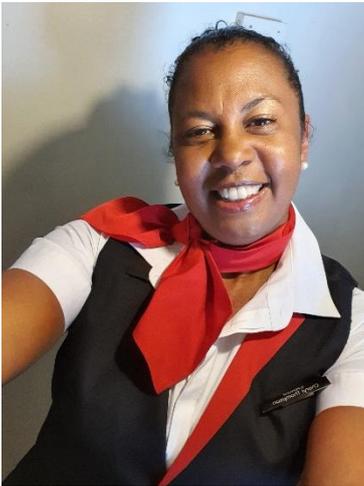


QTIC Indigenous Tourism Employment Program

SUPPORTED BY THE STAR ENTERTAINMENT GROUP



The Woman with Many Shoes

Cheryl Thompson is the 'woman with many shoes'. Black heels and stockings for QantasLink Customer Service, steel cap boots for Qantas ramps and bags, crocs for Ridgee Didge Café and Coolamon Coffee, cowgirl boots for Trackers Tours, bare feet for Desert Dust Dancers and smart casual to manage all her businesses. She is a woman of many pursuits, with a focus on exposing Outback Queensland and its visitors to the value of Aboriginal Tourism for sharing their stories and culture, as well as providing career pathways for Aboriginal youth.

Cheryl returned to her Yiningai country, now known as Barcaldine, six years ago and began her tourism journey as the owner of the Ridged Didge Café. After owning and running the Aboriginal identified café, the demand for Aboriginal Tourism in Barcaldine and Outback Queensland became apparent but was not available.

"We started getting more enquiries about Aboriginal experiences in the outback, of which there was none. That's where we started tapping into the market."

From there, Cheryl committed herself to developing experiences that tell their stories of country, including her business ventures of Trackers Tours Company and the Desert Dreaming Centre.

Sharing her people's stories became especially important for the older generation of 'grey nomad' visitors who did not have the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal culture in their schooling. Providing a place where these visitors could ask questions, but also where they could seek a blessing or a welcome to country and feel accepted and safe in the vast unknown of the outback.

"I am practising, living and breathing my culture which is continuing the dreaming."

She is the first in Australia to be awarded a Ground Handling Contract for QantasLink at not only Barcaldine, but Longreach too, the largest Airport in Central Western Queensland. With 2020, being the 100 years celebration for Qantas, they are proud to have Cheryl and her business as part of the Qantas team and their Reconciliation Action Plan. The Longreach Airport is one of the most desirable destinations in terms of the celebrations of 100yrs for

Qantas, what an experience the passengers will have, being welcomed to the Outback by a team, led by an Aboriginal businesswoman.

"What I can do is be a role model so that young women can see the possibilities in having a business."

Cheryl aims to mentor and support these students within the tourism industry by facilitating traineeships through her many projects. Training them from the floor, up is Cheryl's principle in guiding the students to understand every facet of the business and show them the possibilities in owning and operating a business. She places great value in giving these students confidence to enjoy their work, value themselves and be proud of what they do.

RHONDA APPO
Indigenous Program Manager
QTIC

"Having representation of Indigenous women in business is crucial in guiding and inspiring the next generation to work hard and reap the rewards.

Cheryl showcases how business can be operated through many different platforms and industries, all conducted on country.

Her many projects highlight the clear vision she has of what Indigenous Tourism can look like and how the industry can pave the way for future generations, especially for Indigenous communities.

Cheryl is a role model for young Indigenous women, demonstrating the importance of having objectives, being strategic and working hard in order to achieve them."



Cheryl's advice to future indigenous woman in business

- Embrace your heritage and the tools it can provide
- Do not be afraid to start from scratch and do it yourself
- Understand every role and function within the business
- Distance yourself from professional hierarchy
- Learn to prioritise and delegate where necessary
- If you find something you believe in, it will not feel like work



"I have taken on a lot, but I never feel stressed or over-worked because I love what I do."