aboriginal people, men, women or culturally authorised knowledge holders for example, may possess different responsibilities, protocols, obligations, or authority to share information or make decisions.

EXAMPLE

"I'd like to begin by acknowledging the original people of the land on which we meet today, the <insert people> of the <insert Nation> Nation and pay my respect to their families, Country and culture".

CAN I PERFORM A WELCOME TO COUNTRY?

A Welcome to Country can only be performed by an Aboriginal person with cultural authority from the community in which you are meeting.

- Historically, a Welcome to Country Ceremony offered safe passage and protection to visitors who were granted permission to journey through the Country of another Aboriginal group. It is a custom still observed today, however, as Aboriginal culture differs from place to place, practices will vary across different language groups and may include lore practices and/or contemporary gestures.
- As a mark of respect to the local Aboriginal people and their Ancestors, a Welcome to Country may be performed at the beginning of an important event that brings members of the community, visitors, government and/or corporate delegates together on Country. Examples of these occasions may include events such as conferences, major sporting or entertainment events, community events, or even a new business launch.
- A Welcome to Country is an opportunity for an authorised Aboriginal community member to welcome attendees to their Country and offer their blessings to the event's proceedings. The Ceremony may be performed live or pre-recorded with permission required from the appropriate Aboriginal community representative.

As with any commercial engagement and sharing of Aboriginal cultural intellectual property, the delivery of a Welcome to Country will attract a fee for service.

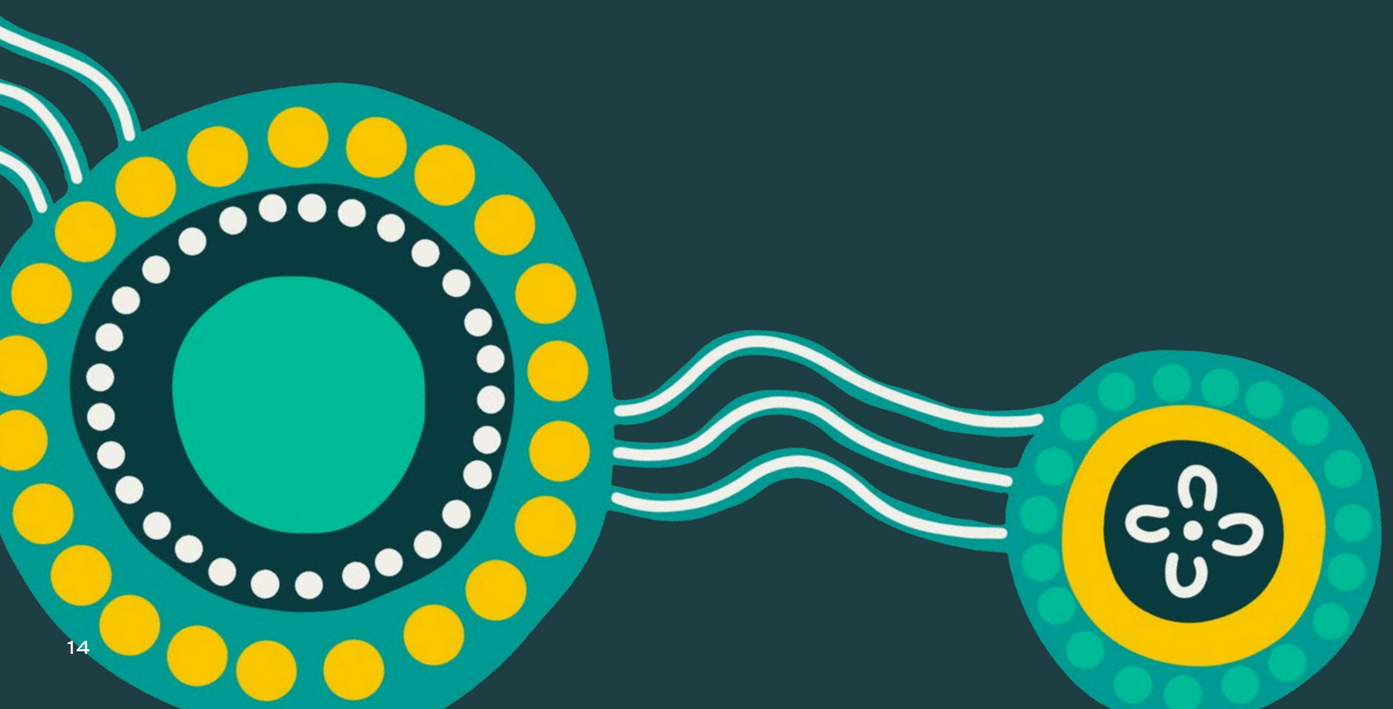
CAN I PERFORM AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY?

An Acknowledgement of Country can be offered by any person (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal)

- Like a Welcome to Country, but available for anyone (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal) to perform, an Acknowledgement of Country is given at the beginning of a meeting, speech, or event. It presents an opportunity to show respect for Aboriginal people and their continuing connection to Country, culture, family, and community.
- A written Acknowledgement of Country can be expressed on behalf of a business or organisation in different forms of communications such as email signatures, websites, and other publications.

EXAMPLE

" <insert Business Name> acknowledges the original people of the land on which we work and live, the <insert people> of the <insert Nation> Nation and pay my/our respect to their families, communities, Country and culture".



CAN I PERSONALISE AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY?

Yes!

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1. Do your research regarding Country and the Traditional Owners of that Country.
2. Think about:
   - What is special to you about this Country and/or your favourite local places?
   - Who lives in those places? Think about the rich biodiversity, including animals and plants you connect to.
   - Who cared for these places and sustained them for thousands of years?
3. Personalise your Acknowledgement of Country with information above to make it more meaningful and genuine!

THINK ABOUT WHAT COUNTRY YOU ARE ON AND WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU.

TOURISM TIP

Find more advice and examples regarding Acknowledgement of Country at **National Indigenous Australians Agency** and **Reconciliation Australia**.

CAN I USE ABORIGINAL NAMING FOR LOCATIONS ON COUNTRY?

- As described by Tourism Australia, dual naming is when a confirmed Aboriginal name for a location or geographical feature sits alongside the English name for the place. It illustrates the custodianship that Aboriginal people have had over the Australian continent for tens of thousands of years and highlights areas of cultural significance. Uluru/Ayers Rock is perhaps Australia's most well-known national dual named place.
- The restoration of an Aboriginal name to be used officially provides recognition and assists in reawakening the language of that area.
- Use of official Aboriginal place naming as a mark of respect in a non-Aboriginal business is encouraged however whilst being inclusive of Aboriginal culture in your tourism business it is imperative consumers are not led to incorrectly believe you are an Aboriginal business.

There are more than 50 places that are dual named in Western Australia for example, Walyalup / Fremantle and Kinjarling / Albany.

TOURISM TIP

Click **here** for guidelines around the process of Aboriginal place naming and dual naming in Western Australia.

DO I NEED TO SEEK PERMISSION TO VISIT COUNTRY?

- When planning a visit to a regional or remote community or reserve, ensure permission is sought (in advance) to access this land from the appropriate authorised person. For some areas of Western Australia, an official entry permit may also be required, for example:

  AAPA Permits – Visitor and transit permits are required for entering communities and reserves managed by the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority (AAPA) and are issued by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.

- Permissions to take and share photographs, video or voice recordings of Aboriginal people and locations, or to take notes of activities or stories shared during a visit or meeting must also be sought (recorded or written).

It is not appropriate under any circumstance to remove objects such as rocks, shells, sand, or artefacts from sites of significance (e.g. sacred sites), or share culturally sensitive, secret, or sacred content such as imagery of sacred sites, details of ceremonies, or the retelling of traditional stories.

In general, remember that it is important to 'tread lightly' and 'leave no trace' on Country. There is no need to disturb ecosystems and take anything from the natural environment.

MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND IN ABORIGINAL CULTURAL INCLUSION GUIDE TWO: RESPECT.

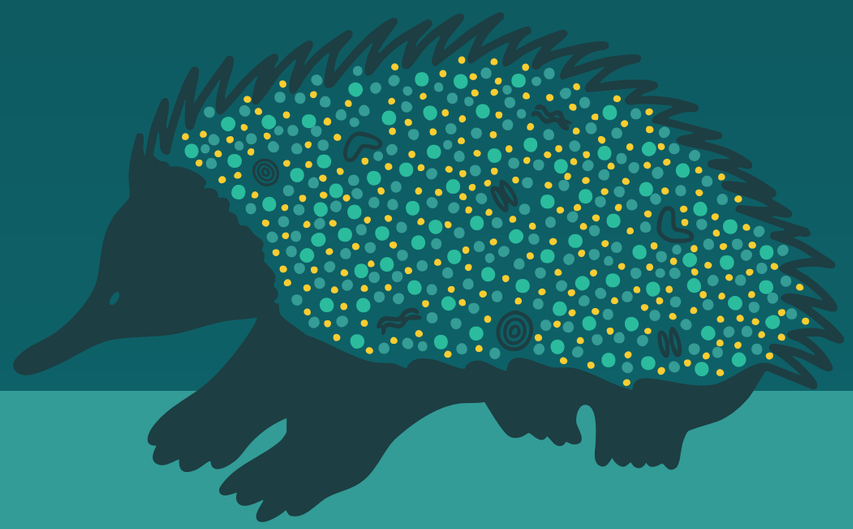
TOURISM TIP

Click **here** for more information on travel and access permits through Aboriginal land.

PLANNING TO OPERATE COMMERCIALLY IN A NATIONAL PARK OR CONSERVATION AREA?

If you have respectfully sought permission (as a courtesy to the relevant Aboriginal people or community) to commercially operate in a national park, marine park, nature reserve, state forest or conservation area managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), a Commercial Operations Licence will be required for activities such as:

- Vehicle tours;
- Guided walks;
- Boat tours and charters;
- Adventure operations (such as mountain biking, canoeing and rock climbing);
- Minor facilities and services (such as food vending); and
- Corporate or commercial training.

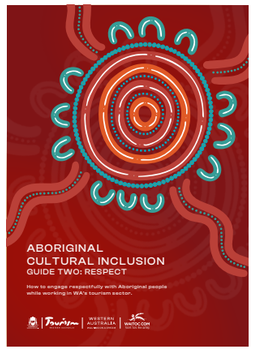


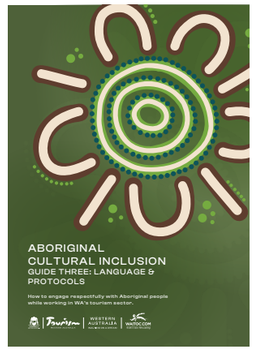
TOURISM TIP

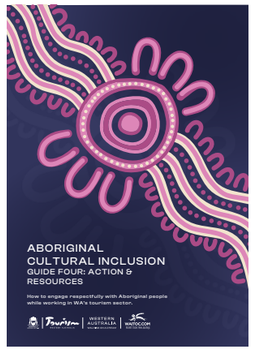
Click **here** for more information on licences and permits.

READ THE FULL ABORIGINAL CULTURAL INCLUSION GUIDES SERIES

How to engage respectfully with Aboriginal people while working in WA's tourism sector:







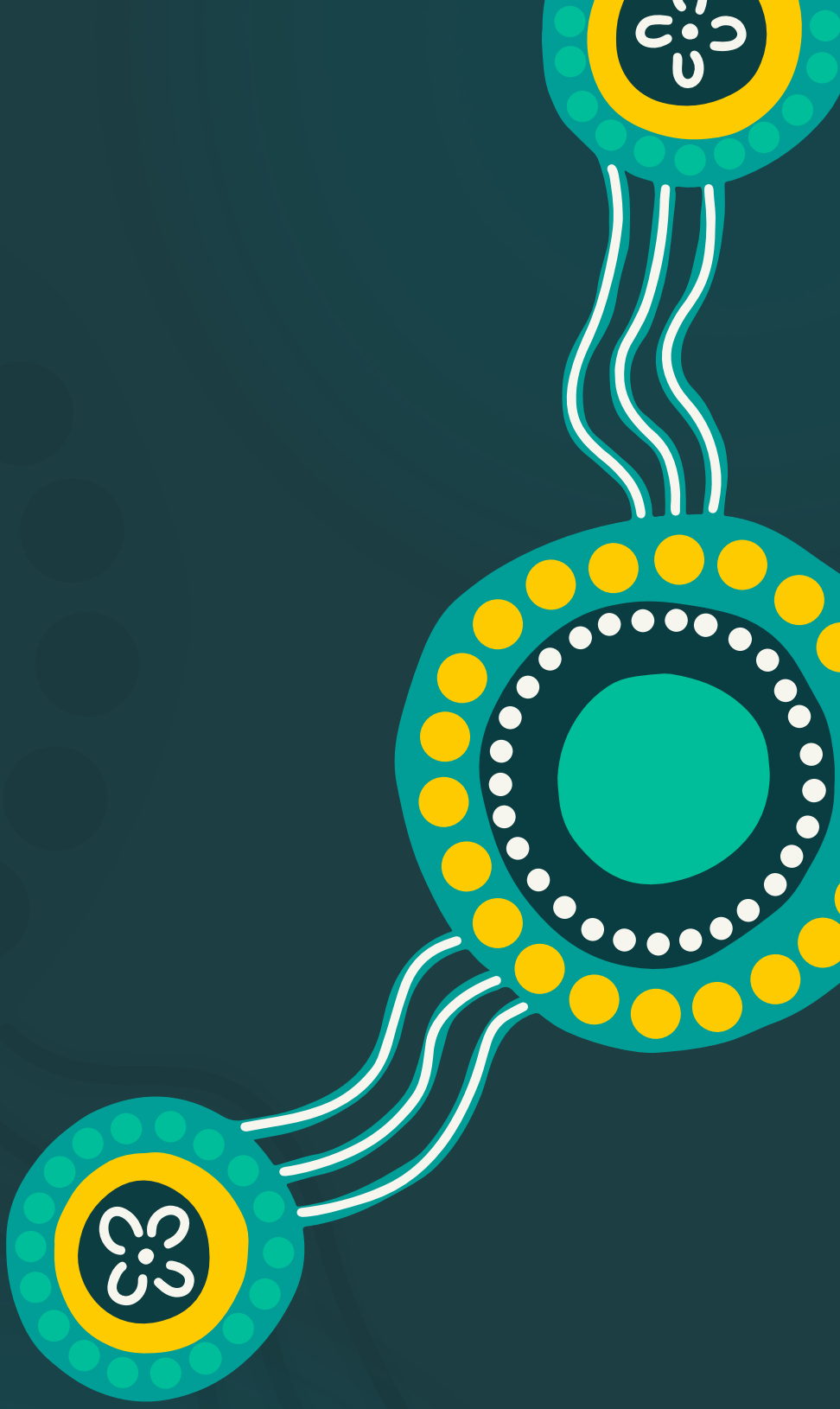
Access all four guides on the TCWA website.

CLICK HERE

WAITOC AND TCWA TRAINING PROGRAMS

Want to hear about the **WAITOC and TCWA Advanced Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion Training Programs**?
Please register your interest by emailing tcwa@tourismcouncilwa.com.au

CLICK HERE



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