

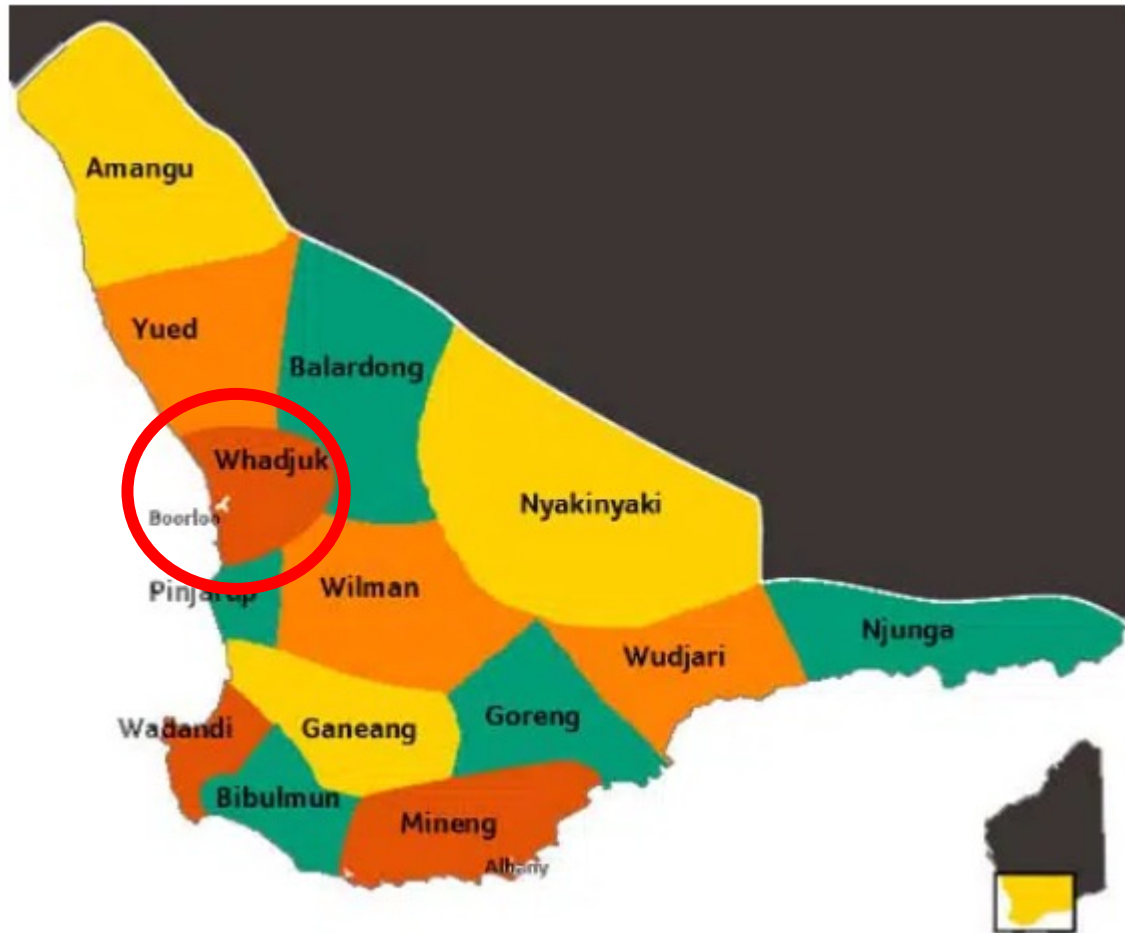
Reflections on working with independent evaluators

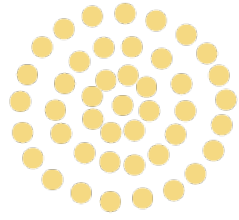
Through the lens of an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation



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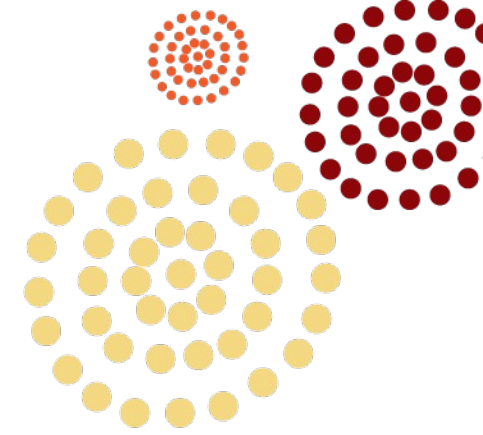
Wungening is a leading Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation based in Boorloo (Perth), WA





Daniel Morrison (Noongar Yamitji and Gija)
Chief Executive Officer
Wungening Aboriginal Corporation

Wungening's story and call to action



- Negotiating for Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing and being to be valued and prioritized in evaluations
- Calling for evaluators and funders to be active in challenging the status quo
- Put the power of evaluation in the hands of Aboriginal organisations, communities and people

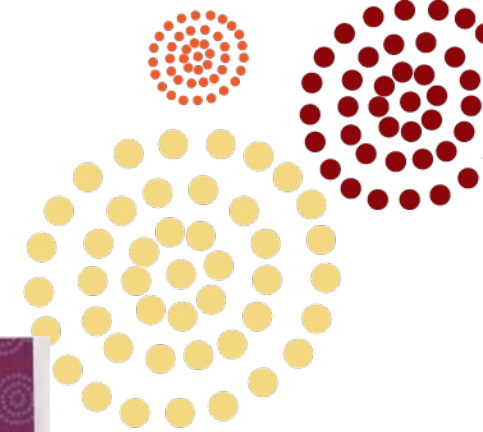
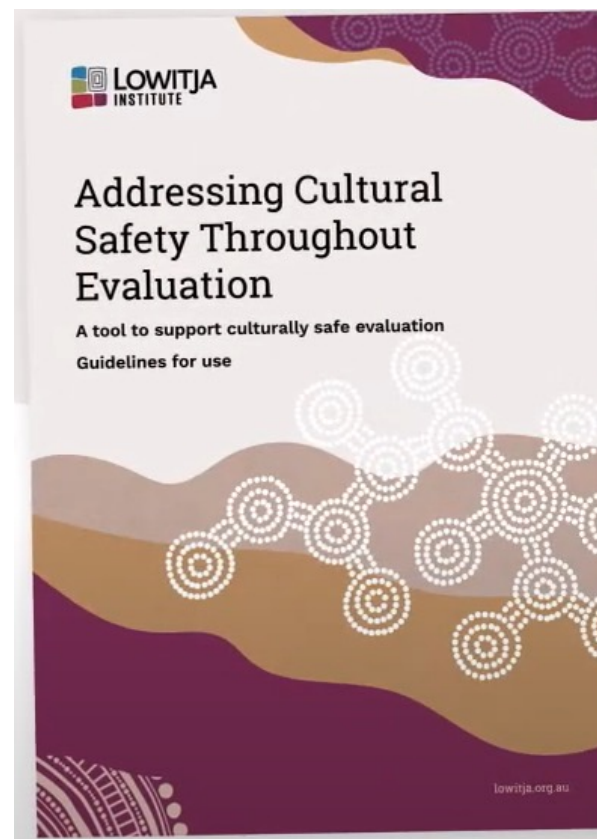
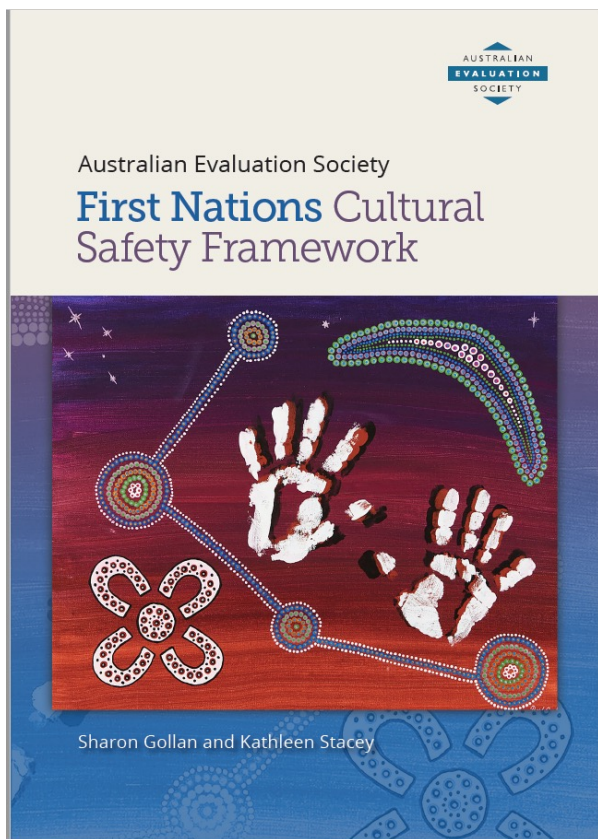


Why is this important?

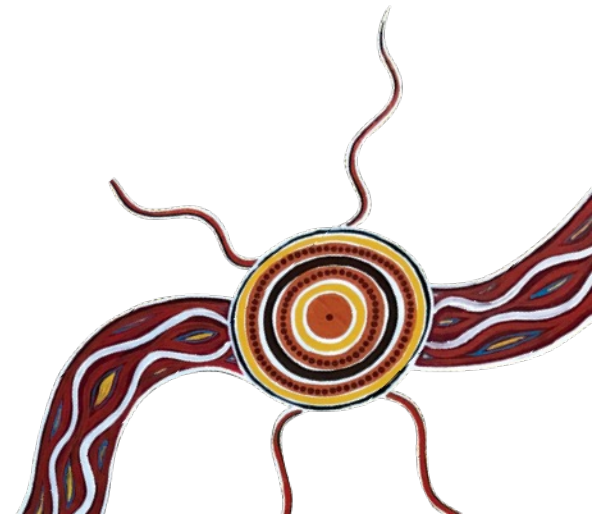
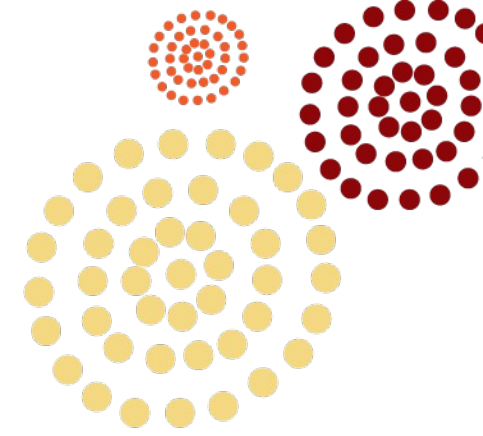
- Evaluation is a powerful tool
- It is used to justify decision about programs, policies and funding models
- However, it hasn't always led to positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



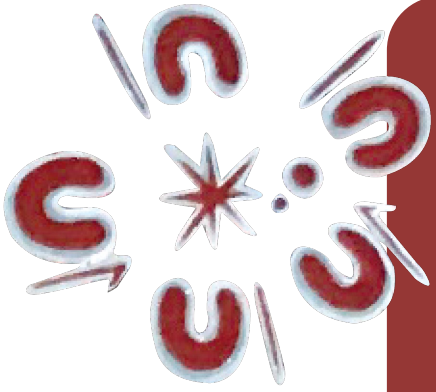
Frameworks



Cultural safety is
not a one-off
activity and is
more than words



Commissioning Stage



When it works

Wungening is advised by the funder an evaluation is planned

Wungening is given the opportunity to influence what will be evaluated and how

Challenges

ACCO not included when funders are planning to commission evaluation

Evaluators are not selected for their expertise in working with Aboriginal communities

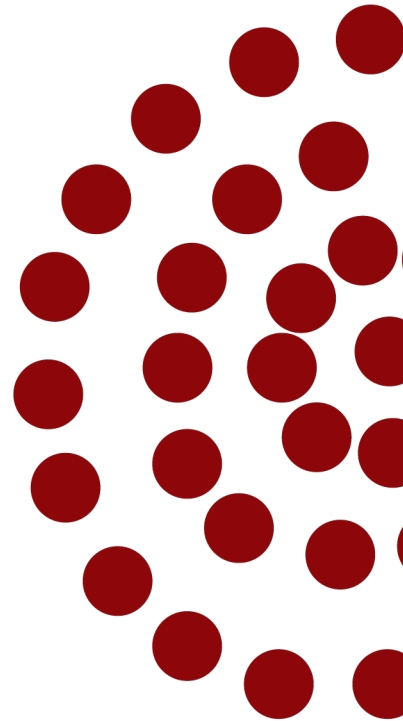
Evaluators are asked to build the capacity of the ACCO

How we responded

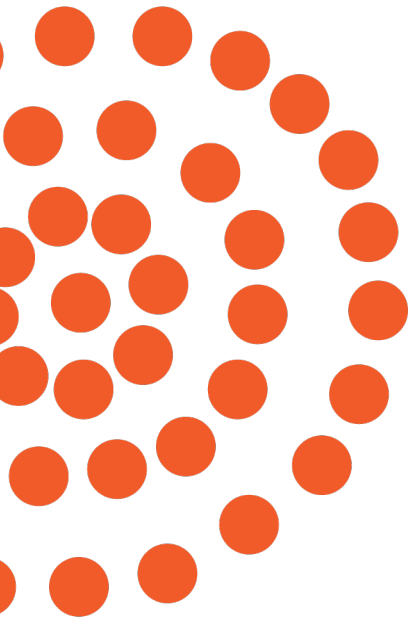
Wungening has to spend time upskilling the evaluator to work in culturally safe ways

Wungening is not resourced or acknowledged for this work

Wungening builds the capacity of evaluators to work in culturally safe ways and can be seen as difficult



Planning Stage



When it works

The evaluator reaches out to Wungening early

Cultural Safety in Evaluation Frameworks

Challenges

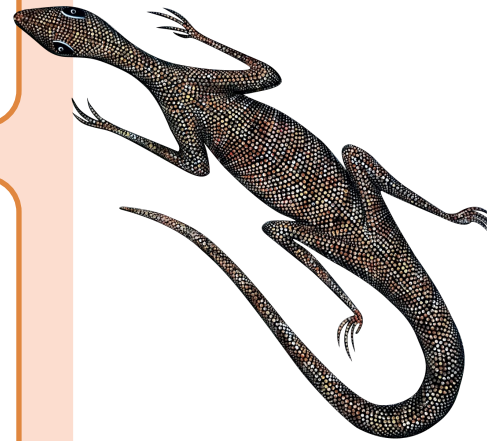
Evaluator prioritises the relationship with funder

Project plan and timeline developed without input from ACCO

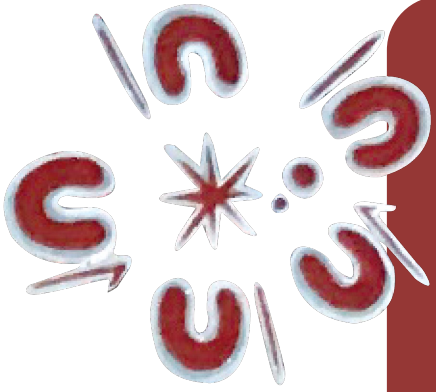
How we responded

Advocate for time to develop a relationship and build trust

Cancel our other commitments or risk not having important voices heard



Designing Stage



When it works

Meet multiple times with the evaluator who are open and flexible to work in Aboriginal ways

Feedback well received and actioned

Challenges

ACCO not asked who should be at the first meeting

Funders outnumber ACCO staff at co-design meetings

Evaluators have a very short time period to develop the questions, measures and methods

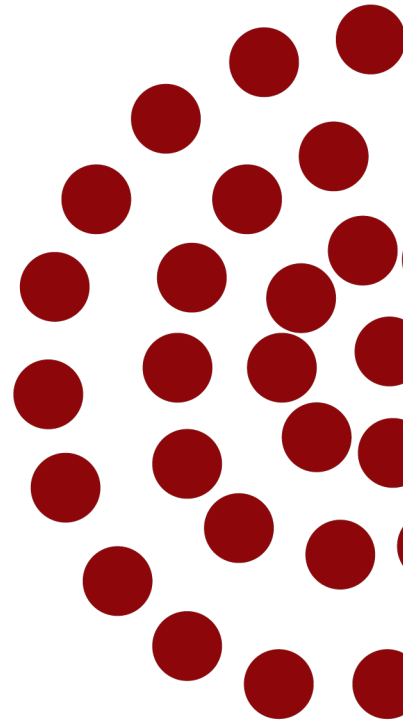
ACCO given shorter time period than funders to provide feedback on plans

How we responded

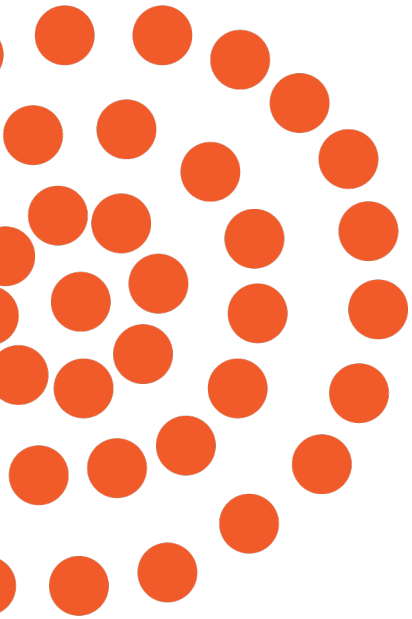
Significant preparation work

Negotiate for strengths-based measures and Aboriginal methodologies

Advocate for Aboriginal involvement throughout the evaluation



Conducting Stage



When it works

Regular communication and meetings

Many opportunities for engagement and a flexible approach

Challenges

ACCO not included in regular meetings

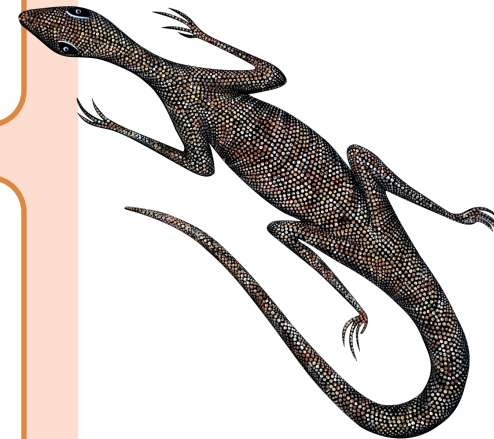
Evaluator prioritises engagement with funder stakeholders

Lack of diversity and range of views participating in the evaluation process

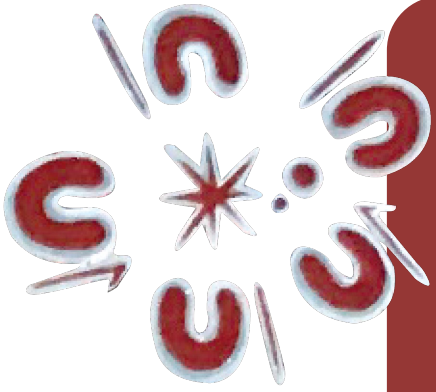
How we responded

Advocate for additional time to organise staff and clients to be available for interviews

Request Aboriginal voice to be prioritised in the report



Reporting Stage



When it works

A report that reflects the needs and strengths of Aboriginal people

Outcomes that are meaningful to Aboriginal people

Challenges

Tight timeframes for writing report

Limited or no opportunity for ACCO to provide feedback

Report written from deficit perspective and values western knowledge

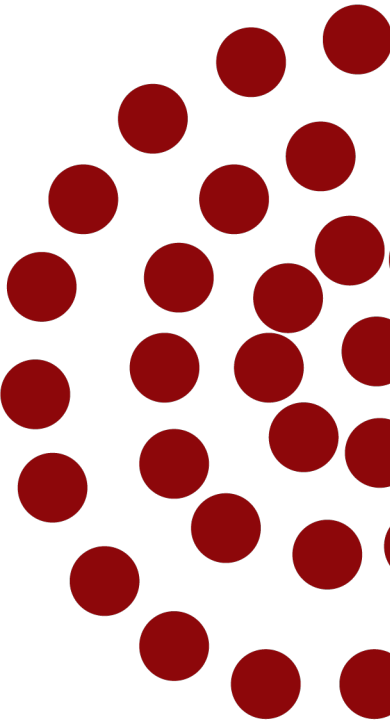
Lack of critical self-reflection by the evaluator

How we responded

Wungening has to write strongly worded emails requesting the opportunity to provide feedback

Advocates for strengths and Wungening's work to be acknowledged

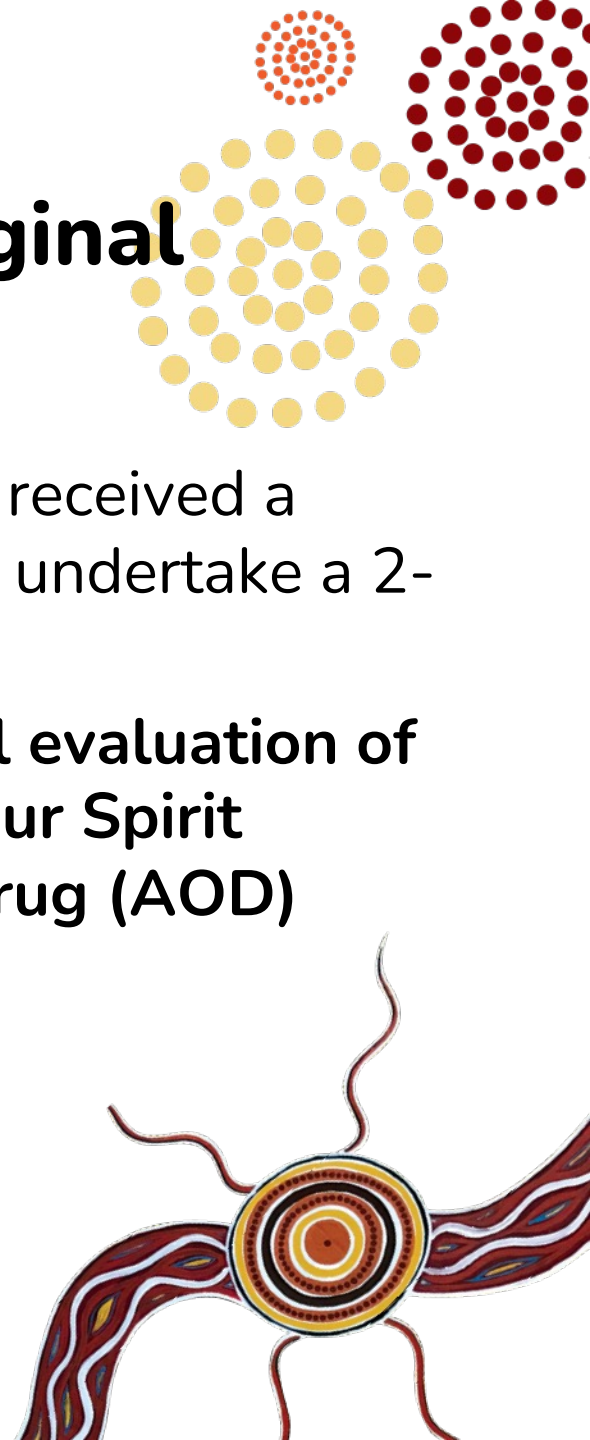
Request for Aboriginal voices, knowledges and skills to be prioritised





Shifting Evaluation in Aboriginal Contexts

- In February 2023 Wungening received a grant from Lowitja Institute to undertake a 2-year evaluation project
- Project title: **A developmental evaluation of Ngalla Wirrin Wungening (Our Spirit Healing) alcohol and other drug (AOD)**



Shifting Evaluation in Aboriginal Contexts

Example: A Developmental Evaluation of Ngalla Wirrin Wungening AOD Program



In practice, our culturally safe evaluation looks like...



Partnership and shared decision-making from the beginning.

Community and Elders consultations prior to project commencement.

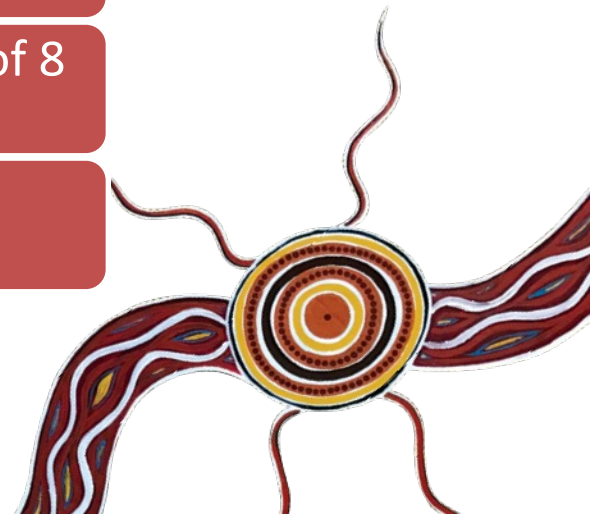
Taking the time to build trust

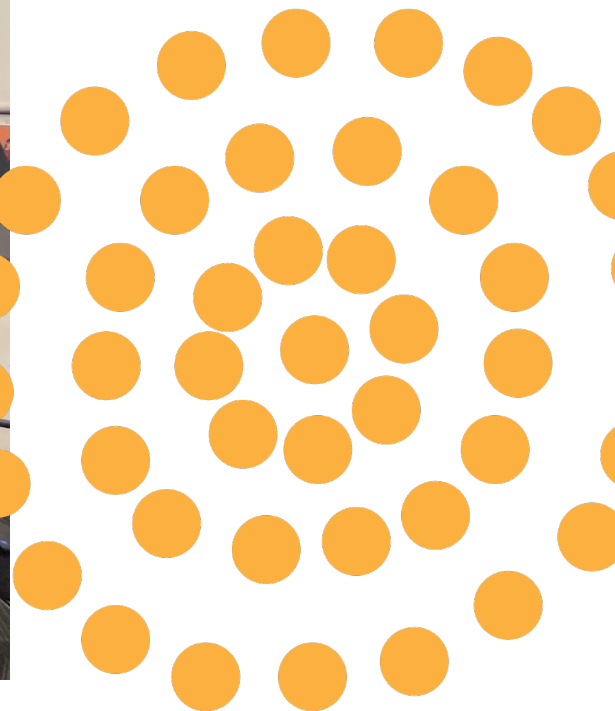
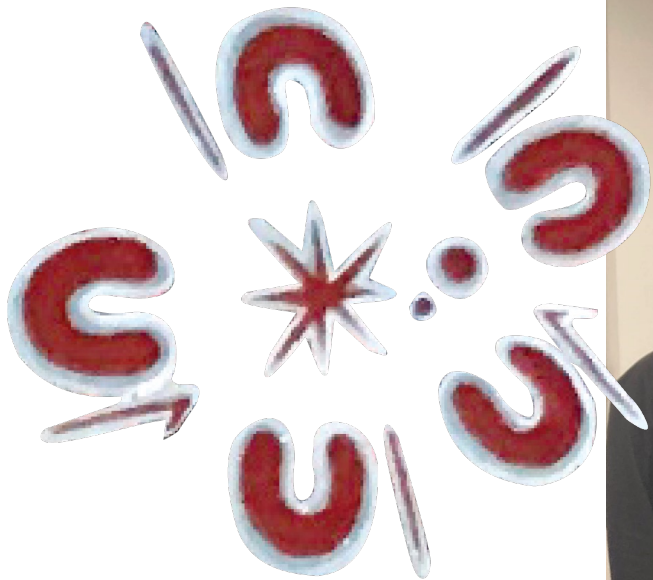
Being reciprocal – sharing who we are, the evaluation aims and why we are doing it

Maintaining relationships throughout the life of the project


Establishing a Co-Researcher Group made up of 8 Aboriginal staff members

Respect for Aboriginal data sovereignty embedded throughout all processes





"This project is important to me because, this here is a big area that I align to and wanted to join in on – this team, this group, this evaluation. There are issues for our mob and there's not much yarning around about things and I think being able to share my experience, in our mob's words, I can pass on their voices. And I can help make sure that's being put into evaluations and research out there." - Co-Research Group Member



Be brave and
courageous
and shift the
power of
evaluation to
Aboriginal
communities'

