

The Self-determination Project

JUNE 2026

Place-Based, Self-Determined Economic Development Design for First Nations Communities



First Nation Start Up | Sacred Country Consulting | Woodrow Eke Advisory

The Problem

The gap between investment & impact

A 2025 report by the Productivity Commission outlined that only 4 of 19 National Closing the Gap targets are on track. This is not a resourcing failure. It is a design failure.

There is growing investment in First Nations economic development. But investment alone doesn't close the gap, not when communities are repeatedly required to align their priorities with frameworks that weren't built with or for them.

Communities are left carrying the burden of translation, explaining their aspirations in someone else's language, to meet someone else's definition of success.



"The frameworks and investment exists. What's missing is the work that connects them to community."

Sinead Singh - Founder & Director - FNSU

Our response

A different kind of support

We offer holistic, wrap-around support that addresses the whole picture, not just one part of it.

Three disciplines. One program.

Built from the start to work together, and to serve the community rather than the other way around.

Holistic & wrap-around	Place-based by design	Self-determined	Meaningful & sustainable
Three disciplines working as one. Communities don't hold the pieces together, the collective does.	Every framework and outcome is built for individual communities. No templates. No generic requirements.	Community holds decision-making authority and all IP. The collective listens and facilitates, it does not define or speak on behalf of community.	Built with community, not delivered to them. Making outputs more likely to be owned and built on over time.

Why now

The Policy environment is moving in this direction

The Commonwealth's 2025 Closing the Gap Annual Report signals a significant shift away from top-down program delivery and toward self-determined, place-based economic development.

The conditions for this work have never been stronger.

Our collective is built to deliver exactly what this policy moment is calling for.

- **\$75 million** committed to Prescribed Bodies Corporate to build capacity and accelerate economic opportunities.
- **First Nations Economic Framework** in development through the First Nations Economic Partnership, explicitly seeking community-led, place-based approaches.
- **National Agreement Priority Reforms** driving a shift toward shared decision-making, community-controlled delivery, and locally defined outcomes

The Collective

Who we are



First Nation Start Up

Sinead Singh - Founder & Director

First Nation Start Up (FNSU) specialises in business services ranging from business management, social media and marketing, cultural consulting and advisory support, to offering more tailored programs of work such as our Cultural Frameworks in Entrepreneurship courses.

FNSU is a business accelerator and consulting agency that specialises in restoring the Indigenous circular economy one community at a time, through tailored support and business accelerators.

We are based on the beautiful Bundjalung and Kombumerri country, Gold Coast, and our consultancy and services are offered nationally, with a unique range of clients and stakeholders to support the growth and development of the First Nations business sector.

Sacred Country Consulting

Gemma Lloyd - Founder

Sacred Country Consulting empowers individuals, families, and communities to turn their ideas into sustainable and financially viable ventures.

Guided by an essentialist approach, we focus on what truly matters to create long term impact rooted in Country, culture, and community strength.

The consultancy was built on more than a decade of experience working across government, community organisations, remote regions, and business ecosystems throughout Australia.



Woodrow Eke Advisory

Woodrow Eke -Principal Advisor

Woodrow is a non-Indigenous ally and facilitator with extensive experience in First Nations economic development, policy, and program design.

In his most recent role as General Manager - Programs & Impact at Ngarrimili, he led the Ripple Effect Project and formalised Ngarrimili's role as a Data Custodian for the Dilin Duwa Indigenous Economic Power Project (IEPP).

Prior roles include senior policy positions at Ngarrimili and The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI).

Woodrow lives and works on Wadawurrung Country, and pays respect to Elders past and present.

The Collective Model

A cycle of First Nations economic self-determination

Community and Traditional Owner Corporations (TOCs) sit at the centre throughout.

The three streams flow clockwise, each building on the last, toward genuine economic prosperity and self-determination for First Nations peoples and communities.



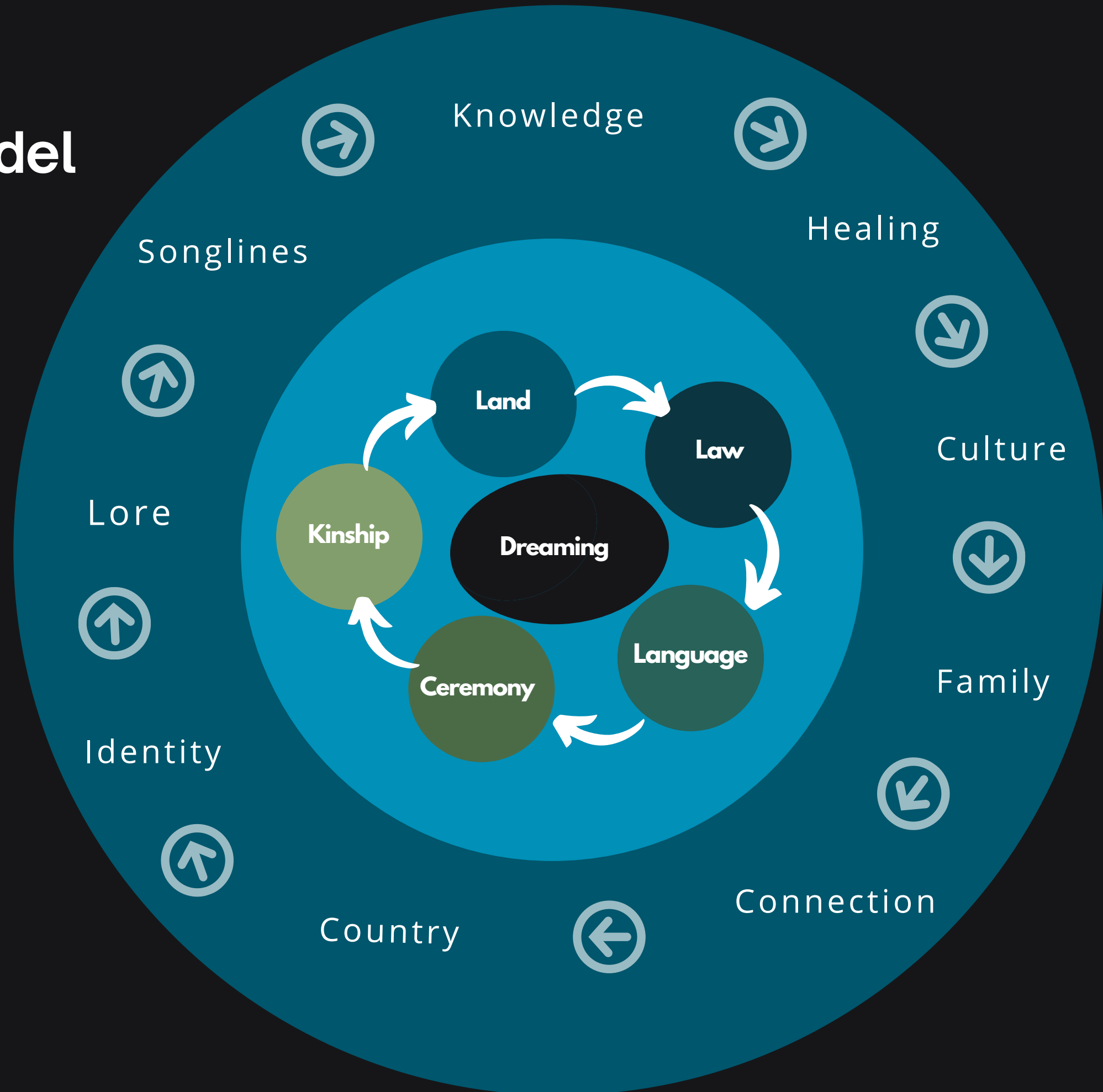
Cultural Context

Indigenous Circular Economy model

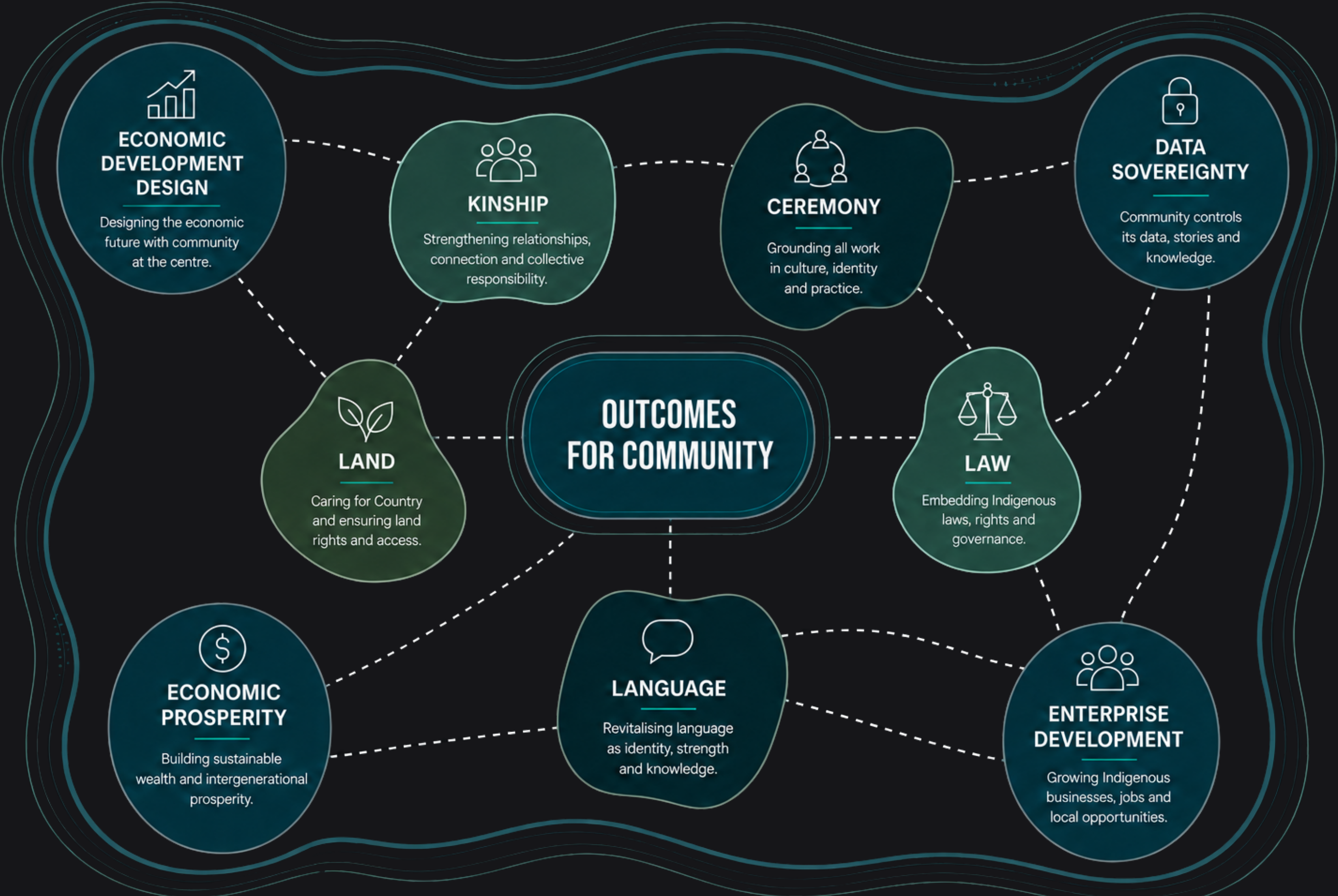
The work of the Collective adheres to the Indigenous Circular Economy Model pictured.

These principles are applied on a place-based basis, at the direction of the Traditional Owners and communities.

Cultural authority is at the heart of the work, always.



Indigenous Circular Economy x Collective Model Framework



Our Approach

Three streams. One Program. Delivered concurrently

Focus areas	What's delivered
Economic Development Design	• Community-owned Theory of Change • Place-based, self-determined Outcomes Framework • Policy translation • Funder-facing documentation
Enterprise Development	• Enterprise capability assessment • Cultural entrepreneurship frameworks • Business planning support • Enterprise pathways
Data Sovereignty	• Data sovereignty framework • Governance protocols • Platform integration • Digital business profiles • Data infrastructure roadmap

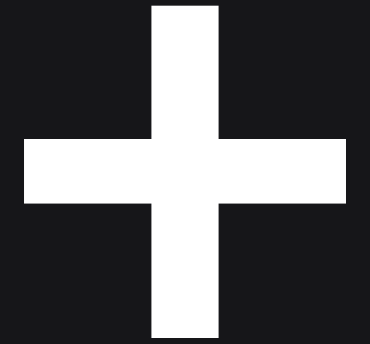
Program delivery

Program stream	Milestones
Stream 1: Economic Development Design	- Milestone 1: Scope & governance - Milestone 2: Context conversations - Milestone 3: Co-design framework - Milestone 4: Refine & document - Milestone 5: Close & reflect
Stream 2: Enterprise Development	- Milestone 1: Enterprise diagnostic - Milestone 2: Coaching & assessment - Milestone 3: Workshops & planning - Milestone 4: Finalise pathways - Milestone 5: Review & handover
Stream 3: Data Sovereignty	- Milestone 1: Data audit - Milestone 2: Sovereignty principles - Milestone 3: CultureQ Discovery - Milestone 4: Finalise governance - Milestone 5: Handover & roadmap
Integration points Collective	- First check-in & share early findings, confirm stream alignment - Mid-point review. Test coherence of draft outputs across all three streams. - Final close. Present integrated outputs, agree next steps

All three streams are delivered concurrently by the collective, with structured integration points. Community holds decision-making authority throughout. All outputs belong to the community.

Who we work with

Building Capacity & Facilitating Impact



Primary participants

- Traditional Owner Corporations (TOCs)
- Native Title Holders and Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs)
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)

Potential funders

- Government
- Indigenous-Led Funds (ILFs)
- Philanthropic trusts and foundations
- Corporate and industry partners
- Private and international investors

This program is designed for First Nations organisations and Traditional Owner Corporations who are ready to define economic development on their own terms.

For funders and partners who want to support that work in a way that is ethical, effective and self-determined.

Next Steps

Let's start a conversation

We don't assume fit. Every engagement begins with listening, understanding the organisation's context, priorities and aspirations before any scope is agreed. We do this in three steps:

Yarn: An initial conversation to understand what matters most to your community.

No agenda. No assumptions.

Just an honest discussion about whether this is the right fit.



Scope: If there's alignment, we work together to confirm what the engagement looks like, which tier fits your needs, and how it will be funded.

We bring knowledge of government, philanthropic and industry pathways, you don't have to navigate that alone.



Start: We agree terms, confirm your working group, and begin on Country.

Everything from here is led by your community.

We facilitate and document, you decide.

No obligation. No predetermined outcome. Just a genuine conversation about what's possible.

Contact

Get in touch

Sinead Singh - Founder & Director

First Nation Start Up

0450 368 525 | sinead@firstnationstartup.com

Gemma Lloyd - Founder

Sacred Country Consulting

0427 766 090 | gemma@sacredcountryconsulting.com

Woodrow Eke - Principal Advisor

Woodrow Eke Advisory

0409 219 167 | woodrow@woodroweke.com.au