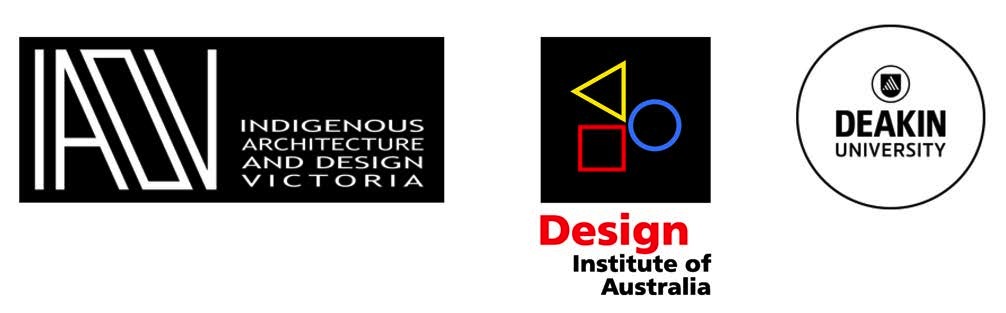
**INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS**

**DESIGN CHARTER** - Communication Design

Protocols for sharing Indigenous knowledge in communication design practice

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**INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS DESIGN CHARTER** - Communication Design

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**Preface**

The International Indigenous Design Charter – Communication Design (the Charter) was coauthored by Dr Russell Kennedy and Dr Meghan Kelly from Deakin University, School of Communication and Creative Arts. In consultation with Australian and International community representatives (for a full list please see appendix 4.2) the Charter aims to serve as a living document for ongoing consideration. Tailored specifically for the communication design profession, this Charter expands on the research findings of Dr Russell Kennedy’s PhD thesis titled: *Designing with Indigenous Knowledge: Policy and protocols for respectful and authentic cross-cultural representation in communication design practice*. As acknowledged in the references, the Charter also builds on foundations set by existing protocol documents and writings with an aligned purpose such as Oxfam’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Protocols document (2007) and the work of intellectual property lawyer Terri Janke (1999, 2002, 2007, 2007). The International Indigenous Design Charter – Communication Design used the Australian Indigenous Design Charter – Communication Design as a starting point for a global discussion involving regional workshops and exchanges around the world. The Australian Indigenous Design Charter – Communication Design was developed in collaboration with the Deakin University, Institute of Koorie Education (IKE), Indigenous Architecture and Design Victoria (IADV) and the Management and Executive Board of the Design Institute of Australia (DIA).

**Part 1: International Indigenous Design Charter : Communication Design**

When working on projects involving the representation of indigenous culture communication designers and buyers of design (non-indigenous and indigenous) are expected to adhere to the following ten points**:**

1. **Indigenous led**. Ensure indigenous representation creation in design practice is Indigenous led based on regional understandings.
2. **Self-determined.** Respect the rights of indigenous peoples to oversee representation creation of their culture in design practice.
3. **Community specific.** Ensure respect for the diversity of indigenous culture by following regional cultural protocols.
4. **Deep listening.** Ensure respectful, culturally specific, personal engagement behaviors for effective communication and courteous interaction are practiced.
5. **Impact of design.** Always consider the reception and implications of all designs so that they are respectful to indigenous culture.
6. **Indigenous knowledge.** Look at the meaning and substance behind the project. Ask the client if there is an aspect to the project, in relation to any design brief, that may be improved with indigenous knowledge.
7. **Shared knowledge (collaboration, co-creation, procurement).** Develop and implement respectful methods for all levels of engagement and sharing of indigenous knowledge (collaboration, co-creation, procurement).
8. **Legal and moral.** Demonstrate respect and honour cultural ownership and intellectual property rights, including moral rights, obtaining appropriate permissions where required.
9. **Develop a Cultural Competency Framework.** Develop cultural competencies and story telling as an educational process.
10. **Charter implementation.** Ensure the implementation of the Charter to safeguard indigenous design integrity. Consider developing a local charter following the attached template.

**2. Introduction**

**2.1 Context**

Despite the existence of protocols for the creation, distribution and ownership of indigenous visual and media arts, there remains a lack of information, guidance and professional leadership regarding the appropriate creation and commercial use of indigenous graphical representations in communication design practice. The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design responds directly to identified need in commercial communication design practice.

**Professional Design Associations**

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design has the support of the International Council of Design (ico-D). The cultural protocols included in this Charter recognise the diverse cultures and traditions of international indigenous world wide and suggests that appropriate representation of indigenous peoples is best achieved when effective and respectful partnerships are established between relevant stakeholders.

**2.2 Role of the Charter** (AIDC:CD)

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design can be used to help facilitate accurate and respectful representation of indigenous knowledge in design and associated media. The role of the Charter is to assist design practitioners but it is also intended to promote understanding among practitioners, their clients and the buyers of design including governments, corporations, businesses and not-for-profit organisations. It is a cultural innovation tool to be used by designers to explain the benefits of authentic cultural representation to their clients and to help them to understand the process required when referencing indigneous knowledge/culture in design. All design stakeholders need to understand that co-creation and the sharing of indigenous peoples’ knowledge must be undertaken responsibly. The sensibilities and sensitivities associated with sharing indigenous knowledge require respectful exchange, open thinking, deep listening and a genuine commitment to learning which is based on the premise of relationality. Indigenous participants are not simply to be referenced, but are active participants in the process. Building relationality ensures that respectful and ethical practices are established and maintained through a positioning based on trust and inter-connectedness.

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design recommends that designers involve their clients and, the buyers of design (government and corporate), in the discussion of indigenous knowledge and how it relates to their organisation. It is important for designers to show leadership in promoting cultural innovation to their clients by encouraging them to commission design work that involves Indigenous-related content from preferred suppliers who follow professional Indigenous design best practice standards as outlined in theCharter. It is a best practice policy guide for the communication design profession and its associated disciplines including graphic design, digital design, environmental design, visual language, advertising and design strategy.

The Charter reinforces the rights of Indigenous peoples to cultural self-determination as recognised by the United Nations in their *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

The UN declaration describes the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions of their cultures, including *designs* (UNDRIP, 2006).

The Charter recommends the document be used as a tool to explain the issues to the buyers of design and to encourage them to consider the following supplier/designer combinations when commissioning indigenous-themed communication design:

* Indigenous-owned and operated design companies who pledge to comply with professional practice standards for indigenous design engagement as outlined in the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design.
* Indigenous design companies or consultants who subcontract creative work to other design companies (indigenous or non-indigenous) and comply with professional practice standards for engagement as outlined in the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design.
* Non-indigenous designer/company who pledge to comply with professional practice standards for engagement as outlined in the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design but also procure indigenous expertise or engage indigenous consultants when applicable.

NOTE: Communication designers should all feel confident of fitting within one of the combinations outlined above. The positioning of designers and the buyers of design within the context of the charter discussion is important. All stakeholders (client, designer, cultural custodian) need to be clear on the sensibilities and processes involved in respectful cultural design practice.

**2.3 Legal Context**

This International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design is a self-regulated, professional best practice guide. It supports existing policies, procedures and protocols that ensure the rights of indigenous stakeholders, including their intellectual property rights and emphasizes the crucial right to fair and informed negotiation and remuneration.

The document does not claim to be the definitive answer to appropriate representation of indigenous culture in communication design. Instead it aims to encourage a climate of *learning through active practice* to guide designers to produce informed, authentic and respectful outcomes in the future. The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design is an open document, it will be reviewed on a regular basis and modified as required. Feedback and case study testimonials are welcome and will be acknowledged where appropriate and desired: [aidc.feedback@deakin.edu.au](mailto:aidc.feedback@deakin.edu.au). Where there is conflict or inconsistency between the principles contained in the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design and any territorial law then the law shall prevail to the extent of the conflict or inconsistency.

**2.4 Inclusive Practice Exemplar**

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design has been conceived and written in the spirit of inclusiveness. This inclusive practice exemplar aims to dissipate ignorance through respectful and ethical knowledge sharing and increased visibility. It promotes the best practice, moral principles and engagement methods (collaboration, co-creation, permissions, procurement) required by designers to represent indigenous culture authentically in their practice. As mentioned earlier, the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design has been written for both non-indigenous designers and indigenous designers, fostering cultural innovation through inclusiveness.

The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) provides guidance in the area of cultural innovation and representation however it cautions designers to be vigilant when sharing indigenous knowledge. “The protection of traditional knowledge should contribute toward the promotion of innovation and to the transfer and dissemination of knowledge to the mutual advantage of holders and users of traditional knowledge and in a manner conducive to social and economic welfare and to a balance of rights and obligations” (WIPO 2014). This Charter calls on designers to develop applied research methods and principles that incorporate effective communication and permissions but also include the associated collaboration co-creation processes (co-authorship/co-beneficiary). It should not be viewed as a ‘how-to’ guide for creating Indigenous designs but instead a guide to develop open, and respectful cross-cultural engagement and exchange.

**Part 3: AIDC:CD Points Expanded**

This section expands on each Charter point by setting out the protocols, explaining the context and then proposing actions.

1. **Indigenous led**. Ensure indigenous representation creation in design practice is indigenous led.

The creation of new, indigenous themed works requires designers to demonstrate patience, respect and determination. Indigenous knowledge sharing extends beyond the procurement and use of existing artworks or cultural iconography. The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design respects the desire of indigenous peoples to oversee their cultural heritage and encourages all communication designers to respect their rights and interests in how they are portrayed in design through both image and text.

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design clearly states indigenous peoples’ have the right to share in the benefits from the use of their culture especially where it is being commercially applied. The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design asks designers to:

• engage with local indigenous designers who are connected with the relevant communities and provide opportunities for them to oversee the creative development and design process.

• employ indigenous staff or consultants where possible.

• share and disseminate information and any findings with the relevant indigenous stakeholders.

* provide copies of the published design works to the people involved.

**Action:** Always apply the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design protocols when new works are created involving indigenous culture, especially on projects requiring a statement about place and history.

1. **Self-determined.** Ensure respect for the rights of indigenous peoples to facilitate the representation creation of their culture in design practice.

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design reinforces the rights of indigenous peoples to cultural self-determination as recognised by the United Nations in their *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007). Communication designers must respect cultural ownership and only use indigenous knowledge if the right permissions have been granted and community protocols observed as specified in the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design.

**Action:** Follow the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design guidelines and respect the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination, which includes the application of traditional knowledge and representation of their culture in design practice.

1. **Community specific.** Ensure respect for the diversity of indigenous culture by following specific local community cultural protocols.

Protocols differ between countries and communities and are often influenced by a community’s location (urban, rural, remote). Designers should be aware that in some cases they would only be given information/knowledge when they are deemed ready for it and trust has been established.

**Action:** Follow the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design guidelines, treat people with respect and be aware of the sensibilities and diversity of cultures that exist across Australia.

1. **Deep listening.** Ensure respectful, culturally specific, personal engagement behaviors for effective communication and courteous interaction are practiced.

Designers and their clients need to develop dedicated research practice methods for indigenous-themed projects and be aware of the budgetary impact associated with such time related considerations.

**Action:** Follow the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design guidelines; start conversation as if you are there to learn not teach; be courteous, be patient and listen deeply.

5) **Impact of design.** Ensure the reception and implications of all designs are respectful of   
 indigenous culture.

Increasingly indigenous culture is being identified by design firms and branding agencies as providing a unique point of difference. Designers must be aware of their professional and moral responsibilities and the need to understand the power they have to influence opinions.

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design acknowledges that recognition and visible representation go hand in hand. It supports the notion of a greater mainstream presence of indigenous culture provided indigenous peoples are recognised as the primary guardians of their cultures.

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design suggests that all Indigenous-themed communication design projects require consultation and/or co-creation, co-authorship, co-beneficiary considerations between communication designers and the relevant community stakeholders.

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design asks designers to ensure the representation of indgenous cultures:

• reflect their cultural values and respect their customary laws.

• empower indigenous peoples

* authentically reflect their cultural identity.

• do not reinforce negative stereotypes or depict confidential, personal and/or sensitive information.

**Action:** When representing indigenous issues or choosing images to accompany text, it is important for designers to consider how the work might affect the indigenous peoples who are concurrently both the subject and producers of the story.

1. **Indigenous knowledge.** Respectfully ask the client if there is an aspect to the project, in relation to any design brief, that may be improved with indigenous knowledge..

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design suggests that designers and their clients have a responsibility to research the indigenous history of all projects. The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design encourages designers to ask: is there is an indigenous story in this project? Asking this question promotes awareness and also provides an opportunity for innovative outcomes.

**Action:** Enquire to whether there is an indigenous story to tell in every project undertaken, even if it may seem unrelated at first.

1. **Shared knowledge (collaboration, co-creation, procurement).** Develop and implement respectful collaboration, co-creation, procurement methods as outlined in this Charter for sharing of indigenous knowledge

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design insists that appropriate consultation processes with cultural stakeholders should always be followed and approvals and permissions sought. The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design expects designers to:

• acknowledge the diversity of indigenous cultures as represented in urban, rural and remote communities.

• ensure they and their clients understand that consultation processes may require an extended period to enable consideration of and consultation with community members.

• ensure the appropriate people (elders and/or those with authority) are present when consulting or co-creating.

• understand it is important to collaborate from the outset of the design process rather than seek approval at the end. The ability of indigenous decision makers to consider without undue pressure is a vital factor in respectful cross-cultural engagement.

**Action:** Follow the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design guidelines. Respect is generated with intent and earned through actions. Designers must therefore operate with patience and sincerity supported by a methodical process of transparency and inclusiveness.

1. **Legal and moral.** Demonstrate respect and honor cultural rights and intellectual property rights, obtaining appropriate permissions where required.

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design emphasizes the importance of respecting both copyright, including moral rights, and cultural rights. It encourages the buyers of design (corporate, government, not-for-profit) to engage indigenous designers and design companies. It includes protocols for the acquisition and reproduction of existing artworks in communication design practice. The Charter also aims to help designers (indigenous and non indigenous) navigate the more complex areas relating to the creation of new artifacts or imagery. It points out that the creation of new work requires designers be aware of vital engagement methods and processes.

**Action:** Follow the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design guidelines and ensure protocols are followed to protect indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights. The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design emphasizes the importance of appropriate acknowledgements and credits as per the legal requirements of the country in which the indigenous reside.

1. **Develop a Cultural Competency Framework.** Develop cultural competencies and story telling as an education process.

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design encourages designers and their clients to develop a cultural competency framework to provide the guiding principles to engagement while working together.

**Action:** Designers should develop cultural competency framework to demonstrate their support for best practice protocols when working with indigenous knowledge and and declare their support of International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design . Designers should also encourage their clients and the buyers of design to develop their own cultural competency framework that includes a statement of their compliance to the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design.

1. **Charter implementation.** Ensure the implementation of the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design to safeguard Indigenous design integrity.

Consultation with the custodians of traditional knowledge should be cautious and respectful. Design motivations should be transparent and outcomes accessible. Designers need to be aware that some aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation may be unsuitable for public scrutiny. Secret and sacred material is often restricted under customary law and therefore unsuitable for publication. Privacy and confidentiality must be respected with personal information requiring special attention in some cases.

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design recommends that designers should:

• use clear language that is culturally appropriate.

• seek permission from the people/persons who own the stories.

• clearly outline and discuss the final design prior to publishing.

• ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are recognised as the primary guardians and interpreters of their cultures.

• ensure that a collaborative design approach to creating new, project specific designs respects cultural values and customary laws.

• ensure that designs act to empower indigenous peoples and to appropriately and authentically reflect their cultural identity in traditional, contemporary or interpretive ways.

* share the benefits of any form of commercialisation.

**Action:** Follow the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design guidelines.   
It is important for designers to consult with elders and/or those with authority to identify any sensitive, sacred or religious issues.

**Part 4: Appendix**

**4.1 Definitions**

The terms *Indigenous/Indigenous peoples* have both been used in this Charter. International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design acknowledges that the word Indigenous can be a contentious term with some but for efficiency and the lack of a more appropriate single word alternative the International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design has opted to comply with the judgment of the United Nations (2013) Forum on Indigenous Issues which states:

Considering the diversity of indigenous peoples, an official definition of ‘indigenous’ has not been adopted by any UN-system body. Instead the system has developed a modern understanding of this term based on the following:

• self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.

• historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies

• strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources

• distinct social, economic or political systems

• distinct language, culture and beliefs

• form non-dominant groups of society

• resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities (UNPFOII, 2013 p.1).

**Indigenous Grouping Terminology**

**INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE -** a term used to describe ways of knowing, seeing, and thinking that are passed down orally and visually from generation to generation of Indigenous peoples.

**Design Practice Terminology**

**COMMUNICATION DESIGN -** the term used to describe the profession, which encompasses the disciplines of both graphic and digital/interactive design. This definition reflects the global shift from focusing on design as the production of an artefact to design as a strategic process. Following are the official International Council of Design (Ico-D) definitions of both communication design and communication designer as ratified by the Ico-D General Assembly 22, La Habana, Cuba, 26 October 2007:

**GRAPHIC DESIGN -** the term for a profession, which is now more commonly referred to as ‘communication design’ or ‘visual communication design’ because of the trending shift from print media to digital/interactive design applications that engage with both visual and non-visual senses (see communication design).

**RELATIONAL** - concerning the way in which two or more people or things are connected.

**RELATIONALITY -** the state or condition of being relational.

**STAKEHOLDER -** a [person](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/person), group, [organisation](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/organisation), escrow agent or custodian with a legitimate [interest](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/interest) in a given situation, action or enterprise.

**COLLABORATION -** The action of working with someone to produce something.

**CO-CREATION -** A [business strategy](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/strategic-management.html) focusing on [customer experience](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/customer-experience.html) and [interactive](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/interactive.html) [relationships](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/relationship.html).

**PROCUREMENT -** The action of obtaining or procuring something. The [act](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/act.html) of obtaining or [buying](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/buyer.html) [goods and services](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/goods-and-services.html).

**PERMISSIONS –** The action of [officially](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/officially#officially__2) allowing someone to do a particular thing; [consent](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/consent#consent__2) or [authorization](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/authorization#authorization__2):

**CO-BENEFICIARIES -** more than one person who gain a combined advantage and/or profit from something

**CO-AUTHORSHIP -** more than one person collaborating as joint author.

**4.2 Contributors**

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design has been developed from the Australian Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design which was created by coauthors Dr Russell Kennedy and Dr Meghan Kelly in collaboration with Dr Brian Martin (Muruwari, Bundjalung, Kamilaroi), Deakin University, Institute of Koorie Education (IKE), Jefa Greenaway (Wailwan/Gamillaraay), Indigenous Architecture and Design Victoria (IADV) and the Management and Executive Board of the Design Institute of Australia (DIA). The authors would like to thank Professor Christoph Antons (Deakin Law School) and Patricia Yates (Deakin University Solicitor) for discussions and input regarding legal terminology and legal issues related to traditional cultural expressions.

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of Ambassador Damien Miller (2016 Ambassador to Denmark, Norway and Greenland and the grant funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trading. In addition, the support of Ursula Lorentzen (Deakin International).

The International Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design acknowledges the contributions of the following research workshops:

**Deakin University Students**Melbourne, Australia attending Nordic Research program November 2016  
 **Greenland House**   
Copenhagen, Denmark. Nordic Research program November 2016

**Greenland University**   
Nuuk, Greenland. Nordic Research program November 2016  
  
**Jonkoping University**    
Jonkoping, Sweden. Nordic Research program November 2016  
  
**Copenhagen School of Design and Technology (KEA)**

Copenhagen, Denmark. Nordic Research program November 2016

**ICO-D Regional Meeting Participants**    
Santiago, Chile. January 2017   
  
**ICO-D Platform Meeting Participants**    
Montreal, Canda. October 2017

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