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Abstract
This paper reports the process of identifying a well-being monitoring and evaluation approach for a community development program with Aboriginal Native Title Holders in Northern Australia. The process involved the use of an empowerment based Aboriginal Family Well-being framework to enable Native Title Holders to articulate domains of value to their local community. These domains aligned with an existing culturally sensitive Aboriginal well-being survey tool which the Native Title Holders saw as relevant for their use. The attempts to provide Aboriginal people with a broader and more long-term perspective from which to judge the value of short-term projects is a different approach to traditional program assessment (monitoring and evaluation). It aims to provide Aboriginal people with a more relevant frame from which they can make judgements about the worth of any program or project in their location, supporting local control and decision making. Potentially it provides Aboriginal people with the information from which to advocate for other supports and to assess the value of Government and other projects.

INTRODUCTION

Despite several decades of development projects in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia, few have been systematically evaluated or monitored (Campbell, Pyett, McCarthy, Whiteside & Tsey, 2004; Hudson, 2016; Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2020). As a result, there is limited knowledge about what works and why. This undermines accountability to Aboriginal people and other stakeholders (Hudson, 2016; Masuku & Ijeoma, 2015, McCausland, 2019). In recent years, Aboriginal people have increasingly called for a greater focus on monitoring and evaluation to improve the quality of programs and increase Aboriginal people's control over their own development (Empowered Communities, 2015; Moran, 2016; Bainbridge et al., 2015).

Evaluative enquiry with Indigenous Australians - especially those living in remote Australia - poses unique challenges. This includes the need for appropriate data collection methods and culturally sensitive engagement with Aboriginal people (Hurworth & Harvey, 2012; Markiewicz, 2012). More fundamental are considerations about how evaluation practice with Indigenous people should address the different worldviews of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (McFarlane, 2006; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008; Katz, 2016; McCausland, 2019; Shepherd & Graham, 2020). To some degree these views echo the long term discussion about the epistemology of evaluation practice and the limits of positivist approaches in assessing programs in complex development contexts (Krantz, 1995; Mertens 2009; Cabaj, 2019). It is also linked to discussions of the limits to counterfactual logics versus more configurational and generative logics (Schatz & Welle, 2016).

Program monitoring is an embedded system of judgement that underpins the overall assessment process. Given the dynamic and context specific nature of many programs designed to support Australian Aboriginal development, monitoring from project commencement is an important contribution to relevant and informed program evaluation (McCausland, 2019).

This paper reports on initial work undertaken by the Northern Land Council in northern Australia to develop a monitoring system which privileges and builds from Aboriginal Australians' own vision for the development of their communities.

BACKGROUND

The Northern Land Council (NLC) is a statutory organisation responsible for assisting Aboriginal people in the northern region of the Northern Territory to acquire and manage their traditional lands and seas (NLC, 2016). While they are strong in language, culture and connection to country, two thirds of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory live in regional and remote communities and outstations where they experience disadvantage in terms of their social, economic and health status (NLC, 2016). The NLC seeks to achieve better outcomes for its 36,000 constituents through Aboriginal-led development.

The NLC Community Planning and Development (CP&D) program works with Aboriginal landowner groups to support them in using royalties or rent money from land-use agreements to undertake projects that create lasting community benefit (Kelly, 2018). The CP&D program uses a community development approach, with projects governed and managed by Aboriginal groups. In addition to delivering tangible benefits to Aboriginal groups, the CP&D program also aims to strengthen and build the capabilities of groups and communities to manage and govern their assets. A core assumption of the program is that more cohesive groups, which are better able to make decisions collectively and manage their own resources effectively will have enhanced agency and control.

The community development work which is the focus of this report commenced in 2017 as part of the development on an indigenous land use agreement (ILUA) for Project Sea Dragon, a large-scale prawn farm at Legune Station, a pastoral lease near the border of Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Although at the time of writing the project was still awaiting financing, ILUA milestone payments have been made to the Djarrandjarrany Native Title Holders (NTHs) and other Native Title Holder groups on whose land the proposed prawn farm will be built.[1] Given the potential for this to be a 99-year project, the NTHs elected to use a percentage of the milestone payments for the benefit of the broader community. To this end, they sought the support of the NLC CP&D program.

In 2018 the NLC CP&D program received Federal government funding to undertake a three year monitoring and evaluation system project, including employment of a 0.8 FTE monitoring and evaluation project officer commencing in 2019. NLC were seeking to expand on the day-to-day judgements about the projects and make better use of monitoring to support their community development approach. Importantly, they were interested in monitoring systems which provided accountability to Aboriginal people. The Federal government funding provided an opportunity to experiment with different monitoring approaches in order to identify an approach that would support the aims of the CP&D work. The proposal was to trial three different monitoring approaches, and to use the learning from this to both establish a comprehensive and appropriate monitoring system for ongoing work and to generate learning about effective monitoring which could be shared more widely with other organisations working with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and beyond.

The three different approaches were designed to approach the task of monitoring from different directions. They included a 'traditional' monitoring approach, which utilised data collected as part of program implementation to assess progress against the project outcomes (an extractive process, albeit with a variety of data collection methods); a locally led approach utilising Aboriginal people's perspectives and assessment of the community development projects and their benefits (a participatory approach); and a third approach focused on monitoring of well-being, going beyond a focus on the specific project. This paper reports on the development of the third approach, which was undertaken through collaboration with Djarrandjarrany NTHs.

THE MONITORING APPROACH

Djarrandjarrany NTHs call the monitoring system '*Checking up to keep on track*'. Several considerations shaped the approach. The first was the 'direction' of the monitoring. Typically monitoring focuses on the program or project, collecting information or evidence about activities and then proceeding through an analysis process to make a judgement about the progress and value of that project. This approach, looking from the 'project out', privileges the value of the intervention and its likely contribution to change (Garcia & Zazueta, 2015). A different approach – one which is more appropriate for some complex development programs, including those focused on Indigenous people (La France, Nichols & Kirkhart, 2012) - is a context centred approach (Roche, 2004; Davey, et al, 2017). This approach starts with examining what has changed for people and then looks at the relative contribution of the project to that change.

A further influence on the approach was alignment to the long-term goals of the NLC CP&D program, namely, to support Aboriginal people to have enhanced agency and control. Utilising a critical approach to monitoring (Morris, 2006; Katz et al., 2016), the focus was on providing people with information about their situation in a way that supported them to make further judgements and act within and on that situation.

Finally, the approach was influenced by approaches developed elsewhere in Australia. In particular, it drew on work undertaken with Yawuru people in Western Australia (Yap & Yu, 2016), which demonstrates the value of supporting Aboriginal people to define their own intended outcomes and then systematically monitor progress towards those outcomes over time. The aim was to generate information that would resonate with Aboriginal people and support their knowledge about areas that they defined as significant for themselves and their location (Katz et al., 2016).

Earlier discussions with the NTHs indicated that they had a strong interest in knowing how the community development work would support overall community health or 'wellbeing'. The concept of wellbeing has received increased global attention in recent years, and there is considerable debate about its definition and measurement (Whiteside et al. 2017: White, 2010). For Indigenous peoples' wellbeing is a holistic concept encompassing mental, physical, cultural and spiritual health. It is "steeped in the harmonised interrelations that

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[1] An ILUA milestone payments was used to fund an upgrade of an outstation, Marralum, near to the site of the prawn farm, which will enable more people to live there and, in the future, service the prawn farm.

constitute cultural well-being, including spiritual, environmental, ideological, political, social, economic, mental and physical factors" (Salmon et al., 2019, p.1.).

When the NLC CD&P team worked with the NTHs to identify the long-term changes they were seeking, their vision suggested a holistic focus, a focus with several features coming together to represent the health or wellbeing of people in that location. Features included:

- Healthy and happy (health services, healthy eating, spending time on country, no drugs and alcohol).
- Teach country and culture to your people and language and bushfood.
- Education and schooling and transport.
- Running the community ourselves – strong leadership.
- Running our own businesses.
- Employment; for example, jobs fixing the homeland community (Marralum); rangers; gardening/nursery.
- To be recognised as Native Title Holders, so we can make decisions for country
- Kids looking after country in the future.
- Living on country at Marralum.

Based on these findings, mindful of the long-term CP&D intention of increased agency, and drawing from experience elsewhere in Australia (Whiteside, Tsey, Cadet-James & McCalman, 2014), a Family Well-being empowerment (FWB) framework was utilised as the starting point for developing the monitoring approach. FWB is well documented as a tool for engaging Aboriginal Australian adults in reflecting on and taking greater control of their health and social and emotional well-being (Whiteside et al., 2014). The tool enables people to develop greater awareness of, and language to articulate, their emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical needs through a narrative group work approach. With such awareness people demonstrate strengthened personal and community capacity to meet these needs (Whiteside et al., 2014).[2]

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION
In the following sections we describe the process through which the Djarrandjarrany NTHs identified the outcomes or domains of change they wanted for their communities that would become the focus of the monitoring. We then describe the process of developing an approach to measure change in these domains.

Throughout the process we were guided by the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) 'Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities' which provides a set of principles to ensure research adheres to six core values: spirit and integrity; cultural continuity; equity; reciprocity; respect and responsibility (NHMRC, 2018). Ethical approval to undertake the work was provided by La Trobe University.

The team developing this approach included NLC CP&D staff with backgrounds in community development, land management, cross-cultural engagement and governance and established, albeit relatively new relationships with NTHs. This was complimented by skills and experience in Family Well-being, monitoring, research and evaluation brought to the team by research partners at La Trobe and James Cook University.

Identifying domains of change
As discussed, NTHs had already identified wellbeing – defined in a holistic sense - as a key concern. These ideas were further explored through workshops held in Kununurra in Western Australia and Wadeye in the Northern Territory in June and September 2019. Twenty-five NTHs participated; 14 women and 11 men. When asked whether they would prefer to run the workshops in local language, with translation for those who attended from outside the community, participants stated they were comfortable using English. The workshops involved 3 main components: defining key concepts, identifying domains of change that were of value to them, and measuring change.

The workshops opened with a discussion of guidelines for how the group would work together and the nomination of a TO as Chair to ensure these were followed. As monitoring and evaluation was a key focus of

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[2] FWB was initially designed as a 5-stage group program where students undertake six months equivalent of full-time training and obtain a Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificate II-level qualification. However, the program has been adapted as a short course where students explore the topics of human qualities, basic human needs, life journey, relationships, conflict resolution, emotions, crisis, grief and loss, and beliefs and attitudes (Whiteside et al., 2014).

this project, and an essential component of the NLC CP&D support, a first step involved ensuring that NTHs were clear about the meaning and relevance of monitoring for them. The NTHs agreed that taking notice of what was happening and checking with each other how things are going was important and expressed interest in exploring how best to undertake monitoring in ways that helped them to improve health and well-being. NTHs likened monitoring to checking the washing machine or checking the tide and adopted the term "checking up to keep on track' for the monitoring process.

Topics from the FWB tool were then used to engage the NTHs in a reflective yet structured conversation on domains of change. This was facilitated by one of the authors who has training and extensive experience using the FWB framework. Given their clear alignment with the domains the NTHs had previously identified, attention was given in the workshops to the FWB topics of Leadership Qualities, Basic Human Needs and Managing Relationships. In the topic, 'Leadership Qualities' NTHs were asked to identify someone they considered to be a leader in their community and to share ideas about the qualities required for fostering community and personal leadership. In the 'Basic Needs' topic, NTHs discussed their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs and ways in which these could be better met for themselves and the community. In the 'Managing Relationships' topic, NTHs reflected on the processes and qualities associated with different relationships, including those where there was tension or conflict, those that were more conciliatory and those that are 'heart centred' and promoting of love, wisdom and compassion. For each of these topics participants' comments were recorded on large sheets of flipchart paper attached to the walls of the room.

Detailed workshop notes were taken for each of the four workshops to document the workshop processes and the TO conversations. These notes included some direct quotes from NTHs as well as photographs of the flipchart paper and of the participants. These notes formed the data for analysis.

Data analysis

Consistent with the NHMRC ethical principles and the ethics of care and responsibility embedded in Aboriginal research methodologies we sought to take a culturally safe and respectful approach to data analysis in which we privileged Indigenous knowledges and cultural traditions (Bainbridge, Whiteside, & McCalman, 2013).

Theoretically we were informed by constructivism which allows for multiple realities, the influence of contextual social processes and structures, the relational nature of research and the subjective position of the researcher (Charmaz, 2000; Bainbridge et al., 2013). The initial analysis – undertaken by one of the authors– focussed on the words of the NTHs and aimed to understand the priority domains of change for them. Using thematic methods (Braun & Clarke 2006), the notes were collated into one document to enable careful reading and line-by-line coding. Emergent codes were grouped into analytic categories. Three major themes emerged from the analysis. The first centred on the qualities required for effective leadership, including values and skills. The second theme addressed elements of social and emotional well-being, with a strong focus on connection to culture. The third theme captured broader issues including safety, education and life-long learning, and employment. As the author who undertook the initial analysis was not Indigenous, the analysis was verified by NLC staff and by the NTHs at subsequent meetings.

The results of the analysis are presented below, with participant quotes provided as supporting evidence. These quotes arose from workshops conducted in Wadeye and Kununurra in 2019.As these quotes were documented as workshop notes, there is a small risk they may not represent the spoken words exactly.

FINDINGS
Leadership qualities
Strong leadership was considered vital to well-being. The NTHs agreed that they have some strong leaders, but they need more role models. The reflective FWB conversations on human qualities generated a long list of the values and skills that effective leaders have.

Most commonly identified were the qualities of being caring, compassionate and kind: "Be kind and humble with open arms". People spoke of caring for their children and other family and community members: for example, one woman was "looking after an Aunty who was unwell, helping to meet her physical and mental needs". Another participant noted that it was also important to care for country.

Respect was considered an essential leadership quality: "Everyone needs to be modelling respect". This involved both self-respect and respect for others: "need to respect yourself and show you kids respect".

Participants noted that respect was the basis of a community song – the Kununurra respect song, "Just be proud". Also mentioned was discipline which involved being trustworthy and responsible, hard work and being on time. In Wadeye NTHs spoke of the importance of listening, "doing things for other people", being "kind and humble", having "open arms", taking responsibility, being inspiring, hard-working, and taking a background helping role. One person thought "Being organised, keeping a clean and orderly house" was important.

NTHs also felt that leaders needed to have the skills to make things happen. Most important were communication skills. People discussed how the work occurring at Legune required a large group of people to work together to make decisions. As NTHs they needed to "speak up"; and "be bold and communicate, be brave, support and direct". They needed to know how to chair a meeting and deal with conflict. This was not always easy for everyone to do; one woman said that "she would like to get more confidence, she is working on it, but she is a bit shy".

Social and emotional well-being
Physical and mental health
Having a health clinic, exercise, healthy eating and giving up smoking were identified by participants as basic physical needs during FWB conversations in both Kununurra and Wadeye. Mental health was also a priority for participants. The high rate of suicide was a serious concern and people felt more needed to be done to reduce this. People spoke of the need to attend to their own mental health: "If you are not feeling well spiritually, go to your next-door neighbour, listen to music, water your garden". Some sought professional help, "to let our feelings out" and thought it important that others feel able to do this. Several women spoke of the need to address unhappy personal issues, including family relationships: one woman had left a partner who had bullied her, and she was now in a healthier relationship.

Connection to culture
Connection to culture was viewed as essential for social and emotional well-being and featured heavily in FWB discussions. One person reflected: "Culture is one of the most important things for keeping people on track. Culture is everything". Connection to culture involved knowledge of language, totem and history, story-telling and singing in language, staying on land, dancing in corroboree, and connection to other clans. Participants expressed concern and sadness at what they perceived as a loss of culture: "people are not going to corroboree… some of the totem and culture has been lost, old people are losing voice and energy. It's sad to lose the culture.".

Participants discussed the importance of cultural leadership and sharing and teaching young people about culture at length. They spoke of the need to teach young people about their culture so that they "know where they come from [and have] connection to culture and land". The group shared some stories about cultural leaders including a grandmother who would shoot goanna from the front seat of the car or go out digging with crow bars and how she shared culture and kept people safe. One woman was "learning how to teach language so can be a teacher of languages to meet mental needs". Spending time on country was vital for teaching culture; "Family time out bush is important".

Broader issues
Community safety
Community safety was identified as a basic need and an indicator of well-being. It involved safety within both houses and neighbourhoods. Within the house participants discussed the importance of child safety. This involved parental supervision of children's "coming and going" and their internet use. They were concerned at the number of "broken families" and homes with "too much drugs/alcohol/family violence". They were distressed that too many children were leaving home to meet physical safety needs and felt there should be more safe houses for children in the community.

Neighbourhood fighting was also considered a serious problem. Many of the Kununurra participants had experienced sleepless nights due to fighting and drinking nearby. In Wadeye, at the time of the June workshop, children had been hospitalised following community violence. People called for the fighting to end and for the "community to be free of alcohol, and respect to be at the heart of it".

Education and employment
Education was seen by participants as essential. They noted that "It's hard for young people to get good jobs if they don't have education". People reported that they were worried that young people weren't getting enough education. Some commented that only two houses with kids in the community go to school. When they were younger, everyone went to school. If kids miss out on too much education it's hard for them to go back to school.

Distance education for remote primary and secondary students and boarding school in Perth (and elsewhere) had become options for some young people. But many felt that education should involve access to mainstream education as well as learning cultural knowledge. Participants also emphasised the need for life-long learning, including through training in areas such as land management, managing money, and gaining a driver's license.

Participants discussed the need for more employment and had a range of employment ideas including aged care as "there are older people in the community that need looking after". Other suggestions included collecting bottles and cans for recycling; this was happening in Wadeye and could also happen in Kununurra. It was anticipated that the prawn farm project would provide employment opportunities.

NEXT STEPS – MEASURING CHANGE

Once the domains of change were agreed with NTHs, the next step was to develop the tool through which to monitor change in those domains over time. In line with experience in Western Australia (Yap & Yu, 2016), the original plan had been to develop unique measures based on TO feedback. However, a broader scoping of the experience in Australia identified an existing Aboriginal well-being survey tool that appeared to capture these themes as well as others of potential relevance. The Mayi Kuwayu (MK) survey was developed at the Australian National University by Aboriginal researchers in consultation with Aboriginal groups and organisations across the country as part of a major national study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander well-being and the value of culture for people. The survey includes the domains of identity, language, culture and community; health; experiences; and family support (Jones et al., 2018). Table 1 provides examples of domains and themes addressed within the MK survey that aligned with the areas identified by NTHs.

Table 1: Comparison of domains of change identified by Djarrandjarrany Native Title Holders and in the Mayi Kuwayu survey

Domains of change identified by Djarrandjarrany NTHs	Domains and themes identified in the Mayi Kuwayu survey
Leadership qualities (for example, respect, compassion, kindness, communication skills)	Community (leadership, participation, feel listened to, respected) Identity, language, culture and community; Health; experiences; and family support and connection
Physical and mental health	Health (physical health, mental health, alcohol, smoking and gambling)
Connection to culture	Identity and country Cultural knowledge and practice
Safety; education and life-long learning; employment	About you (includes employment, education, housing, money situation) Experiences (including programs and services, discrimination/racism, worries in the family and community, caring, stolen generations)

At the September 2019 workshop in Wadeye, a selection of questions from the MK survey was tested with NTHs to assess their relevance and acceptability. Questions related to leadership, connection to culture, family and community relationships, health, education, employment and financial management were written on flipchart paper and NTHs were asked to work in small groups to rate how important these were and how well they aligned with their own ideas about wellbeing, and to provide explanations for their rating. The NTHs engaged deeply in this process. They found the MK survey questions to be relevant, addressing the issues of most concern to them, and an appropriate tool for measuring change in their communities. They expressed interest in learning more about the broader MK study.

With NTH agreement, the NLC invited a team from the Australian National University to support implementation of the survey with NTHs in Wadeye and Kununurra. This included training and support for a small group of community researchers to administer the survey, analyse the data, and report the findings. The NTH group identified a senior woman and two women from the next generation with the skills and capacity to take on the community researcher role. The work commenced in 2020 and to date three community researchers and an NLC staff member have been trained to support local people to complete the full survey. The NLC officer took on a coordinating role and managed logistics, and community researchers led the survey processes

including obtaining consent and maintaining confidentially and cultural safety. 28 surveys have been returned and initial analysis has been completed. Initial review by NTHs indicates that they have found the results relevant to their situation and useful as a basis for further discussion about their development aspirations and intentions. A full process for communicating all the results including comparison across several measures between this group and Aboriginal people living elsewhere in Australia, is being implemented, at the direction of NTHs. This process, expected to take some months and to be accompanied by additional development and facilitation activities, will be the subject of future reports.

Checking up to keep on track has not been easy to develop in these two remote Aboriginal communities. The logistics involved in both establishing the approach and then administering the MK survey have been extensive and time consuming. There have been some particular challenges in the early phase of administering the MK survey in Wadeye and Kununurra, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel, competing organisational and community priorities and demands, and the length of time and level of support required for people to complete the survey. Some of these challenges were mitigated through the engagement of the community researchers, who worked with NTHs and other participants, finding the 'right' times to invite them to complete the survey, supporting them with transport to a quiet location where they could focus on the task and sitting beside them to assist with explaining survey questions and requirements. Community researchers played an important role as interlocutors for the MK dialogue and ensuring the survey could be completed in a culturally safe way. A side product of the whole process has been the upskilling of these local researchers. The capacity of NLC and the local researchers to regularly repeat the survey and build the knowledge base of NTHs, supporting them to interpret the data and its value in assessing shorter term activities, are all still to be tested.

DISCUSSION

Aboriginal-led approaches to monitoring and evaluation are vital for both quality improvement of programs and for providing Aboriginal people some control over those programs. This paper reports the process of identifying a well-being monitoring approach for a community development program with Aboriginal NTHs in Northern Australia. In this innovative approach, an empowerment based Aboriginal Family Well-being framework enabled deep reflection and the articulation of areas of value to the local groups, namely: qualities for leadership; connection to culture; and community level indicators of safety, education, and training; and employment. These domains aligned with and clarified earlier work undertaken with the NTHs to identify their long-term vision. They also aligned with an existing culturally sensitive well-being survey tool created by and for Aboriginal people (Jones et al., 2018). Our subsequent trial of parts of the survey within the workshops highlighted its potential to be used for monitoring Aboriginal well-being, as defined by NTHs, thereby mitigating the need to create a new measurement tool and 'reinvent the wheel'.

Despite logistical and some other difficulties, reports to date indicate that the NTHs have appreciated the opportunity to reflect on the issues raised by the MK survey and to be involved in the study. The support offered by community researchers in terms of organising a quiet place with no distractions as NTHs completed the survey, being able to work on the survey at a time which best suited their other commitments and having the help with understanding offered by the community researchers all clearly improved the process. Beyond this the NTHs identified that the survey was relevant. They saw in the questions the areas or domains they had identified and discussed. They were able to connect the survey to their original aspirations and ideas for change. They considered that information about these areas was relevant to the decisions they will make for the well-being of themselves and others.

The next step in the process will be for the ANU MK research team to complete the analysis of the MK surveys and for NLC to work with the NTHs to explore the significance of these results. Being part of a national study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing will start to give the NTHs some information about their well-being compared to others and a base measure from which to assess if things are improving or not. Longer term, as the survey is repeated, those NTHs will be able to assess how well they are progressing to increased well-being in their location, as they define it. The intention is that they will be in a more informed position to judge the value of the community development projects.

The attempts to provide Aboriginal people with a broader and more long-term perspective from which to judge the value of short-term projects is a different approach to traditional program assessment (monitoring and evaluation). It attempts to provide a group of NTHs with a more relevant frame to assess all the activity in their place, one that includes the areas or domains they have identified as significant. This approach has the potential

to widen the knowledge base from which Aboriginal people can make judgements about the worth of any activity or project, both those supported by NLC and others.

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