ARTICLE

Realising Indigenous Data Governance: A Case Study of the Koori Resource and Information Centre Archives

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Abstract

This paper presents research findings from a study exploring how Indigenous community archives realise Indigenous Data Governance (ID-GOV). It considers the development of the Koori Resource and Information Centre (KRIC) Archives in Shepparton, Victoria, as a case study. This study aimed to determine whether the KRIC Archiving Project realised a form of ID-GOV. It adopted an Indigenous methodological framework using a combination of data collection methods to generate a range of research data. This study found that the KRIC Archiving Project adapted Western archival frameworks and practices to create an archive of local Indigenous significance and history that was accessed, operated and managed under Indigenous direction. In this way, the Project advanced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and achieved a momentary emergence of ID-GOV.

Keywords: *Indigenous community archives*; *Indigenous Data Governance*; *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*; *Self-determination*.

The movement for Indigenous Data Sovereignty (ID-SOV) and Indigenous Data Governance (ID-GOV) has emerged in response to poor data practices. Since colonisation, Indigenous lives have been heavily surveyed and documented in archival collections across Australia. Missing from these archives has been the inherent and undeniable voices of First Nations Australians regarding the collection, ownership, possession and management of data pertaining to their people, knowledge systems, way of life, lands and waters. An integral part of transforming the dominant discourse about current data development and management practices and archiving protocols is the privileging of Indigenous knowledge and culture. Although the histories and experiences of Indigenous lives vary at regional and national levels, they share common narratives of resilience and resistance to colonialism and frameworks of white hegemony.[1] This has seen the emergence of Indigenous community archives (ICAs), which adapt and transform rigid hegemonic structures to meet the specific needs of the community.

This paper is based on my study about the development of an ICA in an Australian context, focusing on the Koori Resource and Information Centre (KRIC) Archives in Shepparton,

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Victoria, as a case study.[2] The research sought to determine whether this particular ICA achieved ID-GOV. Its methodological approach was shaped by an Indigenous research paradigm to ensure that Indigenous perspectives and knowledge were foregrounded. A combination of data collection methods was used to produce a range of research data.

The term KRIC is applied in various ways throughout this article. Variants of the term include 'KRIC' or the 'KRIC office', which refers to the community organisation; the 'KRIC Archives', which refers to the community archive itself; and the 'KRIC Archiving Project', which refers to the management, sorting, cataloguing and preservation of the archival material.

Indigenous community archives

ICAs are not a recent phenomenon. As Baker & Cantillon argue, works undertaken by Indigenous communities to reclaim, repatriate, create and govern their 'memory, identity, knowledge, and culture pre-date … the community archive movement'.[3] The community archive movement evolved around the mid-1970s and early 1980s in response to protests of antiwar, civil rights, and gay and feminist activists.[4] The materials housed in ICAs comprise various types and forms of records that relate broadly to their respective communities, people, land and waters, histories, knowledge, language, and community organisations and initiatives.[5] Moreover, ICAs provide a space that gives voice to marginalised communities who are often excluded, silenced, othered and subjugated in colonial accounts.[6] In this regard, ICAs contest assumptions deemed as truths; challenge the 'hegemony of the nation-state's imagined past and futures; and invoke a multiethnic cacophony of voices that requires reconsideration of established knowledge production alike'.[7] Furthermore, community-based archives enable community groups to determine the contents of the repositories as needed and decided upon by their community.[8] This can also signify control over the access to and use of materials. With growing interest in ID-SOV and ID-GOV, Indigenous people can initiate, develop and engage with community archives on their own terms, which is essential to facilitate self-determination.[9] By applying community archiving techniques, the desire to create histories that represent the experiences of everyday marginalised people and groups makes hidden narratives visible.[10] For example, repositories created by mainstream archives (e.g., galleries, libraries or universities, etc.) in partnership with ICAs are a means by which Indigenous communities can create and maintain archival systems that are inclusive and respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols and needs.[11] This article refers to ICAs as information and knowledge repositories that contain records of significance to Indigenous community groups.

Indigenous data governance

ID-SOV and ID-GOV are part of a growing global movement and associated research that has emerged in response to poor and unjust data practices concerning the control, creation, collection and access to Indigenous knowledge.[12] ID-SOV refers to the rights of Indigenous people to determine 'the collection, use, and application of data about us, our lands, and cultures',[13] whilst ID-GOV refers to the ownership, access, generation and management of Indigenous data by Indigenous people and nations.[14]

ID-SOV is achieved through the exercise of ID-GOV.[15] Indigenous communities practice ID-SOV through the interconnected processes of ID-GOV and data decolonisation.[16] Decolonisation occurs through exposing, challenging and transforming the dominant hegemonic norms and values in data collection and management.[17] This enables Indigenous communities and other data representatives to replace and repurpose Western data systems with Indigenous

frameworks and knowledge that 'define data and inform how it is collected and used'.[18] In this way, ID-GOV is informed by Indigenous ontology and epistemology, or Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being, to control and manage community data practices.[19]

The practice of ID-GOV is encapsulated in the CARE Principles (Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility and Ethics) developed with the support of the Global Indigenous Data Alliance (GIDA).[20] These principles emerged from the efforts of 'Te Mana Raraunga Maori Data Sovereignty Network, US Indigenous Data Sovereignty (ID-SOV) Network, Maiam Nayri Wingara Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective, and numerous Indigenous people, nations, and communities'.[21] The CARE principles aim to ensure that through ID-GOV First Nations, people are no longer alienated from the collection, management and use of Indigenous data. However, the extent to which Indigenous groups partake in the four processes varies globally.

Currently, four ID-SOV networks exist internationally: the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) in operation in Canada since 2010; Te Mana Raraunga, The Mâori Data Sovereignty launched in 2015; the United States Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network formed in 2016; and Maiam Nayri Wingara Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective established in Australia in 2017.[22] Following the Oñati workshop in July, GIDA was launched with contributions from the cofounders of these ID-SOV networks.[23] Importantly, GIDA considers that 'global alliance is needed to advocate and advance a shared vision for ID-SOV' (GIDA 2021) as UNDRIP alone is not sufficient to achieve this (for further details, see the 2019 Oñati Indigenous Data Sovereignty Communique).[24]

In Australia, there is growing interest and advocacy to progress ID-SOV and ID-GOV. For example, in 2017, Maiam Nayri Wingara was initiated by Indigenous scholars to promote shared understandings and the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data sovereignty principles and protocols.[25] Guided by UNDRIP, Maiam Nayri Wingara actively encourages Indigenous Australians to engage in the data space using Australian ID-GOV protocols and principles to empower communities to accurately record their stories. The National Centre for Indigenous Genomics (NCIG), based at the Australian National University, exemplifies the progression of ID-SOV and ID-GOV in the Australian context. It was established in 2013 to house a vast collection of DNA blood samples of First Nations people from across Australia.[26] With Indigenous-led decision-making and management of the data, NCIG utilises genomic medicine to the benefit of First Nations Australians.[27] It is evident, therefore, that ID-GOV enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make appropriate decisions that support local Indigenous communities to meet their needs and aspirations, especially in sustaining community archives.[28]

Research methodology

A case study approach was adopted to investigate the unique circumstances of the KRIC Archives. The value of using a case study approach lies in its insightful appreciation of the context and other complex conditions related to a given situation or 'case' through its use of multiple sources of evidence.[29] In this way, it fits well with an Indigenous research paradigm, in which it can readily encompass Indigenous beliefs and ways of being.[30] Understanding the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make sense of the world, especially the complex connection between life, land and the cosmos, is a crucial component of Indigenous research.[31] Indigenous worldviews differ greatly from 'the dominant cultural worldview in Western society' and consequently are often excluded from the Western research frameworks.[32] Even when Indigenous knowledge is acknowledged, it is often from a Eurocentric standpoint.[33] An Indigenous paradigm and research methodology, however, allow First Nations communities (and researchers) to '(re)present our worldviews from the basis from which

we live, learn and survive' and reclaim control over Indigenous knowledge.[34] Therefore, as a Torres Strait Islander researcher, I adopted Indigenous research methodology, first to give precedence to Indigenous frameworks and ways of knowing, being and doing. Second, to ensure that power in the research relationship is transferred from the researcher to the researched by advocating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community agendas and interests.[35] Considering the Traditional Owners on whose land this research was conducted, I aimed to systematically investigate the perspectives and opinions of the Aboriginal and other First Nations people living in the north-eastern region of Victoria. In doing so, I consulted with Kaiela Institute and their Algabonyah Data, Research and Evaluation Unit (ADREU) and obtained approval via an application process to conduct the study in a culturally safe manner.

In keeping with the case study approach, I used a combination of data collection methods to ensure a range of different types of research data.[36] They included a small number of semi-structured in-depth interviews, archival material sourced from the KRIC Archives and my autoethnographic reflections. These methods ensured both Indigenous and Western knowledge were specifically investigated to generate a better understanding of KRIC's data practices.[37]

The research data were analysed thematically using a colour coding system. By this means a specific colour was assigned to each and every theme identified in the interview, archival and autoethnographic data. The data were then analysed using the colour codes to identify recurring themes. The synthesis of the data in this way enabled its interpretation as it presented insights and understanding of the ways KRIC realised ID-GOV.

Semi-structured interviews

Using convenience sampling, study participants were identified and recruited from a sample population of individuals involved in the KRIC Archives, either as part of the KRIC Archiving Project team or through the KRIC office. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with each individual and guided by a set list of questions that asked participants to reflect on their own personal experience with KRIC and working in the KRIC Archives. The questions also inquired into the ways in which the Archives were meaningful to each participant, the significance of the Archives to the community and the participant's familiarity with the concept of ID-GOV.

The interviewees comprised four of the original 10 members of the Archiving Project team employed in the KRIC Archives from 2006 to 2015. Each participant was given a project information statement sheet outlining the research project. It invited them to participate in an interview and advised them that all information collected would be treated anonymously and confidentially. Once they consented to being interviewed, participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to the interviews taking place. All interviews were digitally recorded using a voice recorder, transcribed with the assistance of transcription software and analysed thematically.

Analysis of archiving protocol and practices

In addition to interviews, materials held within the KRIC Archives were used as a secondary data set. Documents pertaining to archiving policies and practices of the KRIC Archiving Project were examined as evidence for determining whether and how the Project was realising ID-GOV. Documents such as meeting minutes, Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs), and archival policies and practices formed part of the data that were analysed for the research. Access to and use of archival data were approved under an ID-GOV framework developed by the ADREU at Kaiela Institute, the current location of the KRIC Archives.

Autoethnographic reflection

My positionality and reflexivity as an insider researcher are embedded in the study through the process of autoethnographic reflection. I consider and refer to myself as an 'insider' on two fronts, both as an Indigenous person living in the community under consideration and as a former member of the KRIC Archiving Project team. By locating myself within the context of the KRIC Archives, I situate my own positionality and reflexivity within the research, by which I can 'fulfil cultural, ethical and relational obligations; and recentre [Indigenous] axiology and ontology'.[38] My personal account constitutes part of the data gathered for this case study and further centres Indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing within the research.[39] Accordingly, I actively disengage from deficit discourses through employing a narrative of strength, resilience and self-determination. By adopting a strength-based perspective and language, the research aimed to take into account the community's sustained efforts to improve economic, social and health outcomes for First Nations Australians through self-determined data governance.

The KRIC office and archives

The KRIC office was established in 1988 and became a hub for Indigenous community activity in the Goulburn Murray region in northern Victoria.[40] It supported an array of Indigenous organisations, groups and programs through the development of capacity building initiatives.[41] These aimed to support community development, cross-cultural awareness and public discussion.[42]

I recall that the 'White House' – as it was affectionately referred to by locals – was as the name implied, a small white house set against the neighbouring cookie cutter shopfronts. Whilst the facade was like that of a domestic residence, internally, KRIC resembled a functional office space: bedrooms as offices, the dining and living area as meeting spaces, and the backrooms converted to storage and printing areas. Like many organisations, as the activities within the KRIC offices grew or changed, so did the functional spaces within the White House.

The KRIC Archives were and remain directly connected to the organisational activity of the KRIC office, as most of the records were produced or received at the KRIC office, by KRIC or by the various Indigenous organisations that operated there before winding up or relocating to separate premises. For this reason, the Archives were able to grow organically from the late 1980s.[43] In his work on the history of the Victorian Aboriginal Advancement League, Broome emphasises that Indigenous people express self-determination and agency by using colonial systems and concepts to forge better pathways for themselves.[44] The changing political, social and economic agendas of elected governments and the development of community organisations, groups and programs are evident in the complexity of the KRIC Archives. In this way, much can be learnt about the local Indigenous history through the KRIC Archives as the various sections of the collection provide a series of narratives, conversations and aspirations of the community in those moments. The type of community initiatives whose activities contribute to these narratives includes sports, health, education, employment and financial literacy (to name a few). Whilst each Indigenous community organisation has its own purpose and course of action, its role within the larger narrative of the Indigenous community's survival and growth is connected to other activities captured by the Archives. Thus, it is not just about the history of any one organisation or group but reflects a collective purpose and drive for self-determination.

The KRIC archiving project

KRIC formed two notable partnerships with local organisations to develop the KRIC Archives. These were the Goulburn Valley Regional Library (GVRL) and the Aboriginal Community Strategic Planning and Policy Unit (ACSPPU). The ACSPPU was a resource for the

Indigenous community to undertake a range of community development processes. It was also a resource for local Aboriginal leadership in providing policy and planning support but is no longer in operation as it amalgamated with KRIC in 2011 to become the Kaiela Institute.[45]

Memoranda of understanding signed between KRIC and these organisations demonstrated mutually beneficial relationships. The ACSPPU was interested in housing the non-active portion of the KRIC Archives due to the wealth of information about past and present programs contained within the collection.[46] KRIC, on the other hand, needed more storage space for its expanding collection. The relationship between the GVRL and KRIC aimed to develop a partnership that would nurture a repository of 'Indigenous information and knowledge that would be accessible and responsive to the needs of the local community'.[47] The Koori Library Pathways Project as it was termed sought to connect Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to the Indigenous culture, history and heritage of the Goulburn Murray region. It was from this partnership that the KRIC Archiving Project came to fruition. A small number of Indigenous community members, including myself, were employed to sort, catalogue and index KRIC's accumulating records. This small group was known as the KRIC Archiving Project team. Such partnerships show the resourcefulness of KRIC and the Indigenous community in utilising other organisations to overcome limitations in the development of the Archives.

The KRIC Archiving Project attained a contextual review of its collection, known as a significance assessment, in 2009.[48] The review used research into the activities of KRIC and other local Indigenous organisations and the evaluation of other Indigenous archives (in contrast to the KRIC Archives) to determine the historical, aesthetic, scientific and social/spiritual values of the KRIC Archives.[49] The purpose of the assessment was to appraise the value and meaning of the material within the collection to provide a basis upon which decisions about its management could be made. The Significance Assessment provided several recommendations for the ongoing development and management of the Archives. These included the continued sorting and indexing of archival material, establishing a cataloguing system, developing links with research institutions, investigating access issues, seeking further funding, recruiting volunteers, exhibiting archival material, raising community awareness, and continued assistance for the survivors and descendants of the Stolen Generations in accessing the collection.[50]

Due to the changing nature of Indigenous affairs, KRIC was re-named as the Kaiela Institute in 2011.[51] During the process, the Archives were relocated on several occasions, and as a result, it became disorganised. Furthermore, a lack of funding support meant the continued indexing and sorting of materials ceased in 2015, and the Archives in their current state remain incomplete and dormant.

The connection between the activity of the KRIC office and the KRIC Archives not only is an important component of understanding the local Indigenous history but also demonstrates the community's efforts towards achieving self-determination by representing a counter narrative to frameworks of white hegemony. This narrative repositions the value of First Nations people from a deficit to a strength-based discourse. Recognising the importance of the collection prompted a partnership between GVRL and KRIC, from which eventuated the KRIC Archiving Project. It was there, in 2008, that I first came to work on the Archives as a member of the KRIC Archiving Project team.

Interview and autoethnographic findings

The four participants interviewed for the research were all members of the local and surrounding communities of Shepparton who had either grown up in the area or who had resided there for many years. All had experience working across mainstream and Indigenous organisations in both the private and public sectors. Participants came to work on the KRIC

Archives through various means, including hearing about the project via word-of-mouth within the local Indigenous community, followed by a successful interview for a position. Others were already employed at KRIC in different capacities or were introduced through other community and organisational partnerships with KRIC and/or the Archiving Project. As a member of the archiving team, I was also a resident of the Shepparton area and member of the local Indigenous community and was recruited to the Archiving Project through an interview process.

Origin of the KRIC archiving project

The first theme to emerge from the data analysis of the interviews was in regard to the origins of the KRIC Archiving Project. Interviewees identified the Project as arising from the need to organise and preserve the personal collection of various materials belonging to an Indigenous community leader, who had initiated and lead many local and regional activities and organisations. Such organisations and activities included KRIC, the Rumbalara Football Netball Club (RFNC), one of two Indigenous owned and operated football clubs in Victoria and is deeply rooted in the histories of the Yorta Yorta and the football teams of Cummeragunja Reserve in New South Wales.[52] The Academy of Sports Health and Education (ASHE) is a regional, Indigenous focused, sports health and education centre and was developed almost two decades ago by the RFNC in partnership with the University of Melbourne Department of Rural Health, Shepparton in 2004.[53]

The records from this personal collection formed the basis of the KRIC Archives. As one participant commented, in referring to the personal origins of the archival collection, '… it was really [the community leader's] own, in many ways … [their] own information …' (Interviewee 3). Several others explained how these records had been systematically accumulated by the community leader over time.

> … that's how part of it come about. Because of [the community leader] having all this information from all these different committees and things that were just in the back of [their] car … or in [their] shed that needed to be documented and, you know, filed away for future use (Interviewee 4).

> … that's kind of the start, because … someone would say, 'Oh, you need to clean your car, you know. You need to throw those papers out' and [the community leader] never would. And [they] would always collect them and pile them together and then put them in [their] [car] boot … (Interviewee 2).

The sheer volume of records resulted in community interest to organise these records and successful efforts to secure funding from various sources to archive them. This is highlighted in the following quote:

> And then, you know, we got to a point where it was just like, 'Wow, we just got too much paper! [LAUGHS] … So, we're gonna have to do something with it …' And they applied for this Koori Library Pathways Project funding, and we were able to use a little bit of that. And then somewhere, I think, along the line, we actually got funded for it … And then we got a little bit more money. And that's when we were able to get a few more people on to go through and actually build this archiving project … So, we were able to build a little team, purely for this cause … (Interviewee 2).

In my own experience, identifying the origin of the Archives was key to realising the complex interconnections between the documents and the community development work of [the

community leader]. It was one of the first things that I learnt as part of the Archiving Project team, and it gave me a better comprehension of the sorting and filing process; I better understood why a document was organised within a specific volume and series.

Meaning and importance of the KRIC archives

The need to preserve the rich source of information and knowledge accumulating in the community leader's personal collection was reinforced once work began on the Archiving Project. The tasks of sorting and reading documents not only highlighted the importance of making the material accessible but also presented the archive workers an opportunity to learn from the past and reaffirm their heritage and identity. For example, in response to the question, 'In what ways are the KRIC Archives meaningful to you?', one team member responded,

> … radical, firstly because it was that paper trail … a historical perspective on the contribution we're making to, not only Shepparton, but Victoria and to the nation. And that alone is hugely important because that's a new approach to what we do. Keeping the documents, I mean the paper trail, it's totally new … (Interviewee 1).

In this participant's view, the Archives, '… gives a really good perspective of the Indigenous philosophy around how everything is related to everything else …' (Interviewee 1). The connections between individual, family, community and their intersection across place and time were encapsulated for them within the KRIC Archives. The importance of the records extended beyond physical symbolism, by maintaining the spiritual principles of connectedness particularly how everything is interrelated,

> You have Aboriginal studies, but you don't have philosophies. The Archives actually has that and it's all in paper form and it is set up in ways where, if you're Indig [sic], you can see how they connect, one to the other (Interviewee 1).

In my experience, the spiritual symbolism of the Archives was particularly remarkable. The interconnections between archival material; community activities, organisations, groups and programs; and their narrative as a collective were indicative of 'one-ness'. It embodied the ongoing interrelatedness between land and people, living and non-living, and the past and the present, and it enabled me to appreciate how I am a part of that as an Indigenous person.

Memories and significance of the KRIC Archives

The memories of working in the KRIC Archives recalled by the interviewees were positive. For example, one participant explained how history was reclaimed through joyful discoveries in the Archives, '… we had these really beautiful kind of moments through it …' (Interviewee 2). They also valued the significance of such discoveries 'it was those little precious moments with people as they were discovering what we were all learning' (Interviewee 2). Similarly, for another interviewee, the legacy was recognised when processing audio material,

> … a lot of the people [recorded] on the CDs would now be Elders because they were mostly music or interviews done of young people by young people at the time and those young people would have families now … (Interviewee 1).

The social impact of the KRIC Archives for interviewees accords with the findings of Caswell and colleagues.[54] Their study of the impacts of community-driven archives on the people and communities they serve in California demonstrates how the significance of discovering family, friends and neighbours in archival materials fosters and strengthens connection to

community.[55] This impact also encouraged a level of pride amongst the interviewees towards the history and activity of the local Indigenous community, 'it's a very progressive community, the Yorta Yorta one is, the fastest growing and most politically astute community, not only in Victoria, but all in Australia' (Interviewee 1). The Archives maintained and preserved the narratives, diligence and contributions of community and its Elders benefitting future generations,

> … it's good to know what you've been doing … if someone like yourself wants to do a history of … Aboriginal community in Shepparton, well it's good to see those different ventures (Interviewee 3).

This passing on of knowledge through the Archives was seen as significant in safeguarding against loss of community history held orally by community knowledge holders '… an Elder who has all these wonderful stories they keep to themselves and when they die, they're lost …' (Interviewee 4). I, myself, recall a specific moment when the Archiving Project was attempting to identify individuals from an old black and white photo of a local football team. We asked aunties and uncles, most of whom had just dropped into the White House, if they could help identify the individuals in the photo. In this way, we were able to identify many of the past players and rekindle community memories and history in the process.

For participants, the Archives were 'a little goldmine' (Interviewee 2), and working on the Project was 'a stroke of luck …' (Interviewee 3). This accords with my own impression of the Archives as a unique repository of knowledge, and hence, the inspiration behind this research. Recognition of the exceptional nature of the Archives was further evident amongst the interviewees by their use of terms such as 'standalone' (Interviewee 1), 'pushing the way' (Interviewee 2) and 'breaking new ground' (Interviewee 4).

Challenges with the KRIC archiving project

Challenges regarding the short- and long-term sustainability of the Archives were a concern for the participants. As one explained, weekly team meetings provided ongoing evaluation of the indexing system,

> … once a week or once every two weeks we would go through the system and [the coordinator] would get everyone to talk about whether it was working, or not working or if they were having problems with it. And I think that's how we ironed it out … (Interviewee 1).

The absence of a data management framework, combined with the vastness of the work and lack of knowledge about the content of the Archives, however, required trusting those who worked on the KRIC Archives to engage with the material in an appropriate manner. As a result, the task of refining the indexing system became 'too complex in the end' (Interviewee 2).

During the archiving process, several factors were identified as necessary for the sustainability and development of the Archives,

> … we said that it was really important for people to show proof of ID when they want[ed] to access the Archives. The other thing we needed to get was a reading room (Interviewee 1).

A reading room for users and proof of their identity were essential not only for the ease of community access but also for the overall security of the archival material. Participants also found it a challenge to simultaneously protect the materials and make them accessible to the community without having specialised skills.

I think in the first instance, yes, we wanted it to be accessible to community, but I think we were trying to do other things first. So, one, we had to protect the document and then two, we had to kind of make it accessible, even just to ourselves … And I don't think we quite had the skill set amongst ourselves to manage how … community could utilise it (Interviewee 2).

Notably, members of the KRIC Archiving Project utilised training opportunities from mainstream institutions to advance the Archives' protocols and procedures. Workshops through the National Library, the National Film and Sound Archive, the National Archives and Public Records of Victoria 'trained us into how all of those collection agencies do their Archives …' and '… we met up with other collection agencies all around Australia' (Interviewee 1). As such, interviewees emphasised the difficulty of managing access and security of the Archives, which, on occasion, was underappreciated by other team members and staff who had not undertaken the training workshops. Interviewee 1 explained that '… with the Archives we had a process, so that was something that we'd learnt at the workshops in Canberra …' and

… even though we did great work, it was really difficult for everyone else to appreciate how hard it was to put it together and to follow those security measures. Because during that time a couple of documents out went missing, but we also relocated [the Archives] like three or four times (Interviewee 1).

Interviewee 4 added,

… have a little bit of … some guidelines about … accessing that information and what you can do with it and what you can't do with it, so people can access it, but it's not open access where it can be used for unscrupulous things … (Interviewee 4).

It was also important to participants to have the collection digitised, '… you've still got an opportunity to possibly digitise it …' (Interviewee 3). Digitised records prevented any further deterioration to the Archives and eased access by making copies available electronically.[56]

The variety of archival material and lack of specialised skills meant that the KRIC Archiving Project was limited to coding and cataloguing certain data whilst continuing to adapt existing archiving protocols. This was required as the indexing system had not yet been developed to include all the archival materials. The Project was also constrained by funding and the costs associated with access to appropriate equipment and implementing certain processes. As participants stated '… we didn't have the money to keep going …' (Interviewee 1) and,

… we're talking about keeping things, you know, with acid paper, and all that kind of stuff. We never ever got to that point, but we were talking about digital, but we don't quite have the programs that we do today … it'd be different to do it nowadays, but we were just learning (Interviewee 2).

These findings regarding access to resources, limited funding and issues with developing archival protocols echo those of Zavala and colleagues who observed similar challenges and concern with the long- and short-term sustainability of community archives in Southern California.[57]

Use of the KRIC archiving project colour coding system

According to the interviewees, KRIC developed its own archiving protocols and guidelines through the support of the GVRL. Descriptions of the archival systems included the

categorising of material according to local institutions; type of activity; dates; and the use of plastic pockets, coloured folders and dots. As one interviewee recalled,

> I know we went by year, and I know we categorised by organisation … that's how [Name of Manager] started to see that map because we knew what organisations we were dealing with and what organisations [community leader] had been working across and then … We broke it down by the year. And … then by the date of the document, if it had a date. And all the documents that were, didn't have a date. So, date unknown, kind of, were at the front … I think we tried to kind of file it like that … We had colour, so we colour coded by folder. The folders were the colours. So, because I remember the [football] Club being orange, I'm pretty sure and then ATSIC, I think was blue and yeah. So, I'm pretty sure we had kind of that. I can't remember what the dots were for, I know, I know we put the dots on the plastic slips … And they were to do something, and I can't quite remember what they were … (Interviewee 2).

The development of a mud map by the Archiving Project Coordinator outlined the interconnection between community organisations, and community initiatives assisted Archiving members in refining the sorting and filing process. Following this, a colour coding system was incorporated, although it was a less significant component of the archival system. As one interviewee recalled, 'colour coding came much later. I think, just before we had the significance assessment done' (Interviewee 1). Another stated, 'I can't remember, I just remember that there was a colour coding system' (Interviewee 2). Similarly, in my own experience, I can recall aspects of a colour coding system, however, I cannot remember having ever used the system.

Perceived community significance of the KRIC Archives

Community interest in the Archives was apparent, particularly in the documentation of organisational activity and community history, which was an important resource both internally to KRIC staff and externally to community and universities. As Interviewee 1 explained, 'it was community who walked in off the street and asked if they could use stuff. It was University students ringing up and saying can they access stuff'. However, it was later identified that stricter guidelines were required to make the Archives accessible in a culturally safe manner to community. Another interviewee commented,

> you know, there's privacy, confidentiality, there's things that you know …, you want to protect but at the same time you want to make it accessible …, that set balance … that's why you need those guidelines (Interviewee 3).

Understanding ID-GOV

The KRIC Archives were recognised as determining '… the rules and frameworks around how data is managed and looked after' (Interviewee 2). Whilst not all participants had a prior understanding of ID-GOV, once I explained the concept to them using a standardised definition, they immediately related ID-GOV to the KRIC Archives.[58] For example, one commented, 'that is the KRIC Archives all over, it does all of that stuff' (Interviewee 1). Interestingly, interviewees also expressed an understanding of ID-SOV when discussing the community's ownership and control of the KRIC archival material. The Archives were seen as containing material, which went well beyond quantitative data. They also included text which could be analysed to provide evidence and build history,

you could get all that kind of stuff that text, kind of discourse via the documents, they're creating, you know, about themselves. And that becomes evidence of their legacy or their organisational legacy, you know, what a history, build their history, a whole heap of things. And so yeah, for me, I think, they own it, it's their archive. So, it's community owned already. It's not a database that the government owns, and we have to get permission to access (Interviewee 2).

A common concern for the interviewees was community decision-making and guidance regarding the use of data to ensure that it was for the benefit of all and not just individual researchers,

… communities being able to guide you in the best way that that data should be used for the benefit of all … At the moment, it's very one-sided, you know, and only the researcher really benefits, and the community just gets left … (Interviewee 2).

… a lot of non-indigenous researchers go in, collect the information and there's no, in the past, no real acknowledgement of ownership. The ownership becomes the University and not the community (Interviewee 4).

Perceptions of KRIC as an expression of self-determination and/or decolonisation

When discussing how non-Indigenous volunteers visited the KRIC office during their un-rostered time or days off, Interviewee 1 stated, '… they'd say, "but I just like it here. I just want to come in and have a cuppa" or you know come in and say hello …'. Interviewee 3 reiterated this sentiment, '… KRIC, was very friendly …'. Their experience of working in the KRIC Archiving Project and the KRIC office in general accords with my own memory of KRIC as a workplace unlike any other I had experienced before. It seamlessly integrated both Indigenous and mainstream practices in a way that was comfortable for all who worked or visited there. Others described it as a community space and '… kind of this little community hub and support …' (Interviewee 2). KRIC was a place where,

… Community could pop in make a cuppa, we'd all make, share our lunch, throw in and buy food and if anyone walked in off the street, they were welcome to have a feed … (Interviewee 4).

Additionally, several interviewees found the working culture at KRIC to be a 'freer atmosphere' compared to their experiences of working in the more formal settings of mainstream and other Indigenous organisations. As a result, they valued KRIC as an ideal work environment. For example, one explained,

… as a work environment, for me it was perfect cause it meant that I could work at whatever speed I wanted to and pick the times that I would work as well …. You've got no one looking over your shoulder, and you've got no one watching the clock to make sure that you're meeting milestones … And you've pretty much got a lot of freedom to do the work when you think it's the best time to go and do it (Interviewee 1).

Here, the flexibility of Indigenous organisations juxtaposed the rigidity of mainstream government and corporate structures. KRIC was able to meld Indigenous knowledge systems and practices with Western institutional frameworks and understandings. As Interviewee 1 highlighted, '… you've got two ends of the one world there, working in the one space'.

The KRIC Archives were also seen as a testament to the self-determination of the Yorta Yorta people. For example,

… community here is not, they're not passive, they're not passive to their own disadvantage, they *have* been doing things, and that is evidence of that, that they have been active in this space. And that they have achieved a lot, you know, via their activity and leadership and hard work and whatever. And that's, as a collection, that's what it tells you, you know … If you join up all the Archives of all organizations here, you could just imagine what you've got. It's a massive amount of activity that this community is doing for themselves, you know, they're not just sitting there going, 'Oh, here, I want a handout', they're actually helping themselves (Interviewee 2).

… it's a reflection of their communities and you, and your own sense of looking after yourselves. You cannot … rely on other people to do it. So, it's best to do it yourself … (Interviewee 3).

it's history, it's past history, it's … documents. You know, a lot of work had been done in the eighties, a lot of good work … A lot of things documented about where we're at in the eighties, what our issues were and what we were trying to do to overcome some of those issues. So, it's all there in the Archives (Interviewee 4).

Analysis of the KRIC archiving project's policies and practices

The KRIC Archiving Project team developed a number of policy and procedure documents, which incorporated data management standards for identifying and organising materials within the KRIC Archives.[59] The documents informed how archival material was being managed by community. One example of adapting Western archival standards was the Project's use of the Public Records Office of Victoria's publication on the storage of public records in agencies.[60] This utilisation of technical information regarding the storage, maintenance and disposal of data illustrates KRIC's data governance model.[61] The model had distinct sections into which archival material was sorted and demonstrates the community's plans for continued maintenance of the collection.

Two distinct filing systems operated under the indexing guidelines as KRIC's 'current active material' required a filing process separate from the archiving system. Current material would eventually circulate into the archiving system after 2 years. Once material had been sorted, indexed and filed, it was then stored in allocated rooms within the KRIC office or the ACSPPU office. Certain rooms housed specific series. For example, general material was stored in 'Room 1' at the ACSPPU, whilst books and publications were stored in 'Room 2' at the KRIC office, and private and confidential material housed in 'Room 3' at the KRIC office. Such efforts are evidence of the community's attempts to adapt mainstream archival standards to suit the framework of their circumstances and work within the limits of their organisational environment. Whilst initially incorporating only two series (i.e., 'General' and 'Books & Publications'), the index was eventually expanded to eight series and spread across six rooms due to the large volume of archival material.

Further to the indexing and storage of archival material was a colour coding system. The system worked in parallel with the other indexing standards. Coloured paper dot stickers were attached to shelf lists for easier identification of archival material by the KRIC staff permitted to access the Archives at that time. The colour coding system specifically incorporated the epistemology and ontology of Indigenous culture. This was evident in the complex way

colour was used to connect each category. For example, an outer green ring and yellow centre referred to the 'Missions/Reserves' category, whereas an outer yellow ring and green centre represented 'Song and Dance'. However, both green and yellow were also connected to other colours and other classifications within the system. For instance, an outer yellow ring and blue centre referred to the 'Arts & Material Cultures' set, whilst an outer green ring and pink centre belonged to the 'Flora/Fauna' category.

Findings and discussion

The KRIC Archiving Project clearly challenged the exclusionary framework of Western archival science for Indigenous communities. This was achieved by centring the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the framework of KRIC's archival practices. By recognising the continuation of social injustice arising from structural forces which marginalise and overlook such voices, the Archiving Project was able to temporarily ameliorate the impacts of Western institutional structures and policies in the operation and management of the KRIC Archives. Achieving such outcomes was possible through the connection and collaboration of the Indigenous and mainstream domains.

The KRIC office functioned as a cultural interface between the Indigenous and mainstream community, in which it provided a socially inclusive and comfortable space connected to and supportive of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.[62] By establishing common ground, KRIC advocated the needs of Indigenous people through its community development work whilst satisfying funding requirements of government policies for Aboriginal affairs. Furthermore, community leadership and innovation allowed KRIC to manage, decipher and transform relationships between the Indigenous community and mainstream agencies, with limited resources and support that such a task required.[63] In bridging both worlds, KRIC fostered a unique organisational culture.

The accommodating and culturally attuned organisational culture at KRIC expressed the characteristics of an Indigenous work ethic. This contrasts with the neo-liberal capitalist work ethic driven by rational calculation, efficiency and profit-making, which obligates employees to perform, manage and complete tasks within strict timeframes.[64] Whilst KRIC staff were still required to meet performance standards and management outcomes through their successful completion of tasks, such outcomes were achieved through a more relaxed and inclusive approach. It is important to note that whilst examining this Indigenous work ethic was beyond the scope of this research, it did—along with collaborative practices—contribute to successful outcomes. This explicit expression of Indigenous knowledge and culture was at the core of KRIC's organisational structure and purpose. It was also a milieu of community agency, self-determination, innovation and cultural affirmation that incubated the KRIC Archives. The Archives, as a result, did not emerge as a 'troubling space'[65] that many mainstream information repositories, such as colonial archives, can present for Indigenous people.

KRIC's organisational culture and the work performed in that space reiterated a need to find a sustainable solution to accruing data. The procurement of small grants assisted with establishing an archiving project to deal with the accumulating material. Through the funding grants, KRIC was able to employ a small, dedicated team to focus on the sorting and filing of the collection. Noticeably, the Archives developed and provided a much-needed physical record that enabled the continued efforts of the Indigenous community to preserve, manage, control and make decisions regarding their history. As a community archive, KRIC's close affinity with its records meant it could accommodate the voices and visions of community to evolve archival thinking.[66] It was also a medium through which community could create new ways of connecting across time and space.

The KRIC Archives empower community narratives and histories and, thus, convey the living memory, epistemology and ontology of Yorta Yorta Nations people.[67] Therefore, rather than being something inherently Western, the KRIC Archives privilege Indigenous oral traditions transmitted through records.[68] Here, the continuum of Yorta Yorta history and knowledge, which has passed from one generation to the next for millennia, is embodied in the KRIC Archives.

The relationships that exist between Indigenous people and records, and the complexities that surround those connections impact the individuals whose histories the KRIC Archives document. Additionally, the individuals, communities and organisations who share in the vision of the Archives enriched and broadened their recordkeeping and archival practices.[69] This is evident in the various narratives captured within the archival material that reveal the extensive and dynamic activity by community to challenge colonial discourse. In this context, the KRIC Archiving Project is evidence of the Yorta Yorta Nations' self-determination and decolonisation of public collecting institutions. By adapting the typical Western archival frameworks to suit the unique circumstances of the Archives and challenging deeper social justice issues, KRIC created an appropriate archival framework for the Aboriginal and other First Nations community. Through the coding and cataloguing process, the KRIC Archiving Project formed a culture of inquiry to question, learn, understand and transform the standard Western archival practices and protocols. The collective ownership, control, creation, access and preservation of Indigenous data demonstrate KRIC's approach to data governance.[70] KRIC realised ID-GOV by integrating Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being in the control and management of their archival data practices.[71] As such, the community's agency, self-determination and shared vision drove KRIC's data governance model.

Although the KRIC Archiving Project had developed a functional Indigenous-led data governance model, the lack of ongoing funding meant that this emergence of ID-GOV could not be sustained. Community archives have precarious futures, in which they operate predominantly through their ability to access and retain resources such as 'financial, human, physical, skills and expertise'.[72] The short-term and long-term sustainability of the KRIC Archives relied on similar resources. Its longevity was particularly vulnerable to a precarious funding situation, lack of knowledge and skills in archival science and the vastness of materials which eventually saw the Archives and the activities of the Archiving Project cease. This is not to say that the KRIC Archives no longer exist, but rather, they lie dormant awaiting revival and the activation of the Significance Assessment recommendations.

Conclusion

ICAs are a testament to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interest in controlling, preserving, collecting and accessing Indigenous knowledge and history. In this regard, the KRIC Archives were and continue to be a significant and very valuable resource, particularly as the Archives and the Archiving Project reflect the cultural heritage, identity and pride of the Yorta Yorta community; document the efforts of community to maintain their data rights and rights of self-determination across changing times; and represent a counter narrative to Western archival practices. However, the range of materials in the Archives, its precarious funding situation and the lack of archival knowledge and skills needed to maintain the Archives over time have resulted in it becoming dormant. This research concludes, therefore, that the KRIC Archives challenged the rigidity of institutional frameworks through what was a momentary realisation of ID-GOV.

The research findings demonstrate that funding and training opportunities are essential for the long-term sustainability of Indigenous archives and ID-GOV. Also, it is necessary that the decolonisation of archival institutional systems and processes employs more inclusive

and collaborative practices for and with marginalised communities. Given that this research is a single case study, an important question that arises is whether and how other ICAs utilise similar data governance models that challenge Western archival practices. Therefore, further research investigating data governance models developed by ICAs elsewhere is needed to demonstrate the direct effects on their respective communities and their significance and value to them.

Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Data availability statement
The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to their containing information that could compromise the privacy of research participants. Non-digital data supporting this study are curated at the Kaiela Institute Inc, Shepparton, Victoria.

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