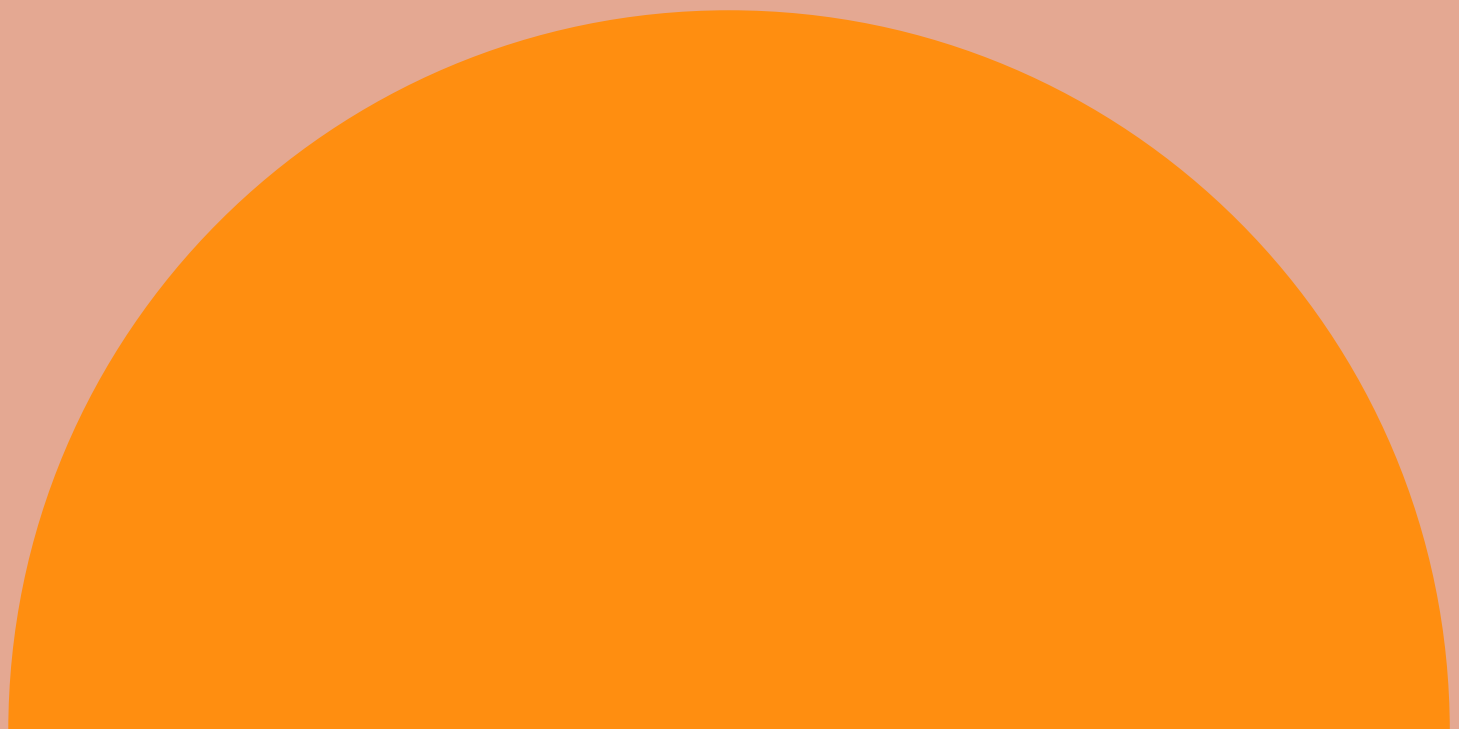




Walk Together

Design Guided by Country

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ISSUE NO.1

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INDIGENOUS CULTURAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

FNAC aims to work respectfully with all peoples and to protect the rights of First Nations Peoples who have belonging to Country, and as a result the rights of Country. As such, we are respectful of all Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property, and any Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights remain with those First Nations Peoples or groups from whom it originates. ICIP refers to First Nations Peoples' heritage and culture (where heritage includes all aspects of cultural practices, Traditional Knowledge, and resources and knowledge systems developed by First Nations Peoples as part of their Indigenous identity) and is collective in that ICIP originates from a group and is passed on from generation to generation.¹

ACRONYMS

AIA	Australian Institute of Architects
FNAC	First Nations Advisory Committee
AACA	Architects Accreditation Council of Australia
NSCA	National Standards of Competency for Architects
PCs	Performance Criteria
ICIP	Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property

1— FNAC acknowledges Terri Janke for the definition, language and leadership around Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights.

DISCLAIMER

This Guide was prepared by the First Nations Advisory Committee and Cultural Reference Panel (FNAC) in good faith exercising all due care and attention, but no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to the relevance, accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of this Guide in respect of any particular user's circumstances. Users of this Guide should satisfy themselves concerning its application to, and where necessary seek expert advice in respect of, their situation. The views expressed within are not necessarily the views of the Institute of Architects and may not represent Institute policy. While every care has been taken in preparing this work, it is understood that the information presented may not be supported by all First Nations Peoples and groups.

AUTHORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

This Guide was collectively authored by members of the Australian Institute of Architect's First Nations Advisory Committee and Cultural Reference Panel and Dr Danièle Hromek.

***Please note:** The voice speaking from this document is from knowledgeable First Nations' lived experiences. As such we use we, our, and us when referencing a First Nations perspective.*

CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES

For some First Nations communities it is customary not to mention names or reproduce images associated with the recently deceased.

Members of these communities are respectfully advised that there may be people who have passed away mentioned in writing or depicted in image in this Guide.

It may also contain words and descriptions that were written in a prior period but that might be considered inappropriate today as they are now understood to be culturally sensitive terms or language.

INTRODUCTION



WALK TOGETHER:
DESIGN GUIDED BY COUNTRY

GUIDANCE NOTES



CULTURAL PROFICIENCY FOR ARCHITECTS



HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF COUNTRY IN
ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTS



PROTECTING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE



RESPONSIVE PRACTICE



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



INCLUSIVE PROCUREMENT AND
PROCESSES



RESPONDING TO FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL
HERITAGE



DESIGN EXCELLENCE

POLICIES



CULTURAL SAFETY POLICY



FIRST NATIONS COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

GENERAL RESOURCES



FIRST NATIONS TERMINOLOGY



TERMS, CONCEPTS AND SHARED
UNDERSTANDINGS



PROTOCOLS FOR WELCOMES
TO COUNTRY AND ACKNOWLEDGING
COUNTRY

ACKNOWLEDGING COUNTRY

Country is a holistic worldview that incorporates human, non-human and all the natural systems that connect them. Country is energised by the many sacred sites, histories, ancient knowledges, and stories that connect them, these are formed in the Dreaming as Ancestral Beings have arisen to shape all that we now experience in the world, including knowledges, Laws, and lore to care for Country. First Nations Ancestors originated from Country and they and their Dreaming still exist within Country as lifeforces in their living cultural landscapes.

Country is sentient and alive; Country communicates what it needs to those who with the ability to hear the messages of Country.

Country soars high into the atmosphere, buries deep into the planet core, dives far into the oceans. Country incorporates the tangible (such as the landscape, water, air, plants, geology, rocks, animals, minerals, medicines, people and places) and intangible (such as the knowledges, memories and cultural practices, identity, reciprocal relationships, belonging and wellbeing, songs, stories and art).

For First Nations Peoples, Country relates not only to the cultural groups and lands to which they belong, it is also their place of origin in physical, cultural, spiritual, and literal terms. Country is the source of all people, plants, animals, knowledge and other beings in First Nations belief systems.

The Australian Institute of Architects acknowledges First Nations Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, waters, and skies of the continent now called Australia.

The authors express our gratitude to their Elders and Knowledge Holders whose wisdom, actions and knowledge have kept culture alive. We recognise First Nations Peoples as the first architects and builders, we appreciate their continuing work on Country from pre-invasion times to contemporary First Nations architects, and respect their rights to continue to care for Country.



Introduction

Redfern Community Facility (Brickwork details).
Djinjama, Aileen Sage Architects, Jean Rice Architects and Dr Noni Boyd.



Walk Together: Design Guided by Country (‘the Guide’) follows in the footsteps of work undertaken by numerous Elders and Knowledge Holders, architects and designers, activists and academics to bring respectful and meaningful approaches to engaging with Country, representative communities, organisations, and First Nations makers and individuals in relation to architecture and the built environment. It aims to provide aspirational and practice-specific guidance to working in culturally appropriate and safe ways that protect and respect Country and all First Nations Peoples involved.

It aspires to support cultural responsiveness in design, and approaches to architecture, design and heritage integration that are informed by, respectful of, and inspired by Country. It assists architectural professionals in relation to engagement methods, funding models and procurement excellence specific to working with Country and First Nations Peoples.

Allied built environment professionals, the broader industry and clients may find the Guide useful to support design throughout all stages of a project. Through the Guide, we hope the broader Australian public gain an understanding of design and architecture and how impacts user’s behaviours based on First Nations Advisory Committee lived experiences.

The Guide also makes a call for action. Members of the Australian Institute of Architects are in a unique position to lead necessary changes that support the aspirations First Nations Peoples have for the health and wellbeing of Country, and enabling genuine and meaningful inclusion. Architects, project teams and their clients design and plan future spaces and experiences. As part of their roles, they can advocate for respectful ways that are responsible and caring towards Country.



INTRODUCTION

The Guide was authored with a number of principles at its core:

- Aspirational—

We are aspirational in relation to First Nations’ futures and continuing inclusion in built spaces and design. We aspire to positive communications with non-Indigenous colleagues to ensure diversity in the architecture profession. We are optimistic First Nations communities will have positive outcomes in their relations with the Institute.
- Responsible—

We recognise all who live on and benefit from Country are responsible for the health and wellbeing of Country. We understand built environments have caused substantial harm to Country in the past and understand we are part of producing positive impacts going forward.
- Collective—

We understand that a collective of voices is more effective over a top-down approach. We prefer a relational approach that brings many people along to ensure the necessary change is achieved. We aim to develop a diverse and capable culture in the Institute in which each individual is valued for their contribution to the broader collective.
- Guidance and Goodwill—

We seek goodwill and authenticity from all working with First Nations Peoples on built projects. We recognise that things may go wrong, mistakes will occur, but the work needs to continue towards genuine inclusion and change. We respect openness to change and good intent, combined with dynamic two-way goodwill in relationships. The truth-telling within this Guide comes from a place of healing which requires goodwill to understand and interpret into built projects.

Grey Gum (*Eucalyptus punctata*).

Purpose



The purpose of *Walk Together: Design Guided by Country* is to respectfully support and meaningfully consider Country, culture, and community in built environment project through the actions of Institute members, and by implication, their clients and stakeholders. It supports best practice in architecture in relation with Country and First Nations values. It is recognised that architects cannot do this important work alone and there is a responsibility the wider industry holds, and as such allied built environment professionals and the broader industry may also find the guidance of use.

Walk Together: Design Guided by Country is an invitation to architecture, design professionals and the built environment industry to shift their minds and hearts to impactfully support First Nations Peoples, cultures, rights, as well as the health and wellbeing of Country.

The Guide is presented with a series of Guidance Notes that broadly correlate with First Nations specific Acumen. The Acumen provide high-level information, with the corresponding Guidance Notes providing practice-specific advice regarding implementation of the Acumen.

Who is this for?



This Guide is authored to support architects, industry colleagues, their clients, and students.



The Guide advises on good design practice with the aim of:

- Providing practical advice to support change in how architects and designers think;
- Acting as grounding for awards and design excellence, heritage, as well as design practice;
- Supporting members of the Institute to deliver good quality design in relation to Country;
- Responding to existing policy and guidance;
- Influencing funding models;
- Demonstrating that walking and working together is good for business;
- Meeting the existing minimum professional competencies established in the National Standards of Competency Performance Criteria 2021 including:

PC3	Apply principles of project planning, considering implications for Country, environmental sustainability, communities, stakeholders and project costs.	PC27	Understand how to embed the knowledge, worldviews and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, shared through engagement processes, into the conceptual design in a meaningful, respectful and appropriate way.
PC8	Be able to implement culturally responsive and meaningful engagement processes that respect the importance of Country and reciprocal relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples across architectural services.	PC36	Be able to apply creative imagination, design precedents, emergent knowledge, critical evaluation and continued engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to produce a coherent project design. This should be resolved in terms of supporting health and wellbeing outcomes for Country, site planning, formal composition, spatial planning and circulation as appropriate to the project brief and all other factors affecting the project.
PC12	Provide independent, culturally responsive and objective advice in accordance with relevant building codes, standards, technical specifications and guidelines, and planning regulations, including climate change implications, across all aspects of architectural practice.	PC45	Be able to nominate and integrate quality and performance standards with regard to selected materials, finishes, fittings, components and systems, considering the impact on Country and the environment, and the whole life carbon impact of the project. This includes integrating life cycle assessments and other expertise and advice from consultants.
PC15	Comply with legal and ethical obligations relating to legislated requirements in relation to copyright, moral rights, authorship of cultural knowledge and intellectual property requirements across architectural services.	PC50	Be able to continue engagement with relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples throughout all stages of the project and its delivery in a meaningful, respectful and appropriate way.
PC17	Have an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ aspirations to care for Country and how these inform architectural design.		

PURPOSE

This Guide has a holistic approach that recognises deep history, spirit and spirituality, story and narrative, as much as the practical aspects of designing built environments. Architects are responsible for their own due diligence in the states, territories and local councils (First Nations and non-Indigenous) statutory and regulatory frameworks that they work within. It is also not guidance relating to Designing with Country, which the FNAC acknowledges as a cultural practice that belongs to First Nations design practitioners and should be recognised as such. Rather, *Walk Together: Design Guided by Country* is a companion piece to existing legislation, policies, frameworks and guidance documents.



Djinjama: Defying the Grid.
Installation by Dr Danièle Hromek, Robyn Hromek, Siân Hromek.



What is *Design Guided by Country?*

Country, as outlined in *Acknowledging Country*, is sentient and alive. Country is more than the land, water and air, Country is holistic and incorporates everything that can be seen and everything that is not visible. Country is a complex interconnected network of entities—breathing and non-breathing—that co-exist on Country. As descendants of thousands of millennia of Ancestors, First Nations Peoples were given the obligation and honour of caring for Country, just as we know Country cares for us. To be able to care for Country it is essential to be able to hear and listen to the messages from Country and kin. Resultant from listening to Country, First Nations Peoples in the continent now called Australia have been Designing with Country for thousands of generations.

Walk Together: Design Guided by Country is an invitation to the industry to walk together with First Nations Peoples. *Design Guided by Country* is a framework to facilitate culturally proficient practices in architecture and the built environment. It enables culturally responsive approaches and design methodologies informed by Country, and the ongoing health and wellbeing of Country. Critically these practices holistically considers and provides opportunities for First Nations capacity building through respect for cultural authority, the protection and celebration of cultural heritage and the meaningful caring for Country stewardship.



In 2020 the Institute created the First Nations Advisory Working Group and Cultural Reference Panel whose purpose was to “Lead ... systemic change and reform that centres First Nations peoples, knowledges, and values across the profession and within the Institute.” They were tasked to scope, recommend and develop a range of actions that could be put in place to support and promote beneficial outcomes between First Nations peoples and the Institute. In March 2020 the Institute included a Statement of Recognition in the Institute’s Constitution. In 2023 the First Nations Advisory Working Group and Cultural Reference Panel was transformed into the First Nations Advisory Committee as a permanent advisory body to the CEO of the Institute of Architects.

In 2020 FNAC undertook a substantial piece of work to support the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) review the National Standard of Competency for Architects (NSCA) 2021. The updated National Standards of Competency for Architects (NSCA) require architects and those studying and teaching architecture to respond to important baseline understandings of Country, community and culture. The NSCA 2021 Performance Criteria are acknowledged by FNAC as being the minimum requirements, rather than aspirational. This Guide aims to address some of the aspirations noted through the review of the NSCA in 2021.

State government agencies such as the Government Architect NSW¹ have released frameworks that guide and integrate a Country centred approach to design.

Nonetheless, given more than 230 years of colonial neglect of Country, community and culture, the architectural profession is largely committed to recalibrating practices. While there is some support and aspirations to make positive changes, there are also risks of inappropriate behaviour, appropriation and misuse of First Nations Peoples’ knowledges, cultural heritage, and understandings. The industry is responding, with architects having specific responsibilities to Country, community and culture by continuing their professional development. FNAC recognises that they need support to respond to the new Performance Criteria (PCs).

Following the changes to the NSCA in 2021, FNAC engaged Dr Danièle Hromek to investigate how First Nations values and understandings of Country could be integrated into existing CPD, educational resources, design excellence frameworks, competitions and awards policies and existing Acumen notes. Through this process it became clear that differences in perspectives and worldviews required the development of a new guide — *Walk Together: Design Guided by Country* to support architects and allied professionals in their work.

¹— Connecting with Country Framework, 2023, Government Architect NSW.

Ngurra: The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Cultural Precinct. Concept Render.
Djinjama, COLA Studio with Hassell and Edition Office.



Guidance Notes





The Guidance Notes within *Walk Together: Design Guided by Country* operate as companions to First Nations Acumen. While the Acumen provides higher level information, the Guidance Notes are practical advice regarding implementing the Acumen.

ACUMEN

GUIDANCE NOTE

Indigenous matters in practice

Cultural Proficiency for Architects *

Caring for Country*
(Including Aspirations for Country, Health and wellbeing of Country, Implications for Country, Impacts on Country)
PC3, PC17, PC45

Health and Wellbeing of Country in Architectural Projects *

Cultural authorship
(Including Cultural IP and ICIP)
PC15

Protecting Cultural Knowledge

Culturally responsive*
PC12, PC34, PC36

Responsive Practice *

Meaningful engagement *
(Including Inclusive project planning)
PC8, PC27, PC50

Building Relationships

Indigenous protocols in practice*

Inclusive Procurement and Processes *

First Nations Heritage places

Responding to First Nations Cultural Heritage *

First Nations attribution*

Design Excellence *

* Works in Progress

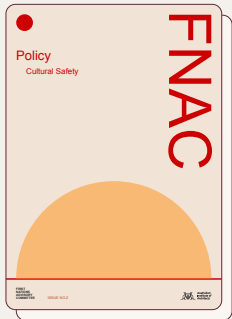


ACCESS THE GUIDANCE NOTES AND OTHER FNAC RESOURCES ON THE INSTITUTE'S WEBSITE.



Additional publications authored collectively and collaboratively by the First Nations Advisory Committee and Cultural Reference Panel:

POLICIES

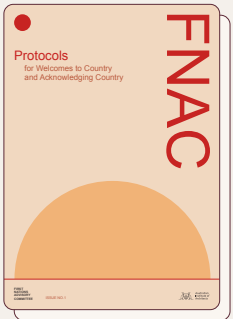


CULTURAL SAFETY POLICY



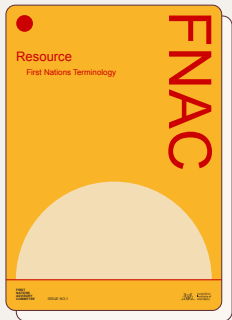
FIRST NATIONS COMMUNICATIONS POLICY (DRAFT)

PROTOCOLS

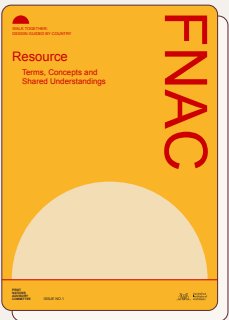


PROTOCOLS FOR WELCOMES TO COUNTRY AND ACKNOWLEDGING COUNTRY

GUIDANCE



FIRST NATIONS TERMINOLOGY



TERMS, CONCEPTS AND SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS

CPD

FIRST NATIONS COMPETENCY CRASH COURSE

SEMESTER 1

FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE, VALUES AND EXPERIENCE: BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS FOR ARCHITECTS

SEMESTER 2

UNDERSTANDING FIRST NATIONS STANDARDS OF COMPETENCY

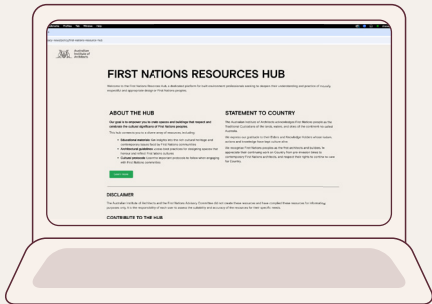
SEMESTER 3

CONNECTING, DESIGNING AND ENGAGING WITH COUNTRY

SEMESTER 4

DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY

RESOURCES

FIRST NATIONS RESOURCE HUB

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