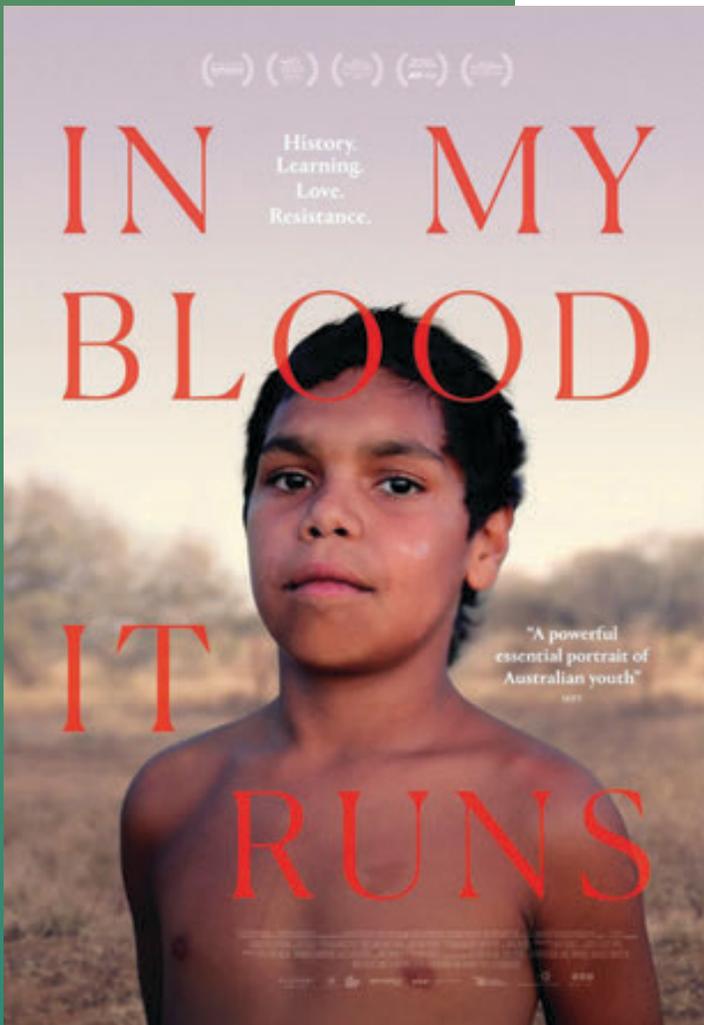


AN INITIATIVE OF



DOCUMENTARY POWER
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

MAKING SOCIAL CHANGE WITH DOCUMENTARIES: What Works, Why and How?: A Case Study



IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS

Centering Co-creation and Communities
in Documentary Film and Impact

SPRING 2024

“Often there’s a film, and then there’s an impact campaign or a distribution strategy or a duty of care plan... and those things are kind of bolted onto the side. There’s an idea that you have to protect the film and not let it be those things. But [for us] the process was the film. The relationships were the filmmaking process.”

Alex Kelly
Associate Producer / Impact Producer
In My Blood It Runs



PERSPECTIVE
FUND

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

As both an outcome and a set of activities, making social impact through documentary storytelling has changed enormously over the past decade. It isn't an understatement to say that the entire environment in which filmmakers and impact producers create has seen fundamental change over the last few years, due to major disruptions made by rising social movements and the arrival of new funding powers, distributors, and engagement platforms. At such a juncture, an initiative from the Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI) raises the following key questions: What does social impact in documentary entail today? What are the current challenges? What lessons and models of the past are being brought forward and which ones are being overlooked? What does success look like in this work and how do we define it?

This case study centers this pursuit by engaging with the film *IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS*, selected by an advisory committee of eight leading filmmakers and impact producers, as providing a useful perspective into the features, best practices, tools, lessons, and experiences of an exemplary impact campaign within the documentary field today. This case study is based on multiple conversations with key members of the film and impact campaign team around their experiences working on this impact campaign.

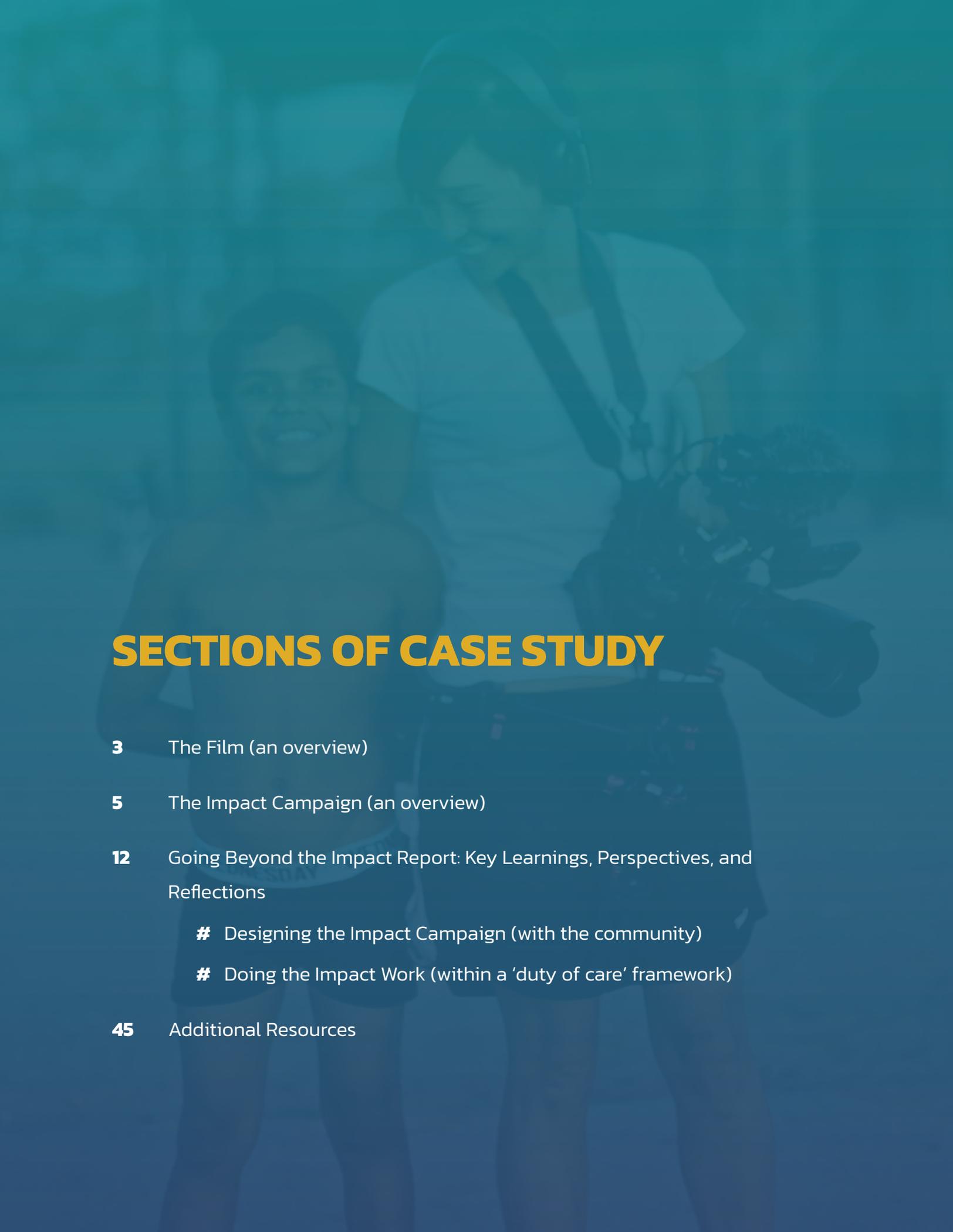
This report is one of five case studies published by the Documentary Power Research Institute at the Center for Media & Social Impact. For more information on other case studies, resources and reports being produced by this research please visit:

<https://cmsimpact.org/program/documentary-power-research-institute>

Acknowledgement

As researchers at CMSI, we join the film and impact team of *In My Blood It Runs* in acknowledging the unceded territories of the First Nations communities whose lands 'Australia' have been built on. We recognise their sovereignty and we honor their Elders, past and present and are guided by their continued strength, resilience and resistance. With the filmmakers and impact producers who supported this work, we would like to further acknowledge the sovereign territories of the Arrernte and Garrwa people on whose country *In My Blood It Runs* was made on and with. We are especially grateful for the generosity, time and energy that three particular members of the *In My Blood It Runs* impact team – Alex Kelly, Rachel Naninaaq Edwardson, Maya Newell – offered to this study and to sharing their valuable perspectives and experiences to this work.

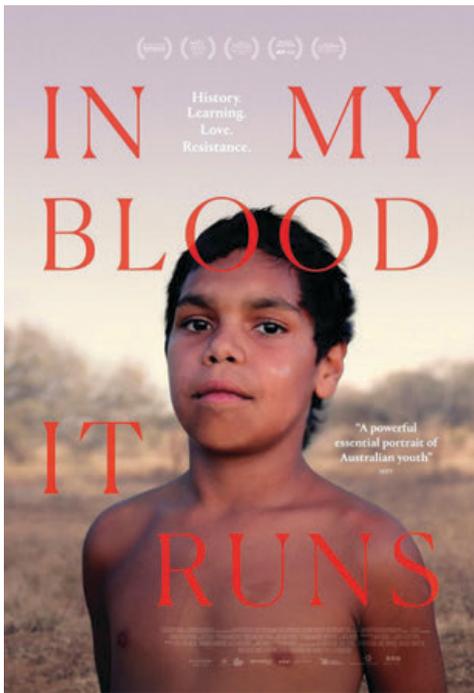
* Following several successful existing working groups across the documentary ecology, this study began by establishing a collaborative working group of eight people. This group was created to help shape the design of its core questions; provide insights and valuable guidance in designing the study (including in identifying selection criteria and recommendations for the interview population); inform the analysis process (including in the identification of the most meaningful and significant findings for the field); and support in socializing and leading the broader campaign for adoption and understanding yielded by this work. As part of the larger documentary study in which this research sits, this group met at core junctures in the research program to shape the design and implementation of this work and to select this case study. More information on this advisory group can be found here: <https://cmsimpact.org/documentary-power-research-institute-team/>



SECTIONS OF CASE STUDY

- 3** The Film (an overview)
- 5** The Impact Campaign (an overview)
- 12** Going Beyond the Impact Report: Key Learnings, Perspectives, and Reflections
 - #** Designing the Impact Campaign (with the community)
 - #** Doing the Impact Work (within a 'duty of care' framework)
- 45** Additional Resources

THE FILM



The Film: *In My Blood It Runs*

IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS is a feature length documentary created in collaboration with and directed by Maya Newell with collaborating directors: Dujuan Hoosan, Carol Turner Megan Hoosan, Colin Mawson, James Mawson, Margaret Andersen, Jimmy Mawso. Released in 2019, it shares the perspective and life of Dujuan, a ten-year-old Arrernte & Garrwa Aboriginal boy living in Hidden Valley town camp in Alice Springs, in Australia's Northern Territory, as he tries to balance his traditional Arrernte/Garrwa upbringing with a state education.



Photo credit: *In My Blood It Runs*

THE IMPACT CAMPAIGN²

Key impact goals of campaign

 **Anti-racism:** Address racism by sharing lived experiences of First Nations people and challenging structural racism (including highlighting role of media & institutions in perpetuating racism in Australia)

- Other issue objectives related to this goal included use of the film to:
 - *Challenge discriminatory behaviours and systemic racism in institutions*
 - *Challenge the wider documentary community in terms of best practice / ethics / process of making films and impact campaigns*

 **Education reform (policy and partnership campaigns):**

- (1) Champion and build significant support for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led education system, and
- (2) Encourage mainstream schools to become more culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

- Other objectives related to this goal included:
 - *Support the foundation of a National forum of First Nations educators*
 - *Support mainstream schools to be culturally safe for First Nations people*
 - *Build a national conversation about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agency over their own education systems through schools*

 **Juvenile justice reform (policy & partnership campaigns):** Amplify evidence-backed restorative youth justice solutions instead of punitive youth justice

- Other issue objectives related to this goal included use of the film to:
 - *Raise the criminal age of responsibility from 10 to 14 years old*

NOTE:

All of the above goals were identified under the direction of Djuwan and his family, as well as an advisory group of senior Arrernte and Garrwa Elders and leaders, as detailed in the “designing the impact campaign” section of this case study.

¹ For more information, please see the “2022 Impact Report,” produced by the *In My Blood It Runs* film and impact team, where much of the background information for this case study originated. The report can be accessed here.



Key Activities and Engagement Strategies of Impact Campaign and Screenings

-  **Festivals:** The campaign involved several local, national, and international screenings at over 50 film festivals. It premiered at the Hot Docs film festival in Toronto in April of 2019, but it also participated in several other screenings, especially in Australia (including: Sydney Film Festival, Melbourne International Film Festival, SWIFF (Coffs Harbour), Real Film Festival (Newcastle), CinefestOz (WA), Perth International Arts Festival (WA), Darwin International Film Festival, Brisbane International Film Festival, Stronger Than Fiction (Canberra), and Byron Bay Film Festival).
-  **Policy-influencer outreach:** In the lead up to the cinema release in parallel to the festival screenings in 2019 the impact team screened the film to several hundred people to build possible partnerships around the release, gain allies, alert peers to the context of the film and work and to get people on board to support the release. This included screenings via Zoom and with a link on the indie platform as well as in person screenings with Maya, Alex and other members of the impact team in Melbourne, Sydney, Darwin and Alice Springs. Some of these were hosted by partners such as Good Pitch, Doc Society and Documentary Australia Foundation as well as philanthropic partners and partners such as Children's Ground. It is hard to measure how much this groundwork changed the way the film was received, spoken about and shared – but the team is confident it had a significant impact on the momentum of the release.
-  **High-level advocacy:** The impact and filmmaking team focused on several advocacy activities, including: having politicians read speeches on the floor of the parliament, on the floor of the federal Senate, and Dujuan addressing UNHCR in Geneva, as well as meeting all Children's Commissioners. All of the 27 staff of the Attorney General's offices in each state and Territory who were undertaking a review of the criminal age of responsibility also watched the film. Lawyers, law reform advocates and a range of community legal groups were all engaged in screening and impact activities.
-  **Educational/school and workplace outreach engagements:** The team hosted a series of weekday, day-time virtual screening events and conversation with more than 62 workplaces, organizations, and schools (including corporations, NGOs, universities and small businesses). They tiered prices based on the organizations, and sold about 3,000 tickets in total, raising almost \$25,000 to help support the impact campaign. This engaged 62 separate workplaces, across corporations, councils, NGOs, universities and small businesses. The team also developed educational lesson/study guides – with an First Nation Advisory Board who read, discussed and redrafted the guides over many months – in USA, UK, Canada and Australia, along with virtual excursions for students (for students yrs 9-12 and high school aged) and teachers, which were recorded and can be found as an ongoing classroom resource on the [films webpage](#). Other engagements included: Screen Rights, Kanopy, Australian Teachers of Media, Cool Australia, Reconciliation Australia. Schools screened the film during COVID-19 restrictions in Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week.
-  **Education – Professional development:** A key component of the impact goals was to change how culturally safe and responsive mainstream schools are for First Nation kids. As such the impact team sought to reach both teachers who were already working – through professional development programs – and those still engaged in pre-teacher training through institutions such as Melbourne University Graduate School of Education. For this work the lead partners were the Stronger Smarter Institute and Reconciliation Australia.

-  **Cinema Screenings:** While the film had a strong opening with significant turnout at the screening theaters, the arrival of COVID-19 prevention measures made it more difficult for the film to maintain its initial momentum. Still, the film raised more than an estimated \$375,000AUD in revenue across more than 20 theaters, and reached about 20,000 viewers, according to estimates from the film team.
-  **Non-theatrical screenings:** Holding on to the non theatrical rights was key to the impact campaign for IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS. The team organised over 500 non theatrical screenings and earned over \$250,000 in non theatrical license fees. This is important to note as this revenue stream was completely controlled by the filmmakers. With no equity investors this income was able to be returned to the filmmakers, the film participants and the impact campaign.
-  **Partnership Screenings:** Special screening efforts, like Australia's "Films For Change" also helped the film to raise funding and reach audiences. 15 screenings raised over \$45,283. Unfortunately a further 31 screening events were canceled due to COVID, many of those audiences engaged through virtual screenings instead.
-  **Virtual Cinema Screenings:** In response to canceled screenings, the film team participated in several online/virtual events. They sold tickets through Eventbrite, distributed the film through Vimeo, and provided live Q&As as part of the virtual events.
-  **Vimeo On Demand:** Since COVID-19 mitigation measures interfered with cinema and other screenings, ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) allowed the film team to make the film accessible on the Vimeo On Demand platform in March of 2020 for a short window, prior to its broadcast. This allowed the team to raise about \$70,000 and reach another estimated 25,000 viewers.
-  **Pay-It-Forward tickets:** The film offered a Pay-It-Forward license option at the end of the screening booking form where people could purchase a ticket to cover the cost of a First Nations community screening; 549 tickets were purchased and over \$12,000 raised. This enabled the team to offer microgrants to First Nations communities to screen the film.
-  **Broadcast on ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation):** Its airing on Australia's national broadcast television station allowed the film to reach an estimated 458,000 viewers across the country. This included people watching on the transmission date and view ABC's streaming platform, iview.
-  **Articles:** The film team supported Dujuan and other members of the advisory and film team to write articles sharing their perspective on the film and the issues they wanted to amplify. These were published in high profile outlets including *The Guardian* and *The Age*. A selection of these articles can be found in the supplemental resources section at the end of this report.

Key Players on The Impact Team

Central to the ethos and approach of the IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS filmmaking and impact processes was the inclusion of a diverse and always expanding team of people and communities who were meaningfully engaged and credited in the work. And while the responsibilities and daily tasks ranged from team members who were family or community advisors to those who helped manage day-to-day implementation, logistics, scheduling, and outreach, they all contributed significantly to the outcomes of the work. Some of these team members included:

- **Carol Turner**, *As grandmother, Collaborating Director and Impact Team*
- **Dujuan Hoosan**, *As lead and Collaborating Director*
- **Megan Hoosan**, *As mother and Collaborating Director*
- **James Mawson**, *As father and Collaborating Director*
- **Margaret Anderson**, *As grandmother, Collaborating Director and Impact Team*

- **Felicity Hayes**, *Cultural Executive Producer and Impact Team*
- **Maya Newell**, *Director/ Producer/ Editor / Impact Producer*
- **Sophie Hyde**, *Producer*
- **Larissa Behrendt**, *Producer*
- **Rachel Naninaaq Edwardson**, *Impact Producer*

- **William Tilmouth**, *Advisor and Impact Team*
- **Margaret Kemarre Turner**, *As great grandmother and Advisor*
- **Amelia Turner**, *As auntie and Advisor*
- **Jane Vadiveloo**, *Advisor and Impact Team*

- **Alex Kelly**, *Impact Producer / Associate Producer*
- **Lisa Sherrard**, *Impact Producer / Associate Producer*
- **Georgia Quinn**, *Associate Impact Producer*

- **James Clark**, *Communications Support*
- **Elle Williams**, *Web & Graphic Designer*
- **Bessie Byrne**, *Education Associate*
- **Sophie Trevitt**, *Juvenile Justice Associate*
- **Keren Shlezinger**, *Education Associate*



Key Advisors on The Impact Team

With input from the people who the film is centrally about, Djujan and his family, a community/partner advisory group was formed at the outset of the filmmaking and design process. The advisory team consisted of a multi-generational group of Arrernte Angangkere (Healers), Elders, leaders and educationalists. They were engaged, paid, and credited as key collaborators throughout the design, development and implementation of the impact campaign, and throughout the making and editing of the film itself. These advisors included:

- **Felicity Hayes**, Senior Traditional Owner for Mparntwe (Alice Springs)
- **Agnes Abbott**, Senior Arrernte Elder, Great grandmother to Djujan
- **Margaret Kemarre Turner**, Senior Arrernte Elder, Great grandmother to Djujan
- **William Timouth**, Senior Arrernte man and Founding Chair of Children's Ground
- **Amelia Turner**, Arrernte Ngangkere, Leader at Akeyulerre, Grandmother to Djujan
- **Carol Turner**, Arrernte Grandmother to Djujan
- **Margaret Anderson**, Garrwa Grandmother to Djujan
- **Jane Vadiveloo**, CEO and co-founder of Children's Ground



Key Partners and Funders of the Work



Primary partners were:

Dujuan and his family, along with the Akeyullerre Healing Center and Children's Ground in Alice Springs.



Other key partners included:

Education:

- Children's Ground
- National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition
- Stronger Smarter Institute
- Reconciliation Australia Narragunnawali
- Akeyullerre Healing Centre
- Cool Australia
- Australian Teachers of Media
- BE. Creative
- Learn Our Truth
- Community Prophets
- Amiun
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principals Association

Juvenile Justice:

- Justice Connect
- Just Reinvest NSW
- Human Rights Law Centre
- Raise the Age Campaign
- Amnesty International
- Australian Human Rights Commission United Nations Association of Australia NSW Aboriginal Legal Service NSW
- Change the Record
- NTCOSS
- ACOSS
- Children's Commissioners



Key Foundational funders, support and partners:

Shark Island Institute, GoodPitch Australia and Documentary Australia Foundation.



Other important funders/partners:

Closer Productions, Screen Australia, South Australia Film Commission, Documentary Australia Foundation, Screen Territory, and in kind film support from Children's Ground, Akeyullerre Healing Centre, Amiun and the Sundance Institute.



Rough Timeline of the Film and Impact Campaign

- **2015**
Maya first meets Akeyulerre / Arrernte elders MK Turner & Felicity Hayes to discuss interests and invitation to work with the community – first community conversations around potential of film and the design of the film and eventual impact work begins with community and with Djuwan
- **2016**
Maya and team start filming, with ongoing guidance from community through 2018, discussion to set the foundation of Impact work starts
- **Oct 2018**
First impact meeting at Honeymoon Gap
- **Feb 2019**
Kangaroo Valley partner retreat supported by Good Pitch Australia
- **March 2019**
Commence engagement and outreach screenings (not public)
- **26 Apr 2019**
Hot Docs Premiere, followed by 50 festivals worldwide
- **10 Sept 2019**
UN Screening in Geneva, Djuwan addresses UNHCR
- **11 Feb 2020**
Hidden Valley premiere & Alice Springs premiere
- **20 Feb 2020**
Released in Australian cinemas
- **March 2020**
Screenings and post-filming impact campaign engagements begin (including virtual screenings/conversations, reconciliation week workplace/school screenings, community engagement efforts, etc.)
- **5 July 2020**
ABC national television broadcast of film

DESIGNING THE IMPACT CAMPAIGN (WITH THE COMMUNITY)

Learnings and process of how it was created

Key Imperatives in Impact Campaign Design

1

Create and *maintain* a space for meaningful co-creation activities around the design of the impact campaign and its objectives through meaningful and recurring events of community collaboration

2

Think early—on about safe and accurate *framing* and *success markers* of impact work (beyond the usual objectives of reach and engagement)

3

“Work in collaboration, not consultation”: Think of collaboration as a process designed with specific communities, not a step-by-step program applied to every community

4

Work with the community and advisors to understand and respond to any biases you bring to the work

5

Cede/Share power with the community/people in the film

6

Ensure you are working in service of the community represented by the film, not simply the wider audience you hope will watch it; the stories of underrepresented communities should not solely be used in the service of educating mainstream audiences

7

Develop a “duty of care” framework, with the community at the center of the film

8

Develop an MOU (memorandum of understanding) that centers these principles so that they can shape future campaign decisions and be shared with any new partner that joins the work

9

When preparing for a film or impact campaign, be mindful of ways that your frameworks and approaches can be “strength-based” – as much about empowerment as they are about protection.

10

Duty of care frameworks should also consider the wellness of filmmakers and impact team members because “if you don’t also look after your team and they don’t have a space to process the things that they’re going through and seeing, then you put everything else at risk”



ON DEFINING IMPACT OBJECTIVES AND TERMS OF SUCCESS WITH COMMUNITY

For the film and impact team of *IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS*, a central component of their collaborative design was the importance of following through on the objectives and promises afforded to the community at the outset of the collaboration. As part of their early conversations around impact with Dujuan and his family, advisors, partners and community members at the center of their film, several key principles were identified around the film's impact strategy.

Strategy Key Principles:

- 1 First Nations people have solutions and must have the agency to enact these solutions;
- 2 Those with lived experience are the experts and their voices should be amplified and heard;
- 3 Children have wisdom and their voices matter;
- 4 Everything is connected. Genuine solutions do not exist within silos;
- 5 Change comes through working in partnership and networks;
- 6 A commitment to culturally safe and responsive practices.

Impact Campaign Goals:

- 1 Address racism by sharing lived experiences of First Nations people and challenging structural racism;
- 2 Champion and build significant support for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led education system (policy & partnership campaigns);
- 3 Mainstream schools become more culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students – (policy & partnership campaigns);
- 4 Amplify evidence-backed restorative youth justice solutions instead of punitive youth justice (policy & partnership campaigns).



At the heart of all these principles and goals was the importance of valuing First Nations perspectives and the history upon which they have been misrepresented in past films and other efforts.

Tactically, this meant that the team took the following initial steps – summarized below at the risk of oversimplifying them – in shaping the objectives and design of their campaign (these steps were originally outlined in the “2022 Impact Report,” prepared by the film team):

- 1** First, they spoke to community Elders, leaders, and members who were suggested by the family and learned what their preferred process would be for discussing the potential film and impact campaign, and if/how they would like to be consulted in the process.
- 2** Then, after building a closer relationship – through sharing experiences, listening, and answering questions – the community elders and leaders who were trusted by the family were invited to join the film and impact team as advisors who could shape the process and story of the film and impact work.
- 3** Next, the film team collectively reviewed a protocol document for engaging Indigenous communities in filmwork entitled *[‘Pathways & Protocols: a filmmaker’s guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts’](#)*, produced by the industry body, Screen Australia. They also reviewed ‘best practice’ and local/international consultation models that developed or used a “cultural safety orientation/ framework” in their work. This involved learning about the “context and history of consultation in film and television involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The key influences drawn from were other Diverse and First Nations community-led initiatives including; Amiun, Lavarch Productions, Children’s Ground and Akeyulerre Healing Centre, Isluma Productions.”
- 4** Throughout the stages of this work, the film team also developed close relationships with local, community-led partner organizations. The local partner organizations were also run by the community and Dujan’s extended family, which added another element of support in ensuring that their work was always aligned with – and led by – the community’s interests and priorities.
- 5** Following this extensive process of research and reflection, and with a foundation of past research, models, and practices to build from, alongside special guidance and leadership provided by a First Nations creative producer on the film and impact team, Rachel Naninaaq Edwarson, the team met with the families represented in the film again and continued the work of designing a process of consultation for the film and impact work that would follow.



Community-led organisations have the strongest relationships, history of work and understanding of the critical issues and can help orient film teams to the socio-political context of the stories on screen.

Powerful stories like Djujan’s rarely make it to our screens. And yet these stories are often a key factor in helping policy makers and decision makers understand the untapped potential of community control and systemic change.

Our elders know the power of telling these stories in mainstream and they made a commitment to help guide the film and film team and understand Arrernte ways of working.

We have been honoured to be a core partner with IMBIR and to have worked with such a large and diverse team locally and nationally in bringing this project to the Australian public.

– Jane Vadiveloo, CEO Children’s Ground, Co Founder Akeyulerre Healing Centre, IMBIR advisor

Following the last step, noted above, one of the most important steps in the design of the impact campaign was the act of creating and holding a safe space for community members to discuss and shape the intentions and desired outcomes of the impact work at the onset of the work. And central to this organizing step was to make sure that their engagement wasn’t tokenistic or rushed, but that it was centrally meaningful in the decision making process and design of the campaign. **To achieve this, the impact team worked closely with key partner, Children’s Ground, to organize and host a three day meeting with key community members – who were either part of the film or directly implicated/represented by it – to design the framework and objectives that would guide the focus of the impact campaign.** The event was held in Alice Springs with between 35 and 50 participants, including the people and families at the center of the film, along with other senior Arrernte people and advisors, and partner organization members, including from Akeyulerre Healing Centre. As part of the meeting, the community and film team reflected on the history of the First Nations people in Australia, going back before colonization, and acknowledging the history of film impact work and collaborations that have come before.

We looked at the impacts of colonization. We talked about other film impact campaigns. We talked about film distribution. We talked about duty of care, and we started to map out the kind of key thematic areas and the key messages that the family wanted to see the release of the film achieve. And that became the basis of a draft impact strategy, and then we went and talked to lots of our other partners about what was actually happening in the political space, the policy space, within social movements, around those themes, and then we went back to the family and sat in the community.

(Original interview, Alex, 8 June 2022)

The film team also spoke to partners and funders and made it clear that “the principles and processes that we used within the film, and that if we were working with them in any way, that we expected them to adhere to those as well” (Original interview, Alex, 8 June 2022). These commitments with partners were organized through memorandums of understanding, which held the principles, goals, and key messages of the community, and it also made it clear that partners can’t use the film images from the film or speak about the film, unless they’re abiding by those principles.

Even though many of the organizations working in film are considered “progressive,” that doesn’t mean that their work or approaches can’t be damaging. At times, this meant that some organizations were challenged in new ways; but Rachel and Alex said that it was always important not to assume anything, but to ensure stay rooted in the model of collaboration that created the film and impact strategy in the first place.

I think for some partners it seemed unusual that we would say, “As a basis of this partnership can we read your drafts of your social media posts or your press release before you send it out?” And sometimes it’s only one or two words, but the conversation that we would then have on a Zoom call where we would step through why those two words undermined agency, or undermine dignity and the kinds of work that the family had identified they wanted to do, and why, and what the messages and principles were. That actually also feels like a really big piece of the impact work, and that’s got nothing to do with metrics, and numbers, and bums on seats...We’re not in every lounge room conversation. We’re not reading every review with the audiences, but to the extent that we could possibly influence the framing, and the conversation, the education materials that we produced, the Q and As that we hosted, the media op-eds that were published, everything came through back to these core principles and processes.

(Original interview, Alex, 8 June 2022)

In other words, community collaboration means having attention and power constantly pointed back to the community at the heart of the film; not to the funders or audiences that might see it. As Rachel, who is a First Nation producer from Alaska put it:

And essentially that comes back to those principles, because it boils down to being aware of not our intent, but our impact for the community, and being conscious of not creating a film, or story, or project that is about using an Aboriginal community to educate a mainstream audience... I can't tell you, as a First Nations person myself in a community, the amount of times, I've got another one on my email, came through this morning, [that say] 'We want to come and tell a story about your community, so the whole rest of the world can learn how terrible this impact is,' (ie. 'we want to use your community to educate everybody else.')

Which, of course, there's a reason for that. Sometimes that's a good thing; but if the impact of that is negative for the community whose stories, and bodies, and energy, and resources you're using to educate the rest of the world, then we've missed the point. And so for us, it was really pivotal that we were constantly checking our impact on Dujuan, his family and on the community, because they exist as a collective unit, like all human beings in the world. And so that was really pivotal at every step of the way, and it was quite complex and very difficult. And it did mean occasionally we had to pull out of projects, or we had to stop things we thought would have big potential. For us this was a two step process, what was the positive impact for the community -not just the broader audience (i.e. local impact alongside national/international impact); and what was the positive impact for Dujuan himself who is at the center of the film on screen. By extension this also meant constantly assessing and adjusting for potential negative impact to the community or to Dujuan. (Original interview, Rachel, 8 June 2022)

The three-day workshop that served as an important starting point for community collaboration was only just that: a starting point. **Regular workshops were maintained for community collaboration every 1-3 months** with key community members and partners to discuss key decisions, themes, context, storylines and other key processes as the impact campaign moved from design to implementation. This process also included viewing and providing feedback during the editing process of the film, with rough cuts being viewed and discussed with the community on an ongoing basis, with sufficient time and power shared with the community for the film and impact campaign to meaningfully change based on their feedback. These community members and partners were also paid for their time through a shared profit model, which was part of the duty of care framework developed by the team.

While IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS is not the first or only example of profit sharing within the field of impact and collaborative work (and their impact team made a point of emphasizing that they aren't the first to use this approach), it is an exemplary and rare example of this model being applied in the field of documentary film. The IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS team set up a royalty distribution structure that shared the profits of the film with the community contributors. **This meant that Dujuan and his family received profit that was equal to the Director,** and more than any producer. "Dujuan's family decided that they wanted to set up a Trust so that these funds could benefit Dujuan and his brother as they grew up. The film team held meetings where all family members traveled to Mparntwe to be part of the conversation and design how they wanted the funds to be used for the children's benefit." (See IMBIT impact report – link provided on resources page)



Centering a Process of Co-creation (at the first community meeting and at every stage):

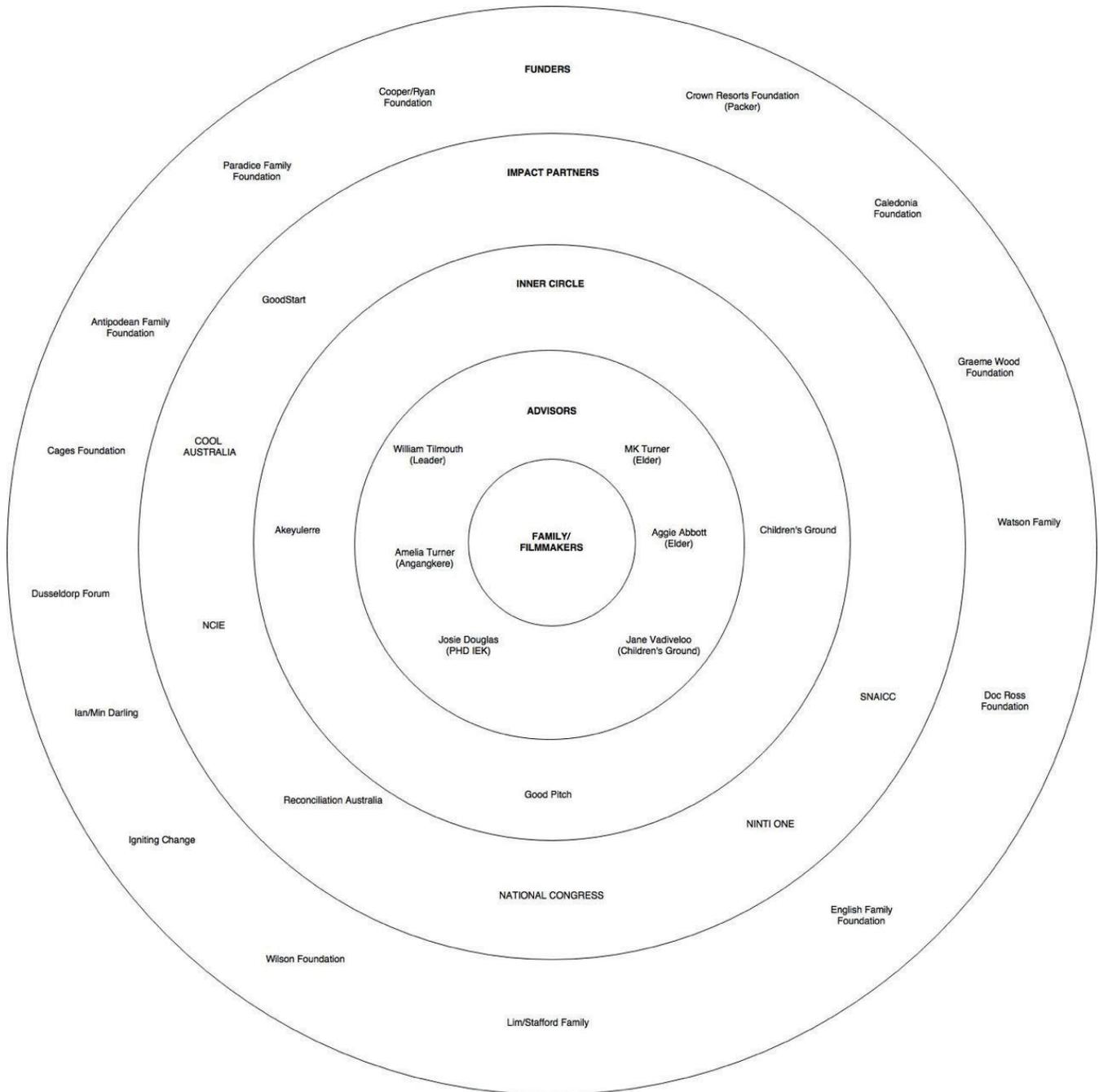


Figure 1: This is an image produced by the *In My Blood It Runs* team, and published in their case study. In the words of the impact team it reflects: "our somewhat unconventional creative control model which indicates where and with whom the power sat. Dujan, his family are at the center of all decisions and acknowledged as Collaborative Directors with the filmmakers whereas funders and those furthest from the ground, are distanced from influencing the story."

The IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS film team stressed the importance of systematically ensuring community collaboration and co-creation at every level and decision moment involved in making and distributing the film. And while their collaborative work is exemplary, the film team also stressed the importance of acknowledging that their collaborative model was inspired and informed by a longer tradition of collaborative community work (that is rarely recognized) and it was also formed to reflect the way the community itself was already conducting business.

Beyond its impressive outreach activities, however, one of the most distinguishing features of impact efforts around the film IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS resides in the development and execution of its design and community-first approach. There are several co-creation lessons offered by the processes behind the film and its impact work that merit highlighting for wider recognition. This case study aims to highlight some of the most important of these lessons for impact producers working today.

One of the most important lessons exemplified by this film is its rooting in collaborative models of engagement, with the community at the center of decision making conversations around the development of the film and its distribution/screening efforts, rather than models of consultation. **While many studies and producers seek to find the ideal recipe for meaningful documentary impact work, this is not how the field should be approaching impact, according to Rachel Najinaaq Edwardson and Alex Kelly, two members of the producing team who collaborated on the film and its impact work. Instead, the focus should be on building relationships with communities, and then identifying the correct steps through that relationship.** As Rachel put it, the community at the center of the film must be the starting point:

“I think that was the North Star for this project from the beginning. This project didn’t start off necessarily with “we want to make a film which tells this (insert our idea) story”. It started off with we want to work in partnership with this child and his family and community to find the story that needs to be told, and that was very intentional. And so we get asked this question quite a lot, “Well, what was it that worked? How did you do it? What were the steps? What are the steps we need to follow? What do I need to do to make a film about (insert diverse community.)” Our response is pretty much always the same, which is that this is a process. It’s not a step-by-step program, and the reason it is a process is because the core focus that you should have, if you’re going to work in collaboration rather than consultation with the community, whose stories you’re telling on screen, if you’re working in real collaboration, it first starts with relationships, and then everything is done together from that point. And it’s done in response to the context the community and key characters are in, and in the context of the particular filmmakers around the project, and the context of the key themes arising in the story. And so everything was first designed from that point; authentic relationships and in response to context.” (Original interview, Rachel, 8 June 2022)

Several interview participants – from the larger study of impact campaigns across 50 films – expressed a concern that many impact producers (even if well-meaning) seek consultative, but ultimately exploitative, relationships with communities, often situating film subjects/community members within strategies and engagement models that were pre-conceived to their input (i.e. engaging them in conversations around impact after a film is completed, inviting them to film screening Q/As, etc.). However, this is antithetical to the principles of co-creation, as underscored by the legacy of anti-oppressive work in film and the arts and by the team’s work in IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS.



In practice, collaboration meant that, from the outset of the filmmaking process, the filmmaker and producer teams for IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS prioritized asking the community at the center of the film – a First Nation community – for permission to share and engage with their story and the story of those in their community, before any impact effort or design process could begin. It meant being fully transparent with the filmmaking and impact process and collaboratively redesigning anything that needed adjustment with the community, in particular to be responsive to community cultural process and contextual issues.

So the first thing we did after being invited into the space was to ask permission, and to be completely transparent about who we were and to start off with a conversation around what the relationship of co-creation would look like- from the beginning. We worked with the family, advisors, and community to work out what that process needed to look like and how that process would be collaboratively developed, even in and of itself.

(Original interview, Rachel, 8 June 2022)

Rachel said that the model they used to develop this approach “was underpinned by the expertise and previous work of our advisors and our team and by the principles and framework of the *Amiun Culturally Safe and Responsive Collaboration in the Arts*.” Previous collaboration-centered work done by the IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS impact team included: Sophie Hyde and her work with Closer Productions on character agency, Larissa Behrendt and her expansive work on community agency, Maya Newell and her work creating space for the voices of diverse young people on screen, Rachel Edwardson and Amiun’s work on Culturally Safe and Responsive film reform, Alex Kelly’s work in ethical impact strategy development, and Lisa Sherrard and her work on film finance management to create equitable structures.

“Alongside this [expertise] we had critical advice and guidance from the processes and practices of our key community partners Children’s Ground and Akeyulerre Healing Center, who heavily guided our process,” said Rachel. “Culturally Safe and Responsive Collaboration in the Arts gave us a framework to springboard off of. Cultural Safety was originally introduced into the health sector in New Zealand by Iripaheti Ramsden, and has become a best practice model across many industries. This foundation helped our team to do the work to be ready for authentic collaboration with Dujuan, his family and his community and amongst our diverse creative team.”

Going deeper into the organizing tactics and principles of their work, at the core of their co-creation process, and a key focus of their first collaborative efforts with the community, were two key pillars of Cultural Safety that could apply to any film or film team:

1 Work to understand and identify biases, how they show up in your arts practice and how you can adjust your practice to be ready for collaboration.

2 Continually cede/share power with the people/community the film centers..

It is based on the time and efforts dedicated to these two principles that Rachel and Alex said goal posts, ideas of success, timelines, and project team members should be constantly reassessed and reoriented. Because at the heart of these two key pillars is the importance of always making space for “the control and agency of the family and their community [at the center of the film], and the awareness and intentional effort that we were doing things in a different way to what most film groups [and funders] are used to.” (Original interview, Rachel, 8 June 2022)



On understanding and responding to bias:

At the core of this first principle are past models and learnings related to adhering to cultural safety in film and culturally responsive practices. And while this pillar might seem deceptively simple, Rachel notes that it required unbending attention. From Rachel's perspective, understanding your bias involves:

Intentionally understanding and working towards identifying where conditioning and bias is present in ourselves as filmmakers, and as people who hold power in this position, and in the industry itself that we're working in. Then figuring out what we can do, working out how to understand what we can do to address this conditioning and bias, and to adjust our processes for it in relationship, again, with the community. (Original interview, Rachel, 8 June 2022)

A central part of this process, for instance, required asking themselves if the questions they brought to the impact design table were the right ones, and to stay open to bringing in trusted community leaders and people who the main participants of the film felt should be part of the conversation and planning.

So we had to constantly check that we were asking the right questions, because your answer to how collaboration works, or how you're going to structure film, or what it's going to look like is heavily dependent on the questions you're asking and how you are asking them. So we were interrogating the questions we were asking before we were asking them, as we were asking them, after we were asking them, and adjusting our process all along. For example, one of the things we adjusted was who and how people were involved. If we were making this film in a traditional filmmaking context, and you wanted to do collaboration, you would just do collaboration with Dajuan. He's the main character." Right? But because we worked to adjust conditioning and share agency we asked the family how they wanted us to set up our collaboration structure. And the family said, "We need these people to advise on the issues facing Dajuan, this is how we work as a Arrernte community, together with many people around the table." So we looked critically at other film projects in a similar context and worked with the family and our advisors to adjust our process to make space for community involvement and our Key Advisors then we made sure to structure the space appropriately so we could get to content and process adjustments. (Original interview, Rachel, 8 June 2022)

On ceding power to the community and people in the film:

The second Cultural Safety principle emphasized by Rachel and Alex was **ceding power**, which describes the process of giving agency over to the people whose stories are depicted on screen. They acknowledged that this process is notably different from the approach most frequently used in the film industry, and how filmmakers are often taught to make films. The typical mantra that filmmakers often hear is that they should never give power to their subjects; but for films that endeavor to share intimate stories of communities and people long misrepresented by the field of documentary and actors outside of media, this is the mantra that any community-rooted impact effort must break.



A question often asked of filmmakers is what brought us to be interested in a particular story. What is our interest in our subject matter? But the deeper, more important question to answer in a self-determination framework is how is the film building the capacity of the subjects and their community? How do you shift them from “subject” to “agent”?

This involves asking questions such as:

Whose story is it?

Who has the real authority to speak?

Who has the power / is powerless?

Who needs to be empowered to speak?

How can we help them tell their stories?



From there, a story and perspective can be shaped that not only digs into a subject but moves voices from the margins to centre stage.

(Larissa, Behrendt, this quote was shared by the film team on Aug 30, 2023)

Building on Larissa’s assertion that the community should dictate the process and goals of an impact effort, Alex noted that the process of collaboration is too often treated as a one-off event. Instead, it should be employed as a process that requires constant check-ins and conversations.

Part of ceding power means acknowledging that the people in your film are part of larger contexts, families, and communities – all of which will likely be impacted by any film that is produced or any impact effort that is generated. For this reason the film team emphasized the importance of ensuring that the family and advisory groups were truly given the power to steer decisions and influence the film work. As one of the film’s key advisors, Arrernte Elder William Tilmouth, who also serves as the co-founder of Children’s Ground, recalled:

On this project, we discussed different issues and things that came up in the footage and talked about how to present the story, so it was in the proper context. We discussed what might have been inappropriate to put out into the public. There was a lot of feedback from the family and the advisors. It was an enjoyable process. We had deep discussions and the advisors were comfortable to raise any issues they needed to. These consultation sessions, which were many, were noted carefully and fed back through the whole team so that the things that needed adjusting in the story, process, duty of care or key messages were adjusted and it's how everything came together. I was quite satisfied with the process of the advisory group. We did things in an Aboriginal way, and that's how the consultations on this film worked. Sometimes we took the filmmakers out of their comfort zone. But they were all the more willing to do that. The film team had to put aside ego, [film industry understandings of] professionalism, learning's and try to learn a new way. This was the vehicle in which the family told their story and they drove it where they wanted it to go.

(William Tilmouth, this quote was shared by the film team on Aug 30, 2023)

And so the act of collaboration becomes one of constantly ceding power and building relationships with larger communities of people. It meant not only collaborating with Djujan, the central participant in the film, but with the larger community and understanding and being responsive to the context he lived in.

It's not like we cede power once, and we sign an agreement, and then we continue. It's a continual relational process. And because the content has implications and is showing issues, and Country, and places, and talking about ideas that are not just concerns for Djujan and his immediate family, but broader people in the community. That meant that we always had to be attending to the possibility of other people also needing to enter into those relationships and conversations, because that, again, is part of the duty of care in terms of understanding that Djujan and Arrernte family and his Garrwa family sit within broader Arrernte and Garrwa communities, and that they have responsibilities to those communities that the film could become something that was important to bring other people into that conversation. *(Original interview, Alex, 8 June 2022)*

Then, when new members of the film team were brought into the work, the permission of the community was always invited first. This required hosting frequent conversations and also providing multiple avenues for the community to reach members of the film team if/when needed.



We were having those conversations with the community rather than discussing it ourselves, taking an idea to the community, and then designing the process or content. We also triangulated the access points for the community. So that at any given point, they could access us through a number of different pathways... So that we knew if we were going off-track, if there was a problem with how we were filming, what we were filming, anything that was going on... we wanted to make sure that the family and community had multiple ways of accessing us, and so that required us to have really close partnerships with other organizations on the ground, and with other people who the family were comfortable with. And that was part of our job as diverse producers, as having many producers on the ground as well, is that we could check. We could check all along the way to make sure that we were hearing what we needed to hear.

(Original interview, Rachel, 8 June 2022)

The dynamic of ceding power to representatives of the community in the design and filmmaking processes extended to distribution and impact activities related to the work. And this often required explaining to funders and organizing activities the importance of such wider engagements.

In the film industry people are always really eager to talk to the main character and director; they're not as interested in talking to everybody else or to the issues the film is raising and who is running changemaking for those issues on the ground. We had story consultation and impact consultation workshops, which were continuations of the relationship we'd built during filming, and then when we went to release an impact, we made sure that at every single possible stage we had diverse representation that always drove to the core messaging. Some great media and event opportunities we turned away from, if it wasn't possible to have community with us. For impact and what we were trying to push- what the story was ultimately telling, it was critically important that we made space for community voice at every single opportunity to drive that message home and also because of the nature of what this film was, why we made it this way, and how. We all knew that it was critically important we ensure it wasn't just the director or main character who in this case was a child, carrying the message that belonged to the community.

(Original interview, Rachel, 8 June 2022)

As part of this effort, the team brought the whole family at the center of the film to Toronto for the film festival experience, traveling with seventeen people to Hot Docs Film Festival, for example.

The continuation of the collaboration, from design, through filmmaking, and to distribution/engagement/impact efforts, points to the importance of understanding that collaboration means following through on commitments/conditions given when a community first gives permission to participate. There isn't a collaboration phase, it is the process. As a result, the film and impact work become inseparable – which may be a frequent aspiration of impact work, though rarely the example.

The team for IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS maintained frequent group conversations and screening of select content throughout the filming process. This provided opportunities for the community to explain contexts and intricacies that the film team might have less understanding about. It also helped the community to have a greater sense of agency around the core issues of the film and what events in their community might be relevant.

I mean, it worked in really practical ways too, in terms of what Maya filmed was always at the invitation of people who were calling her and saying, "Come now. This is happening. This is happening at school. This is happening at home. We're going on this bush trip. We're going over here. Come with us to film." So they were already choosing what Maya had access to, but then it wasn't a case of watching edited content. It was then watching rushes and thinking really carefully about all the kinds of things that were captured. And, for instance, hospital content, at the school, understanding tropes and ways in which young people are represented and Arrernte people have been represented, and thinking so deeply and carefully about that. And that was large groups of people watching content and having quite deep conversations about those ideas.... it wasn't like we were making a film, and this was the parallel process that kept the checks and balances going. This was how the film was made.

(Original interview, Alex, 8 June 2022)

As Alex put it, the process of creating the film and designing an impact campaign were "inseparable".

It's inseparable, whereas I think often there's a film, and then there's an impact campaign, or a distribution strategy, or a duty of care plan, or a consultation process, and those things are kind of bolted on the side, but there's an idea that you have to protect the film and not let it be those things. But the process was the film. The relationships were the filmmaking process. *(Original interview, Alex, 8 June 2022)*



CENTERING CONSIDERATIONS OF WELLNESS



The experiences of the impact team working with the film *IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS* offer several useful insights and tools for how to think about participant wellness in documentary film and impact, along with methods that were effective for them in creating safe spaces for engagements to begin and evidence for the importance of considering wellness early on in the process.

Central to the *IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS* impact team's approach to wellness was the early creation of their "duty of care" framework, which ensured that the impact team was, from the beginning, "**conscious of what a camera can do.**" (Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)

Specifically, the duty of care framework was created with an eye to impact and wellness, before the filming process and it was effectively a set of guiding values and principles that all participants and partners involved in the impact work must adhere to.

The duty of care framework was created with Dujuan, his family, and other key advisors. It was also informed by a long process of research and looking around the film industry for tools and resources – especially in relation to working with children and around processes of 'informed consent' – that other filmmakers and impact teams have developed or found helpful in preparing their own work.

One of the important components and intentions beyond the duty of care framework was to be "strength-based," and to ensure they were creating an approach that was as much about empowerment as it was about protection:



A key principle in the Amium framework we leaned on was the need to ensure what we were doing was ‘strength-based’, this is often mis-understood in the industry as being unwilling to go into tough areas which is not what it means. For us in the duty of care space, we were conscious in the duty of care to make sure that it was dual-pronged, that it was strength-based. Where we said, “Let’s not just be responsive to something that’s negative. Let’s actually try to do work to make sure there is a positive impact.” We’re not just protecting [Dujuan]. We’re trying to also use this as a space to give him a platform for support and development and what does that look like. (Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)

At times this meant funding educational trips for Dujuan and his family. It also meant anticipating and talking about how the experience of being in a film could impact how people at Dujuan’s school and in (and beyond) his own community might look at him, treat him or relate to him in the future. In terms of timing, it meant waiting until the community felt ready before screening the film. And it meant, perhaps most importantly, remaining in constant dialogue and communication with Dujuan and his family at every stage of the process.

Again, building off the relationship, in particular between Maya and Dujuan, it meant checking in to see, “What is it you’re anxious about? Is this working? Is this not working?” Sometimes we’d go to screenings and he was scheduled to go to screenings and he was way too overwhelmed or it was too much and so we’d restructure so he didn’t have to go. We also had a plan Maya worked out with the family, so that after every big trip we facilitated the ability for Dujuan and his family to go out to their homelands to recharge. (Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)

The process of intentionally creating moments for “checking-in” with Dujuan, his family, and other key community members and advisors, was not accidental or simply an implicit commitment brought to the work by some of the producers; rather, it was an explicit part of the duty of care framework that everyone was responsible for maintaining.

A duty of care is not something you can just make a plan for and say, “Cool, we’ve done that.” (Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022)

While the duty of care and considerations of wellness were primarily focused on the family and communities depicted in the film, Rachel and Alex also **said that wellness considerations were a core issue they tried to center for all members of the film and impact team who were engaged in the work, including those who were new to the community.**



When you have a diversity of teams and you're working in an area where there is injustice and resulting trauma, [it is also important] that your duty of care includes the [internal team] people. The communities are under the heaviest burden of this trauma but it is also important to consider how the exposure to this trauma can impact those who are working with the community. This impact often goes unspoken about and unseen because it's important to stay focused on the community... But if you're also sticking to your core purpose and you don't also look after your non-community film team, as well, and they don't have a space to process the things that they're going through and seeing, then you put everything else at risk. Because the foundation of what you're doing - the core purpose of what you're doing - is building your relationships with the community and you have to make space to process the injustice in the space and how it manifests so the relationships can be as clear as possible of that weight. (Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)



Ultimately, Rachel and Alex said that every film and impact project's duty of care should be different and be responsive to the particularities of the community and participants at the center of the film. But, for every film, focusing early on developing a 'duty of care' framework can be a helpful step for any film team to ground themselves early-on in the particularities of their work and community.



DOING THE IMPACT WORK (WITHIN 'DUTY OF CARE' FRAMEWORK)

Learnings and process of how it was created

Key Imperatives in Impact Campaign Execution

1

As a requirement for participation, every partner should review and agree to an MOU (memorandum of understanding) that outlines the key features developed in the duty of care framework – which represents the objectives, messages and values of the participants (i.e. the community and family) at the center of the film.

2

When it comes to doing community and film impact work “good intent isn’t enough”, it’s vital to ensure that the community’s desired impact goals are always motivating choices and work and that the impact team is always “checking our impact rather than just our intent”: the MOU can be an effective tool in doing this well.

3

Pace and speed of events is key. Being aligned with the community often means constantly checking in to ensure that the impact work is moving with the pace and interests of the community.

4

Ensure that you are constantly making space for community partners (including those people who are outside of the core family and advisors of the film) to also grow into each stage of the impact work by honoring the value and expertise they bring to the work – in ways that go beyond their history (or experience) working in film.

5

Identify community objectives first, and then go into conversation with partners, funders and other organizations about impact work.



Map the resources of partners and align community objectives with the capacity of partners

With the family and team's impact goals, objectives, and values made explicit and documented in the duty of care framework (and MOU- memorandum of understanding) identified in the initial design phase of the film and impact work, one of the first post-production steps that the impact team took was reaching out to partners and matching their capacities with the impact objectives the team identified through their early consultations.

This involved assessing the unique resources and capabilities of each partner: for instance, do they have a significant reach? Do they have strong connections with relevant parliament members? Are they already having similar conversations (or do they want to have deep conversations) on the same issues the family and community are interested in?

The release period for the film, IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS, lasted roughly two years, with the first year being heavily focused on festivals and the second year focusing more on theatrical, online and broadcast releases. During that first year, when the film was largely only being screened at theaters, the impact team worked diligently to form community partnerships, support community screenings in different cities and build relationships with organizations and people who they wanted to work with. The impact team estimated reaching out to more than 500 people with links to the film and with invitations to partner with them around screening the film and pursuing its objectives. During this process, screenings were not seen as end-goals in and of themselves, they were opportunities to strengthen partnerships with like-minded organizations.

“These were screenings where we would also present the goals from the community and to see if that aligned with the goals and the campaigns that those organizations were running (Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022).”

Ultimately, the organizations that they partnered with included National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition, Amnesty International, Change the Record, Raise the Age campaign, the Human Rights Legal Center, children's commissions, various education organizations, individual activists, and people working in different areas of juvenile justice and education reform. In identifying partners and building coalitions, Alex said the focus was about both finding allied organizations and allied *movements*.



Part of it was both seeking to find alignment with the work they were planning to do in the next couple of years. There's a lot of education work around how a film might support their campaign and then [there was] a broader piece that's really about **movement mapping**. So just trying to find out, "What are you trying to move in the next two years? What's the current trends in the sector? What are the complications between different organizations and what are the power dynamics in the field? Who has relationships? Who's trying to move what?" And trying to get a bit of a perspective on the more transformative and radical parts of the movement, the more liberal parts of the movement, the more conservative parts of the movement and seeing how the film might be used by different groups. *(Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022)*

Rachel said that one of the outcomes of this mapping process was working with local partnerships to "build heat" around the key objectives of the impact campaign and synergy between the people and organizations engaged by it. Put another way, she said that an essential purpose and outcome to the mapping activities was the process of building new relationships, which helped the impact campaign to build more power.

What our new relationships allowed us to do was access a huge network of resources and collective intelligence. Not just physical resources – mailing lists and stuff – but human resources and expertise. So that way when we had relationships with our key impact partners, which were our second level of partners that we brought onto this group, they could say, "Hey, this is going on over here. This is an opportunity right here. This is something you need to know about." So it wasn't just our own internal, little team controlling all those aspects. We then built a net so that we could grow off of and have agility to take the opportunities that were present, that popped up, that were unexpected. *(Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)*

The ability to have this network of partners mapped out in advance allowed the impact team to be agile and responsive to cultural moments, media interests, and events that came-up during the impact campaign. For instance, when juvenile justice was a topic being covered in the media, the impact team was able to call on the people and organizations they had already identified as experts on that issue (of juvenile justice) who could help them use the film to enter and contribute to those media conversations in ways that centered the interests of the community in the film.

[The partner organizations] were part of those conversations. We checked everything with them. Often, they would come on and they would meet people, our advisors or the family or our other key partners on the ground. It's not like we said, "Okay, now we've got this. Thanks, we've done everything." They were with us at every single point. And that was a very intentional focus for us. *(Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)*

At the core of their impact work was the purposeful strategy of constantly making space for the family and key community advisors to grow into each stage of the impact work. This happened because the impact team intentionally made a point of ensuring that it happened – through on-going meetings with community members. It also happened by ensuring that local community partners were supported as bringing unique value that went beyond their history (or experience) working in film, and ensuring that their perspective was represented at each

The way that we approached the collaboration was that we made space for our community partners who did not have extensive histories in the film industry and impact to grow into each stage of this project with us. So that impact meetings grew off of other meetings. But what we then did in release and impact was make sure that we checked in with the community. We would just pause. I mean, we wouldn't pause the process but we would make space to drop out of everything and check-in with the family and our key advisors and do an assessment with them and say, 'Where are we at? Is there anything happening you want to [talk about]? Let's check in with all the things that were going on.'

We had a number of things going on at any given time with this impact campaign because the goals were so broad. We'd go, 'Here's what's happening' [and we would provide] a little bit of a critical update and check in to see if there was anything [happening] on the ground in their communities.... 'Is there anything happening that we want to touch in or you want to do some work in?'

The family would often go, 'Well, actually, I want to do this over here or there's this happening and we want to do this with the film.' But they hadn't brought it up until that moment, because we'd made space and stopped to have the conversation and check-in. So that initial impact meeting we had, which built-off of all the collaborative structure and the filmmaking process, was the start, but we made sure we continued to check in periodically and have a bigger planning discussion, aside from the day-to-day conversations." *(Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)*

Rachel also noted another important distinction about these community check-ins. She said that they were specifically designed to not be recaps of things that had happened; rather they were designed to be meetings in which the community and family were given power to meaningfully shape the direction and decisions related to the roll-out and future events of the impact work.



Constantly checking in was really important, both to ensure that we were beholden to positive impact on the ground for the community, because it's very easy to get run over by all these amazing things happening nationally and there's a lot of attention, there's a lot of media. And sometimes the biggest impact are tiny little projects that are going on at home, in the community and people don't think to ask or look for that.

So it was both to make sure that we were beholden to that and also, a way of ensuring - in practice - that what we were doing was being done in relationship and collaboration with the community. Rather than, 'Hey, I'm just telling you, by the way, there's this photo campaign going on.' ... It was going, 'Hey, what do you think about this? This is who this group is, this is what they do, this is who's behind it, what do you think about it? Do you want to have a look at it? They're asking us if we want this, what are your thoughts? Would you like to participate or would you like us to open a conversation with said group?'

It just meant that the level of day-to-day engagement we could continue to check that we were working in was collaboration rather than consultation. And we didn't always get it right. Sometimes we veered this way and we'd have to pull back and go, 'Okay, we've got too many things going on, or this isn't right for 'x' reasons, or we actually stopped for and chatted for a while; let's slow down.' *(Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)*



Ensure that engagement efforts can be responsive to where the conversations, moments, and energy of the moment is – tap into existing movements and moments.

To ensure that their impact campaign, though rooted in many intentionally pre-determined objectives and commitments, could still be dynamic and responsive to the cultural and political moment in their community, country, and globally, Alex said that their team needed to be proactive and to consult with partners and other organizations around the key dates, events, and movements that were happening at any given time.

While certain screenings and high-level events could be scheduled and anticipated well in advance (i.e. they knew they were going to participate in a UN meeting in Geneva early on), other engagements required constantly asking local partners about what was happening in their community or around their issue.

It was about hearing from movements or NGOs about key pressure points, key days of action that they might be doing, places that we happen to be... We would ask: "What's happening politically? What are the opportunities?"

(Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022)

For instance, during their impact campaign there was a review happening in every state and territory in Australia around the question of raising the age of criminal responsibility, and at one point the impact team learned that there was a committee of about 27 people nationally who were advising each department state and territory on this issue. Since their film spoke directly to the nuance around discussions of criminal responsibility, the impact team found a way to get their film in front of all of those 27 advisors.

One of the practical tools that the team used to help them identify and align with ongoing conversations and work was the use of an in-depth mapping phase – where the impact team worked to literally map “what was happening, what the conversations are, what the trends are, where we sit politically, who are the organizations we’re aligned with, and educating people about how they can partner with us.” (Alex Kelly).

In practice, this commitment to being responsive also meant that the focus of the campaign often needed to evolve quickly in real time and that some issues would get more attention than others, but Alex noted that this flow worked well for the team because it allowed them to influence conversations and key events at the moments in which the film and community could have the greatest impact.

[For instance] it did sometimes feel like we might not be thinking about the education piece as ‘top of mind’ at a moment, because there was heaps of momentum on juvenile justice. Then there would be a rush of attention towards education because there was a curriculum review happening or one of our partners was ready to launch a crowdfund or we were invited to talk at a graduate university of education. (Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022)



But Alex and Rachel both emphasized that one thing can't be overstated enough: being prepared to be flexible was key to the success of their impact work. The process of integrating both firm calendar events that were identified early on in the design of the work (including festival launches, parliamentary screenings, major global convenings) alongside local and time sensitive events meant that the IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS team needed to frequently move their attention where the energy was and where their partners directed them. It was a demanding process, but critical to the success of the impact work.

Another example of how their team pursued responsive but aligned impact work came in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, an event that no one could have predicted and which had enormous implications on the cultural moment in which the film was being viewed and on the types of engagements that could take place around it. One way that the film's impact team responded to the needs and evolving situation around COVID-19 was to move with the local organizations and partners they had aligned with. In other words, they didn't try to push the partners toward their outcomes; they moved with the local partners. In practice, this meant using the film to raise funding and support for health and safety work the organizations were doing.



When our lead partner organization, Children's Ground, in Mparntwe, in Alice Springs, very quickly wanted to do education work to get COVID-19 information and get resources to people, help people get transport back to community, get access to soap and sanitizer and that sort of thing, we were very quick to use the film to raise money to support that. So that's an example of something that was outside the original remit of the impact campaign but we could respond really quickly and do something really practical to support the community and on the ground. Then we also did some work to raise funds for a First Nations catering company in Sydney that were doing a lot of COVID relief food. They were very, very grassroots. It was just a few people and they didn't have a lot of resources. (Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022)



Ultimately, the film team raised about \$12,000 for this work by these three organizations.



Don't jump at every opportunity – ensure that every impact decision is in service of the community objectives (create “agile matrices”)

One of the most unique – and important – decisions that the impact team made was to ensure that every partner who engaged with them had seen and signed their MOU (memorandum of understanding), outlining the values, objectives and goal of the film as created with/identified through consultations with the family. Ensuring partners were knowledgeable of and aligned with the frames, messages and goals of the family – as stated in the MOU – meant explicitly informing every partner that “If we do work with you, and you do use the film, these are the ways that you can use it.”

This meant that **the impact team selected community objectives first, and then went into conversation with partners and others about impact work**. So, while the campaign could always be flexible to any given moment or energy in the country, and the existing movements/capacities of partners, the impact work was always grounded and guided by the objectives of the community. As a requirement for participation, every partner had to agree with the MOU, which was created with – and represents the objectives and values of – the community and family at the center of the film.

The purpose of the MOU stemmed from the impact team’s belief that when it comes to doing community and film impact work **“good intent isn’t enough”** and the MOU helped them to ensure that the community’s desired impact goals were always motivating their choices and work. In doing so, the MOU allowed the impact team to ensure that they were always **“checking our impact rather than just our intent.”** (Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)

Often we would go to groups and we’d say, ‘We know we all intend or want the same thing, but this MOU allows us to make sure that we are actually checking our impact rather than just our intent.’ Because [often] everybody says the same things, everybody believes the same things, everybody wants the same things. But when it comes down to how we’re doing it, often we have different ideas about how to do it. In particular, in relation to where power sits. For us, because we were really clear that power had to sit and the agency had to sit with the community. (Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)

Rachel said that the impact team’s strategy of casting a large net during their mapping and partnership activities was extremely valuable, but it also meant that they needed to make sure that they weren’t diluting the community and family’s power and agency in the process. And the MOU was one of the best mechanisms that allowed them to achieve this.



One of the imperatives of the MOU that directly impacted their way of working was the agreement that the family and the key community advisors always needed to have sufficient time to review key decisions, copy, and anything related to the film or its impact work. This is because maintaining a collaborative relationship with the community was never intended to be a “stage” of the process; rather it was the basis for the entire project, and it was vital to both earning the trust of community members and to create spaces for meaningful conversations and collaboration. As William Tilmouth recalled:

People were very skeptical at first... Historically, filmmakers came in, talked to us, then we'd never see them again. People would go off and become 'experts' on our lives. Aboriginal people were always at the back of the room, never up front, never able to voice their opinion. After generations and generations of that behavior, it's very hard to get people to even move away from just a whisper. To feel free to talk. To say, 'I'd like this part to be here, I'd like that taken out.' Because I'm one of them, people felt comfortable when I spoke up. My role was more about empowering them to speak their minds.

(William Tilmouth, quoted in Patricia Thomson, 9/21/2020, IDA article, 'In My Blood It Runs:' Visualizing the Weight of History through an Aboriginal Child's Eyes)

Members of the film team said that this need to ask for time and more input wasn't always the 'natural' way of working for some partners, but it helped the impact team stay centered and maintain their original spirit for making the film and leading impact efforts around it in the first place: to support the community.

The reason to do an impact around this project is to affect change on the ground in a positive way for the community. Not just for other people to become more aware that Aboriginal people exist and that they love their children, but actually for the community to see a positive impact. Therefore, we actually have to be that careful with how we go. So it means we have to go slower. It means we need to have more resources. It means we need to have more eyes on the project. The MOU was a really good way of starting that conversation with a group... So it did make a big difference. *(Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)*

This step helped to protect the collaboration and promises that were made in the early consultations with the family and community at the center of the film. It also meant separating working partnerships with partners who could not remain aligned with the MOU, and who tried to use the film for their own promotional reasons and other purposes that were not in the interests of the family. In other words, the commitment to only work with organizations and partners who are aligned and committed to the vision and objectives of the community and family (as outlined in the MOU) meant – at times – not accepting invitations, delaying screenings, re-working events, or working with organizations that were not aligned.



For instance, on a specific and practical level, the film team pushed back the date of a local screening because the family said they didn't want the screening to take place on that day because "they weren't quite ready to show [the film] to everyone on the big stage." Together, they then worked with the family to identify where it would screen, how, and when. In this way, pace and speed of events were key. **Being aligned with the community often meant constantly checking in to ensure that the impact work was moving at the pace of the community.**

So actually, going back to that question of how did we decide, there were things we said no to because they were moving too quickly, it was too complicated, people couldn't travel at the time, health issues, other things going on for people. (Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022)

Ensuring that the work was following the right pace also meant constantly looking around the table – or across Zoom – and checking-in on members of the impact team. The act of ensuring that the impact work didn't become like "a machine" with unrealistic, unrelenting deadlines and without flexibility or adaptability in approach was key to building a "community of practice" that Alex and Rachel say was key to ensuring the sustainability of the work.

On the pace, this stuff gets heady. You get adrenal. You are on deadline. You've got a publicist who needs the press kit. You've got a festival that needs the description for the program. You've got a media that want to do a breakfast program tomorrow and you are tired and you're running and that's the pace. And it's really hard when you are also trying to strategically gather profiles, accept opportunities, build relationships, build goodwill, to slow down and not just be like, "Oh, yeah, great! CBC wants to do an interview. Hot Docs want to invite us" ... to just get on that. (Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022)

But Alex said it was always essential for them to slow down in these moments, to get buy-in from the family, team and key advisors and then move when everyone was ready to move together.

The process of slowing down was also part of the impact team's larger outlook on how they could ensure the sustainability of the work and wellness of the people in the family and community, and the members on the impact team itself. Alex referred to this process of ensuring the full team understands the importance of maintaining a "human pace" amid the demands of a film's release and impact campaign.



Building in a more human pace that is required to maintain the integrity of process is actually a healthier thing anyway, because this industry, you can just live on that adrenaline, “Everything is important. Everything is now” dopamine hits, pushing out in emails and all of that. To say, “We’re not going to put this on Instagram till we check it with the family and we’re not going to send out the newsletter this week or we’re going to miss that deadline because we still haven’t been able to chat to such and such,” it actually is quite good and very healthy. *(Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022)*

Similarly, Rachel said that **the act of saying “we need to slow down”** became a critical tool for the impact team.

What happened was at any given moment with any given opportunity within our team, somebody would be going, ‘This is a great opportunity, we should really try to do this.’ And somebody would be going, ‘We need to slow down.’ So what it meant was we could have a really dynamic conversation and make the decision about whether or not we needed to do it and there was almost no conflict, because we were aligned in purpose. *(Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)*

Another engagement strategy the impact team used was to frequently ensure that the community and family members had the opportunity to represent themselves in events, when and how they felt comfortable. And if the organization or event wasn’t supportive of that effort (i.e. if they only wanted to talk to a particular director or producer) then the film team would walk away from that interview or opportunity.

There were some things that were great opportunities that we turned down; not because the family didn't have capacity necessarily, but because whatever organization it was that was asking wouldn't make space for the family or community [or community partner/expert]... We'd have an internal conversation about going, 'Well, if they're not going to make space for the family, then what is the benefit?'

...It's a hard decision because the more of a platform you build as a film team and in a project, the more energy and the more attention you get to what you're trying to do. But if it circumvents what you're trying to do by taking energy away from the people on the ground who are doing it, it defeats the purpose.
(Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)

The process of deciding which conversations and opportunities they agreed to and which ones they didn't resulted in something that Rachel describes as an "agile matrix" – through which decisions were always weighted against their benefit for the community and objectives at the center of the impact campaign. Giving power to this "agile matrix" of input from the family, community and local partners meant finding empowerment and "success" in the ability to walk away from opportunities.

We knew that sometimes we might have to walk away from something we thought was an amazing opportunity. Because we had to slow it down, because we couldn't get to the family. We might lose that opportunity. That's what was a bit different in our team. We were willing to walk away from it, if it meant that it was going to even put at serious risk, even if we didn't know it was definitely going to cause harm, if the community or the family were saying, 'This is not right or we're not comfortable with,' or they were behaving in a way that we knew meant that they weren't comfortable with it, then we were willing to walk away from those opportunities. That was the one thing.

(Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)

Returning to a point made earlier, Rachel and Alex said that the MOU might have been the singular most effective tool for the impact team in identifying conflicting interests and potential red flags to new partners. Alex said that in some cases the partner would say “Oh, this is fantastic, you’ve laid everything out. Wow, this is great. What a cool thing. This is the thing we should do.” In which case, the impact team can say “okay great!” and continue with aligning and partnering in the work. But if someone says ““Oh, this? Okay. We haven’t seen something like this before. We’ll just have to show our legal department and get back to you” then Alex said she and her impact team knew that they were probably in store for a different kind of partnership.



So the process of having stepped through that so deeply with the community and then articulating it in quite a clear way, in that one-page impact document and the short MOU, and then for all of us to be able to speak quite confidently to that in all of these initial screenings and conversations with people, was a really significant piece of the work. *(Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022)*



“Prepare the space” for positive experiences. Ensure community members lead preparatory conversations/planning ahead of events, and create systems of support for community members during any event and impact effort.

In every film campaign, the importance of preparing for instances of trauma – both from the perspective of the people who are featured in the film and the people who are participating in events and conversations around it – is essential. And given the centrality of Dujuan’s family and community in every aspect of the film and its subsequent impact and engagement work, considerations around trauma – and ensuring that the film and its impact campaign didn’t cause new trauma for them – was all the more critical. And it is on this issue, in thinking about/preparing for/and implementing campaigns that center considerations of trauma and the wellness of participants, that much can be learned from the experiences of the IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS impact work.

The impact team’s efforts of ensuring that every partner agreed to the MOU was one important wellness strategy. The team’s commitment to maintaining a pace that was in step with the community was another. But bringing in partners with shared values and carving out spaces for community input was only one step toward ensuring the wellness of the family and community participants engaged by the impact campaign, the other step – which is just as crucial – was preparing and talking to the family and community participants about what these engagements could be like and listening to their concerns and perspectives ahead of time. In other words, considering the wellness of community participants meant doing more than creating spaces for their participation; it meant working to create safe-enough spaces for their participation in community events, Q/As, and all the other impact and engagement related events that come with documentaries.



There was quite a lot of deep preparation that our team did, sitting with family, really talking about, “What do you want to say on stage, what do you want to talk about in these interviews?” We ended up both helping people write longer pieces over a several week process to publish. Then also working with people to have cards to have on stage because this is the first time for many people that they’d spoken publicly and it’s a pretty big deal and we really wanted to support them to feel really confident that they were able to express everything they wanted to. We also primed the Q&A hosts to ask the questions that fit with the answers. I suppose the secondary reason to that, in terms of not just wanting to support everybody to feel really confident, but also there is even within, and it’s not surprising but even within progressive media spaces, you still get quite insidiously problematic questions asked.

(Original interview, Alex, 21 December 2022)



Frequently, to provide an example of a harmful trend that the impact team had to prepare for, when engaged by media outlets and outside conversations, First Nations people are put in positions of being asked questions solely on the basis of their identification as First Nations people. Meaning that media outlets will often ask them questions as if they are speaking on behalf of all First Nations people. In order to prepare the film's participants for these sorts of challenging situations, the impact team supported the family and community members in writing their own stories and giving speeches based around the perspective they felt were important to share was an important and helpful approach.

In addition, the importance of creating spaces that were prepared for "positive experiences" was intentional for the film team.



Something that I've learnt actually through this process is that it's not just creating the opportunities for people to have a platform or to invite people to Sydney Film Festival, but it's **preparing the space so that is a positive experience**. And that is actually a huge part of the work, which is really labor-intensive. Then in a similar way, all of the journalists and know we spent so long talking with some of the people who... Rachel spent time inviting inviting First Nations leaders and people to come and talk to us about these stereotypes that exist, particularly the media around First Nation stories. So we had **big conversations about how to approach the media around the film** and try and control that conversation so that we weren't placing people in interviews where they were asked terrible questions or matching up with a journalist that we hadn't done our full research on and suddenly, there was a story that was actually perpetuating damaging representations instead of doing the opposite. **Actually, the clearest way to do that was actually to have the people in the film and all of our advisors write their own pieces and have them prepped to pitch them to media. As opposed to saying like, 'Oh, do you want to interview this person?,' we'd say, 'Here's this amazing article, would you like to print it?' And ... that was really successful in the end to lead the conversation.** *(Original interview, Maya, 21 December 2022)*



Another critical piece of **preparing the space** meant ensuring that the experience wouldn't just be in service to educating people outside of the community, but that it would also be in service to the people in the communities represented by the film.





The thing we were doing together, the purpose of the thing we were doing together, was not simply making a beautiful film, although that was obviously the vehicle by which we were doing the thing. But the thing we were doing together was about making sure that we were bringing a powerful and authentic story to screen that would be used with a critical conscious underpinning, not just something... to entertain the rest of the world.

For us, it was about making sure that we're not using Black bodies to educate everybody else. Rather, we're doing something that will benefit both the internal community where the film has come from and then the greater community that needs to hear these stories. (Original interview, Rachel, 21 December 2022)



As a result, the impact team didn't think about press coverage or reach or national attention as an objective or goal in itself. The impact team was always thinking about the impact – positive and negative – that any attention or media item would have and ensuring that they were doing everything they could to minimize any harm or misrepresentation that could come from such wider coverage and attention. And it is perhaps the following aspiration of Maya that best encapsulates this commitment:



I hope that you can see the wisdom of Dujuan and his character and charm walk onwards in you. I hope audiences can see that beneath these children we deem to be difficult or troublesome, are vibrant and smart kids who will flourish if we can create the space in our systems to value their First cultures and identities. I hope you are moved enough to want to look deeply into your sphere of influence and actively consider how you might be able to give agency and power to others.

(Maya Newell, 12/21/2020, quoted in POV: 'In My Blood It Runs' Film Update)



KEY RESOURCES

The following materials served as the primary documents in informing the writing of this report, and they have been made publicly available for other filmmakers and impact producers to learn from by the IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS team.

Summary resources on the impact campaign and partners

- IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS website impact page ([doc link](#))
- 2020 Impact Update ([doc link](#))
- Impact Overview ([doc link](#))
- Impact Report ([doc link](#))
- Impact & Filmmaking Video ([doc link](#))
- Collaborative Filmmaking Case Study ([doc link](#))
- MOU for Partners ([doc link](#))
- Maya and Rachel podcast episode (Creative Distribution podcast): <https://open.spotify.com/episode/4cLFmr9q12cDyrLQNfa7Wg?si=3e01129238314224>
- Some additional background on approach: <https://inmyblooditruns.com/about/>
- A selection of media articles about the project: <https://inmyblooditruns.com/media/#mediastories>

Background materials on ethics/approach:

- On the ethics of the relationship between subjects and filmmakers regarding Gayby Baby (by Maya). "Gayby Baby – From the politics of representation to the politics of care" <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0017896918759569>
- Alex's 2012 Churchill report on impact http://echotango.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/AlexKelly_Churchillreport20131.pdf
- Some info on the Big hART project Ngapartji Ngapartji (mentioned by Alex during first call) <https://echotango.org/2013/04/on-ngapartji-ngapartji/>
- This is a much longer (157 pages) evaluation report on Ngapartji Ngapartji from Murdoch University – The Consequences of Kindness – https://www.bighart.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BlghART_Evaluation_ConsequencesofKindness.pdf
- Amiun website for Cultural Safe and Responsive Practice – www.amiun.org
- Dujuan's speech to UN:
 - <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/12/i-am-cheeky-but-no-kid-should-be-in-jail-this-is-why-i-addressed-the-un-at-just-12-years-old>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWOppPEoqDM>
- "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way." (Co-Creation; pathways and process for sustainable reform), By Rachel Nanjinaaq Edwardson and David Selvarajah Vadiveloo with Leah Manaema Avena. Working title book on Culturally Safe and Responsive Practice in development.



Articles written by Dujan, his family, and some of the film's community advisors: with

- Dujan Hoosan, Aboriginal people were here first, <https://overland.org.au/previous-issues/issue-238/feature-aboriginal-people-were-here-first>
- Dujan Hoosan, I am cheeky, but no kid should be in jail. This is why I addressed the UN at just 12 years old, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/12/i-am-cheeky-but-no-kid-should-be-in-jail-this-is-why-i-addressed-the-un-at-just-12-years-old>
- Jim Mawson, We Want Our Indigenous Kids To Have Their Own Schools, In Their Own Language, <https://junkee.com/indigenous-kids-education/239404>
- Carol Turner, Ayeye Atyenhe Akerte – About My Story, <https://www.dumbofeather.com/articles/ayeye-atyenhe-akerte-about-my-story>
- William Tilmouth , Our next generation will be formidable. Their identity will not be denied., <https://indigenoux.com.au/our-next-generation-will-be-formidable-their-identity-will-not-be-denied>
- Megan Hoosan, In My Blood It Runs has a message about the love Aboriginal parents have for their kids, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-05/in-my-blood-it-runs-aboriginal-parents/12418348>





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