

BRING TOGETHER WALK TOGETHER

The Traditional Owners of the Bindjareb Djilba (Peel-Harvey estuary) and the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (the department) have partnered for Bindjareb Noongar water perspectives. This strong partnership was forged through a commitment to meaningful engagement with Traditional Owners in the development of the [Bindjareb Djilba Peel-Harvey Estuary Protection Plan](#), an election commitment of the McGowan Government. In line with the National Water Quality Management Framework, it is important for the cultural and spiritual values of the Bindjareb Djilba to be embedded into the plan and that Bindjareb Noongar water perspectives are well represented.

The partnership has empowered Bindjareb Elders to develop their own overarching water plan, the Bindjareb Gabi Wonga, the Bindjareb water story. Bindjareb Elders developed their Yaakan (turtle) model for the plan based on cultural knowledge. Bindjareb Elders and the department have shared and threaded knowledge systems to bring together cultural knowledge and Western ways.

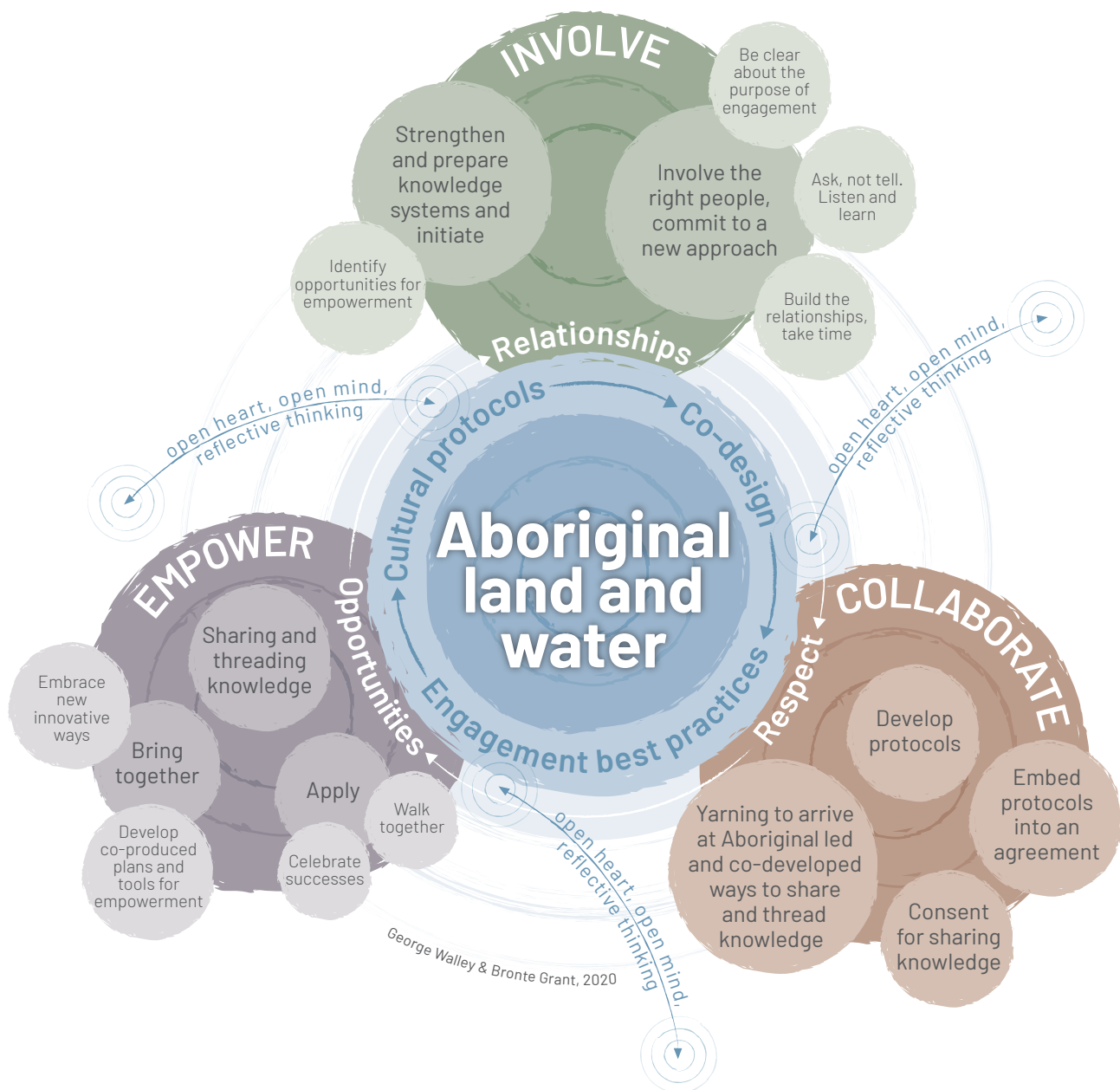
The Bindjareb Gabi Wonga is empowering Bindjareb people to share their vision, goals and priorities for water planning – for example, as an overarching plan, the Bindjareb Gabi Wonga has informed the Bindjareb Djilba Peel-Harvey Estuary Protection Plan, the Waterwise Perth Action Plan and the Water Quality Improvement Plan for the Peel-Harvey estuary.

This information sheet aims to provide explanatory notes to assist with the interpretation of the Bring Together Walk Together Aboriginal Partnership Framework for application. It is recommended that the [Our Knowledge Our Way in caring for Country Best Practice Guidelines](#) (CSIRO, 2020) are referenced to support the interpretation of the explanatory notes.



To yarn about the Bindjareb Gabi Wonga, please message Bindjareb Elders at bindjarebgabiwonga@gmail.com.

There has been interest in the way Bindjareb Elders and the department have approached partnership engagement. Together, the Elders and the department developed the Bring Together Walk Together Aboriginal Partnership Engagement Framework (Figure 1). This framework communicates a pathway to forge, build and maintain strong partnerships for Aboriginal land and water outcomes and has been endorsed by the department's Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group and is aligned with the Danjoo Koorliny Walking Together project.



THE FRAMEWORK

The Bring Together Walk Together Aboriginal Partnership Engagement Framework is a pathway to foster, build and maintain strong partnerships for Aboriginal land and water. This framework has application for Aboriginal-led policy and planning; participatory research; and major and minor projects. Bring Together Walk Together focuses on ensuring that business is done in a respectful way, with an open heart, open mind and the practice of reflective thinking to listen and learn from each other along the way. Empowerment is realised by being open to formulating and enacting on new ideas and innovative approaches to bring together and walk together for 'Aboriginal land and water', through sharing and threading knowledge in a respectful way. Threading has a directional lineal connotation and through this intends to safeguard the integrity of the knowledge systems, not to dilute or misrepresent important and sacred knowledge. Key elements of this approach are shown in the diagram by a series of circles and lines to represent cosmology, the elements are linked and ongoing, the relationship within and outside of the partnership's business is important and respected, and together is influential for empowerment. This pathway is not a construct that is concrete; the Bring Together Walk Together Aboriginal Partnership Engagement Framework provides a pathway to build on, adapt and evolve into a way of doing that is locally relevant and endorsed by Aboriginal partners.

The Our Knowledge Our Way in caring for Country published by CSIRO presents Indigenous-led approaches to strengthening and sharing Aboriginal knowledge for land and sea management. Its guidelines inform the application of the Bring Together Walk Together Aboriginal Partnership Engagement Framework and should be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes summary.



AT THE CENTRE

Aboriginal land and water

Water is intrinsically linked to the cultural and spiritual identity of Aboriginal people. The land and water forms an integral part of who Aboriginal people are – and they, in turn, form a part of the land and waters¹. Aboriginal people have a continuing life commitment and cultural responsibility to look after land and water. Land and water is central to the wellbeing² of Aboriginal people and our community.

The core

To achieve Aboriginal land and water outcomes, meaningful partnership engagement adopts an Aboriginal-driven process, within a framework of Aboriginal control and self-determination³. Core to the success of Aboriginal partnership engagement is **co-design**, respecting **cultural protocols** and **engagement best practices**. The partners uphold Reconciliation Australia's pillars of **Relationships, Respect and Opportunities**⁴ throughout the journey to arrive at a shared goal for Aboriginal land and water.

Co-design

Co-design principles enable an Aboriginal-driven process, within a framework of Aboriginal control and self-determination. Co-design is a dynamic and ongoing process, creating a space for empowerment and celebration. This approach is supported by the current Australian Government, with the [National Indigenous Australians Agency \(NIAA\)](#) established on 01 July 2019 as an executive agency under the Minister Hon Ken Wyatt's portfolio, making a new era of co-design and partnership.

Principles for strong partnerships

- Partners should commit to ethical research protocols and agreements to create transparency, ensure mutual benefit, and protect Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP)
- Strong corporate and cultural governance arrangements are a foundation for protocols and agreements that enable transparency, ensure mutual benefit and protect ICIP
- Good partners understand the importance of time in enabling proper decision-making and building trust, foundations for respectful working relationships
- Indigenous-led partnerships hold mutual benefits for knowledge-sharing



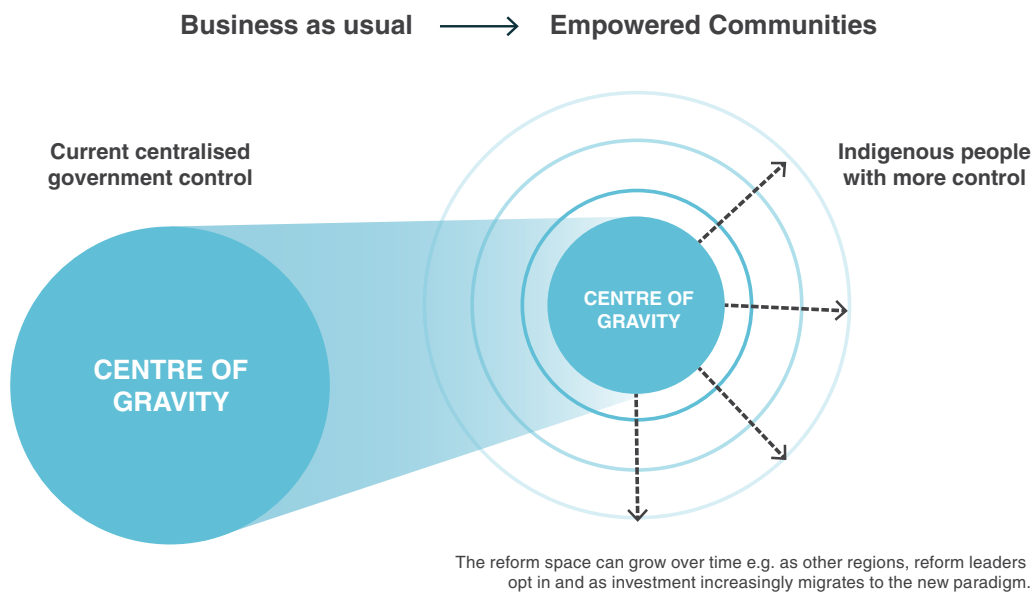


Figure 2.3: A Paradigm Shift is required, Empowered Communities: Empowered Peoples Design Report 2015, pg. 31.

The new era of co-design and partnership requires a paradigm shift from 'business as usual' in engaging with Aboriginal people. Co-design to create a space for partnerships and empowerment will be a different role, a different skill set and a different way of operating for most project managers, and new skills will need to be learned.¹⁰

Co-design is a relatively new concept for Aboriginal communities, so it is necessary to invest time and resources in building an understanding.⁵

Cultural protocols

Cultural protocols refer to the customs, lores and practices of a cultural group. Aboriginal cultural protocols differ between country (regions) and language groups: it is important to recognise and respect the cultural protocols specific to the Traditional Owners engaged in the partnership. Cultural protocol guidelines⁶ are a good starting point in recognising and respecting cultural protocols. Partners collaborate to develop specific cultural protocols to build trust and respect, setting out the way partners will do business. The cultural protocols developed by the partners (that define customs, lores and practices, cultural intellectual property⁷, cultural safety and resourcing) are built into a partnership agreement.



Engagement best practices

Engagement best practices are embedded at the core of the framework to ensure a meaningful, quality and effective co-design engagement process. Engagement standards should be considered in the co-design of an engagement plan. The engagement plan is a working document that is regularly revised on shared reflection. Outputs of the engagement plan will support the development of protocols for the project agreement, the project agreement itself and the project plan. Best practices consider community engagement standards⁸:

1. The Involvement Standard – we will identify and involve the right people and adopt an Aboriginal-driven process (ask, not tell; listen and learn) within a framework of Aboriginal control and self-determination.
2. The Support Standard – we will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement.
3. The Planning Standard – we will agree on a shared goal, the purpose, scope, timelines of engagement, and ensure that our approach is flexible.
4. The Methods Standard – we will agree on the engagement tools to deliver project outcomes.
5. The Working Together Standard – we will develop protocols and an agreement to define how we will work together.
6. The Sharing Information Standard – we will share information in the spirit of collaboration, respecting cultural intellectual property, confidentiality and sensitivities.
7. The Working with Others Standard – we will work with others and encourage stewardship.
8. The Improvement Standard – we will learn, actively developing our understanding, knowledge and skills.
9. The Feedback Standard – we will provide project updates for good communication and a final report.
10. The Monitoring and Evaluation Standard – we will measure and evaluate whether the engagement meets its purpose and delivers Aboriginal land and water outputs/outcomes.

THE PATHWAY

The journey of Bring Together Walk Together takes steps to Involve, Collaborate and Empower in the engagement spectrum⁹ and the process is a continuum, with the partners upholding the core principles in the journey and committing to an open heart, open mind and the practice of reflective thinking along the way.

Before initiating a partnership, it is important to **strengthen and prepare knowledge systems**. [Our Knowledge Our Way in caring for Country](#) presents Indigenous-led approaches to **strengthening and sharing Aboriginal knowledge** for land and sea management. It provides a guide for keeping cultural knowledge strong and supports the Bring Together Walk Together framework.

www.csiro.au/en/Research/LWF/Areas/Pathways/Sustainable-Indigenous/Our-Knowledge-Our-Way

For a strong partnership built on trust and respect, people involved in the partnership must be culturally aware. Professional development is highly recommended as cultural awareness is essential to arrive at a mutual understanding. Cultural awareness must address decolonisation, a conscious effort to prioritise and practise Indigenous culture and values over dominant interests¹². Aboriginal culture and lore is diverse: read articles, attend events and local cultural awareness training opportunities and other forums to gain better understanding of the Aboriginal culture in the local area. Seek out a respected person in your community working with local Aboriginal people, ask for their guidance and support in your learning journey.

Identify the Traditional Owners of country as shown on the National Native Title Tribunal maps for claimant applications and determination. Be aware that claim boundaries may include more than one Traditional Owner group. Understand statutory responsibilities under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and the *Native Title Act 1993*. Have cultural protocols for the Traditional Owner group you are working with been published as their preferred way of doing business? Conduct ethical research into Aboriginal land and water literature for the project area, being mindful Aboriginal knowledge is cultural intellectual property and must be respected. What projects have the Traditional Owners partnered in? From background research, identify partnership opportunities. Ensure the opportunities align with organisational priorities. The opportunities must be realistic and expectations managed: false promises will undermine trust and respect.



INVOLVE

Start the conversation with key people in the community that have built strong and respected relationships with Traditional Owners. Introduce your project to them. Seek their advice, guidance and support as a mentor for the engagement you are about to embark on.

Involve the right people

It is very important to involve the right people early (at the beginning) – this is cultural protocol and is central to achieving Aboriginal land and water outcomes. Be introduced to the right people by someone in your community who has a strong and respected relationship with the group. Introduce yourself and say where you are from. Be genuine, culturally safe and respectful in the way you do business (be guided by your mentor) and always ask, not tell, listen and learn.

Commit to a new approach

Be clear about the purpose of engagement and commit to a new approach, an opportunity to empower a partnership for Aboriginal land and water. Present realistic opportunities and manage expectations. It is respectful to pay Traditional Owners for their cultural services as land and water professionals.

Build relationships, remember to **take time** in the conversation. **Ask, not tell. Listen and learn.** Ask if you can meet with the Traditional Owners to yarn more about the project, ask what suits best (where, when, how). It may take a number of meetings with the right people before Traditional Owners decide to explore establishing a partnership to work towards a shared vision: this is about building trust and respect. Be mindful that leaders of the Aboriginal community are often involved in multiple projects and can be overcommitted. Ask (not tell) what Aboriginal people's priorities and needs are to participate as an equal partner to lead the journey. *Our Knowledge Our Way* provides guidelines and case studies for Indigenous-led approaches to strengthening and sharing Aboriginal knowledge for land and sea management.

COLLABORATE

Yarning

The power of yarning and the power in yarning. Yarning builds respectful relationships. Fruitful yarning enables co-design and collaboration. Yarning to arrive at a shared vision. Yarning to formulate Aboriginal-led and co-developed ways to share and thread knowledge. To foster yarning, be guided by the information sheet [*Communicating effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*](#).

Sharing stories and ideas, and building a narrative to embrace new innovative ways

In yarning, stories and ideas will be shared and a narrative will be built for the partnership. Stories and ideas are cultural knowledge. Cultural knowledge is the cultural intellectual property⁵ of the Traditional Owners. An agreement of how cultural knowledge is captured, stored and shared must be addressed early in the partnership, consent for sharing knowledge is a requirement (*Our Knowledge Our Way*, CSIRO, pg. 4).

Yarning is organic. At the heart of yarning and effective co-design (pg. 2) is the practice of open heart, open mind and regular and ongoing joint reflection and reciprocal learning³ for knowledge sharing and co-production. Taking time to arrive at a shared understanding, to reflect, evaluate and celebrate the successes along the journey, strengthens the partnership and creates space for empowerment.

Through yarning, develop specific **cultural protocols** (pg. 3) to build trust and respect, setting out the way partners will do business. **Embed protocols into a partnership agreement**, a memorandum of understanding or similar, to underpin the partnership. The agreement is a narrative to state the shared goal, purpose and scope of the partnership, clearly defining what each party can bring to the partnership, and the rules for doing business together, including **consent for sharing knowledge**.

Consent for sharing knowledge

Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is critical to the sharing of knowledge. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and many other international and national laws and policies, recognise FPIC as the best-practice approach to engaging with Indigenous knowledge.

FPIC requires that individuals and groups are provided with sufficient accessible information to enable full consideration of the risks and benefits of a proposed project, before they make a decision about whether or not to consent to that proposal. Partners should ensure that their project budgets accommodate payment of interpreters where appropriate, to ensure Indigenous partners are adequately informed before giving consent. The requirement for consent entitles Indigenous Peoples to determine the outcome of decision-making that affects them.

Co-develop ways to share and thread knowledge (*Our Knowledge Our Way* case studies) through yarning (from small meetings, to one-on-one yarns, working towards co-design workshops in a culturally safe space) to arrive at a shared goal, purpose and scope of the partnership.





EMPOWER THROUGH SHARING AND THREADING KNOWLEDGE

With an agreement in place and a narrative forming to share and thread knowledge, the partnership presents opportunities to look after Aboriginal land and water. Upholding the core principles of the framework, in equal partnership, partners bring together and walk together, with an open heart, open mind and reflective thinking, to develop co-produced plans and tools for empowerment.

Stories and ideas shared in yarning will share and strengthen knowledge systems and contribute to the **development of the co-produced plans and tools. New innovative ways** of doing business will be formulated if there is active commitment by partners to reach a mutual understanding, to **bring together** Aboriginal perspectives and the Western way. To create the interface for sharing and strengthening knowledge, the practice of an open heart, open mind and ongoing joint reflection and reciprocal learning is pivotal for the partners to achieve a shared goal. This practice monitors the effectiveness of engagement against the core principles of the framework and the project itself.

This is a new era of co-design and partnerships for Aboriginal engagement, embracing new innovative ways. Along the way in **walking together**, it is important to **celebrate successes** to keep the partnership strong. In reporting and communicating successes, partners will need to give thought to adapting outputs, products and services for a range of audiences⁵ in line with the core principles of the partnership.

Leaders in the Aboriginal community are often involved with multiple projects and initiatives. Links will be identified by Aboriginal community leaders. Along the way, the strong partnership will bring in and involve more people to **walk together**.

clear and constant communication

high community ownership **on country** co-produce

walk together sharing food **commit to a new approach**

opt-in principle deep listening **respect cultural protocols**

adaptive mutual responsibility equal partnership participatory

mutual capacity building regular joint reflection and reciprocal learning **take time**

Involve Aboriginal people early,
genuine from the beginning flexible

cultural awareness and safety **strong Aboriginal leadership**

art the power of yarning and the power in yarning **trust and respect**

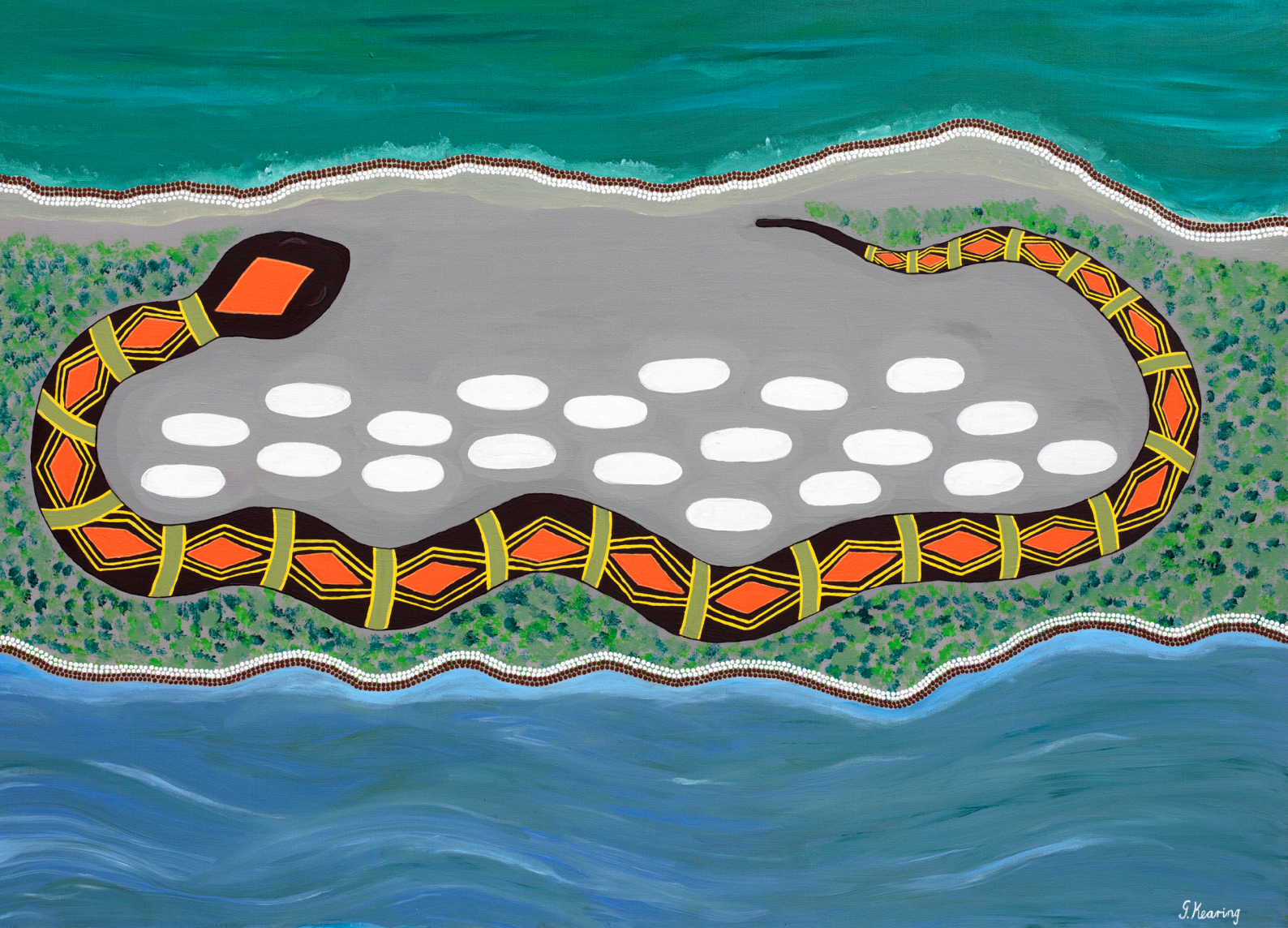
Cultural Intellectual Property resource appropriately (time and budget)

strong openness to understand and balance perspectives

an agreed way of doing business **listen** willingness to share information to collaborate

on-going commitment language

arrive at an interface to bring
together Aboriginal knowledge
and western ways



Bindjareb Gabi Wonga

Bindjareb Water Story

*Bindjareb Noongar baalap kaadadjan, Djilba Gabi ngalang
Gabi Wonga. Nyitting yey, nidja yey, benang yey, ngalang Gabi
Wonga boola moorditj. Nidja Wirrn Boodja Baalap kaadadjan,
doyntj-doyntj koorl wer Noongar Dandjoo, ngalang kaaleepga.
Ngalang Gabi waalang, ngalang wirrn waalang, ngalang
Noongar waalang, ngalang koort waalang, ngalang kaaleepga
waalang.*

Bindjareb Noongar people's cultural knowledge about our estuary is our water story. From the creation time to the present time, to the future, our water story is a very amazing and important story. The interconnectedness of Spirit, Land and People brings together our cosmology, our sense of place, our homeland. Our waterways health is connected with our own health and wellbeing.

To yarn about the
Bindjareb Gabi Wonga,
please message
Bindjareb Elders at
[bindjarebgabiwonga@
gmail.com](mailto:bindjarebgabiwonga@gmail.com).

Bindjareb Gabi Wonga

Bindjareb Water Story

The Bindjareb Noongar people have looked after the Djilba for 50,000 years based on governance and lore. Bindjareb Noongar people have a continuing life commitment and cultural responsibility to the preservation of the Djilba and Bilya. Bindjareb Gabi Wonga is our vision, management goals and actions to look after our waterways.

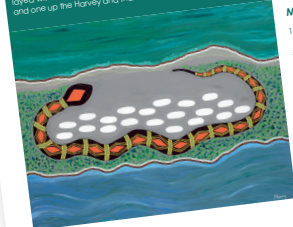
Wirin Spirit
Kaadadjan Cultural knowledge
Baalap People
Boodja Land

VISION: The unique and precious link between Spirit, the Djilba and people is preserved for future generations

How the Waters came to be

One day the Aboriginal people of the Mandurah area found there was no waterway, they went to the beach and danced and sung for the great Waugal to come. Then she came and started to make the Peel Inlet and the estuary, she found that she was carrying eggs and she rested in between the estuary and the sea until she laid them. This painting shows that she laid with her eggs to keep them safe. Then the eggs hatched and she sent her babies to do the rest of the work because she was tired. She sent one up the Serpentine, one up the Murray and one up the Harvey and that's how they came to be.

Aunty Gloria Kearing

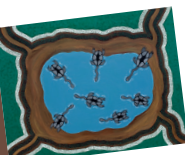


- Management Goal 1: Custodial responsibilities, spiritual and cultural knowledge is preserved.**
- 1.1 Work with Biders to develop an agreement for Aboriginal participation and partnering in waterways planning and management for Bindjareb boodja.
 - 1.2 Develop and implement a plan for Bindjareb Gabi Wonga (Bindjareb Noongar water perspectives) to communicate management and values, water objectives and actions for improved management of the Djilba.
 - 1.3 Embed Aboriginal values and traditional Lore into water planning and management.
 - 1.3.1 Review the legislative framework including State and Local Government policy, to implement measures to improve water quality and flows to preserve the cultural values of waterways.
 - 1.3.2 Introduce a mechanism in the Western Australian Planning Framework to enable Traditional Owners to fulfil their custodial responsibilities and influence waterways planning and management in Bindjareb boodja.
 - 1.3.3 Ensure that Aboriginal values, sites and cultural knowledge is preserved through provisions of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972.
 - 1.3.4 Support the development of joint management responsibility opportunities for Traditional Owners to partner in the management of waterways.

Yaakas

As children growing up around the South Yandup area one of our main sources of food was the long neck turtle. The painting shows that when the water starts drying up the turtles move into the centre and that's when they start burying themselves in the mud. We knew where they were in the swamp by the different colour sand on top.

Aunty Gloria Kearing



Management Goal 2: Traditional sites and food places for hunting and gathering are preserved.

- 2.1 Identify and protect cultural flows and water-dependent values of traditional sites and food places.
- 2.2 Support initiatives that build capacity for Bindjareb Noongar partnerships in water planning and management to preserve traditional sites and food places.
 - 2.2.1 Implement an Aboriginal Ranger Program for Bindjareb boodja to look after planning and management to preserve traditional sites and food places.
 - 2.2.2 Develop and implement the Bindjareb Waterways Assessment Program.
 - 2.2.3 Develop and implement waterways protection and restoration projects in partnership with Aboriginal people to improve the health of the Djilba and Bilya.
- 2.3 Continue to promote drainage reform to protect water quality, cultural flows and Bilya.
- 2.4 Continue to undertake waterway health and scientific investigations programs to water-dependent values.
- 2.5 Continue to undertake waterway health and scientific investigations programs to monitor the health of traditional sites and food places, the programs to include opportunity for Aboriginal participation, knowledge sharing, culture-embedded training and employment.
- 2.6 Continue to implement catchment management initiatives for water quality improvement of traditional sites and food places.
- 2.7 Implement statutory and non-statutory mechanisms to protect traditional sites and food places including extension of the Ramsar boundary of the Peel-Harvey System to encompass Black Lake, Gorgup Lake and Lake Amallo of the Serpentine River.

"Take your shoes off and feel country"

Acknowledgement of the cultural knowledge holders that contributed to the Bindjareb Gabi Wonga. Rick Ugle, George Walley. You are invited to share your ideas for action to look after our Djilba and Bilya.

Daabal Delta

This is on the border of the estuary and how the Murray River comes into it and all the creeks that run into the river. The Delta would have been all the beautiful colours of our river all the beautiful colours of our river. I can see all the lines, usually I do to show the pathways of the people and how they walked (people and how they walked) way around there, but as I was thought about it's not like that. They have taken all our pathways. The lines and shadows form us. The lines and shadows where all the people has built houses next to the waterway.

Aunty Gloria Kearing

Management Goal 3: The turtle is respected

- 3.1 Respect and promote wellbeing of our culture.
- 3.2 Enable Aboriginal wellbeing.
- 3.3 Strengthen and develop Aboriginal Culture.
- 3.4 Develop Bindjareb cultural significance.
- 3.5 Implement the Aboriginal management.
- 3.6 Create and through culture.

The Bindjareb Noongar people have looked after the Bindjareb Djilba (Peel-Harvey estuary) for 50,000 years based on governance and lore. Bindjareb Noongar people have a continuing life commitment and cultural responsibility to the preservation of the Djilba (estuary) and Bilya (rivers).

"Take your shoes off and feel country" Franklyn Nannup

Bindjareb Gabi Wonga

Bindjareb Water Story

Wirin Spirit
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VISION: The unique and precious link between Spirit, the Djilba and people is preserved for future generations

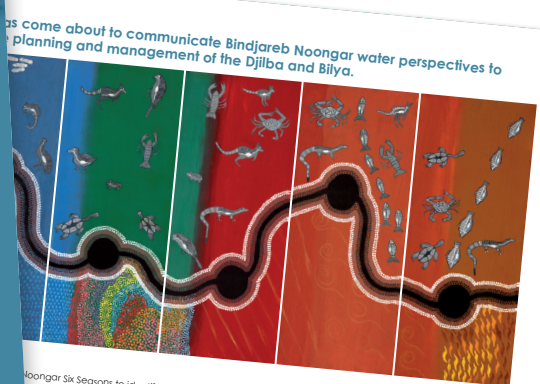
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Bindjareb Noongar six seasons to identify and associate the changing seasons, the food resources and the name for estuary, is one of the Noongar people's six seasons and runs between August and September.

"Take your shoes off and feel country"

Acknowledgement of the cultural knowledge holders that contributed to the Bindjareb Gabi Wonga. Aunty Gloria Kearing, Franklyn Nannup, Aunty Jane Nannup, Rick Ugle, George Walley. You are invited to share your ideas for action to look after our Djilba and Bilya at bindjarebgabiwonga@gmail.com



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