



# Decolonising evaluation

A practical example using  
Social Return on Investment

Artwork by Rochelle Patten Snr (Qway) |  
Gunnai, Yorta Yorta, Wemba Wemba, Dhudhuroa

Natasha Rees, Skye Trudgett | September 2023



# Who we are



## Kowa Collaboration

Kowa is a First Nations led and staffed 'profit-for-purpose' enterprise.

Kowa is deeply committed to transforming impact evaluation practice to uphold and reflect First Nations values.

[www.kowacollaboration.com](http://www.kowacollaboration.com)



## VACCHO

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing in Victoria.

With a membership of 33 community controlled organisations supporting over 65,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

[www.vaccho.org.au](http://www.vaccho.org.au)



## Think Impact

Think Impact is an experienced social impact and sustainability advisory firm. Since 2014 we have supported, enabled and inspired clients from across business, government, philanthropy and the for-purpose sector to manage for better impact.

[www.thinkimpact.com.au](http://www.thinkimpact.com.au)

# What we heard

*‘Will we be able to see the results of the evaluation?’*

– First Nations program leaders, 2022

*‘Evaluators usually have a big talk then go off and write about us.’*

– First Nations CEO, 2022

# Three reflections

1. Lack of trust due to past behaviours
2. Lack of self-determination in the evaluation process
3. Lack of ownership over the output.

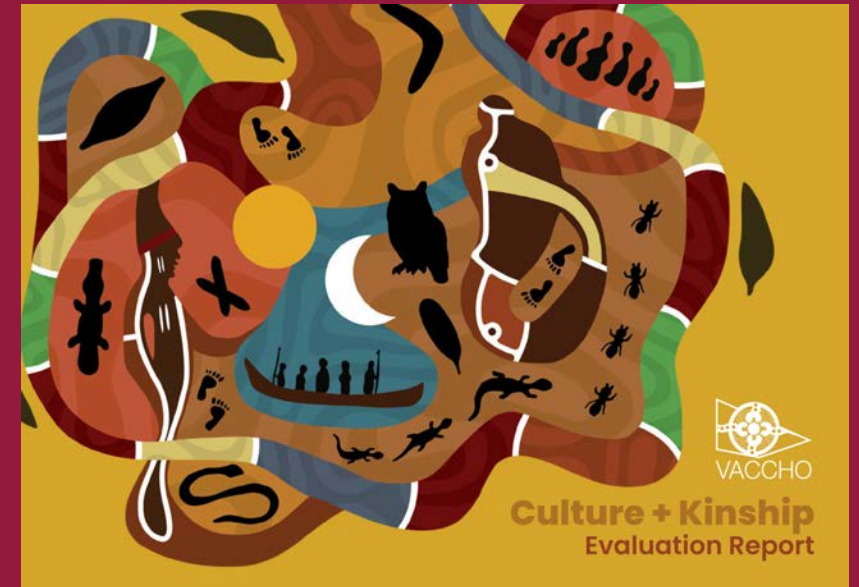
# What we were evaluating

Assessing how connection to culture and kinship supports wellbeing

## Four ACCOs

- **Moogji** – land ownership
- **Rumbalara** – art workshops
- **Goolum Goolum** – possum skin cloak
- **Budja Budja** – youth camps

Also, fully assured SROI to meet needs of funders



# SROI with a First Nations lens

## Standard SROI stages

## This project's stages

1. Establishing scope and identifying stakeholders

1. Immersion

2. Mapping outcomes

2. Impact Yarns

3. Evidencing and valuing outcomes

4. Establishing impact

3. Value Yarns

5. Calculating the SROI

6. Verifying results

4. Verifying results

7. Reporting, using and embedding

5. Reporting, using and embedding

Assurance

Assurance



# Dr Skye Trudgett

## CEO Kowa

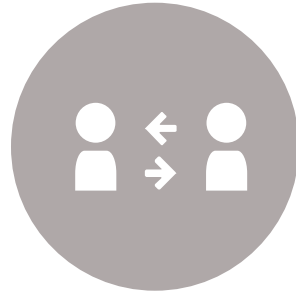
Standard SROI stages	This project's stages
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6. Verifying results	4. Verifying results
7. Reporting, using and embedding	5. Reporting, using and embedding
Assurance	Assurance





# Immersion/Establishment

What  
we did



Establish how First Nations Data Sovereignty principles would be applied using the OCCAAARS Framework (Trudgett et al 2022)



Review of AES First Nations Cultural Safety Framework



Iterate method and scope several times to ensure ACCOs would get benefit from both the process and the output

# Impact yarns

- |                |                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Phase 1</b> | Co-design questions and process  |
| <b>Phase 2</b> | Collecting yarns                 |
| <b>Phase 3</b> | Centering and amplifying moments |
| <b>Phase 4</b> | First Nations thought leadership |







# Phase 2: Collect yarns



# Phase 3 and 4

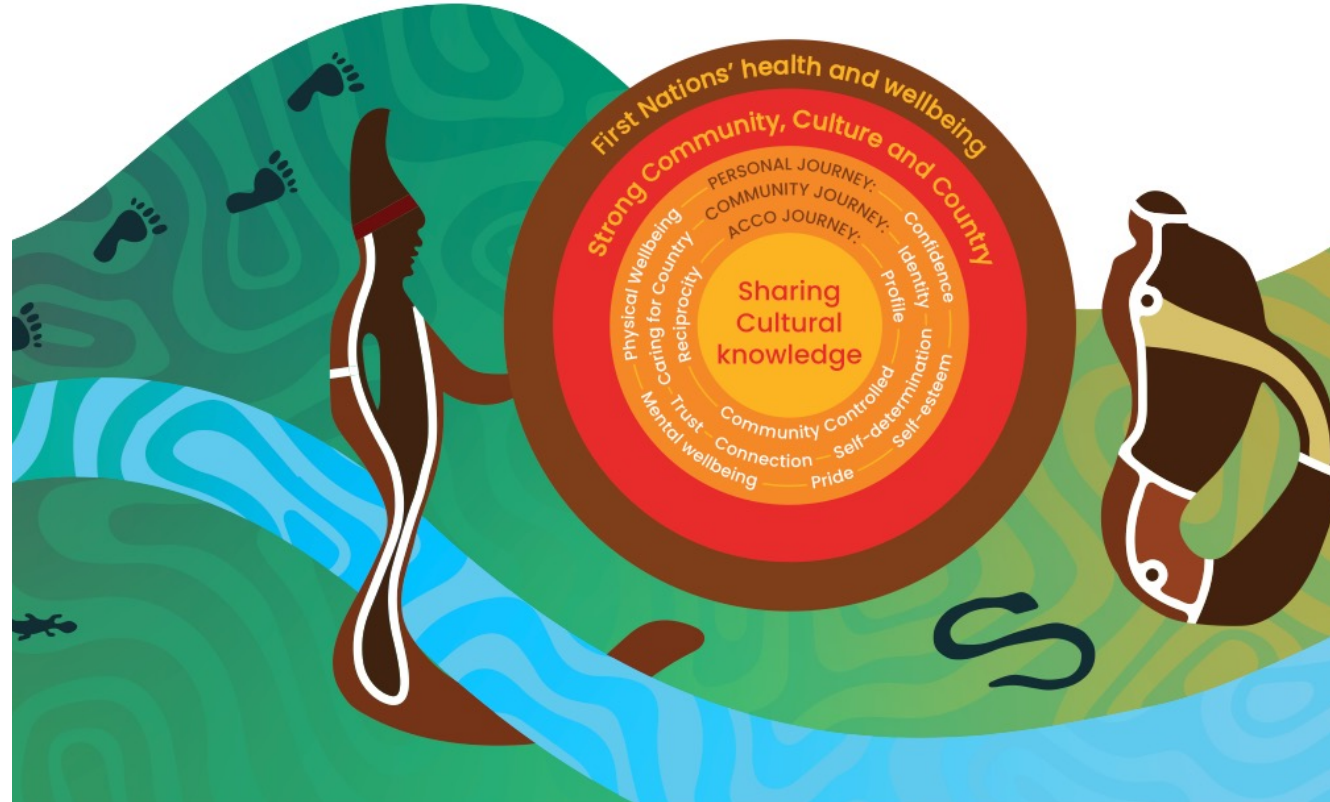
## Centering and amplifying moments; First Nations thought leadership

- Safe space
- Sharing back, finding common threads
- Opportunity for deep listening and learning together

### Outcomes for SROI valuation:

- Connecting with Culture
- Pride in Culture
- Stronger sense of identity
- Gaining cultural knowledge and skills
- Experiencing self-determination
- Increased mental health
- Increased self-confidence
- Increased educational prospects and economic prosperity

# Co-designed theory of change





# Value yarn process

## Determine relative value of outcomes

- Provide activity to vote on relative values
- Assign a financial proxy to most important outcome (anchor proxy)
- Determine relative values of other outcomes, based on community voting
- Validate again



# Results

- ACCOs were able to use the output and felt that they owned it
- Secured \$1.5m in funding
- Ministerial commitment to Action: *Develop a dedicated, coordinated, statewide Aboriginal early intervention and prevention program in Victoria that prioritises investment in self-determined, Aboriginal led initiatives that build connection to Community, Culture, Country and Kinship.*
- International case study for integrating First Nations practice in SROI
- Social Impact Measurement Network Australia (SIMNA) award for Excellence in Innovation (Runner up 2022)



# Further links



Full Culture + Kinship  
evaluation report

<https://www.vaccho.org.au/impact/>



Impact Yarns tool

OCCAARS Framework  
for embedding First  
Nations Data  
Sovereignty principles  
into design and  
evaluation

[www.kowacollaboration.com/resources](http://www.kowacollaboration.com/resources)



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improve your impact

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“This painting is about culture and spirit. When we have connection, we have health and wealth. The river is a lifeforce that sustains and maintains us. We are all different, yet we are the same under the moon and sun. Grandfather is the teacher of young men; you can see the men and boys in the canoe. Grandmother is a teacher of young women; they sit in a yarning circle to share knowledge. The owl is a symbol of wisdom. The gum leaf is a symbol of welcome and growth. The shield is a symbol of strength. The feet symbolise going back to Country for wellbeing and being guided by our Ancestors’ footprints. The animals are symbolic of Caring for Country; which is also to care for self.”  
Rochelle Patten Snr



QUESTIONS?

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**Thank you**