“...In the present time, Nyungar people are citizens of their country and many have promoted their culture through the medium of tourism (CALM 1998; pers. comm. Mann 2002; WAITOC 2002, 2003).

Ten Nyungar Case Studies
Sandra Harben and Len Collard
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Len Collard
NYUNGAR TOURISM WORKSHOP 2003

The first meeting held in 2003 to discuss the Nyungar Research Project (ARC) with both Nyungar and non-Nyungar participants involved in tourism in Western Australia.

(Photo by Sandra Harben. Left to right: Karen Jacobs (Kwillana Dreaming), Steve Crawford (West Australian Tourism Commission), Angelique Fransen (Western Australian Indigenous Tourist Operators Committee), Len Collard (Murdoch University) and Dale Tilbrook (Maali Mia))
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**A NYUNGAR VISION FOR NYUNGAR TOURISM IN THE FUTURE?**

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NYUNGAR TOURISM IN THE SOUTH WEST REGION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA: TEN NYUNGAR CASE STUDIES.

For thousands of years Nyungar people have lived in the southwest of Western Australia in Nyungar boodjar or country. The Nyungar belief system stems from Nyungar cosmology, the Nyungar Rainbow Serpent or Creator the “Waakle”. Whadjuck/Balardong Len Collard (2000, pp.2-4) tells of how “the Waakal came out of the earth. Sometimes it went kardup boodjar or under the earth and sometimes it went yirra boodjar or over the earth and it made bilya the rivers, the kaart the hills and ngamar or the waterholes”. Nyungar theorised the Waakle created the Derbal Yirragan, now known as the Perth waters of Swan River which means, “where the estuary is filled up to by the winding river” (Kickett 1995, p.4). It also made all the other waterways in Nyungar boodjar. The late “Keeper of the Stories” Balardong/Whadjuck Ralph Winmar, reinforced the Waakal theme in his story when he said, “At York, you can see where the Warkal [sic] (water snake) left a track when he came over the hill. The Warkal [sic] is the giver of life, he made the rivers, swamps, lakes and waterholes, he maintains the fresh water sources.” (Winmar 1996, p.21).

These Waakal theories as stories are real to Nyungar. If one were to look at Derbal Yirragan or Perth waters of the Swan River from the top of Geenunginy Bo Kaart or ‘the hill to see far’ also known as Mt Eliza or Kings Park, one could visualise this huge Waakal twisting and turning as it made its way to the coast at Walyalup or Fremantle. Author and poet the late Dr Jack Davis, a northwest Aboriginal man who spent most of his life in Nyungar boodjar, wrote the play Kullark in 1982. The audience heard Dr Davis’s version of the local Whadjuck boordier or leader Yagan’s ceremonial chant that could be heard loud and strong as he pays tribute to the Warrgul [sic] for creating the Nyungar universe:

Woolah!
You came, Warrgul,
With a flash of fire and a thunder roar, and
As you came, you flung the earth up to the sky,
You formed the mountain ranges and the undulating plains.
You made a home for me
On Kargattup and Karta Koomba,
You made the beeyol beeyol, the wide clear river,
As you travelled onward to the sea.
And as you went into the sunset,
Two rocks you left to mark your passing,
To tell of your returning
And our affinity (Snell 1988, p.16).

Whether you are a visitor from another part of the state, interstate or from another country, visiting a Nyungar tourism venture and learning about Nyungar heritage and culture is indeed a unique experience. There are a number of Nyungar tourism operators that allow visitors to experience Nyungar culture and listen to Cultural Tour Guides and Cultural Custodians pass on our histories and stories. From the following case studies you will see how these Nyungar tourism operators provide an authentic unique experience through their cultural interpretive tours, bush walks, educational tours and tool making activities. These Indigenous Tourism Operators will also show you westernised products such as CD’s, tapes, bookmarks, books, glassware, pottery and t-shirts that have logo’s or motif designs reflecting a Nyungar influence. If the visitor is interested in experiencing adventure tours in a four wheel drive these are available through some of the Nyungar Tourism Operators. However, if whale watching or dolphin watching and visiting our magnificent pristine beaches are more to your taste then you can experience this with either Kepa Kurl, the Wardan Cultural Centre or Kwillana Dreaming.

Nyungar tourism operators impart Nyungar knowledges that respect and reinforce Nyungar cultural heritage. They are committed to protecting Nyungar cultural authenticity and integrity through developing sound business practices so they can offer the tourist that unique Nyungar experience in Nyungar boodjar or the southwest lands of Western Australia.
WHAT IS TOURISM?

“Tourism is about people who come and visit different cultures and to learn about those cultures”. (Nyungar tourist operator, 2004)

Many case study respondents stated that tourism is widely encompassing. For example, several said that tourism is an opportunity for local, interstate and international people to travel to different places and have an experience. That experience could range from simply talking to a local person about the history of the place, visiting the local sights and scenery, visiting historic buildings, participating in a local festival or joining a tour group that offers a range of other activities. Tourism is also seen as payment for services rendered, whether that service is of a cultural nature, entertainment, artistic or even a bed and breakfast. It can also be seen as when someone is invited into your world and share that world with them and they pay you to do this.

Operators from Kodja Place say that Nyungar tourism, particularly in areas where there are no natural attractions like here in Kojonup, is telling Nyungar stories and life experiences is essential for our Nyungar tourism. Nyungar tourism is also about respecting cultural beliefs and customs and by making sure the visitor understands that this is fundamental to business. For example, there are cultural obligations to attend to and the site is not open when the visitors come, we don’t have to apologise because “that is our culture”. We need to make sure that the visitors have this information before they come so it won’t be such a let down for them. We haven’t advertised our cultural obligations but are going to put this on our brochures in the near future. Operators from Kodja Place also said “Tourism is also about being in a business where you have to be 100% committed because it is about a lifestyle change and is a huge thing to deal with so tourism is about being totally committed”.

One respondent said tourism was about opportunities to “showcase culture, showing other people how we live, what we eat, what people do, it is an opportunity to promote understanding between different peoples”. Another said, “Tourism is about people who come and visit different cultures and to learn about those cultures”. The prominent international dance group Middar says that tourism is “a paying guest or paying visitor. Tourism is a business where
people are paying for an experience. A guest is actually invited into a country and is looked after. A visitor is also someone who frequents a place, they don’t actually live there, they know of it and they go in and out”. Another case study participant suggests that “tourism is really a paid experience that is delivered by people on the ground to those who want to have that particular experience”. Finally, Dr Reynolds of Kepa Kurl tells us that “tourism is about showing people something that they like to see, like here in Esperance, it is an opportunity to give the tourist an anthropological and ethnographical history of our country”.

The Nyungar Tourism Operators gave an array of definitions for “what is tourism”. However, all of the participants agreed that tourism is essentially “when someone comes to see something in your part of the country and they pay for that experience”.

WHAT IS NYUNGAR TOURISM?

“... anything that takes place in Nyungar country is Nyungar tourism. So all tourism in Nyungar country, can be categorised as Nyungar tourism.”
(Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm. 2004)

The ten case study participants were asked to offer their interpretation of Nyungar tourism. Some of the Operators said that Nyungar tourism offers the inbound tourists and the local tourism market an opportunity to see and meet Nyungar people and to learn about Nyungar culture and lifestyle. Tourists want to participate in the different types of activities that Nyungar people offer whether it is a bush walk, looking for bush foods, boomerang throwing, making a damper or a fire, learning about bush medicine plants or how traditional Nyungar artefacts such as the meero the spear thrower, kylie the boomerang, koitch the axe or kitj the spear are crafted. Nyungar tourism gives the tourist a Nyungar experience, an opportunity to interact with a Nyungar person who can tell them about our own culture, history and stories. The inbound tourists who come to Nyungar country want a Nyungar experience and they want to see it being done by a Nyungar person.

It was also suggested that it is culturally appropriate for Indigenous people to be working in Indigenous tourism as tour guides who can interact with the visitor and talk about Indigenous culture. Many of the respondents believed that it was culturally inappropriate for non-
Indigenous tourist operators to offer Australian Indigenous history and experiences to the tourist. They reasoned that Indigenous tourism and Indigenous tour guides give tourists the satisfaction of knowing that they have spoken to an Aboriginal person and that the stories about Indigenous culture and history is then “authentic”.

Another respondent also said that Nyungar tourism gives the tourist a unique opportunity to have an experience with an Indigenous person at one on one level. It is going to be an uninhibited experience rather than a commercial or plastic experience – it is going to be a real experience, they will see the bush, smell the bush, feel the bush and touch things, make a fire, throw a spear. This is a “real Indigenous experience and seeing Indigenous culture on a television, that’s not quite real but actually doing it, now that’s a real firsthand Indigenous experience”.

Some of the respondents stated that Nyungar tourism offers unique authentic experiences. Another case study participant said that culture and the environment is the main target for tourism development, in other words the Nyungar relationship with land as well. It was also suggested that Nyungar tourism is about creating a place where Nyungar culture, cultural knowledge and cultural history can be kept in centres like the Wardan Centre, Kodja Place, Southern Aboriginal Corporation, Yirra Kurl, Moore River and Maali Mia. It is all there, Nyungar history, culture and experiences. A tourist may come along and ask a difficult question about something and it is not good if you have not housed all this culture and knowledge in the one place. This can be done by gathering together as much of our Nyungar intellectual knowledge as possible, then we can answer all the questions the tourists ask us.

The same respondent suggested however, that Nyungar tourism is also an opportunity to tell our history “how it is through our eyes and through our oral histories. Some of our history is missing or has been left out because of colonisation. Our elders were told not to talk in our Nyungar language, not to tell our stories – they were made to be “shame”. It is also important to remember that some Nyungar history has been recorded through “Wedjela” or whitefulla accounts of the past, so not all of what we know or read about is going to be right - “we tell the tourist this and try to put at least some things right about our culture as well as fill in the missing gaps”. The same respondent stated that another important reason why the tourist comes to visit us; “they want that interaction with an Indigenous or Nyungar person so we have to feel
very confident about giving them the best answer we possibly can when they ask us a question about our own culture and history”.

Another respondent said that Nyungar tourism is about “letting people experience the Nyungar way of life and our history with other people”. This respondent said that Nyungar tourism can be put down to one word “respect”. We all need to be respected for what we believe in and that you cannot have respect unless it is vice versa. So Nyungar tourism is about giving our visitors the opportunity to get a clear understanding of the Nyungar culture so they will be able to give the respect that is required. If we don’t share our knowledge and culture then their ignorance continues to flourish. If you can stop this ignorance by showing people and telling people about your culture then you will be able to get the respect. He also said that Nyungar tourism, particularly in areas where you haven’t got the natural attractions like some other regions in Western Australia, telling Nyungar stories and Nyungar sharing their life experiences with the visitor is essential for our Nyungar tourism.

One of the case study participants said that Nyungar have always been engaged in tourism right back well before settlement. Tourism took place before the settlers actually came to this country. The tourism between our people and people from other nations is well documented. Our people went as far as Uluru and the centre of Australia and those people from there came back as well.

Travelling was a big part of ceremony and a big part of tourism in those days as well. People going to ceremony would be going on business but when it wasn’t ceremony time those people would still go and visit other areas and then when they would come for a visit they would bring with them gifts and exchange. The different groups would bring stones and ochres and all sorts of different things from their country that didn’t exist in Nyungar country and that is a form of “paying their way” which puts them into the category of tourism. So tourism in Nyungar country is very very old, thousands of years old. Nyungar are nothing new into this business of tourism, they are very old in the business of tourism they are just new in the western articulation and operation of tourism.
Nyungar tourism comes into two categories.

1. There is tourism that is conducted by Nyungar people and giving the tourist an experience that is uniquely Nyungar or

2. A combination of Nyungar and the modern western advantage that they have. For example tourism might be showing the visitor about the waters or the rivers or taking them on a cruise boat or taking them for a walk out on the jetty which is a “Wedjela” or whitefulla thing. But the essence and the philosophy behind the tourism experience is still Nyungar tourism.

3. The other thing is that anything that takes place in Nyungar country is Nyungar tourism whether the whitefulla’s like it or not. The reality is that this is Nyungar country and whoever is showing people a prominent tourist place, whether it be in Fremantle, Kings Park, Bunbury or Wave Rock at Hyden, this is all Nyungar country. Even if it is run by a whitefulla it is still Nyungar tourism. So all tourism in Nyungar country can be categorised as Nyungar tourism.

Whilst a variety of opinions were offered they all agreed that Indigenous people who are involved in Indigenous tourism gives the tourist “Indigenous authenticity” to the visitor’s experience.
WHY NYUNGAR ENGAGED IN THE TOURISM MEDIUM

Kwillana “Dolphin” Dreaming

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The business came out of an idea that was conceived with someone who was working in my current role and we were talking about the benefits of an Indigenous product in this region. (Karen Jacobs, pers. comm. 2004)

The Kwillana Dreaming tours was conceived in October 2000. Karen Jacobs tells us the Kwillina Dreaming story. “Because being such a small region there is a lot of different diversity amongst the tourism industry that Indigenous Operators could deliver here and for the five years previous to that I was trying to promote to the community the opportunities within Indigenous tourism. Something needed to happen or otherwise a non-Indigenous company or individual was going to commence a tourism operation and part of that operation would include Indigenous interpretation. They would reap the benefits from delivering Indigenous cultural heritage information, which in many cases where this occurs, is purely up to their interpretation and that really worries me, worries me about Aboriginal cultural interpretation across the country”.

“Nowadays things have changed quite a bit but that is probably one of my biggest fears. I never intentionally set out to set up my own business but I thought through some ideas with a couple of potential business partners and it took quite a bit to convince the other two that this was an opportunity that was going begging. Within a month and a half we actually met with a Project Officer from the Office of Aboriginal Economic Development who had worked on projects previously. It took us a couple of meetings to sell him the idea and once we sold him the idea and that we actually knew what we were doing and we knew what we needed to achieve and what our responsibilities were to achieve those issues he put in 110% support of
our project and somebody assisted us with a Business Plan and a Feasibility Plan and the funding to go through and write our Business Plan. That was a very long process it took us eighteen months to go through and achieve. The OAED provided the funding and the Project Officer employed with them put in the application to OAED to assist us with finance to go through and do those different studies to determine if there was a market and demand for Indigenous tourism”.

Wardan “Ocean” Cultural Centre

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“When we were gifted the land, which I saw as a kind of gesture towards reconciliation from a local American fellow living here in Wardandi country, we first offered it to other Nyungar Corporations but they said they were too busy”. (Bill Webb, pers. comm. 2004)

The Wardan Cultural Centre began in 1991. Bill Webb, Wardandi Nyungar and custodian of Wardandi knowledge tells us the story of Wardan. “In the early stages, ten years before 1991, the aspirations of my father and mother and few members of the family was “how do we house our culture, how do we keep the content of our culture alive, you know the history and the knowledge that my father and mother knew. I came out of the bush when I was 13 years old and lived in a humpy and I used to listen to these stories from my Grandfather’s and that as well. But with the ever moving, changing world of mechanisms, the kids don’t really sit around and listen to the stories nowadays. They are more inclined about playing Nintendo’s or doing other stuff like that. It takes the kids away from the real things, of them absorbing the stories about Nyungar culture”.
My mother and father said “we need some place, the Nyungar culture needs some place for the Wardandi Nyungar culture to survive. I think that through our Dreaming we knew something was going to happen sooner or later and this gift of land set us on the path to make sure that our history and knowledge was preserved. Hopefully through a Centre like this it will be preserved forever, or until white man comes along and changes all this things and chucks us off the land again. But over the thirteen years, I know that it was set on a three year plan until we had our doors open and then I realised we needed to put our plans into a three to five year plan. Then somebody came along and said “a new industry, business like this it will take you seven years to start functioning”.

“We were gifted the land where the Wardan Cultural Centre now stands. We had to put together our own Corporation, do the land transaction, get the land transferred because the land was given to us and was worth about $1.2 million. We could have used this as an equity base and gone to the bank and have the business up and running straight away. When we went to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission we believed ATSIC was supposed to equal it (whatever equity we had). We thought that was their policy but that turned out to be untrue and that started the long struggle. Some of the heartaches and problems that we had, “dealing with some of the ATSIC’s and the Department for Aboriginal Affairs throughout Australia. We know, and I’ll be fairly blunt because these things are suppressed. The budgets that go out towards Aboriginal people for products and businesses like ours, probably only about five percent of the whole federal budget get out to these sorts of places. So you see what I mean about a struggle, it’s a real struggle until we get to this certain stage.”
Maali Mia “Home of the Black Swan”

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Maali is the local Nyungar word for Black Swan and Mia meaning house, dwelling, camp or home. The Black Swan is important to the Nyungar people and is symbolic to the Swan River. (Dale Tilbrook, pers. comm. 2004)

Dale Tilbrook, Director of Maali Mia, “We have been doing the same type of business since 1996 however we just had a change of ownership and name change. We were originally making boomerangs as a commercial enterprise and this led us into opening our own retail outlet. I have to thank Ken Colbung for this. I was encouraged by Ken to create a business that promoted Nyungar culture and he had a particular interest in boomerangs”.

“So that is where it started. My background is in retail and marketing and I worked eight years in London and seven years in Perth in big retail organisations and I had no idea about transferring those skills into a business centred around culture. It was Ken who encouraged me to do that. He said, “you have got what it takes, you have to put your hand up and say, I am a Nyungar person doing this”. So he is my mentor and patron and obviously with his encouragement I became very receptive to the idea and it was just sow a few seeds and tell me how important it is to actually stand up and acknowledge myself as a Nyungar woman and do something. He was always on at me about “stand up and tell the world that you are a Nyungar woman doing this”. I was hesitant at first because I thought well “who cares” but after eight years of doing this I found out that a lot of people care and it is a really important thing to do. I am very happy tourism gave me an opportunity to get in touch with my Nyungar heritage after having drifted along knowing that I had a Nyungar heritage but knowing very little about it because you certainly did not learn about it at schools and you only picked up little bits from your family and no-one talked Aboriginal history when I was growing up”. 

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“People talked stories but no one got down to the nuts and bolts of our history. Our father was a Wardandi Nyungar and our mother was English. Being raised in the North, we didn't learn much about Nyungar culture or about our family. Reconnecting with our Nyungar roots has been a liberating experience for us. Learning about our family and culture has been an important part of this journey. My father's mother came from Busselton. Her maiden name was Sayers. I run this business with my younger brother Lyall. I was born in the Pilbara and Lyall in the Kimberley. “I was encouraged by Ken Colbung to create our original business of making returning boomerangs in 1996, and he has remained my mentor and inspiration. We have expanded since then to include other items and the retail side of the business”.

Maali Mia is an Aboriginal Cultural Centre which houses a Gallery, Gift Shop and Craftworks. Their new location is a purpose built dwelling which showcases paintings, artefacts, boomerangs, didgeridoos and a host of colourful gifts and collectables. Our selection includes a wide variety of framed and unframed Aboriginal art; hand decorated glassware, pottery and wooden gift items; carved and painted emu eggs; traditional and contemporary jewellery; postcards and prints; and Aboriginal and Australian music cassettes and CD's. The artists who contribute to the Gallery and Gift Shop come from many of the Indigenous language groups in Western Australia but there are also artists from the Northern Territory. These include Nyungar, Yamatji, Nunda, Wadjerri, Ngaanatjarra and Wongatha, the smaller items are mainly produced by our local Nyungar people, we are a cottage industry.

Prior to our recent move we were located at the historic West Swan Primary School in Henley Brook that was established in 1896. We were working out of the buildings on this site and now our workshop will remain where it is so we will work between the two locations.
Southern Aboriginal Corporation

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According to John Hayden the Southern Aboriginal Corporation is the largest Aboriginal representative and resource agency in the Kaatanyiny or ATSIC region, which comprises the south-western corner of Australia. Its field of operations covers sixteen towns from Bunbury in the west, Brookton and Pingelly in the north, Albany in the south and eastward across to Kondinin. This is an area of more than 120,000 square kilometres. About 5,500 Aboriginal people live in this area, many of them in the smaller country towns. Under its Constitution, SAC has two main objectives. These are to;

• Advance the social, economic, cultural and sporting development of Noongar people
• To represent Noongars on all issues that concern them.

“SAC has a strong and enduring commitment to the training and education of Noongars. It has been involved with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and other government departments in many training programs throughout the region.

One of the key things that came out of SAC opening our Art and Craft shop for the tourists, was the use of the local Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). Each town in the Lower Great Southern Region had to identify what they specifically wanted to do against five
criteria. For example, did they want to make spears, boomerangs, paint, do screen-printing and so on.

The Nyungar in Gnowangerup make boomerangs, Katanning Nyungar do paintings and some Nyungar do screen-printing and so we spread the business around. So what came out of that for these Nyungar then was where are we going to sell our stuff? Some towns are out of the way so we got some money so we could rent some premises here in Albany to house all of these pieces. We started up our Art and Craft retail store in 2002 in Stirling Street, Albany but we were not getting the flow of tourists, it was a little out of the way so we set it up where we are now. We have a small lease here so the location is better as people walk up and down here all day. As I said the tourists weren’t coming past so we changed location. One of the difficulties we knew we would face in the future was where would we get our products from because this was only a two year funded ATSIC program. With our interest in tourism we will be able to create employment opportunities for Noongar people and promote Noongar culture in a positive way”. (John Hayden, pers. comm. 2004)

Waljin “Rainbow” Consultancy

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“When we first thought about a tourism venture we identified where we wanted to set up and then train people to deliver the tours”
(Mitchella Hutchins, pers. comm. 2004)

Waljin Consultancy is a family business with a diversity of cultural products on offer to the visitor. Mitchella says “We had our products before we set up the business because we had already been doing promotional things on a small scale”. Because the demand was becoming more and more we got to the point where we thought, “make it a business it is either going to work or it is going to fail”. People said we were “mad” trying to run a business with three little
kids but basically I said well if you don’t have a go how you going to know so we did. We have had no financial assistance from anyone we use the money we generate from the business to promote the business. We did a five year business plan to give us a guideline so that we know that we are actually moving forward and not backward and with any business plan things can get altered because your vision gets bigger and better so we came to the end of the first business plan and reached all the objectives that we wanted to reach and so basically had to start again and we realized that we were going to have to get really big to meet the demand that is out there. We want to do promotional videos and all these other things but at the same time we want to keep it authentic. We have to keep that authenticity to our products.

We made sure that we “crawl, then walk, then run and not just get up and run and fall flat. The first thing we did with our business and marketing plan was to identify is there a niche out there, how much of a need, can we fulfil that need. We had a whole lot of consultants come in and offered a range of information, for instance Jo-Jarrah Consultants, South West Development Commission and others knew we were interested in getting something done. The consultants were passionate and they did the legwork for nothing because they knew we were just getting started so it was like a joint venture/cultural side of things.

Yirra Kurl “to go up”

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“I don’t know where I got my ability from, the first time I put paint to canvass was in 1994 and it just started off as a hobby. (Deborah Cortese pers. comm. 2004)"

Deborah Cortese is a Nyungar women with brilliant artistic ability and along with her husband John Goebel have operated Yirra Kurl since 1998. Yirra Kurl is based in Maddington, near Perth, Western Australia. They currently lease a 530 square metre factory/office building where they employ 10 staff members. Yirra Kurl is making the transition from a ‘small business’ to a ‘medium sized business’. “This growth is a direct result of an aggressive marketing campaign
aimed at increasing the number of retail outlets stocking Yirra Kurl products, combined with ongoing product development, both in the development of new products and the modification of current products, using feedback from its stockists, and their customers” (Yirra Kurl (2003) Pty Ltd – Business Plan). Yirra Kurl recently entered into a partnership with Chris King and Urszula Gadja-King, who own and operate the printing company that has provided the majority of Yirra Kurl’s printed products since 1999.

Deborah tells us her story. “I started painting anything I could get my hands on, for instance my kids would come with me and we would go and collect gum nuts, clean them up so I could paint them and make key-rings. My daughter and I painted terracotta plates, wooden products, earrings that type of thing. All of my work was done and stored in our lounge room. After I had a collection of painted products I headed off to Sydney and walked the streets showing my work to different agents and retail stores. After two weeks I had orders to the value of $20,000. This was part of the beginning of Yirra Kurl. I went and registered a business and my husband John gave me a choice “you develop the products and I will be a house dad”.”
Nyungar Tourism in the Southwest of Western Australia

Nyungar Cultural Centre - Bunbury

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“The Nyungar Cultural Centre will be an icon in the future where it will act as a ‘keeping place’ for Nyungar knowledge and culture. It will be a place where the public and private spheres of Nyungar knowledge and culture will be housed”. (Leon Ridgeway, pers. comm. 2004)

About three or four years ago a Working Party made up of both Nyungar and Wedjela got together with a vision in mind. Linda Quartermaine, a member of the local Nyungar community, set the idea in motion about eight to ten years ago when the Bunbury City Council was handing back land to Nyungar people. She said “that is going to be our Cultural Centre” and that was the seed of our thinking about the proposed Nyungar Cultural Centre. The handing back of land by the Council was seen by Nyungar as their way of symbolising and negotiating a type of land rights deal. So the Nyungar got some land and that is how the idea came up to have a Nyungar Cultural Centre. So the Working Party started to think about what resources we had and how we could utilise those from an economic and cultural perspective. We had bus drivers, Nyungar people going to TAFE and studying tourism, we had language speakers and Nyungar artists. Knowing who those people were and that they were available, we started to pull some ideas in. So we thought about how we could utilise all of these skills and resources that were in our community and how could we bring them to one place and use them for some economic, social and cultural gain for the whole of Bunbury (not just for Nyungar) but for everyone as well. The idea at that stage was to get hold of the Bird Park as it is situated in a good environment. So we thought maybe that should be the place for our Nyungar Cultural Centre because it has kangaroos and so on and there was already a tourism operation going it just needed to be “indigenised”.

When we put that to the Nyungar community they said no because that is where the old rubbish tip was and we had not thought about this and yet it should have been obvious to us that this was not a good place to build a Nyungar Cultural Centre. We went back and put a
proposal to the Council in regard to the Cultural Centre being built in Bunbury. A number of sites were put forward and rejected for various reasons, like lack of access, lack of traffic. Bird Park was not appropriate so basically being left with only one site, that is Koombarna Bay, and the City of Bunbury wanted to make that into a Cultural Precinct. It looks like a Museum will be built on the site and as we have identified that this is where we would also like to be, when it all happens we will be co-located with the museum. The steering committee for the museum and the Nyungar community think that co-location will be a good thing. This is something that has grown rather than this is what we were going to do. There are benefits for the Nyungar community being involved with the museum. There are a lot of resources on both sides that could come together, like travelling exhibitions even before the Centre is built. Together the Nyungar and Wedjela community of Bunbury could get out there in Nyungar country, collect the Nyungar culture and history and bring it back here to Bunbury in readiness for our Nyungar Cultural Centre, so there is an option there for the development of Nyungar products even before the first brick is laid.

So the idea is that this site is going to be the tourist precinct for Bunbury. There will be a hotel going up, a museum, Nyungar Cultural Centre and with the mangroves behind this location, it has serious potential. The idea is that the Nyungar Cultural Centre will be a business instigator and support service for small business. Like tourism businesses will come and use us as a booking agent for tourists. The Centre will have art, postcards, usual type of tourist materials. It’s early days but we have a pretty good idea. Our intention will be to rehabilitate the area that we build on so we can get bush medicine plants growing for our tours. We will have tool making, Indigenous tours to different sites, talk about country and then link tourists up with other tourist operators like Wardan and Kojonup. We will use Bunbury as the link centre to places like Albany, Kojonup, Collie, Busselton, Manjimup and The Wardan Centre. We will act as a support for artists where they will have a place to come to and do their artwork. We will act as an educational centre and a link for other tourism operators in the southwest.
We wanted to get involved in tourism because we wanted to tell people about the achievements of Nyungar people in the history of Australia’s development. We hear a lot about Wedjela people and their achievements in our history but we do not get a real sense of participation and involvement about the Nyungar as part of this Wedjela history. Our ancestors were forced to play a part in the clearing of the land here in the southwest and generally participated in the building up the wealth of the nation. So we wanted to get recognition of our Nyungar people and talk about their history so we got involved in this project. By doing so it has meant that we are able to talk about the stories of the interaction between both Nyungar and Wedjela people even though they might have been working separately on different things they were actually working together to achieve the one outcome. For example, one might have been clearing the land and the other was doing the fencing.

So going into this tourism venture in partnership with the Shire of Kojonup and Kojonup Tourist Association was a perfect opportunity for us to put Nyungar history and culture on the agenda and using it as a tool for really breaking down the barriers that were put up throughout our history. It is also an opportunity for both Nyungar and Wedjela to work and stand side by side—all moving forward as one—not in separate paddocks but side by side.
The Kojonup Nyungar community and the Kojonup Tourist Association have had a long and strong working relationship for many years. For instance the Wildflower Show that is held in Kojonup each year showcased the Wedjela and Nyungar culture. The Nyungar community would cater for the visitors by having traditional Nyungar foods. Mort Hansen and his dance group would come and showcase Nyungar culture through dance and song and we could do this because of the respect shown by the Kojonup community for the Nyungar people and our culture.

Kodja Place incorporates an Interpretive Centre, Gallery, Visitors' Centre, community and conference areas and a rambling 2.5 acre Australian rose maze. The building takes its name and shape from the traditional stone axe used by the Aboriginal Nyungar tribe in the Great Southern region of Western Australia. The Kodja was central to their nomadic hunter and gatherer lifestyle, before European settlement, and only a few remain in existence. Jointly run by the Kojonup Aboriginal Corporation and Kojonup Tourist Association, tourist services and locally produced cultural artworks are available. A central focus of the Kodja Place development are the stories of three fictitious women who breathe life into the hopes and dreams, tragedies and hardships of a centuries of rural Australian life. Nyungar woman Yoondi, Italian migrant Maria and second generation British settler Elizabeth's lives are tied to the land, each other and the changing landscape and fortunes of our country. Their stories tie the elements of the Kodja Place together in the same way that these three diverse cultures have entwined to give rise to one story - that of Australia's unique rural heritage and culture. Kojonup is centrally located as tourist hub providing easy links to Albany, Perth and the Southwest for travellers wanting to explore the natural delights of this unique region. Kodja Place is a stunning example of what can be achieved when Nyungar and Wedjela community people come together and walk hand in hand to fulfil “their dream” or their “vision”.
Kepa Kurl “where the water lies like a boomerang”

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Doc Reynolds tells us “I think that working and with the knowledge I have gained over the years, I have always enjoyed meeting and talking to people. Of course you just get a basic understanding of where they come from and even when I go camping, just my wife and kids and I, we talk to people out there with some kind of European base and the world comes to your doorstep. So when I actually sat down and had a think about doing cultural tourism, it was just something that I had to do. I had plenty of options to do a lot of stuff, and I thought well, what is my mission in life? And I thought well, a lot of people over my years of employment did not have a great understanding of Aboriginal culture and here in Esperance, there was no Aboriginal outlet, no… there wasn't a lot of things talked about from the Aboriginal perspective, so I decided to go into tourism. There was a clearly identified gap and I decided to sever all my ties to the community things that I was doing, and then to go into corporate business because if things for the Aboriginal people are going to improve, then we have to start looking at corporate growth over government and funding”.

“By doing that and being the example, we can make a difference. We started from scratch. We had nothing when we started up, we didn’t have a clue then, we got a package but how to market it and how to get it out and do it and everything. You know, it became a steep learning curve and a thoroughly enjoyable one at that. Because you know if you want to do something, you have got to be committed to do it. It is not 100% commitment, it is 120% because you always have to do that
little bit more and, most importantly, I am getting paid for what I love doing. Just talking - what I used to share with my family which I don’t mind doing for nothing, I am telling white people the sorts of things that I share with my own family while I get paid to do it. We don’t go into a lot of the intricate stuff obviously, but just giving the visitor a basic understanding of our culture and environment. The European people in particular just love looking at the plants and natural bush scapes here. Their bush and their forests are very different to ours, and, of course, they don’t have a lot of the bush medicine, so yes that’s one of the reasons why I am into tourism. The tours offered by Kepa Kurl allow everyone to explore the unique and timeless Aboriginal culture prior to colonisation and see how Aboriginal culture has evolved today”.

Middar “a style of dancing”

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“The thrust behind setting up Middar was the belief that Aboriginal culture and Nyungar culture in particular had been marginalised and it (Nyungar culture) was something that people wanted to study but didn’t believe actually existed”. (Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm. 2004)

The Story of Middar. The Middar Aboriginal Theatre was formed in 1976 by Dr Richard Walley, Ken Buckskin, John Kelly, Theo Kearing, Louis Collard and Ernie Dingo. As long as the Anthropologists, doctors and other people who study Indigenous culture and in particular Nyungar culture, as long as they were the one’s in the limelight and being well marketed, well “they were the keepers of stories” as far as the western world was concerned. We needed to take that back off them, we really had to say we as Nyungar people that “we are the keepers of our own stories, we don’t need a non-Nyungar person to interpret them for us.”

Dr Walley said he realised the importance of his culture and wanted to do something positive to give Nyungar people back their sense of pride and identity and to educate the wider community on the respect, strength, dignity and community spirit that are the founding stones of Aboriginal
culture. He saw the potential for this through the theatre combining Nyungar music, vocals and dance.

So to do that we went to the two areas that were very prominent at the time, one of them was through the Education system. Going to the schools and public events, like the country and western festivals, the other festivals that took place in Nyungar country and perform to general public there. That did two things, the first one, it really pricked the conscience of the white fullas to let them know that Nyungar culture is alive and very vibrant and the second one, really reinforced and motivated a lot of Nyungar people to look at their own heritage and embrace their heritage a bit more. That to me was the most important thing. So that was the education side of things.

The second one was in the tourism area. The tourism sector became important because they were an audience that were bursting for a unique experience and by coming to Perth at this time, apart from looking at the view there was river trips, there was things like excursions like El Cabello Blanco operating a horse show, there were the wine tours. All these things they could get in Europe but the one unique thing we offered them was an Indigenous experience through dance. That's why I think Middar was really accepted and embraced and I think the benefit from that flowed on to the non-Indigenous sector.

I dare to say the two prominent links into cultural tourism in those years of the 1970’s was Middar down here in the South in Nyungar country and Sam Lovell in our North. If you go and look at the Indigenous cultural tourism here in Australia you will find that Sam Lovell and Middar are still very prominent in the history of tourism, we have both won tourism awards. Middar won the Sir David Brand Tourism Award and won Swan Gold Small Business Award, both prominent Awards here in this State (Western Australia). So the recognition came not only from the Nyungar sector but the non-Nyungar sector as well in recognising the achievements of Middar.

Since their formation in 1976, the Middar group have toured extensively both nationally and internationally and are recognised as one of the leading Indigenous dance groups of Australia. The original members of Middar learned the dances by watching animals in the surrounding bush, observing their movements and why they make these movements. They also listened to the elders who told stories about the animals and used these stories in their dances. Some of the dances include yonkga or kangaroo, waitj or emu dance, brolga or crane dance.
EXPERIENCES ABOUT FINANCE ISSUES AS TOLD FROM THE INDIGENOUS TOURISM OPERATORS

The case study respondents were asked about the types of financial assistance available to Indigenous Tourism Operators. For instance, did the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Aboriginal Economic Development Commission, Department for Indigenous Affairs, Western Australian Tourism Commission or West Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Committee provide assistance to them and what type of assistance. Secondly, the respondents were asked whether they sought a loan or loans from a financial institution.

Kwillana Dreaming

"Unfortunately we did not get funding from a government department”
(Karen Jacob, pers. comm. 2004)

Karen Jacobs said unfortunately they did not get funding from a government department because her and partner George Walley registered as a commercial business and not a non-for profit small business. As a result you do not get the additional financial assistance as a small business not for profit. “I purposely registered as a commercial business because I knew what the demand for was for cultural tourism and what the competition level was. One thing that I did not realise was how long it was going to take us to break into that market. I stood my ground on this one and not re-registered the company because I still do know what the demand is but if you were just new setting up a tourism business which the tourism industry has identified as being extremely high risk by any finance company. I could not go for a personal loan for the amount that I required to get the business up and going so literally we have been doing it fairly slowly according to what my bank account will allow me to spend at the time. Whatever we have built the business up from has come from myself and from my partners personal wages. We did not get any outside finance at all in the beginning from a bank, ATSIC or anywhere. We just invested what we made from the business into the business and we still do that to a certain extent today”.
Wardan Cultural Centre

“I took our Business Plan and idea to the Aboriginal Economic Development Commission in the Department of Commerce and Trade”.  
(Bill Webb, pers. comm. 2004)

Wardan said that the government agencies in the business of giving grants or business loans, are essential to give Nyungar tourist operators that ‘leg up’ in order for them to move towards becoming financially viable so they can then move away from those support. Bill Webb says “in the first instance when we first started we began to marry ourselves to individual organisations, Department for Indigenous Affairs (DIA) for the land transaction, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) for the funding.  I think it saves a lot of heartache once you have identified your product then you can marry all these organisations together so there is no separate things that you need to go through. The local government is useful, it gives support to new ideas and businesses in their region”.

“For finance/funding we had to mainly go through DIA and ATSIC.  You have to really dot your I’s and cross your T’s . The ATSIC’s of the world may be looking for loopholes – to me I don’t think that they are really hell bent on really making successful things or helping Aboriginal people.  Over the duration of times when we have come to deal with ATSIC, when they first came to the fore we have never really seen major things develop for Aboriginal people.  So you really need to do your homework.  If you have a business plan or something similar, make sure you get it looked at by someone first.  We were never really pushed under the ATSIC business sector which was a heartache and nightmare because when I realised they had this whole section in ATSIC that could have looked at our business fully but they never offered this information so I never knew about it”.

“I took our business plan and idea to the Office Aboriginal Economic Development Commission in the Department of Commerce and Trade.  It is a big body that looks at businesses that can generate an economy for Australia, and they can see Aboriginal businesses as an economic entity.  Putting it under their wing, they got all the statistics, facts and figures for us and they took it to ATSIC and pushed our business plan for us. We knew with them backing us our application for funding wasn’t going to be suppressed and we were not going to be pushed under that big pile of paperwork or get shuffled away somewhere else”.
“OAED is a major driving force and the driving force is that they know if a business is going to be economically viable. They are the one’s who push government and push ATSIC and they get the funding from lotteries or any other avenues available to Indigenous people. They can really utilise a lot of avenues. Because sometimes they’ll just go ‘well where are your support structures’ and we can just say well ‘we have a business plan, this is all our resources, all of our knowledge and know how that we believe is going to be of interest for a tourism market’. You just need to keep pushing at all of the levels of funding or whatever you need to help you to initiate your business and then keep those government agencies onside so that you can get to where you need to be and to grow as well.

The Department for Indigenous Affairs was approached for funding for the land transaction and whatever other funding we needed we went to the Department of Land Administration (DOLA) so they could excise this land away from the man who gave it to us. ATSIC funding was initially granted through a training program that we applied for. Through this training program we built a part of a building here so they knew we were serious. This was like a little testing thing, it was like ‘oh yes, if you have $1.2 million dollars worth of real estate but they will still ask “are you serious?” Well, when you are dealing with that sort of money you have to be serious. This was one short training program offered to us and it helped us to finish one of our buildings but it was also recognition that we were serious. We pushed for some other plans and ideas that we had and with the help of the OAED, we realised what types of things we already had or what we needed. For example, what resources we had here, what was its value in terms of monetary value and what funding we needed – what we call is the core element for setting your idea in motion and what you have to do to get there. The core element is a place like the Wardan Centre, where people can visit for education purposes. Without financial support from organisations like DIA and ATSIC, it would be difficult for an Indigenous tourist operator to be financially viable in the early years. We have to educate that whole bureaucratic system but if you had a product so sound and a business plan set you could go to the bank instead. If you had the support of your shire and community and things like that and they see it is a good product and it will bring tourists to your area, you may very well get finance. With a sound business plan and lots of community support, the bank would probably give you a loan”.

“As soon as the OAED realised what they were dealing with they gave us a lot of their own funding to uphold each stage of our business whereas ATSIC was letting us down. We had to keep the dream moving, keep the dream going. ATSIC eventually came to the party. The
funding from the different organisations was critical but they were not without their obstacles and loopholes. We had the vision and later we had the land gifted so we knew exactly what we were moving into and exactly what we wanted to plan and to how we wanted this place to be, an educational centre and a place to house our history as well”.

Maali Mia

“When we started up our business it was not with a lot of money that’s for sure”. (Dale Tilbrook, pers. comm. 2004)

We were working out in the back shed making boomerangs, we got some wood, some home handyman tools but then figured this was no way to produce our product because it was time consuming. So we bought some bigger machinery and this changed the way we were doing things. We started out running our business from home but this was against Council regulations and so we very quickly signed a lease on some premises and so everybody went away very happy. It didn’t take us long to build up a local business out at Tumblegum Farm. Within six months we were showcasing our product at a Gift Fair at Darling Harbour in Sydney in 1997 and we had a medium response. We also walked door to door showing our product to different people. After a while we moved to Manguri in Queens Park and from there we moved out to Henley Brook and then to where we are now. We also opened a gallery so that local artists could sell their wares.

We did not get any outside finance at all in the beginning. We just invested what we made from the business into the business and we still do that to a certain extent today. The business makes just enough income to be able to work in our business and survive and then get to a stage where we could pay our wages. We do have an overdraft with the bank and this helps us to finance our debtors list and wait the thirty days plus to be paid, so there is a gap in the cash flow and then we have to rely on how quickly people pay their bills. However, it was not easy to get an overdraft even though I have been a customer for 30 years with the Commonwealth Bank it was still difficult to get this overdraft. I had business loans before, my mortgages have been paid out and it was still difficult to get the $10,000 overdraft. I think that this might have been because of the Aboriginal business and Aboriginal flavour. But without the overdraft it would have been very difficult for us to operate viably.
Southern Aboriginal Corporation

“Our funding was for a CDEP training program. This is how part of our tourism venture, the Arts and Craft Shop came about”
(John Hayden, pers. comm. 2004)

Our funding is through ATSIC to implement a CDEP training program and our strategy for this training program was for the Nyungars to make some artefacts, paintings and other products. This was a two year funding project. We had Nyungar people making spears or kitj, kylies or boomerangs and paintings, in fact all sorts of products depending on the skill of the person. Also SAC is a large organisation and we provide a range of services so we were able to support this venture with some of our own resources as well. However, our main concern at the moment is where will we get funding after the two year ATSIC funding program runs out.

We'll have to cross that bridge however, when we get to it. In the meantime, we just want to encourage Nyungar people to display their artistic skills and keep supplying SAC with a range of products that we can sell in our Arts and Crafts Shop. This is an opportunity for Nyungar people to show our culture and for the tourist to learn more about us and to take home a piece of Nyungar memorabilia with them.

Waljin Consultancy

“As a business we do not get financial assistance. That is, no bank finance, no grant assistance, no CDEP. We look after our own financial affairs and don’t owe anyone anything”. (Mitchella Hutchison, pers. comm. 2004)

In order to be viable, we make sure we generate enough business to be able to cover all our costs and because we are only a small operation our costs are small. A lot of other small businesses have gone and debted themselves up to the eyeballs, the business failed and they are paying it off ten years later. I want to confidently say no, this is Indigenous run Indigenous owned and what we have got nobody has given us anything and again this may be stubborn but I am sick and tired of hearing this being said. “You get a handout from this person and that person and the Government gives this that and the other, but I can have the pride in acknowledging and saying no we did it ourselves”.

But again I see WAITOC a bit like ATSIC, a lot of people getting paid a lot of Nyungar money and not a lot of Nyungar positives coming out of it. I don’t have a lot of faith in ATSIC because it’s a “bit of a puppet on a string thing and we’ll dangle a carrot in front of you” – but we will only listen to those people who tell us what we want to hear and offer us help. From my perspective I am a proud Nyungar woman that has knocked back help from a lot of people because I want to do it on my own and not have people score success off my back. I also act as a role model for Aboriginal people and my husband and I have been doing it for four years and we have not had one cent of assistance from anybody. Maybe in the next few years we will focus on getting some assistance but we want to make sure that it is from the right organisation and not just those who will offer us assistance and wait for us to fail and then take over our business.

Yirra Kurl

"It was very difficult to get funding from government agencies”. (Deborah Coertse, pers. comm. 2004)

Yirra Kurl Director Deborah Coertse tells their story and experiences when dealing with government agencies in trying to develop partnerships and seek funding assistance for their business. “It was very difficult to get funding from government agencies”. In fact, we had sent in an application to one of the departments for funding. We had not heard anything for quite sometime so we decided to ring up and find out how our application was progressing. We were told that they did not have an application from us so they asked us to submit another application. My husband and I sat down and did this, then waited for a reply. Quite some time had passed, a few months I think, we still had not heard anything so we rang them up to find out how our application was progressing. Once again we were told that they could not find our application. To say we were extremely disappointed is no exaggeration. They apologised and said we should put in another application. This time however, we sat down with some of our business friends, filled in the application and then made several photocopies of it, and then distributed one to each of us in the business, posted a copy to the department and finally hand delivered a copy as well. We wanted to make sure that this particular government department could not come back at us and say that “we either did not send in an application, that they could not find our application, or submit another application form”. We covered all our bases. This was a very poor service by one of the main funding agencies for people like us trying to set up a business or get access to some funds to try and help boost us along.
Yirra Kurl’s most recent interaction with this same department came as a result of them contacting Yirra Kurl and asking Deborah “how can we help you, would you like some funding”. Deborah went on further with her story and said “this is a real turn around because when we were just starting off there was so many loopholes to jump through and now that we are doing so well financially as a business they want to know us and try and give us money. It must be very difficult for other businesses who have to deal with this sort of process and who may not be doing so well. Deborah says that whilst there is funding available to help Indigenous people set up a business you almost have to prove yourself before they will even look at you. It seems to be at odds with the whole funding process and no wonder a lot of Indigenous people don’t have too much faith in the government systems. There is too much red tape and the waiting time to hear whether you are being considered for funding is way too long. No wonder some people just give up and try and work it out on their own”.

**Nyungar Cultural Centre**

“The funding is an important part of setting up any business but I want to say that everyone who has been involved with our vision has offered their time for nothing…” (Leon Ridgeway, pers. comm. 2004)

The Nyungar Cultural Centre yet to be built in Bunbury hopes to be gifted the land from the City of Bunbury. When it comes to the finances required for the operations of the Centre “we will have a feasibility study done but we need to get funding for this part of the project before we can employ our Project Manager to take up the role of moving this project forward. We can’t employ someone yet even though we have the funding from Department for Indigenous Affairs to at least employ someone part-time over a two year period. Until we can address this funding gap it has been difficult to maintain our momentum”.

“However, we are aware of the types of funding that are available from various government and non-government agencies that we can approach as our project develops. For instance we will approach Lotterywest and Office of Aboriginal and Economic Development. We will also investigate the possibility of funding from philanthropic foundations. We will also approach some Commonwealth government departments such as Department for Culture and Arts and Department for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. Look, we will explore every avenue possible when the time comes.”
Funding is an important part of setting up any business but I want to say that everyone who has been involved with our vision has offered their time for nothing, some of those government agencies and the local government have given us resources in-kind such as a place to hold our Working Party meetings, a place to do some photocopying, the City of Bunbury have offered their skills and expertise with filling in for Tenders when get to that part of our business. One of our biggest supporters over the past couple of years was Department for Indigenous Affairs but they recently withdrew their offices out of the Bunbury area and this has severely impacted on our momentum as well because they were the ones who would organise meetings, co-ordinate meetings and just generally keep their finger on the pulse for us and keep us informed on a regular basis. This was especially important because a lot of us involved in getting this project off the ground work full-time or have other regular commitments. Anyway, when we are ready to get underway we will start targeting those funding agents for some of our finance.

**Kodja Place**

*Initially the Shire was granted a $600,000 grant from the Centenary Federation which was a Commonwealth Government Initiative. (Craig McVee, pers. comm. 2004)*

The Chief Executive Officer of Kojonup was responsible for developing new business and opportunities. It was when the Centenary of Federation funding became available from the Commonwealth government that the different groups here in Kojonup wanted to access this funding. For instance, the Kojonup Tourist Association wanted to move from its premises to highway frontage here in Kojonup and there was an old gentleman who had a shop on the highway where he showed his harness display, horses, carriages and so on. He passed away and the Kojonup Historical Society didn’t want the shop to close down. Then there was the Chief Executive Officer of Kojonup who wanted to access this funding for a Rose garden. So with all these different priorities everyone got together to talk about what they wanted to do here in Kojonup so we could apply for this Centenary funding. Out of these discussions a Committee of ten people were set up to develop up business plan. The people came from different groups with different expertise.

It was from this meeting that the Kodja Place vision started. Initially the Shire was granted $600,000 from the Centenary Federation a Commonwealth Government Initiative. This enabled us to build a purpose built tourism centre – this included the Interpretive Display,
Visitor’s Centre and the Rose Maze. But once we got into developing our vision and doing some research we went off and accessed dollars from everywhere possible. For instance from Lotterywest, Centenary of Federation, Women’s Suffrage a Commonwealth Government Initiative, West Australian Tourism Commission, Great Southern Development Commission, Great Southern Area Consultative Committee and so on.

Our vision grew from a small centre to a multi award winning complex. The building cost over $2.2 million dollars but we had over a million dollars in kind from local community people. Our population is just over 2,045 and we had about 600 people involved in this project. For example, they did all the planning, research, oral histories, actual creation of the rose maze. The farmers drove in their tractors, trucks, bought their shovels and created the framework for the maze so this is just one example of the voluntary time and effort put into our Centre. The women cooked meals, provided coffee and tea, cold drinks and generally looked after everyone who was working. Many of the women were also involved in the physical labour of this project.

There is a perception in the wider community that Aboriginal people can get money at a click of the fingers but the reality is that is not true. So this was a lesson that many of the Wedjela here found out. We were only entitled to what everyone else is entitled to. So in getting grant money we also had to go through loopholes, jump hoops and so on. But the strength of writing up our application for grants was the interaction of both Nyungar and Wedjela here in Kojonup working together towards the one goal.

We are still in the business of accessing grants wherever we can. It is not easy to co-ordinate the access to this funding to do what it is intended for. For instance, we were given funding for the erection of our signage but we would have liked this funding a couple of years ago, but better late than never. This funding was accessed from the West Australian Tourism Centre for Country Visitor’s Centre Self Sustainability.
Nyungar Elder and owner Doc Reynolds tells us his story. “When we looked at the idea of tourism we wanted to make sure that there were no strings attached. If you go through Aboriginal funding and other funding agencies you have a whole lot of strings attached. There are usually a lot of reporting mechanisms associated with government funding and it can take up a lot of the time. That means it can cut into a lot of your time in trying to deliver a service. It is just not worth the hassle and I have worked in organisations where a lot of time is taken up providing reports to government agencies and I just didn’t think it was worthwhile to go down that path. The most important thing which we did was basically talk to an Accountant to talk us through all the aspects of what we were going to do because we were not aware of what sort of avenues we could go to for finance.

Once we talked this through, we went to the bank and secured loans from the bank. We could have bought the business capital and so on, but as the accountant said “if you were going to go broke better to do it with someone else’s money other than your own”. So that is what we basically did. We got all the tax concessions and all that come with it, so anything we could claim was a bonus to us. The only government support that we got was the bloke helping us out with the Business Plan and helping us to set up a web page which didn’t require a lot of reporting, just basically a bit of funds, and just someone to come in and give us a bit of guidance. We did have good support and guidance, we had good knowledge ourselves but we just wanted to make sure that it was all put in a format which we could easily understand. We used that as a guidepost in our business growth. We went into it full on and we are reaping the rewards. The first real reward was health wise initially”.

"If you go through Aboriginal funding and other funding agencies you have a whole lot of strings attached". (Doc Reynolds, pers. comm. 2004)
Middar

"I find that most operations start off very much at people's own cost".

(Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm, 2004)

One of the most important things in tourism and the reason I am saying tourism is what I described as earlier, as tourism is about a “paid experience” is the financial part and you must get financial rewards. Before you can get financial rewards you must set down the foundations to get those rewards. There are three ways of doing that. The first one is having your own funds and setting up your own operation and owning it completely. The second one is where you get subsidised and look at what programs are available and you apply for those subsidies, if you are lucky and become successful then you utilise those funds to run your operations. The third one is part thereof where you can have some of your own funds and then get subsidies in the form of a very low percentage repayment loan.

I find that most operations start off very much at people’s own cost, very much voluntary, and the reward is small. The unfortunate part about the western philosophy, particularly in financial areas is that you must prove that you don’t really need the money you must prove you are a very viable operation, prove your cashflow, and all those corporate things that you don’t really have when you are starting off an operation but that is what they require. So a good idea, good work ethic and demand does not mean anything. You have to have a spreadsheet to prove you are going to be successful. That is the downfall to a lot of operators. You may have people who are very, very good at delivering a very good service but not good at filling out forms then the service will collapse. Middar was quite lucky because we kicked off at a time when there was a big demand and an interest and we found the value for our services was taken very seriously. We didn’t overprice ourselves and we definitely didn’t undersell ourselves. We knew the value of our product at that time which was the presentations and we got it. So I think in the later years the value started to waiver and people started questing the value of a service and when I say a service its actually a service or product that you are selling. You can’t sell culture or a Nyungar identity or Nyungar experience. You can actually sell a product or a service so that people actually say “Wow I feel really good because I got what I paid for”. I think that’s where the financial issues really come into play because a lot of our people don’t really know the value of their product and there are no standards in the area and I
really believe that there are some who are very good and there are some exceptions and they are doing really well but really that is the question “What is the value of my product”?

HOW THE OPERATORS PROMOTE AND MARKET THEMSELVES.

I think that’s what marketing is, really the quality of your presentation speaks for itself. (Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm. 2004)

The marketing and promotion of Nyungar Tourism Operators include a variety of strategies. One of the common tools utilised to capture a broader audience is the use of the world wide web. Most of the participants said that they use the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Committee website as a promotional and marketing tool. They also said that they would not rely solely on this website as a marketing tool and felt that there were lots of other avenues to pursue to get their businesses out into the “wider world”. The following comments demonstrate how the case study participants utilise their contacts and creativity to market and promote their businesses.

Kwillana Dreaming

“...through word of mouth”. (Karen Jacobs, pers. comm. 2004)

Karen Jacobs of Kwillana Dreaming said they “promote their business through word of mouth. We have been fortunate as a commercial business with very little marketing or outlay as far as our marketing and promotion of the company goes. However, we have had a huge amount of assistance through a sponsorship for the graphic layouts for our brochures and the printing of the brochures. In fact all of our marketing materials has not cost us anything and therefore have not hade to make any major financial outlay. The media have been very kind to us also, we have been on a number of television shows like the Rex Hunt Show, Postcards, Overseas Backpacking Holiday Programs that have been televised worldwide as well as other different TV shows. Plus we have had full-page spreads in the Sunday Times and West Australian at no
expense. We have had a lot of advertising and marketing in regional maps that depict the Peel region. This has been our only financial outlay in the last two years.

However, I have not seen a huge return for that kind of marketing so these are the kinds of things that we need to experience to see just what outcomes and objectives we are achieving from purchasing products or tools for marketing and promotional work. From the television shows and newspaper articles this year we have received a huge amount of return from them and continue looking down those types of avenues for our promotional work but steer more away from the Regional Mapping type situation where we have got a one inch by one inch advertisement.

**Wardan Cultural Centre**

“We promote through the media, brochures and internet”. *(Bill Webb, pers. comm. 2004)*

Bill Webb of the Wardan Cultural Centre said, “We promote through the media, brochures and internet. Internet is a tool that allows us to gather all our resources, for example the way our product is going to be, you edit your material and can say specifically how you want to market yourself. The internet is a quick way of getting out into the world. Our centre is only marketed throughout the Southwest of WA and we also have our own Website on the internet which is [www.wardan.com.au](http://www.wardan.com.au) we can also be found on the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators website which is [www.waitoc.com/](http://www.waitoc.com/).

However, a lot of the international visitors that come here to our Centre are through word of mouth. Sometimes their own curiosity brings them here to satisfy what they are trying to investigate as well because I believe that 90% of visitors want to have an interaction with an Aboriginal person. Whatever tools or strategies used for promotional work or marketing you are the one who has to push – sell yourself – push whatever you have and market it and get it recognised that you have a product that is going to be of interest to any tourist. Whatever resources you have use them and level it at the whole tourism market. If you are going into a big project or product then you really need to look at all avenues of marketing. For us it has been a thirteen-year struggle but we have only been open for about 14 months. What we really
have to identify is that if you are in a new area and you are trying to get something going then you need to know what you are going to develop and how you are going to develop it. Any business needs a fair deal of money to initially start marketing the recognition of your product and then once you have got it out there it steadily grows. You find that a few years of running you will need to upgrade your website, or you want a different sort of brochure because you may have invented something new within your product. So every now and then you have to upgrade your product. Yes, try and look at all avenues to make sure that your product starts to look like your icon, that your brochures and other resources represent some sort of Indigenous tourism and use every avenue, the tourism commission, radio, media, internet and things like that”.

**Maali Mia**

“...advertise in a lot of tourism books that are free books at the airports”. *(Dale Tilbrook, pers. comm. 2004)*

The Maali Mia tourist venture publishes a flyer, which is distributed by Templar Marketing to hire care companies, hotels, backpackers and visitor centres. They also advertise in a lot of tourism books that are free books at the airports, at hotels and visitor centres.

Maali Mia has a website which is www.maalimia.com.au although it is mainly geared around their returning boomerang product where they can be ordered on line. It does, however, talk about their Art Gallery and Gift Shop as well. “We are members of WAITOC and I am a Board Member and we are on their website as members which is www.waitoc.com/.

*(Entrance to the Maali Mia Aboriginal Cultural Centre)*
Southern Aboriginal Corporation

“…basically through word of mouth”. (John Hayden, pers. comm. 2004)

The Southern Aboriginal Corporation said they rely on their marketing and promotional activities “basically through word of mouth and the stuff we have got on the market through a webpage here at SAC. The main tool though is through word of mouth and we have a captive audience through our CDEP program. From SAC’s perspective that is how we have been promoting our products”. SAC has a key leadership role in promoting and marketing Nyungar tourism. SAC has been big on promoting tourist operators and says, “well we are here and we can support and assist all Nyungar tourism operators”. This is a unique and creative strategy, SAC is the peak Aboriginal organisation in the lower southwest from Kondinin right through to Albany “we will be there as a support mechanism and promote and do what we can for Nyungar artists because we want to saturate the market with Nyungar arts and crafts”. That is probably the main arm of SAC that is going to be able to market Nyungar art in the next twelve months or so.

Waljin Consultancy

“…through the use of (their) logo on shirts”. (Mitchella Hutchinson, pers. comm. 2004)

Waljin Consultancy carries out their marketing and promotional activities through the use of their logo on shirts and promotes the business in that way. Mitchella of Waljin Consultancy explains why this is a good promotional tool. “Because it may be that your visitor doesn’t go to a tourist centre but may be driving along and see our logo and decide to come and visit us. As an Indigenous operator one of the biggest slaps in the face is that the tourist bureaus actually ask us to pay to have our business promoted by them. They ring us regularly and ask us to bring our “stuff” in, but they want us to pay $300 a turn to have our business promoted by them but ironically enough we don’t hardly get any business from those guys. We also use business cards, flyers, t-shirts, send out activity listings through email to different groups interested in our product and we have a business document for distribution. We go on about promoting and advertising our products but it is not just for the visitor it is for us as Nyungar people as well – we are just about the best advertisement for our Nyungar culture so our Nyungar kids will stand
tall and proud and know there is an opportunity for them in the future in a career in Culture or Tourism. We also use WAITOC, we are on their website which is www.waitoc.com and they promote us.

One of our concerns is that we have organizations like WAITOC and other organizations, which are more or less government run and they are supposed to support us but they don't. Their support is minimal compared to the funds needed to run such organisations. For example, there is the big Conference coming up and as Indigenous operators we have to pay an exorbitant amount of money to go to the Conference which is a government held forum. It's a bit hypocritical because they should be helping us to aspire to build our businesses not us paying the government to tell us how to run our businesses and generating funds by doing so. Waljin is not going because we weren't available, we are a small business and we have to be here if we want to make money. If we didn't have to pay one of us would have attended the Conference.

These Conferences are good for networking but there is not a lot of production at the end of the day for me personally others may benefit but to attend the Conference could cost me $3000, whereas I have to pay the government $300 to sit and listen and be a participant in something government held and run. WAITOC gets us on the international scene through their website. We had a stall at the International Travel Agencies Forum where we all came together at Burswood last year so we had an opportunity to cut out the middle man and go straight to the businesses like Qantas and Taiwan Airlines – we set the stall up ourselves with our promotional gear and with no help, although this year WAITOC are offering to help us with this promotional strategy.

**Yirra Kurl**

"...a database to directly market (their) products". (Deborah Coertse, pers. comm. 2004)

Yirra Kurl marketing and promotional strategies include a Database Development. They have used a database to directly market their products in schools in Western Australia, this has resulted in a 5% increase in sales. Other databases to be developed include:
1. The Corporate Market aimed at businesses and government departments and 
2. Schools in other Australian states. 
3. Export Market which targets retail outlets and galleries 
4. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 
5. Austrade 
6. Stationers 
7. Large mainstream retail stores 
8. Catalogue companies in USA, Canada, United Kingdom and Europe. 

Other marketing strategies include membership of the Perth Conventions Bureau. Membership benefits include access to a database listing Perth conventions planned for one year, and organiser’s contact details, promotion of production to other Bureau members and use of products by Bureau management for corporate gifts. Attendance at trade shows and conferences, both within Australia and overseas, to promote and sell Yirra Kurl products. The development of a database of corporate contacts who will be targeted directly to promote Yirra Kurl corporate products and packages, using email and mail. Finally, promotion of Yirra Kurl products to a number of catalogue companies, based in the USA, which directly target corporate buyers via online and mailed catalogues.

*Yirra Kurl Postcard – the design by Deborah Coertse depicts Autumn (Fish – Mussels – Pippies)*
Nyungar Cultural Centre

“We will identify promotional tools and activities that allow us to target the local, national and international markets”. (Leon Ridgeway, pers. comm. 2004)

It’s difficult to really know how we will end up promoting our Nyungar Cultural Centre. But I am sure that we will have a state of the art website. We want the visitor to be able to do a virtual reality tour so we need to get the appropriate information technology to be able to do this. This sounds far fetched but it is going to be able to happen because technology just moves so fast anyway. We will identify promotional tools and activities that allow us to target the local, national and international markets. We will have the standard brochures, use the WAITOC website which is www.waitoc.com and any other tourism websites that might be available.

We would also use other Indigenous organizations throughout Australia to help us to promote our Centre. After all they are the one’s who have connection to family and community, and what better way to get us out into the wider Indigenous community and national Indigenous community. Nowadays the “Nyungar grapevine” actually uses the email systems as the conduit to get our messages across to each other, we will use this technology as well to access everyone’s personal networks.

Whichever way we decide to promote and market ourselves it will be across all media, cut across different cultural groups and generally just get the message out and tell people to come and see us and see what all Nyungar have generally got to offer.
Kodja Place

“new strategies have recently been identified”. (Craig McVee, pers. comm. 2004)

Kodja Place have a variety of promotional tools that they utilise. For instance, they have brochures, flyers, t-shirts, street and frontage signage and the use of the internet, you can find us on www.waitoc.com. However, new strategies have recently been identified and the Kodja Place intend to market their business in the following ways. Firstly, it intends to drive visitation to Kojonup and the region by positioning itself as “must see” attraction/experience. Secondly Kodja Place will communicate its brand more consistently through presenting images, events and promotions that have impact on its primary target markets. Images include advertising, promotional material and signage. Events include live performance, VIP visits, new exhibit openings, cultural activities etcetera. Finally, Kodja Place will ensure it reaches “museum” visitor targets without alienating non-museum visiting targets by failing to position itself as a broader attraction/experience. Craig McVee says these are just some of the ways that Kodja Place will drive the new strategic marketing strategies in the future.

Kepa Kurl

“We promote ourselves ... through networking.” (Doc Reynolds, pers. comm. 2004)

One of the ways that we promote ourselves is through networking, said Doc Reynolds. We get other groups coming down from Kalgoorlie and we share information about our suppliers and so on. Other Indigenous people running tourism operations, art galleries and gift shops are very free in releasing names of contacts and that sort of stuff, but the only person we have had problems with was a non-Indigenous tourism operator who runs an art gallery. It is one of Perth’s main gallery and gift shop selling Indigenous products but he wasn’t free in releasing any information at all. We tried to explain that we were not going to be a competitor because we were 700 kms away. This still didn’t encourage him to network with us, but since then we have been speaking to a few desert communities and trying to source some of their products.
In a nutshell Indigenous people, no matter where they are, like to see the story and products shared and promoted for further understanding of our culture. So it is interesting there is this white fullah who doesn’t want to share knowledge and culture with us.

Another avenue we utilise is the website and we have got our website under construction. In the meantime you can find us on the web at www.waitoc.com. We are also looking at what marketing resources are out there that we can tap into, for example the local regional tours and forums. We recently had an invite to the Sky West forum (Sky West is the major regional airline coming into Esperance). As a result of sitting down at a local tourism forum here, they said they were looking at marketing two areas, one was business tourism because tourists were coming into Perth for Conferences and they said “we can fly you out here to do this, for this amount of dollars”. People coming in from overseas or some of them coming in from over East and we can fly them to anywhere in Western Australia for a weekend or whatever, you know a two day package, or a three day package.

Another one that Skywest are really focusing on is Indigenous tourism and promoting that as well. We were at a National Indigenous Conference in Perth and one of the most startling statistics that sticks in my mind was that the Australian Tourism Commission does surveys. How they do it and how they collate it and collect the data and that, I’m not quite too sure, but they made this comment that 80% of International Tourists that come into Australia want an Indigenous experience. And that could be anything from visiting the art shop or doing the tour or spending time in the community or whatever.

So there was an identified gap of 60% of people who were coming into Australia and were not getting an Indigenous experience and they came here for one. So, that clearly identifies out of all of the resources and information that is available, that we have got a serious shortfall. So what we have endeavoured to do now that I and my sister are partners in business, we spend a lot of time travelling, but once our business is up and going we will then be able to advertise
ourselves around the country. Dropping off our brochures and that around places in some of the remotest areas in Australia and some of the most popular areas, because we believe that if people are travelling around and they pick it up they will see it and they will think “well we will come to Esperance we will do a Kepa Kurl tour”, so, and that is done at no cost to us.

And of course when I have to go to Perth, instead of flying, I can drive there and then I can go one route and drop all our brochures off, and come back another route and drop all our brochures off which will cost our company nothing. It is just looking at those little avenues, and of course what’s there. Getting into trade shows. We are in the process of getting that all established now. When there are State forums we will be putting our hands up to do a presentation. So what that basically means is that we will promote Indigenous tourism. We will be right up there with other tour operators. We have our brochures so we will be there for sure even if we have to pay for it out of our own pocket. So that is how we get it out, and of course, the other important one as I said earlier, is word of mouth. And if people have got a problem with a product, we say one of our mottos is “if you have a problem please tell us, if not then please tell others”. And that seems to work all right.

We have to build up our status so that we can become one of the leading tour operators of the South. We believe that we have the product that people want and the indication thus far is that what we are doing is correct and is what people have been looking for. This allows us to build on our product, learn from that and also always strive to create or bring out the optimal product that people will go and talk about, that the word of mouth in marketing will tell hell of a lot more than all the papers and brochures that you can put out in the market place. So it is the quality of service and not the quantity. And if you get the quality right, then everything else falls into place. We have been told and believe, a place like what we have got here in our shop, we have put everything in there, we have got the quality stuff, and our tours, well I give a bias view and say “yeah we are doing all this stuff here” but the visitors that come here and go on our tours say that it was brilliant. And of course people don’t mind spending the extra dollars on getting another product that they can go away with.

Of course as we all go on holidays we all like to learn about the areas we visit so we can tell our friends. We can say well “we went over there” and we are hoping that by them coming here they can say that “we went over there and we went on this Aboriginal tour and it is one tour that you should go on”. And we have a lot of people come here, come on our tours, that
are referred to us or recommended by somebody else. And that’s a feather in our cap. By us doing that then we know we are getting it right, we are always striving to learn. We are not ashamed to learn from others, you know a fool learns by his own mistakes, a wise man learns from others.

So that is why we get out there and are making sure that we are doing what we believe is the product that people want. And last season, we kept a low-key approach, principally because we wanted to make sure our product that we were delivering was the product that the market place wanted.

Middar

“The most important (one) is do what you are doing well, and the product eventually will market itself”. (Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm. 2004)

When you are promoting and presenting or marketing your product, there are a number of ways of doing it. The first one of course is paid advertising which is for the masses, then there is word of mouth when someone has a very good experience and they tell other people about it. There are promotional presentations, where you go to events that have large numbers of people and you can actually do that presentation there which reaches the masses, you can develop all sorts of flyers and information which can make things very prominent, so there are many different ways of marketing.

But I think the most important one is do what you are doing well, and the product eventually will market itself, and I think that is what I have found and it is something that Middar did for a long time. It doesn’t matter what Middar did we did it very well. Whether it was a small presentation in a school or a large presentation in a concert hall, every audience was treated with respect, and the best performance by the performers at that time was delivered and I think that’s what marketing is, really the quality of your presentation speaks for itself.
TOURISM INTEREST IN NYUNGAR TOURISM

“tourists come to hear and learn more about Indigenous/Nyungar heritage, and generally just come to ‘enjoy’ the experience.” (Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm. 2004)

Respondents in the case studies stated that one of the reasons tourists want to come on any cultural tour, be it Nyungar, Wongi or Yamatji, in fact whichever part of the region or country where Indigenous people are delivering a tour from, is to experience what is unique and significant about that particular Indigenous group from that particular area. Tourists want to experience personal information sessions with an Indigenous person face to face. Most people rarely have the time or opportunity to sit down with an Indigenous/Nyungar person and talk about the lifestyle and traditions and cultural ways of doing things. It is a very rare occasion where this occurs so it gives tourists an opportunity to achieve that cultural awareness and interaction in a very practical way. However, what is just as important is that “experience”. Three of the respondents said that overseas tourists, in some form or another have a better understanding of the history of Indigenous/Nyungar people than Australian people in general. They suggest that overseas tourists who are coming specifically to experience an Aboriginal tour or product have already done some research about our Indigenous heritage and the places they would like to visit. The tourist then decides that this is what they would like to do so that they can experience a one on one with an Indigenous person. Another respondent said that the tourists, with this background knowledge, want an interaction with an Indigenous person and gain more knowledge about our history, they also want to identify with an Indigenous person and hear if some of the stories they have heard are true.

Kodja Place says that unfortunately most interest for Nyungar tourism is from international visitors. Wider Australia knows very little about Nyungar culture and history. They may know something about Aboriginal history generally but here in our country belief and culture is dependent on the landscape and therefore Aboriginal groups are diverse but Australian people don’t acknowledge this. When I take some of the local tourists through there is very little recognition towards Aboriginal history. Some concede ignorance and walk past our interpretive information whereas the overseas visitors are just amazed by it.
However, things are changing and we seem to be getting more of the local market now which is really good. The overseas visitors are more accepting of our Nyungar culture or Aboriginal history and culture generally.

We have seen a growth over the years, it is a steady interest and this is being reflected in the number of bookings, receipt of sales and visitors passing through the door.

Another respondent also suggested that tourists come and hear and learn more about Indigenous/Nyungar heritage and generally just come to “enjoy” the experience. Another respondent said that visitors want to take back to their place of origin a piece of Nyungar history and culture so the visitor will buy a piece of art, or a glass bowl or a piece of jewellery. They can look at the item later on and associate it with Nyungar country as it helps them to remember who we are and helps them recall their experience with us.

Kepa Kurl said that the majority of people who come on their tours want to gain a greater understanding of the Aboriginal culture. “The product on offer by us fills that void for them and we find especially the Europeans are very, very interested in what we are doing. Learning about our lifestyles, bush medicines, and culture. I define culture in five areas and they are reciprocal,

1) land
2) law
3) language
4) spirituality
5) family (tribal kinship systems)

What people are looking for are in those five key areas and of course if we don’t do that then we are not filling the void for a lot of people. Some tourists ask what I consider ignorant questions. For instance, I heard of an Indigenous Tour Operator that used to work with another tour operator who was asked the question “do Aboriginal people still go on walk-about”? and he came back with the reply “no they drive about now” and had a good laugh about it. Well that lady was really offended. She asked the question in all sincerity and you have to give the answer in that same mode because if you don’t give it back to her in that same mode then they will think well, what are they on about. That’s what we have to do, show sincerity and respect back, because even if we might think it is a dumb question, its how the people on these tours want to be treated. We should answer their questions in a manner that helps them to
understand about our culture. If I was in that lady's position that is how I would have wanted my question answered”.

Middar say that one of the biggest things that tourists are interested in Australia, and it has proven very popular in Nyungar country, is the art. But there are not too many Aboriginal people who are millionaires because of the sale of their art.

One of the reasons for this is that some of the artists don’t really know the value of their work. Go to any artist who has just completed their work and say to them “what's that worth” and they will say “well, what do you think”. They will ask for your opinion on the value of it. I think that is the difference between the Western and the Indigenous philosophy because the Indigenous and Nyungar people, the ones who do it really really well, they do it because they enjoy it. Because they enjoy it, some people think that they should feel guilty about asking top dollar because they think, “well, I feel good about this”. But they really must think “well, I feel good about this and I have delivered a very good project/service/product and I want a good return”. That is where that fairness and balance comes into question. But that will sort itself out over a period of time. So it is not a big issue, it is just a period I think, Indigenous operators and tourists are going through and I think eventually once it sorts itself out it will be to an advantage of not only Nyungars but Australians in general.
WHAT DO NYUNGAR TOURIST OPERATORS OFFER THE VISITOR?

All of the case study groups offer Nyungar culture and history in different forms of tourism attractions. One of the ways they do this is by telling the visitor their own oral histories. Many of these cannot be found in the Wedjela accounts of Nyungar history. The Nyungar tourism operators also offer hands on experiences such as boomerang making/throwing, spears/spear throwing, damper making and camping trips (Karen Jacobs, pers. comm. 2004).

Other products are offered through interpretive tours that include visits to sites of significance, learning about bush foods, bush medicines and tool making. Some of the Nyungar artefacts used as part of dance performances or demonstrations include feather sticks or dance sticks, mera or spear thrower, message sticks or boorna wangkiny, wanna the women’s digging sticks, koorda bags or kangaroo skin bags and didgeridoo music. All but three of the case study participants offer a variety of non-Indigenous products that are influenced by Nyungar artwork, designs and Nyungar language. Some of the non-Nyungar products that are offered to the visitor include books, CD’s, tapes, gallery bookmarks, writing pads, t-shirts, glassware, pottery, jewellery, calendars, bookmarks, games, children’s colouring books and video’s. Three of the respondents offer the visitors an opportunity to see how damper is made and cooked in ashes. Karen Jacobs of Kwillana Dreaming said that they offer overnight camping trips where tourists can simply enjoy the delights of the scenery, smell the bush, sit around a campfire and listen to Nyungar storytellers reciting our “creation stories and mythologies”.

One of the respondents elaborated further about what is on offer to the visitor. “The visitor comes to learn and see how the Nyungar sustain our culture, how we sustain the natural environment, how we hunt, how we gathered our food in the old days, what is our spirituality
and how Nyungar built their mia mia/dwellings. We tell them that we are one of the longest living cultures on earth. This helps the tourist make the connection that Nyungar have been here for over 55,000 years ago or more here in Nyungar country. They learn about what our ancestors did and how they actually survived here before colonisation. We can give them an understanding about how Nyungar lived in an ever-changing environment, even through the ice-age, this is bewildering for other cultures, we don’t have all the answers but we can help them to try and understand what it must have been like for the Nyungar. We pass on as much information about our culture as we can because tourists are investigating this whole thing, how did Nyungar survive over the millennia. We teach them that Nyungar have a place and we are able to express ourselves about our country. We are able to show them that there are places in Nyungar country where we have built monuments or museums; these are places where we hold all some of our cultural knowledge and heritage. We give them the opportunity to share our knowledge with them”.

We tell the tourist that we are happy to share some of our knowledge but we also tell them that there are some knowledge’s that are sacred and we keep that with us, like some of our burial areas. We see that it is not a necessity to share those sites with the tourist but we can give them an overview about this and who and what we are. We also have the opportunity to share our concerns with tourists about protecting our heritage sites, ancient burial grounds, ancient camping grounds and even the essential food source areas.

We tell them about the need to protect our environment because this means protecting our cultural heritage. If we don’t all share this concern then we may not be able to become an intricate part of tourism in Australia in the future and contribute to one of our major economies. We need to protect our environment because interstate and international visitors will come here and say, “oh here is another place/city, and they have probably destroyed some beautiful environment within Nyungar country”. Our areas are sensitive areas to our Nyungar people; once it is lost it is lost forever. The tourists won’t come back here to this area because if they wanted to see the raping and pillaging of land they can go anywhere in the world and see where this has happened. We offer the tourist an opportunity to come to Nyungar country and have a natural interaction with the environment and with a natural person from this area. Another respondent said that they try to cover the five senses with whatever content they are delivering in their tour. For instance, in their Interpretation tour they talk about Nyungar culture and way of life, which also brings in the gender specific issues that are very strong within our
culture. They talk about bush tucker, and often get people to sample these so they can feel, smell and taste. They talk about bush medicines, they point out the plants that can be used for medicinal purposes giving a full description of what these plants are used for and how they are applied. They talk about our Dreaming stories, but only our stories that are very common to a lot of the Nyungar community within the Peel Region and only stories where they have sought approval from the Elders so they deliver them as part of their product.

Every so often performances such as dance are offered during certain times of the year but especially over the holiday period. It is at these times when the Nyungar kids are not at school and they love to come and perform for the clients. This particular tour operator also looks at practical skills like water carrying baskets, cooking utensils to knives and depending on what area they are visiting and what natural resources they have got to work with and yes, give a very general overview of way of life of Nyungar people. Also taking people from pre-settlement through to contemporary Aboriginal Australia and the importance of retaining our cultural values and principles. Deborah Coertse of Yirra Kurl said “we offer a broad range of products, the designs on these products are authentic, a Nyungar has designed them, and the designs are my trademark”.

Craig McVee, of Kodja Place says they mainly purchase paintings and crafts from Nyungar that includes sandshoes, bags, and other pieces of merchandise. Tapping sticks, message sticks and walking sticks are also on offer and these too are made by local Nyungar people. They are currently experimenting with the making of traditional boomerangs, and want to get back to their culture and heritage and make each one unique. They also sell products on consignment for various Nyungar artists throughout the Nyungar region but mainly focussing on local products made by Nyungar people. All of their products have a ticket of authenticity.

Kodja Place also offers an interpretive tour. This is done by a Nyungar Tour Guide who takes the visitor through the building and give an insight into the displays and tells his/her own personal experiences about government policies and practices. He or she invites the visitor to sit and have a “good yarn” and gives a contemporary look at Nyungar culture today. They show the traditional lifestyle of Nyungar but in a contemporary setting.

Doc Reynolds of Kepa Kurl says “our philosophy is very simple. We offer what every one else can’t offer. You know, I have lived here all my life so I can give the historical evidence and
Nyungar Tourism in the Southwest of Western Australia

history of Esperance and also I can give the Aboriginal history. That is the beauty of an Indigenous tour operator as opposed to a mainstream or a white tour operator. The white history is available for everybody to read the Aboriginal history, which a lot of people have shown a lot of interest in; white people can’t talk about in the same manner as an Indigenous tour operator. Being a local and being seen as a leader and an Elder, it makes our part a lot easier because people recognise they are getting value for service, and I’m not somebody that has just blown in from out of town and started up as a tour operator. What I am giving the tourist or visitor is personal lifetime experience and it is involving the white and the Aboriginal history as you go along. So that is the strongest part of our tours. The visitor is getting their money’s worth because they are getting two tours for the price of one. And everybody always looks for that extra bit, when they are outlaying their money so that they can maximise their outlay to get the best possible product that they like. They come here, and it is just like us when we go away, we like to listen to what other people have got and we don’t mind paying the money so that you can come away with a better understanding of it”.

NYUNGAN PRODUCTS

Many of the products offered to tourists by the Indigenous Tour Operators are distinctly Nyungar. Six out of the ten respondents made it clear that when they purchase their stock for their galleries or retail stores, authentic Nyungar products that have been created by Nyungar is the number one priority.

Kwillana Dreaming

“... do not sell Nyungar products but it is something that we are working towards”. (Karen Jacobs, pers. comm. 2004)

Karen Jacobs of Kwillana Dreaming said that they only feature Nyungar products as part of their adventure tours, bush walks and performance and tell the tourist about these during the storytelling activity. For instance, etchings or paintings at sites of significance are shown to some tourists who have come for a second and third visit and want to know more about places of cultural significance. This decision is made only after the tour operator believes these visitors have achieved a certain level of cultural sensitivity and awareness of the importance of
protecting these sites as they are in close proximity to major roads and housing. This policy is to protect the knowledge of where these sites are located in case of vandalism.

Karen Jacobs reiterated that they do not sell Nyungar products but it is something that they working towards and have looked at mass producing and working with local suppliers to be able to develop up a mass product. It is something that they have not found a need to do right now but “when we do we will set up a retail outlet”.

**Wardan Cultural Centre**

> “When we purchase Nyungar products we are showcasing to the world that we are a very great nation of Nyungar people.” (Bill Webb pers. comm. 2004)

Bill Webb said that they make their own artefacts on site to allow the visitor to have an insight into Nyungar tool making and that they have access to over 35 artists from within Nyungar country from Perth to as far down as Albany, so keeping up the artwork and other stocks is not a problem. These Nyungar artists are actually showcasing not only the individual’s work but they are showcasing their own Nyungar boodjar or country. For instance, we gain art from around all the different Nyungar boodjar language groups. This is because some of them do not have major tourism attractions or participate in tourism. The Wardan Centre becomes the arm of the extended knowledge from other Nyungar areas. So we learn how to market ourselves. We know we have a product and we develop our products from all the resources like the music, art and plays. When we purchase Nyungar products we are showcasing to the world that we are a very great nation of Nyungar people.

**Maali Mia**

> “Whilst we mainly offer the tourist Nyungar products the reality is that there are lot of other Indigenous people living in the Perth area such as Wongi, Yamatji and Koori people”. (Dale Tilbrook, pers. comm. 2004)

Dale Tilbrook explains to us that Maali Mia are makers of real returning boomerangs. Maali Mia returning boomerangs were selected by SOCOG as part of their “Olympic Millennium collection
of Indigenous Arts and Crafts". Boomerang demonstrations and lessons are available to everyone by arrangement. Select from a range of models all with different flying characteristics. Select from the range of authentic, bush harvested, termite hollowed didgeridoos that are decorated by local Aboriginal artists. Each instrument is fully tested by their Nyungar craftsmen to ensure quality sound. Maali Mia or the place of the black swan is located in the Swan Valley and is a major tourist attraction for the area. As an Aboriginal owned and operated business, they offer a unique experience to local, domestic and international visitors. The business has recently established an Aboriginal Cultural Show at its premises through a co-operative venture with another local Aboriginal business, Ngala Koondarm Boodjah which means our dreaming land, is run by Lillian Smith-Ince and her son Steven Jackson.

Whilst we mainly offer the tourist Nyungar products the reality is that there are lot of other Indigenous people living in the Perth area such as Wongi people of the Goldfields of Western Australia, Yamatji people of the Mid West of Western Australia and Koori people from New South Wales. The tour operator said they secure a lot of the stock for the business through the artists approaching them with their artwork and other products. We are quite happy to sell work that is genuine authentic Indigenous works from Western Australian residents. We have a very small amount of work from out of the State. A very small range of Australiana products, in other words not produced by Indigenous artists is also offered to the tourist. However, these products are only bought when it is very top quality and where we cannot find an Indigenous source for the demand for these products. Maali Mia are currently developing new ranges for marketing around Australia including jewellery and "bush" scented items. Part of our marketing strategy has been to work with the local tourism and business associations. We are also waiting to join Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Committee as soon as they have their processes in place and are applying for accreditation as an Indigenous provider under their new programme.
Southern Aboriginal Corporation

“We (Nyungar art and culture) are going to be huge through Nyungar Moorditj because we will be promoting Nyungar and their culture”. (John Hayden, pers. comm. 2004)

John Hayden said that one of the things that they do well and are proud of at the Southern Aboriginal Corporation is their policy of promoting Nyungar art. This policy is based on the experiences that some of the Nyungar who are involved with Southern Aboriginal Corporation have had when travelling around Australia. “People in Australia say that there is ‘no culture in Nyungar country’, I say that is not true because I know there is, it is just that we don’t promote ourselves to the extent we should. A tourist might want to go up North because they want a tribal experience, a full hands on experience and you can see Aboriginal people everyday walking around the streets in places like Broome and that but here in Nyungar country in places like Albany or Perth, you probably would not see a Nyungar and yet up to 1500 Nyungar can live in any one town”. The same respondent informed the research team that they have a variety of art specifically belonging to Nyungar artists who have mentors like Lance Chadd, Lance Pickett and Revel Cooper. The respondent also posed the question “How do we promote Nyungar art and culture whether it is art, dance or whatever?” He believes one of the ways is to get out into the international market. SAC is actively involved in this marketing strategy for local Nyungar artists. This is being done through the Nyungar Moorditj Art Company because he believes people are screaming out for Nyungar art to come out of the cupboards. We are going to be huge through Nyungar Moorditj Art Company because we will be promoting Nyungar and their culture.
Yirra Kurl

Deborah Cortese of Yirra Kurl says that as a supplier of products we try and supply to the tourist market useable products but keeping the Indigenous context there and just letting them enjoy the painting, artwork and vibrancy of these products. It took a long time to get my colours into the product and my colours reflect my feelings and happy nature. People even pick my products to fit into the homes they are decorating my products are not just for Aboriginal people they are for everyone. My goal in this business is to clean up the market as we have tourists buying Aboriginal products that are made in China. All of our products are authentic, made in Western Australia. I don’t use Nyungar words on any of my products but it is something that we will seriously look at in the future, for instance our colouring books have pictures of animals but don’t have the Nyungar name for them maybe we will change this. I have room for the development of “teacher packs” and flash cards as well. Some of our future direction of growth will include clothing, swimwear, mix and match coordinates for bed linen we have demands for these products and when we do pursue this everything will still be authentic and West Australian made. The only issue that we have to deal with is the costs of producing our products in WA because we are competing with overseas labour market that could cost half of what it costs us but we are intent on protecting our market for as long financially possible.

In response to feedback from customers, a number of designs and products were phased out, and a number of new products were developed. Less focus was placed on hand-painted products such as boomerangs, clapping sticks and bookmarks, as they were costly and time consuming to produce with little profit margin. Products that were redeveloped included: bookmarks to a magnetic style, placemats and coasters – from heavy boxed sets with a cork bottom to disposable and laminated versions. Boomerangs – from hand-painted designs cut by machine using computerized versions of Yirra Kurl designs. New products include calendars and diaries, stationery pads, magnetic jigsaws, colouring books and postcards, fridge magnets, notebooks and note cubes, children’s stickers, boxes of lollies, polo shirts and printed scarves. Many of these new products gained rapid acceptance by customers and Deborah says this is one way of confirming that the product is a good product.
Nyungar Cultural Centre

“Authentic handcrafted Nyungar products will be our policy and skilling up our community to make Nyungar arts and crafts will be integral to the whole integrity of the process...” (Leon Ridgeway, pers. comm. 2004)

According to Leon Ridgeway through the Nyungar Cultural Centre at we will firstly identify people through their family groups and also through their language groups. For instance if they are a Whadjuk Nyungar, a Kaneang Nyungar, or a Balardong Nyungar and so on, we can tie up the family groups so that families also recognise their historical background in that way. Other Indigenous people coming to Nyungar country such as Koori of New South Wales, Murri of Queensland or Yamatji of the Mid West of Western Australia we would like them to also identify themselves in that manner so that we ensure that authenticity to product and cultural knowledge is paramount. We are not going to have anything made in Japan and flown back. Authentic Handcrafted Nyungar products will be our policy and skilling up our community to make Nyungar arts and crafts will be integral to the integrity of the process and the Centre itself. We will use all of the technology available to us today, information technology, laser printers and any other resources but make sure our products are authentic and everyone is “cool with it”. We will make sure that our cultural knowledge is also authenticated. We will set up a governance committee strictly for authenticating the material that goes in and out of the Centre. It is like the “gateway” or the “Keeping Place” idea where there are lines drawn up about public and private information.

So there will be a policy drawn up to say, “this is what we will do”. The Governance Committee will consist of Elders, Custodians to country, and people of significance within the community – not just coming from traditional families but historical families.

Yirra Kurl is the only product we purchase. We buy a range of products from Nyungar artists. We purchase our products from Nyungar and other Indigenous artists living in WA. We only supply Nyungar made and owned products. We only sell Yirra Kurl products – I have tried other Indigenous artists because of the demand of our products. However, sales agents and other suppliers did not accept their work. The reason being that my work and designs are unique and are recognised as the Yirra Kurl trademark.(Deborah Coertse pers. comm. 2004)
The Nyungar Cultural Centre will provide Nyungar products in the first instance, but if other Indigenous people can provide products we will market and offer these as well. But where possible the products would be Nyungar made and designed. We do have Koori people of New South Wales, Murri people of Queensland and other Indigenous people so we will be able to add an extra dimension to the products we offer. The Nyungar artefacts though will boost employment however for the locals.

**Kodja Place**

Kodja Place is a spectacular building that was designed in the shape of an “axe”. It houses a gallery full of art, books, t-shirts, home made jams, bookmarks to name just a few. It also houses their cultural interpretative walk where Nyungar tour guides will take the visitor through a Nyungar and Wedjela history.

**Kepa Kurl**

“We try and look for Aboriginal suppliers because we want Aboriginal products and we want to try and keep the product totally within Aboriginal control”. (Doc Reynolds, pers. comm. 2004)

Doc Reynolds suggest that basically Kepa Kurl offers tourists and visitors Indigenous inspired artwork: paintings such as dot art, carved emu eggs, painted glasses, emu oil products and other souvenirs such as placemats, mouse pads, key rings and fridge magnets. They also have wooden birds that are hand crafted and hand painted, candles in all shapes and forms, various types of painted plates and painted candle holders.
We try and look for Aboriginal suppliers because we want Aboriginal products and we want to try and keep the product totally within Aboriginal control. However sometimes, we can’t always do that so we have to go outside of Aboriginal products. If these products have been inspired by Aboriginal culture and people see that, then we can put the product out there that is equal if not better than the product we see around the town area. A lot of people make the comment, “that it is never too late to do these sorts of things”, and we believe it is about time we did it. Get something here that gives people an opportunity to purchase different types of products. To do this you have to create a market so that people will want to buy them. The downside of offering a particular product is that sometimes what you think will sell, doesn’t sell, so you have to get rid of it and get another product that will sell.

Our business comprises three areas:

- the art gallery and souvenir shop,
- the tours and
- the consultancy.

Our consultancy is based mainly around the cross-cultural awareness training, Indigenous issues or carry out work on behalf of Committees that many of our business directors sit on. For instance, I am the Chair of the Aboriginal Lands Trust and a few other administrative committees for which I get paid. In this respect it becomes a consultancy cost. So I try and do a lot of work now during the winter, and then we are hoping that by middle to late August, the wildflower season will crank up and when that starts, well then our tours will start. With our tours, we do six in all. The tours include:
1. Town tour which takes about three hours;
2. Kepawari tour which is the wetlands or moving water,
3. Tour of the islands and the wetlands which is a very brief introductory tour which goes for an hour and a half.
4. Marbleerup tour, that’s a half day or five hour tour
5. Mandoobournup tour, which is a beach tour and
6. Mandoowernup and that’s up at the National Park.

All our tours except the short ones, include billy tea and damper, and sometimes jam or bush jam when they are in season, or we can get the supplies when they are readily available. We also do other tours on demand and we will do tours out to some of the remote areas and places of historical significance. Whilst we take people out, not a lot of people have the opportunity of owning four wheel drives to get out to the remote areas that are only accessible by four wheel drive. Hopefully we will get a couple of good parking bays in the shade this year where we can promote our tours. Kepa Kurl is looking at doing a couple of other one day tours and night tours that are just going to be a “one off”. Just trial and error at the moment, we really haven’t given it a lot of thought just yet. It is something we are going to look into, just to gauge the interest. If it’s wanted we will do it more often.

**Middar**

"Keniny or dance is a dynamic and enduring cultural entity of Nyungar culture" (Dr Richard Walley pers. comm. 2004)

Middar means a style of dance of the Nyungar. Middar delivers spectacular interpretation of dance and song through their performances. This medium has enabled Middar to become internationally acclaimed dancers. Keniny or the dance is a dynamic and enduring cultural entity of Nyungar culture. Middar continue the tradition of Nyungar keniny or dance and offer the tourist an authentic Nyungar experience that has endured for over 40,000+ years to the present through this internationally acclaimed dance group.
AUTHENTICATING NYUNGAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Nyungar tourism operators encourage and seek “authenticity” to the products that are on offer to the visitor.

Kwillina Dreaming

“...so for me to come down and start up a business I had to make sure that I received the correct information”. (Karen Jacobs, pers. comm. 2004)

Oral history plays a very important part of Nyungar cultural knowledge and history. I was fortunate enough to have worked with an Elder from this region who has now passed on. The information I know about Binjareb country, because I am not a Binjareb Nyungar, I am from Whadjuck country in Perth, so for me to come down and start up a business I had to make sure that I received the correct information. The elder was really good at spending one on one time with me and he told me about a lot of the sites and making sure that I had the correct information. It seems though, who ever you talk to people can interpret things in different ways so the idea is to find the common ground on information or you don’t deliver at all or you go on what is written in a book which was often written by a Wedjela person. So it is very hit and miss and hypocritical in some cases.

Wardan Cultural Centre

“Along with the oral history of Wardandi Nyungar we incorporate the use of Australian history, scientific and archaeological findings and archival material”. (Bill Webb, pers. comm. 2004)

Bill Webb tells us that “even though our Nyungar people were pushed out of our lands the knowledge we use in the delivery of our tours came mainly from my parents, the very well respected Wardandi Elder Mr George Webb (deceased) and his mother Elder Ms Vilma Webb.
Along with the oral history of Wardandi Nyungar he incorporates the use of Australian history, scientific and archaeological findings and archival material. Bill went on further and tells us that “when the first settlers wrote a lot of stuff down, archival material brings back their reports and how they have interpreted our Nyungar stuff, knowledge from Elders as some Wedjela stuff is true and some is false. So our Elders can correct us if we use false information so we have the true Nyungar or Aboriginal interpretation. A lot of the old fellow’s did not have a lot of trust and trust people to pass on their knowledge because of oppression and suppression and a lot of the knowledge is out there and it is a matter of finding the Elder who wants to give us this knowledge. What we really need to do as Nyungar people is get the histories, use our own Nyungar knowledge and then rewrite our own Nyungar history so we don’t have issues such as intellectual copyright. I rarely get my knowledge and information authenticated or authorised for use by Nyungar Elders or other Nyungar because my father left us invaluable information that a lot of the Elders around the area could not equal. I know he taught me stuff and my mum holds a lot of the information and so do my aunties so I feel safe that the knowledge I have is secure and authentic. I have knowledge about burial grounds that may not have been passed on to other Wardandi Nyungars but it is also safe with us Wardandi Nyungar.

Maali Mia

“…making sure that whatever content we do deliver is agreed upon by the majority of the Elders”. (Dale Tilbrook, pers. comm. 2004)

Dale agrees that this is a good question or point to make but said that “we still don’t have those issues about authenticity at this stage. So it is just making sure that whatever content we do deliver is agreed upon by the majority of the Elders that live in the region as being “true or close to correct”.
Southern Aboriginal Corporation

John Hayden tells us that “fortunately that I grew up with our oldies and a lot of our Nyungar culture and stories were handed down to us, but a lot of younger Nyungar than me are studying and trying to find out our Nyungar heritage. It is very important to have knowledge of Nyungar culture and because most people know me they know my background and acknowledge that I have had a very good upbringing about our Nyungar culture”. From SAC’S perspective I have a good background and so this is what I will be promoting and continuing to promote in Nyungar tourism. Also, Intellectual Property belongs to the artists, to all the Nyungars. Someone who sells that piece of art still owns the intellectual property about that story. My intellectual property belongs to me and my family. One of the things that Nyungar have to do is grab hold of and accept that the intellectual property is theirs because as we know what some people are doing is plagerising their property and its not something they always understand. Countries like China, Hong Kong, and Malaysia have bought paintings but Nyungar say “but I sold the painting it doesn’t belong to me anymore” but I tell them the intellectual property still belongs to them. At the end of the day its all about what is intellectual property, how do we deal with that and make sure that Nyungar knowledge remains with our Nyungar culture/people. If we pass on something to somebody or someone we have to make sure that it remains here in Nyungar country.

Waljin Consultancy

My family were not sent to missions, our family stayed in tact and so remained in our part of Nyungar country. The knowledge that I was given was handed on through our matriarchal system from my Great Grandmother May Hill, she taught me about damper making, bush
foods, bush tucker, women’s roles and responsibilities in it and she has given me the seeds of self esteem to be proud enough to be involved in our Nyungar culture. Therefore the knowledge and stories that I share with the tourists and visitor’s are authentic. There are only some shared knowledge that I give to the public sphere and the other is only for the private sphere. The main teacher then was my great grandmother who was matriarch of our family. People respected her and her role as Nyungar elder and custodian of knowledge.

I am able to speak confidently about our stories and culture because I am Nyungar, everything that I have been told has been told to me since the day I was born, I experience our culture, I share stories with family and other Nyungar – we don’t question our knowledge so why should the visitor or tourist. As part of my business my word is my word, if I share something with the visitor it’s because it is what I have been taught. I wouldn’t share with anyone unless I have this knowledge. For instance, if someone asked me about men’s business I would say that certain elements of men’s business are not appropriate to talk about and I would have to check on the protocol for sharing this sort of knowledge. For instance, when I was told about woordartji’s, buylit’s and mummaries – I didn’t question it, I couldn’t go and reference these stories from the archives. I was told these stories from our own experts, our Nyungar people.

Yirra Kurl

“The authenticity of Yirra Kurl products is assured, in a market where authenticity is not always the case, but is demanded by buyers”. (Deborah Coertse, pers. comm. 2004)

Yirra Kurl produces a range of over forty high quality, authentic Australian Aboriginal art and craft products for the local community, tourist and corporate markets. The products they offer include boomerangs, hand painted message stones and rocks, jewellery made from the seeds of Australian native flora, and printed products such as diaries, calendars, writing pads, envelopes, wrapping paper, key rings, greeting cards, playing cards and even colouring books for children. Deborah also says that not only is authenticity assured, but that she also controls and owns the creative direction. A comment from a Curator at the Aboriginal Art Museum in Utrecht Netherlands said “we like that we can order directly from the artist, that we’re not dealing with a distribution company”. The service levels and reputation of Yirra Kurl is very high, they produce consistently high quality products, with prompt distribution and customer
Nyungar Tourism in the Southwest of Western Australia

service. Yirra Kurl also accesses a large pool of labour for one-off products through PEEDAC. PEEDAC is the Indigenous CDEP organisation located in the southwest corridor of the metropolitan area. Deborah Coertse say that Yirra Kurl put their reputation on the line and assures authentic products that are of a very high quality.

**Nyungar Cultural Centre**

"We will have a policy in place and then the Governance Committee will sit down and say this is what we can do and this is what we can’t do").

(Leon Ridgeway, pers. comm. 2004)

Leon Ridgeway tells us that they have people identify who they are through family and their Nyungar language group rather than say we are Nyungar. We would like them to say we are Wardandi Nyungar or Whajuk Nyungar so that is one way we are going to tie the families up. Families also recognise their historical backgrounds, that way, people coming into other peoples country like the Koori people of New South Wales, the Murri people of Queensland or the Wongi people of the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia could identify in this manner to ensure that authenticity is paramount. We are not just going to have anything built in Japan or China and flown here, that sort of caper. Making handcrafted products through our community is a necessity. I don’t see how we can do it any other way. It is integral to the whole integrity of the process and to the Centre itself. We will need to use of the technology available to us today to make sure that our products are authentic.

All of our Nyungar knowledges and history needs to be brought together through a Governance Committee to authenticate the material that comes in and will go out. We will have a “Keeping Place” idea where there will be lines drawn about public and private information. We will have a policy in place and then the Governance Committee will sit down and say this is what we can do and this is what we can’t do. The Governance Committee will consist of Nyungar Elders, Custodians to Country, people of significance within the community – not just coming from traditional families but also from historical families. Because at some stage people need to be making a distinction between who are the traditional owners of country that own the land and others who are historical residents of country by that I mean they moved into this area from elsewhere. As you know the historical residence could be there for a hundred years but they are not traditional owners of country. We want to avoid the mistakes other Indigenous people
have made in terms of “who owns country”. Nyungar will develop what Nyungar want to do rather than have someone come in and say this is what you will do.

**Kodja Place**

> A lot of the Nyungar history and culture have come from word of mouth from our Nyungar elders. (Craig McVee, pers. comm. 2004)

All of our displays that show Nyungar artefacts were donated by local farming people who had these in their keeping. In one case for over 100 years – this person had a boomerang, spear thrower and spear which was traded to them here in Kojonup in exchange for “flour and sugar” You can’t get more authentic than this. The stones we have on display were found by local farmers. These stones are grinding stones that the Nyungar would have used for the grinding of seeds for making flour for their damper and we also have the cutting stones which were used for cutting meat, spear heads, skinning of furs and so on.

A lot of the Nyungar history and culture have come via word of mouth from our Nyungar elders. We had to get permission from them to tell the stories and once they gave us the OK we included this in our stories. Some of the farmers also told us stories and showed us their wage books. One farmer had a wage book going back to 1936 and it showed the names of all the individual Nyungar involved in work and the activity they were undertaking.

**Kepa Kurl**

> “The paintings that we sell have a ticket of authenticity that tells you about the artist, where they are from, how they learnt to paint, and they tell the story of the painting - this is one good way of ensuring authenticity”
> (Doc Reynolds, pers. comm. 2004)

Doc Reynolds explains that when I am sharing my knowledge with the tourists, I make sure that what I share with them can be referenced because you may get somebody on our tour like an anthropologist or an archaeologist. You have got to make sure that what you are saying can be cross-referenced. But of course with the Nyungar culture we are basically all the same but
there are some differences with regards to our language. And of course you know you have to
have your language because the language that I refer to might not necessarily be the language
that other Nyungar people refer to. But it is Nyungar language and not many people realise
that this is the case. Where we get the confusion sometimes with our Nyungar language is the
writing down of it.

Because you get one linguist or an Aboriginal person and another person writing it down and
another person reading it, doesn’t necessarily come out the way it was written down, and then
it creates a bit of confusion but we all generally know what we are talking about. Being in my
position I was pretty fortunate because I was brought up in the bush, and then I spent a lot of
time working with old people, not a lot, well I should have spent a lot more time with them
obviously, but with the old people talking about language, law and culture and all those issues.

I actually started doing some work over the last couple of weeks that I was told about twenty
five years ago, and I went and spoke to another old fellow about these concerns that these old
people talked about twenty five years ago and he said “yeah, I remember it clear to this day”.
We both went down into this other shop where they had these senior people who work for
Indigenous Affairs, we were looking for some reference to the knowledge that me and the old
fullah knew, and unbeknown to me it was there, it just authenticated what we had always
known. I got that knowledge about twenty-five years ago. I was blown away to the point where
I just sort of thought, well why did I disbelieve it? Now when I see it here written down, I can
see what they were saying then.

I went and spoke to another old bloke in the last couple of months and he said “yep, that’s
true”. And so this gives credence to my service delivery in business because I feel confident
that things are true. But, I should kick myself for doubting the old fellows years ago who
handed on this knowledge to me.

We are totally Aboriginal controlled. We have no other outside intruders here and it is a
registered Australian company. We have to fulfil all the guidelines to that registration and it is
ours and we are not answerable to anybody other than ourselves. We don’t have to rely on
anybody other than our business partners and that is something that we are quite happy to be
a part of. Where people go into business with other partners I think, if you want to create an
authentic Aboriginal tour product then it only has to be Aboriginal because sometimes a white
fulla coming in can misconstrue it to a point where it westernises the culture. When it westernises the culture you have to ask yourself if you are creating a product that people want.

I am not knocking anyone but the point is, in our shop here, we want to make it so that people feel homely, feel comfortable and that it is culturally appropriate. Having a facility that is culturally appropriate, we looked at trying to go into a bigger shop space but we will do this, maybe down the track. We want to maintain that authenticity and cultural appropriateness so that when you walk into our shop, we are not jammed with souvenirs, and as I was talking to people this morning, we want to put quality stuff there that people want to try and want to purchase.

The paintings that we sell have a ticket of authenticity that tells you about the artist, where they are from, how they learnt to paint, and they tell the story of the painting - this is one good way of ensuring authenticity. All the glassware, emu eggs, and other carvings also have tickets of authenticity. This tells the visitor that they are buying an authentic Indigenous product.

**Middar**

“...do your research before you deliver, make sure your product is authentic”. *(Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm. 2004)*

Dr Richard Walley claims that there are a lot of advantages in tourism, a lot of strength where you can highlight culture and cultural activities, you can also bring people in to think differently. I think there are many, many strengths of the beauty within a culture and the beauty of an experience within cultures. There is also a danger. The danger is when something becomes either successful or there is a demand for it, then, you can also attract some people who don’t really know the full essence of what they are on about. They have bits and pieces of information and knowledge so they turn that into a product or an experience, as they are going along. That becomes very dangerous because a lot of misinformation gets out then, this is where you really have to find out and do your research before you deliver, make sure your product is authentic. Make sure that you are not pinching from other regions just to incorporate them into your thinking so that you can offer it as part of our venture.
What I am saying, in this sector is that there is nothing wrong with progress or experimentations or doing things yourself or inventing something new or trying something new. There is nothing wrong with that - that is part of the evolution of cultures and people themselves. What I am very much afraid of is people who take historical events and distort them so that it is to their own advantage. I think that is where there is the only danger of cultural pluralism is that you really must have your information together to back up your presentation to make sure that everything is authentic.

I think the personnel involved in your presentation is very important. If you are using Nyungar as Nyungar tourism then the figurehead, the person responsible for the whole operation should be a Nyungar. You also find that Nyungars can employ who ever they like, or work with, utilise who ever they like to enhance their product as long as they are not degrading it or misrepresenting it. So you will have a lot of Nyungar operations that have non-Nyungars involved. That is quite healthy. On the other hand you have Nyungars working on a lot of stuff that is not necessarily Nyungar as well. Really the figurehead or the person who is ultimately responsible or the organisations that are ultimately responsible for any presentations under the name of Nyungar, should be a Nyungar.

**AVAILABILITY OF NYUNGR IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

The ten case study respondents stated that where possible Nyungar people are employed within their tourism operation. Some of the case study respondents also said that given there were other Aboriginal people living in the Nyungar region who were actively seeking work in the industry and were knowledgeable about Nyungar culture or had good tool making skills these tourist operators would employ them. However, it was also acknowledged by the participants that there were a number of cultural factors that can impinge on Nyungar people in employment. They were identified as follows:

- Funerals – “sorry time”
- Family obligations or
- Family responsibilities
- Mobility
Kwillana Dreaming

Karen Jacobs of Kwillana dreaming gave an account of some of the issues that an employer faces when employing Nyungar/Indigenous staff. “When running a business and employing Nyungar/Indigenous staff in your industry you have to take into account that there will be cultural issues bought into the workplace. This is an issue when working in the tourism industry because you can’t run some days and not others. You have to take into account that the industry is very unforgiving, because if you miss a day because of ‘sorry time’ or because one of your staff members decides to go “walkabout” and not come back that is not a good enough excuse as far as the tourism industry is concerned. This is because too many other people down the line rely on you running a reliable operation. So if you have got overseas clients coming in, its not just that person making the booking once they get to this country to come on your tour. Often they have been told about your tours from their country from an inbound/outbound tour operator who as acted as a booking agent on your behalf, so they have to be confident that what you are delivering is a reliable and punctual tour. If you miss a day and you leave clients sitting on the roadside it does not go down very well and it does actually take you a long time to recover from that. Also it would take a long time to recover the confidence that you have in your booking agents from overseas and/or interstate. This is one of the reasons I don’t employ all Nyungar people because there might be a funeral coming up and we as Nyungar people are obligated to attend because most of us are all related. Or, we all might have a respect for somebody who has passed on and so must go to the funeral. Therefore I do employ other Indigenous people so that at least I have a Yamatji person or a Wongi person or a Murri or a Koori person who can step in and deliver the tour on our behalf.

Wardan Cultural Centre

Bill Webb said that Nyungar people are readily available for employment in the tourism market. If he was to advertise for Nyungar staff he said he could get Nyungar from Busselton and other
areas and then teach them the specifics of the role of a Nyungar Cultural Tour Guide. He also claimed that at this point in time his operation has a core element in the community that he can call on if he needed to employ more staff. He stated that his business will only grow once they have secure financial viability because they could not afford to pay any more staff at this stage. At the moment Wardan staff consists of eight full-time staff and four part-time staff and make up both genders:

- Manager/Administrator
- Cultural Manager
- Cultural Tour Guides
- Five Trainees

The eight positions are funded through either the STEP program, CDEP, ATSIC or the Aboriginal and Economic Development Commission.

**Maali Mia**

“We employ both Nyungar and non-Nyungar staff at Maali Mia”  
(Dale Tilbrook, pers. comm. 2004)

Dale Tilbrook said that they employ both Nyungar and non-Nyungar staff but the number employed fluctuates according to the season and the health of the tourism industry. “At the height of tourism I have had two people helping me but I am operating the Art and Crafts Shop and other parts of the business myself because of those global issues such as the War on Terrorism and the SARS virus in the past two or three years. The boomerang making part of the business employs my business partner and he has two men working in the workshop. One worker is from Indonesia and the other is a Nyungar, they are both casual because of the poor health of the industry, which has affected orders coming in so we cannot guarantee fulltime wages at the moment. Both these staff are kept occupied enough to be interested in the business and therefore they don’t seek alternative employment. We do not utilise the Community Development Employment Scheme to subsidise any of our staff. Maali Mia staff includes:
Nyungar Tourism in the Southwest of Western Australia

- Director, Operations and Retail (fulltime)
- Director, Boomerang Making (fulltime)
- Two Workshop assistants (part-time)
- One Accountant (part-time)

Southern Aboriginal Corporation

"there are plenty of Nyungar people available for work if the opportunities are there". (John Hayden, pers. comm. 2004)

The Art and Craft Shop run through the Southern Aboriginal Corporation employs two part-time Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) workers. The Southern Aboriginal Corporation purchases all of their stock from Nyungar people throughout the southwest from places such as Bunbury, Perth, Moore, Katanning and the wheat belt. This creates employment opportunities through the CDEP program where the artists employ their skills in the creation of Nyungar artefacts and paintings. John says that there are plenty of Nyungar people available for work if the opportunities are there. However, we have a strong commitment to the training and education of Nyungar people and we want to see that suitable on-the-job training is provided to Nyungar staff.

Waljin Consultancy

"We have become flexible now and have more business confidence but we also recognize now that there are silly little things that affect our people and can stop them from getting a job. Like they don’t have a licence but have a car..." (Mitchella Hutchinson, pers. comm. 2004)

Michella Hutchinson of Waljin Consultancy stated that they employ all Nyungar staff except one who is a Wongi artist who is a welcome visitor to our country from the Goldfields in Western Australia who offers a different style. With the five (5) year Plan we kept getting stuck on protocols and so a heap of us sat down, identified some basic guidelines and rules for ourselves and our employees like quality service and don’t turn up to work “blue” you know being drunk and making sure the employee has a certain amount of public confidence and so on. Any Indigenous operator has to be aware of what they can and can’t share and that was
one of the first things we were on top of before we went ahead with anything in the business, because otherwise we would be no different than any other commercial operator basically exploiting Nyungar knowledge and culture for a commercial purpose. We actually wanted to give it that authenticity – make it real. Because I had such a burden trying to get everything going I had guidelines set down so that if people could not adhere to the guidelines that we had set down, they would be wasting my time because as a small business operator I had to be as blunt as that because I could not afford carry anyone.

We have become flexible now and have more business confidence but we also recognize now that there are silly little things that affect our people and can stop them from getting a job. Like they don’t have a license but have a car, they are great people and can work really well but can’t get to work so we look at how we can combat these problems and work around them. We got around this problem by picking them up or if there is a tour in town, we get the town person (employee) without a license to facilitate that tour or go on the walking tour, than drive people around in the bush if we have a bush tour that day. All these sorts of things are things that we are faced with and so have to try and work out how we can solve these problems. Our guidelines and protocols were for everyone - even with my own family and mum and that, I had to have those guidelines in place because again I could not carry anyone whether they were family or not. All my staff have been paid from the very beginning whether they took a mob of tourist around or delivered a talk about because their time is valuable to me and I wanted my staff to be aware of that, but also wanted to make sure that they delivered a quality product as well. I would not want to pay them to deliver a half-baked product.

The TAFE students we bring into our business are contracted for their specific knowledge and expertise. I trained them myself so I know what areas they are really good at. I know I can leave one of the Nyungar girls to make a mia mia confidently and then two of the boys to throw spear etc and I know they do this really well. I need a quality of Nyungar people to do my tours. I do not want to employ someone under the Waljin Consultancy name who would make me and our business look silly but that is how business works anyway.
Waljin staff consists of:

- Ten staff (all Nyungar except one who is a Wongi)
- Mum and Nana as my Elders – elders role include a “Welcome to Country”.
- Two young brothers – (throw spears and boomerangs)
- Bill Webb and the dancers from Wardan Cultural Centre if we have a smoking ceremony.
- We also contract five to seven Nyungar TAFE students (who come from different parts of Nyungar country). They are trained as Cultural Custodians and the women talk about women’s business and the men talk about men’s business
- Accountant

Yirra Kurl

“My business does not have any cultural issues per se as we employ family members so they can work things out as a family” (Deborah Coretse, per. comm. 2004).

Yirra Kurl have employed a number of staff, both Nyungar, Koori people from the Eastern States and non-Indigenous staff who have a diverse range of skills and expertise. Deborah tells us that she has no doubt that she could fill vacant positions with Nyungar people. Her business does not have any cultural issues per se as she employs her family members so they can work things out as a family. Yirra Kurl has recently experienced large growth and expansion, particularly in its staffing levels. As of December 2004 it had ten staff members. The staff positions comprise of a Cleaner, Accountant, Receptionist, Graphic Artist and Manager, Presser and Warehouse Manager, Despatch Officer, Packaging Officer, Painter, teacher and Seed Driller and one staff member on work rehabilitation. The organisational structure of Yirra Kurl is as follows:
Nyungar Cultural Centre

“...there is enough Nyungar people out there that we can employ in our tourism operation”. (Leon Ridgeway, pers. comm. 2004)

The Nyungar Cultural Centre will employ Nyungar people where possible. We have done a skills audit amongst our Nyungar community and we have identified that there is enough Nyungar people out there that we can employ in our tourism operation. However, we have also identified that there will be other Indigenous people who will be able to come in from outside and work for us and if they don’t have the skills then they will be trained.

Kodja Place

“This is a real problem” (Craig McVee, pers. comm. 2004)

In our region the availability of gaining a Nyungar Tour Guide can be a bit hard at times because we don’t have a very high unemployment rate. This is a real problem so we have to acknowledge that we may have to employ a local Aboriginal person or even a Wedjela but we hope this doesn’t happen. One of the difficulties also is that we want to tell our history with a personal experience so getting another Nyungar from another area would be unfair on the visitor because we want to give them that “authentic experience”. However, if there was a gap we can call on our Nyungar trainees who are employed here at Kodja Place to fill in if our Tour Guide was not able to turn up for work.
We employ four Nyungar trainees and we have a Wedjela Manager whose position is funded by the Kojonup Shire as well as a number of community volunteers who come and work at the Centre on weekends or when they are needed. We have a very long, strong and healthy relationship between the Nyungar and Wedjela people here in the Kojonup community and it is something that we take great pride in.

**Kepa Kurl**

“One of the other problems is getting the young Nyungar people not to have that “shame factor” and they need to get the confidence to get up in front of people and do public speaking (Doc Reynolds, pers. comm. 2004).”

Down here not many Nyungar have the confidence and expertise to do dance because there wasn't the demand. There hasn't been anything in this area before and not a real priority for people to get organised. The reason we can get John Beck and the other boys into dance and didgeridoo playing is because they were trained up and confident in what they do. They were trained up in Queensland because that's where they were employed. One of other problems is getting the young Nyungar people not to have that “shame factor” and they need to get the confidence to get up in front of people and do public speaking.

What we are planning on doing is going to do an accreditation course with the four of us involved in Kepa Kurl. We will identify those who will be an asset in the future for our business and invite them to come and do the course with us. The Accreditation Course is being run through TAFE and one of the things in the course is writing our own Nyungar tourism training program. That will cover all aspects of the tourism trade from customer service right through to how to present our Nyungar heritage, culture, spirituality, language and about country.

This is one way of building up our availability of Nyungar in the workforce and will be a quality assurance test, that is, everyone will be trained in the delivery of the tours and educational sessions. We will all deliver the same presentation and therefore we will be confident of the integrity and authenticity of our products. By going through the Accreditation Course it will help open doors with the larger bus company’s like AAT Kings because basically, without accreditation, they won't look at us – we don't want to be like a Jackie Jackie organisation – here one day and not the next.
Kepa Kurl is committed to building a solid foundation. We employ as many Nyungar as we can but at this stage we have a mix of Nyungar and Wedjela running our business. The staff positions comprise:

- Director x 2
- Accountant
- Shop Manager
- Principal Consultant – Cross Cultural Awareness
- Finance & Accounts Officer
- Principal Tour Guide
- Dancers x 5
- Two Didgeridoo Players

**Middar**

“*We have employed lots of people who are not Nyungar*.  
*(Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm. 2004)*

Dr Richard Walley tells us that when Middar actually started off there were only three Nyungar involved. Louis Collard, Theo Kearing and Dr Richard Walley. The other members of Middar were Ken Buxton, a Nunga from the Flinders Ranges from South Australia, and John Kelly from the Northern parts of Alice Springs and Ernie Dingo a Yamatji. We combined together to give something that was an Aboriginal presentation. It was Nyungar. It was Middar Aboriginal Theatre. Because I was the figurehead of the whole operation, I had the support of the Nyungar at this stage. Some of our Elders did the dancing, but Middar was under the umbrella of Nyungar and the other people as dance group members and had no problem with that.

In doing our presentations, Middar just became Middar and since then we have employed lots of people who are not Nyungars and worked with lots of people that are not Nyungars. That has been very successful, we have been to places like Los Angeles with people like Kevin Gunn who is very well known as a guitarist from the Kimberley. We did presentations with other Indigenous people playing instruments that Nyungar people didn’t play at the time, so we have got no problems in any of them not being Nyungar.
HOW THE OPERATORS MONITOR FEEDBACK FROM THE TOURIST

Kwillana Dreaming

“In the very early days we used to run a lot of ‘dummy’ tours”. (Karen Jacobs, pers. comm. 2004)

Karen Jacobs of Kwillana Dreaming said that in the very early days we used to run a lot of “dummy” tours and bring the public on just to get our Tour Guides to get experience in talking to the public. At that stage of our business, the feedback was overwhelming; we used to get some constructive criticism coming back like 1) not a lot of toilet stops 2) maybe have a huge jug of water etc. The criticism was not about the content or the way the Tour Guides delivered the information, it was all to do with the basic resources we needed to cover while delivering a tour. Since then we have had a lot of our clients come back for a second tour because they have found the information overwhelming – part of their Indigenous cultural awareness. We have not had a lot of negative feedback just basically making sure we have enough resources. So again out of our own wages we have had to purchase a huge amount of resources for standby depending on the age of the client be they the elderly or children. We have quite a lot of seating, 20-litre esky so that we can have iced water, just really basic things.

Wardan Cultural Centre

“Response from tourists are amazing”. (Bill Webb, pers. comm. 2004)

Many of the case study participants said that the tourists like everything about their tours. Bill Webb tells us that the “response from tourists are amazing”. He says why wouldn’t they find the Wardan Cultural Centre tours amazing because “here they get the full works of everything to do with Nyungar that they would not get at a museum”. He said that Wardan are directly involved in the Living Windows Project because we relate to the environment and they can see
that our Centre blends into the environment. The visitor can see a lot pictures that depict Aboriginal as desert people, we are depicted as Desert people and that's not true at all, here we can show them a different version of what us coastal people are as hunters and gatherers. Every now and then tourists say something is missing from our tour.

**Maali Mia**

> “they are a bit disappointed because there are so many fair skinned Nyungar, we’re not very black people”. (Dale Tilbrook, pers. comm. 2004)

Dale Tilbrook of Maali Mia tells us that some of the feedback they receive from tourists suggests that “they are a bit disappointed because there are so many fair skinned Nyungar, we’re not very black people”. However, Dale Tilbrook tells us that once they are given the history of Aboriginal Australia and how we all “got mixed up” this helps to dismiss that romantic notion of the “black fulla, standing with one leg on his knee, his spear in one hand and a boomerang in the other”!

**Southern Aboriginal Corporation**

> “Many of the people who come through have mainly said positive things”. (John Hayden, pers. comm. 2004)

We monitor feedback through the number of visitors who come to our shop and by listening to what they have to say. Many of the people who come through have mainly said positive things. At the moment we are a small tourism business but as our products grow along with our business we will put in place some more formal ways of monitoring what the tourist likes about our Art and Craft Shop and what they think of our products. As I said before, we are going into the Nyungar Art industry in a big way. We are going to take our Nyungar art and artists to an international level. So we will just wait and see when this happens.
Waljin Consultancy

As part of their business strategy Waljin Consultancy give out feedback forms to their visitors so they can ascertain how well their tours are going or what is not being done well. Mitchell tells us why this aspect of her business is important. “Especially for me it is a chance to see where I can improve my product or where we are failing in a certain area. It also acts a resource for the future and can be used as part of your promotional and marketing strategy. So having a quality piece of paper with the visitors name and who their tour operator was, even if it was just an individual who came to visit. These feedback forms are like a personal reference and when you go for a job or promoting your business, you can show this as proof of how good your tour operation is”. Some tourists say they want more time and want to stay longer. For example, we took Presbyterian Ladies College students out for three days and they went feral, they loved our adventure tour, they wanted a five-day program next time, but in fact we offered them an eight day program – these kids are hungry for Indigenous culture. Our tours are about a “shared experience” not just an Indigenous experience. I have learnt from the feedback from that many of the Australian tourists are unhappy with the knowledge that they have received about Australian history and want to enhance and develop their knowledge of Indigenous Australia as a result of coming on our tour.

“Many years ago the Queen of England came to Busselton and she was given a tour by my family members. Then in 2000 she made a return trip and requested we conduct another tour here for her so we showed her around the Waljin Rainbow Garden. Then we took the Queen of England on a bush tucker tour. We tried to give her an insight into contemporary Nyungar culture, let her know that our culture did not die 200 years ago, we are alive and strong”. As a result of this tour we got feedback from the Premier, Richard Court at the time, the Queen’s representatives, the local Shire President – Beryl Morgan and whoever else of importance. The feedback was excellent. We knew we had a top quality product and did not falsely try to enhance our product. Just because it was the Queen visiting we did not change our tour, stories or products for her. Any visitor who comes to Waljin will get “the royal treatment”.

“These feedback forms is like a personal reference and when you go for a job or promoting your business, you can show this as proof of how good your tour operation is”. (Mitchella Hutchinson, pers. comm. 2004)
Yirra Kurl

Deborah tells us that the growth of Yirra Kurl is a direct result of an aggressive marketing campaign aimed at increasing the number of retail outlets stocking Yirra Kurl products, combined with ongoing product development, both in the development of new products and the modification of current products, using feedback from its stockists, and their customers. These two activities in combination have been extremely successful; stockists increased from 67 in September 2001, to 428 in December 2003. “Feedback is critical as it helps us to tailor our products for the customers. As I am the only designer of Yirra Kurl products it puts a lot of pressure on me to keep up with product demands. At one stage I decided to employ some other Indigenous artists to help me with my workload but the feedback from my stockists and customers was not good. They said that they could tell that it was not my work and would not buy products that were not designed and painted by myself. So I had to let these artist’s go. I just try and manage my time better now so that I can continue to develop and paint my own designs. So this is one instance where the feedback was critical for my business. “We also have sales agents in every State and attend Trade Fairs in cities such as Sydney and Perth where all the retailers come and meet our staff and look at our products on display. I have always handled the marketing side of Yirra Kurl, and make regular trips to the Eastern States to visit clients. This is another avenue for receiving feedback direct from some of our customer base about our products and services. This feedback has driven Yirra Kurl’s product development. Many products are trialled in the marketplace before going into mass production”, says Deborah.

Nyungar Cultural Centre

“You have to listen to what is being said”. (Leon Ridgeway, pers. comm. 2004)

According to Leon Ridgeway feedback is important. No matter what you are doing. Even now, all of us involved in the Working Party make sure that the feedback that comes to us helps set the direction of where we are going. You have to listen to what is being said, so we will be
listening to our visitors, the community and whoever else wants to say something. It will be important to do this because other people have a perspective that is not driven by what we think, if you don’t get feedback and listen to other people you can develop a tunnel vision about they way you do things and it might not always be the best way. We will also look at other Indigenous Cultural Centres, even worldwide if we can, so that we can use these cultural exchanges to inform us about what will be in our own practice.

Kodja Place

“... visitor surveys are the most cost effective form of research.” (Craig McVee, pers. comm. 2004)

We use feedback forms to monitor the interest and views of the tourists who come through our Centre. This has resulted in Kodja Place making some critical decisions about its marketing strategy. It will continue to place the importance of “word of mouth”, visitor reactions and visitor perceptions to The Kodja Place. Craig says that “knowing and responding to customer needs is integral to an attractions ongoing success and visitor surveys are the most cost effective form of research.”

Kepa Kurl

“...for us it is just trial and error at the moment as we really haven’t given it a lot of thought yet”. (Doc Reynolds, pers. comm. 2004)

The majority of people that come on our tours want to get a greater understanding of the Aboriginal culture. The product that works as I said earlier, that we are trying to produce is to be able to fill that knowledge void that the visitor might have. We find especially with the Europeans, that they are very interested in what we do. They want to look at our hunting and gathering techniques, look and learn about our bush foods, look at our bush medicines, look at our lifestyles. You know I define culture myself as five areas and this seems to be reciprocal across all cultures.
When I do my tours I try to cover the following areas.

- One is the land, which is you know an important area
- law which is another important area
- language because that identifies us
- the spiritual or the dreaming, and lastly but mostly
- the family or the kinship systems which Aboriginal people have very strong feelings about.

So those five, I try to cover in my tours. I believe that the product that people are looking for is in those five areas. And that allows us to plan our products around that. And of course if you don’t do that then we are not filling the void to a lot of people.

**Middar**

...can be judged by the number of people who come to see your cultural activity. (Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm. 2004)

Dr Richard Walley tells us “as I said before, the true feedback you get from the tourist or visitor about your performance or tourism venture can be judged by the number of people, who come to see your cultural activity or in our case, performances”.
OPERATING TWELVE MONTHS OF THE YEAR

Kwillana Dreaming

“We are covered up for $10 million dollars, we are very fortunate to have an Insurance Company that caters and understands Indigenous Cultural Tourism and understands how Indigenous people deliver their tours.

(Karen Jacobs, Director of Kwillana Dreaming)

“No problems, said Karen Jacobs of Kwillana Dreaming”

The case study participants responded positively about their capability of operating all year round. Each of the tourism operators have a variety of products on offer, bushwalks all year round, art and craft galleries, history and cultural talks, canoe rides except winter, educational excursions, camps for youth and tool making. The case studies also commented on public liability insurance and some of their experiences in “capturing” an agent.

“We are covered for up for $10 million dollars we are very fortunate to have an Insurance Company that caters and understands Indigenous Cultural Tourism and understands how Indigenous people deliver their tours. Before we ended up with the Company we have got now we actually went through 15 Insurance companies and we did not hear back from ten of them once we said what we needed – most of them just find cultural interpretation too difficult to insure, especially when we are delivering bush tucker on the site and we could be out bush walking one day and doing overnight tour which is all walking about 15kms but some companies find that too risky even though it is passive walking. We do operate all year round because we are being diverse in what we can deliver. That’s how we get by in winter but what we deliver will change dramatically and how we deliver it.
We don’t deliver our canoe tours during winter but what we do during this time is take out a lot of school groups, university and TAFE students when they are going through the peak of their cultural curriculum and when they have actually got time to be released from their studies to go out and experience what they have been doing in the classroom in a practical way. So we will change the way we are delivering and especially the packages we present so we are more or less tailor making a tour to represent the curriculum or the educational needs of the group we are meeting with”.

**Wardan Cultural Centre**

“...yes we do operate all year round and have extensive insurance”.
(Bill Webb, pers. comm. 2004)

Wardan Cultural centre is capable of operating all year round. Bill Webb says they have to have public liability insurance. “When you are dealing with people from all over the world, school groups, elderly, they might fall over, kid runs off and might cut their hand. It is a safeguard, you have to safeguard yourself from accidental stuff. Our Centre is nestled in magnificent bush, if fire came through here we would be wiped out”. Insurance is built into our budget and we employ a Manager, Bookkeeper and an Accountant and we are really starting to look after our own affairs. Over the next couple of years we will become financially viable, but “yes we do operate all year round and have extensive insurance”.

**Maali Mia**

“We operate 12 months of the year at Maali Mia” (Dale Tilbrook, pers. comm. 2004)

Dale Tilbrook of Maali Mia simply stated that they are capable of operating for twelve months of the year. However, they have strategies in place to deal with the down times but generally do not have any problem.
Southern Aboriginal Corporation

“We want to be in operation 7 days a week and twelve months of the year at our Art and craft shop.” (John Hayden, pers. comm. 2004)

The SAC Art and Craft Shop does not operate seven days a week. But John Hayden believes there will come a time when they are able to fully fund a seven day tourist operation. However, they are still building up their business and looks forward to the future when this can happen.

Waljin Consultancy

“It took us five years to get where we are now”. (Mitchella Hutchison, pers. comm. 2004)

Mitchella Hutchins of Waljin Consultancy says, “yes, we do operate all year round because we deal with the large amount of tourists, school group programs, adventure tours and elderly”. The senior citizens tour groups and schools are a major component of those off peak season times. We make sure that the business is able to grow slowly so we are open seven days a week twelve months of the year. This year we warned schools that they need to pre-book because we are getting loaded up and if they don't they will miss out. We may have just won a big contract with Presbyterian Ladies College, so this is just another facet of where we market our product to where they will get the most of Nyungar culture. We have to have huge insurance because we offer bush tucker tours, we also have public liability because we offer bush tours and activity tours. This obviously gives peace of mind as a business because someone could kick their toe and I could get sued and have to pay compensation. This sort of thing could break the back of a business overnight. It took us five years to get where we are now.
Yirra Kurl

“Yirra Kurl operates five days a week”. (Deborah Coertse, pers. comm. 2004)

Deborah Coertse tells us that they are fully operational and have extensive public liability and insurance to cover the business. Yirra Kurl is expanding rapidly and their growth has been enormous. “Meeting all of our insurance costs, says Deborah, such as public liability and so on, goes hand in hand when you are running a business.

Nyungar Cultural Centre

“...plans are still underway”. (Leon Ridgeway, pers. comm. 2004)

Nyungar Cultural Centre is not currently operational as plans are still underway. However, once they are up and running they believe that they will be fully operational and financially viable to operate seven days a week.

Kodja Place

“yes we operate seven days a week”. (Craig McVee, pers. comm. 2004)

Craig McVee is very happy to say that they do operate seven days a week and are able to do this as they do have local volunteer townspeople who are more than willing to ensure the success of Kodja Place. We are open seven days a week and only closed Christmas Day. Our hours are 9-5. On weekends if we have a bus tour then we offer a full service, but otherwise the Centre is manned by local volunteers during the weekend. If we had a group come through who didn't book the Tour Guide or myself will come in and cover the service. This is a good example of what I said earlier about being committed 100% and being in the tourism business is a huge lifestyle change.
Doc Reynolds claims they operate on most days but do have some down times. As a result, we have held back a bit because we do a lot of consultancy work outside of our tours, art gallery and souvenir shop. A lot of our consultancy work is done during our low time, our down time is the middle of winter. Whilst the whales are about it is too far to take people out and they are very unreliable. You don’t want to take people out and say you are going to show the tourist the whales when you know the whales could be unreliable. They could be there one day and not the next. It is quite time consuming to organise a tour like that, consequently we don’t like promoting a whale type program. So in the winter we concentrate on other programs and tours. However, we operate five days a week and on weekends. But this depends on the demand and size of the tour. We have got $10 million public liability coverage. It is quite high for our insurance premium but the reality is, if you want to get out there you have got to be prepared for someone to do something out of the ordinary and injure themselves, then you have to make sure that you have adequate cover. We haven’t had that problem yet, so you have to have your insurance such as vehicle and public liability. Yes, you have to have all those insurances. It does put a bit of financial pressure on Kepa Kurl. It is just a cost associated with running a business, some of the things that come up are quite ridiculous and quite ludicrous but you have to be on top of those things as well.

School holidays we are very busy. Kids come in to buy something small under $10 and most people walk in and buy something because they feel guilty. They help us out a little bit. We have very, very low rent in our shop here, and what we pay a month, pays for a week down town. Overheads are low and it helps keep our prices right down. So we are hoping with the combination of the three we can make a good go of our business. Other things we are doing is that we don’t see any coaches, tour companies coming through our village here because we don’t have the parking facilities for buses. We have put in a proposal to the Esperance Shire Council for an extension of car parks to facilitate buses. The Tourist Visitor’s Centre sell all the bus tickets for Westrail and Greyhound but people have to walk down into town to catch the bus so this is taking away the potential of locals and tourists sitting here in the Village, having a look around at Centre’s like ours and then getting the bus. We have this beautiful Village of
Esperance here and so when the buses are coming into town they are bypassing us and the visitors are getting dropped off in town as well. So this is another negative and is taking away potential business for the Village and Kepa Kurl. However, we will get to a point where we can operate seven days a week.

WHY VISIT THESE NYUNGAR TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Kwillana Dreaming

"we offer a very personalized touch to what we do" (Karen Jacobs, pers comm. 2004)

The visitor should come to Kwillana Dreaming because we offer a very personalized touch to what we do. We don’t run a tour for under four people but we don’t run a tour for over twenty three people. We like to keep it to a number where we can make people feel very comfortable and be able to come in nice and close and get a personalized presentation from our Tour Guides, they get to know who our Tour Guides are and get to speak to them very personally. A lot of our clients want to know about very specific gender information that can be very touchy because it depends on the Tour Guide who is being asked the question. Some of the visitors want to know about female hygiene issues so it is really important to us that we maintain a very low key tour and control the number of people who come on our tours so that we do add that personal touch and are able to answer very significant questions – gender specific questions – in a friendly and environmentally appropriate way. Secondly, we offer what is not being offered at this time. By this I mean there are just not enough commercial operators out there delivering authentic cultural information to the public. Finally, Kwillana Dreaming says that visitors should come to them because the Binjareb Nyungar boodjar or lands in Peel region is the gateway to the southwest.
Wardan Cultural Centre

"The visitor can get a cultural experience, an educational experience, a hands on experience and it’s the only place in the world where a visitor can experience Wardandi Nyungar culture". (Bill Webb, pers. comm. 2004)

For the Wardan Cultural Centre, they say that the visitor can get a cultural experience, an educational experience, a hands on experience and it’s the only place in the world where a visitor can experience Wardandi Nyungar culture. We offer diversity, spirituality and we showcase our preservation of the environment. They can come and see a Nyungar icon where we preserve our culture, so it is most certainly a place to visit. I think people should come for our Aboriginal heritage and to generally enjoy their experience. Indigenous culture is shown here by Indigenous people because is up to us to talk about our culture and history, it is not up to non-Indigenous people to do that. We can give the tourist an authentic Indigenous experience.

Waljin Consultancy

“...an uninhibited experience rather than a commercial or plastic experience”. (Mitchella Hutchins, pers. comm. 2004)

Mitchella Hutchins of Waljin Consultancy says “The visitors are going to have a unique opportunity of having an experience with a Nyungar person, a one on one interaction.

Southern Aboriginal Corporation

“We have some of the best cultural experiences to offer as well not only in Australia but the world” (John Hayden, pers. comm. 2004)

John Hayden, Nyungar CEO of the Southern Aboriginal Corporation says “I still believe that what Minang country, Goreng country and Nyungar country generally has to offer is huge. The size, the cultural diversity of landscape and from a Nyungar perspective they are huge. These alone should encourage the visitor to come and see us and because we have some of the best
cultural experiences to offer as well not only in Australia but the world to the visitor. We just need to promote ourselves more”.

**Yirra Kurl**

“...our business is more an operational entity”. (Deborah Coertse, pers. comm. 2004)

Deborah Coertse said that visitors can come to the warehouse and have a tour about the place. The visitor might also see some of my products and designs in its raw state. Deborah uses intricate patterns and designs in vibrant, luminous colours to showcase Australia’s native flora and fauna. The originality, vibrancy and complex detailing in her fine art works has led to recognition in the art world and a number of solo exhibitions. “Our business is more an operational entity, all of my products are sold in retail stores so in a sense it's not a place where the visitor would come unless they really wanted to meet us and see our business first hand. But generally, our business is more an operational entity, all of my products are sold in retail stores so in a sense its not a place where the visitor would come unless they really wanted to meet us and see our business first hand”.

**Nyungar Cultural Centre**

“Everyone should come to our Centre when it is built because it will be unique in Australia”. (Leon Ridgeway, pers. comm. 2004)

Leon Ridgeway, representative for the Bunbury Nyungar community says “everyone should come to our Centre when it is built because it will be unique in Australia. The only other place that I can find that will be on a par is in New Zealand called “Te Papa – National Museum of Social History; they spent about $640 million on it. They have the same type of philosophy in regard to being a social history museum or cultural centre. This is what we might call our Centre, The First Place. Our Centre will be unique because of a close connection and co-location with a non-Indigenous museum, so we will develop social history and rewrite both black and white history. We will give both sides of the story in the context of southwest WA, Nyungar country. There will be oral history coming in to stand with the written histories.
Written histories had to be told anyway. It is all the same but because it is “black oral history some people have an issue with it but they will get over it”. Black and White together. Not only will Nyungar culture and heritage and histories be housed here but we will get Nyungar artefacts housed here as well. Now if we get all the Nyungar artefacts out of the WA Museum and places like that, put them into our “keeping place” until other Nyungar can have their own “keeping places” and get them transferred back to them, that seems the most appropriate way of getting them out of the hands of the bureaucrats and back into the hands of the community.

Nyungar should get their things back. This is far more culturally appropriate for Nyungar to be looking after their own Nyungar artefacts and cultural items – it is a sense of spirit – it belongs with Nyungar people, not locked up in a box in a Museum. As long as the Elders are happy for this to happen, this material to be stored with us where only those Nyungar can look at these things and not having to travel to Perth and go through all the government red tape just to get a look at their own cultural material. It is like a natural thing, it is the way we should go.

**Kodja Place**

“Come and enjoy a billy tea and damper, have a yarn with a Wedjela or Nyungar here”. (Craig McVee, pers. comm. 2004)

We offer an experience that we believe is not offered elsewhere in Australia. When you come and visit Kodja Place, you will interpret and feel the emotion of a local Nyungar Tour Guide sharing with you about not only Kojonup’s history but also Australia’s history of how small communities were created and how the different cultural groups have and at times not knowingly working side by side to create the community that they have.

Come and enjoy a billy tea and damper, have a yarn with a Wedjela or Nyungar and get a feel of what we are about and what we are trying to achieve and that is recognising Australia’s past history as a united group, Nyungar and Wedjela all going forward and achieving the same goals.
Kepa Kurl

“We offer the visitor a quality diverse eco-cultural experience”. (Doc Reynolds, pers. comm. 2004)

Doc Reynolds says “we offer the visitor a quality diverse eco-cultural experience that covers historical aspects. We can broaden your horizons on Aboriginal culture by telling you how that has evolved since colonisation. We can show you snapshots of what it was like pre-colonisation and we can provide a product that very few have in the south of Western Australia.

(Kepa Kurl in Esperance)

We have a unique cultural landscape, it is diverse, we can make your experience informative and entertaining. We can give people the opportunity to be a part of the Indigenous experience and show them something that they may never see again, it will be a lifelong experience that will be etched into their minds until the day they die”.

Middar

... “the visitor will get a genuine cultural experience” (Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm. 2004)

Dr Richard Walley says that tourists should visit a Middar performance because the visitor will get a genuine cultural experience. We do what our ancestors did thousands of years ago and that is we do the Nyungar keniny or the Nyungar dance. You will not see this anywhere else in Australia because that is why our culture is unique.
A NYUNGAR VISION FOR NYUNGAR TOURISM IN THE FUTURE?

Kwillana Dreaming

“... the future of Indigenous tourism is brilliant, absolutely brilliant”. (Karen Jacobs, pers. comm. 2004)

Karen Jacobs says, “I want to see Nyungar Commercial Operators competing for international, interstate and local clients and being able to stand up to the challenge and being able to present a product that is culturally appropriate and at a standard that is acceptable to the commercial industry. Delivering something that is going to be able to compete very equally to a commercial operator wanting to do the same thing. At the moment the tourism industry has a very healthy respect for Indigenous cultural interpretation and most of them have opted not to deliver Indigenous content on their tours because they have got the understanding and healthy respect for Indigenous culture and say they can’t deliver it unless they employ Indigenous people or have developed a partnership or a joint venture with an Aboriginal organisation and only an Aboriginal person can deliver the interpretation. With this healthy respect we find that we don’t have the competition amongst them that we would have had two or three years ago where it was every man for himself and they all understood the financial rewards of delivering Indigenous cultural interpretation on their tours. The majority of them have stopped and they have now gone out and physically tried to track down joint venture and partnership arrangements with Aboriginal communities and what we have said to them now is that “if you don’t get that with whole communities just run with individuals. So if you have individual Aboriginals very interested in the tourism industry then operate what you are doing with that one person and build on that”.

In twenty years time I just hope that we have a very lucrative industry out there that identifies Indigenous cultural tourism as a main component of any tourism project that is out there and that we are withstanding the challenges of what the world might bring at us. Over the past three to four years there have been many world events that have affected and interrupted world tourism as a whole – a lot of commercial operators have gone broke – if you look on the other hand there are a lot of Indigenous tour operations that have travelled through those world
events and are still operating today. So it shows that we have been able to stand the challenges of time and because we have had such a short amount of time over the last forty to fifty years in developing Aboriginal Australia into a contemporary Aboriginal Australia. We are only going to grow a lot faster and develop things at a flying pace so if we can look back in ten years time to where we are today we will think that we are so far behind the eight ball that how the hell did we ever succeed in anything. So the future of Indigenous tourism is brilliant, absolutely brilliant.

**Wardan Cultural Centre**

Bill Webb not only has a vision for Nyungar tourism in the future but also says that each of us needs to have our own personal vision. He started off his response by telling us his vision, his dream.

> “Hold onto a vision and you can achieve your dream. I take after the famous saying of Martin Luther King “keep your eye on the prize and the prize is your own self, dignity and respect and don’t be afraid to be an Aboriginal person”. (Bill Webb, pers. comm. 2004)

If Aboriginal people want to really move into the tourism industry then they need to set up icons where our Nyungar culture can be housed and where we can feel free to release any information about our Nyungar culture. How we have done things as well because we should see ourselves as a stepping-stone for other Aboriginal people trying to move into cultural tourism. Nyungar people can give the visitor that cultural experience, educational experience, a hands on experience and it should be the only place in the world where a visitor can have a hands on interaction and experience with Nyungar history and culture. We need icons where we can preserve our diversity, spirituality and culture. So most certainly we should make Nyungar country a place to visit. When anyone sets up an Indigenous tourism operation, it takes dedication, a dedicated workforce, a dedicated family, a family with knowledge and history. Nyungar icons, museums, call them what you like, but Nyungar Centres like the Wardan Culture Centre should be set up because its centres like this that are of economic value to our people and are of economic value to Australia. Centres like ours will allow us to maintain our history and for our history, culture and knowledge to live on for eternity.
Maali Mia

“The more Indigenous tour operators we have, the more reasons we give people to come to see us”. (Dale Tilbrook, pers. comm. 2004)

Dale Tilbrook of Maali Mia would like to see a whole Nyungar tourism network in the Southwest of Western Australia. We would like to see this equally apply throughout the whole of Western Australia. Dale and Lyall Tilbrook tell us that they would also like to see a “single point” where a visitor could come and be guided around the Nyungar products on offer throughout the Southwest and also for other Indigenous operators throughout Western Australia. The more Indigenous tour operators we have, the more reasons we give people to come to see us.

Southern Aboriginal Corporation

“We just need to promote ourselves more”. (John Hayden, pers. comm. 2004)

John Hayden believes that what Minang country, Goreng country and Nyungar country generally have to offer is huge. John Hayden says, “Well from a Nyungar perspective, the size, the cultural diversity and landscape, they are huge”. These alone should encourage Nyungar people to jump on the bandwagon and run with tourism. The growth of tourism in Australia alone will take over the mining companies and those types of industries as the major player in developing employment opportunities. But my role at this main stage is to say to Nyungar people, “if we don’t promote ourselves, we are going to be overtaken by people and other Indigenous people coming to country and talking about “us”. As I have said all along, over the past 200 hundred years we are a group of people who have been put on the backblocks I suppose and people haven’t encouraged us to take on board the acceptance of us with mainstream providers, it created a dependency that Nyungar people don’t have any culture and I have been saying for the past 25 years that “there is a Nyungar culture here” its just that it has not been publicised to the extent that it should. So it is my role to ensure that Nyungar people acknowledge that we are not a dying race and we have some of the best cultural experiences to offer as well not only in Australia but the world to the visitor. We just need to promote ourselves more.
Nyungar Tourism in the Southwest of Western Australia

Waljin Consultancy

“To promote Nyungar culture in a positive and respectful way”. (Michella Hutchins, pers. comm. 2004)

According to Michella Hutchins of Waljin Consultancy their vision for the future for Nyungar tourism includes their business getting “bigger and better but as long as it is not too big and we forget who we are and forget what our original goal is and that is to promote Nyungar culture in a positive and respectful way” and hopefully what we are doing today, it is going to be a roll off and run off for a lot of other Nyungar and other Indigenous people who are willing to take the step too.

Yirra Kurl

“...for more Nyungar to pursue their dreams”. (Deborah Coertse, pers. comm. 2004)

Deborah Coertse at Yirra Kurl say they want to grow bigger and better. My aim is to supply a range of unique, high quality, affordable and Authentic Australian Aboriginal art products to retail outlets all over Australia and the world whilst providing employment for Aboriginal people. Not send my products away overseas and have them made in China or Korea because the labour is cheaper there. This is one of the things that we have to juggle here locally, the cost of our products because of the cost of labour. And my vision is also for more Nyungar to pursue their dreams because you never know where it might end up.

Nyungar Cultural Centre

“Our Centre could become a powerful tool for Reconciliation, it could be an icon for reconciliation with the Wedjela museum and a Nyungar Cultural Centre coming together, it will be something special. Nyungar talk about that.” (Leon Ridgeway, pers. comm. 2004)

The potential of tourism is huge. It is an untapped resource in the southwest. We have non-Indigenous people taking tourists on to cut didgeridoo’s in the bush. Indigenous culture is everywhere and the potential for tourism is huge, making connection with other tourist groups, yes there is just no end to it. Nyungar people should recognise that there are huge
opportunities in tourism in different shapes and forms. It is also an opportunity to maintain and strengthen their sense of self and connection to country and a social sense and a cultural sense – as long as you can balance the two – as long as we realise that we can’t sell everything for tourism. There are a lot of people in the southwest who see tourism as a future, you can see why a number of people did the Indigenous Tourism course at TAFE and finished it because they were really happy with it. In a social sense tourism doesn’t always mean money but an opportunity to maintain Nyungar culture, identity, independence, empowerment and to be able to pass on Nyungar knowledge and history to everyone, not just to Nyungar but everyone. We can’t be strong partners in a community if we don’t have a sense of “who we are culturally, socially, economically or politically”. All of those things have to come into the future of Indigenous and Nyungar people in the southwest”. Our Centre could become a powerful tool for Reconciliation, it could be an icon for reconciliation with the Wedjela museum and a Nyungar Cultural Centre coming together, it will be something special. Nyungar talk about that.

**Kodja Place**

“To market and sell the uniqueness of each individual Aboriginal group right throughout Australia”. (Craig McVee, pers. comm. 2004)

To market and sell the uniqueness of each individual Aboriginal group right throughout Australia. We have so much uniqueness out there and even though some of the communities don’t have the natural landscape they still have their unique stories and experiences to tell.

**Kepa Kurl**

“As Indigenous tour operators, if we owned and operated it ourselves and created a marketing strategy that will put our product out on the market place, then we would have a product that will be second to none. But we need people who have a commitment to succeed and achieve and stand up and do it on their own with out any other outside influences and pressures”. (Doc Reynolds, pers. comm. 2004)

Doc Reynold tells us that he wants to be able to create a network of Indigenous owned and operated corporate tourism entities that not only provide the focus of Aboriginal culture within their town but to allow people to visit each other’s community and to see the richness and the diversity of the Aboriginal culture, even though it is only a few hundred kilometres apart.
Middar

“Nyungar people to look at their own heritage and embrace their heritage a bit more”. (Dr Richard Walley, pers. comm. 2004)

My vision for the future is for Nyungar people to take hold of their culture, respect their identity and show the world who we are. We are one of the oldest living cultures in the world and we have so much to offer the visitor whether they are from the local area, nationally or from some other part of the world. As I said before, we need to let the white fulla's here and other people from around the world, let them know that Nyungar culture is alive and very vibrant and for us to reinforce and motivate Nyungar people to look at their own heritage and embrace their heritage a bit more.