

EPONA

First Nations Cultural Governance, Consultation & Collaboration Framework

Developed through Initial Consultation and Prepared for Ongoing Collaboration with the Walcha First Nations Community

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In collaboration with
Dunghutti 1st Nations Community of Walcha

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1. Purpose of this Framework

This document has been developed to guide respectful collaboration, consultation and cultural governance between the EPONA production team and the First Nations community connected to Walcha Country.

This framework has been developed through collaboration between the production team, First Nations Co Writer and Cultural Research Collaborator Shannon Green, and initial engagement with members of the Walcha First Nations community. It records the current proposed governance and consultation approach and will continue to be reviewed, refined and endorsed through ongoing community consultation.

The purpose of this framework is to:

- ensure First Nations voices, perspectives and cultural authority are meaningfully embedded throughout the development and production process
- establish clear and transparent consultation and governance processes
- support culturally respectful research, storytelling and production practices
- ensure cultural knowledge, histories and lived experience are approached with care, integrity and appropriate consultation
- create a culturally safe and collaborative working environment for First Nations collaborators, representatives and community participants
- ensure cultural consultation and participation are appropriately recognised, documented and compensated
- support long term relationship building, cultural learning and community engagement outcomes beyond the completion of the film

This framework is intended to remain a living document that evolves through ongoing consultation, collaborative feedback and cultural guidance throughout the life of the project.

The framework does not assume that one individual can speak for all First Nations people connected to Walcha Country. The production will seek broad community participation, recognise differing perspectives and confirm the appropriate cultural authority for particular histories, knowledge, locations and cultural matters as they arise.

The production acknowledges that cultural governance is not a one off consultation process, but an ongoing relationship grounded in:

- Listening
- Respect
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- cultural integrity

The EPONA production team recognises the importance of protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and respecting the cultural authority of First Nations people connected to Walcha Country throughout all stages of development, production and community engagement.

This framework has been informed by:

- Screen Australia's Pathways & Protocols framework
- Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property principles
- ongoing consultation with First Nations collaborators and community representatives
- place based storytelling practices
- respectful on Country engagement methodologies

Project Overview

EPONA is a feature film that combines mythology, history and contemporary rural Australia through a deeply human story connected to identity, loss, healing and belonging.

The project includes themes connected to:

- Walcha Country
- rural Australian history
- connection to land and spirit
- intergenerational trauma and healing
- cultural truth telling
- mythology and spirituality
- the importance of community and cultural identity

Cultural consultation is embedded across the full project lifecycle and will inform story development, creative decision making, production planning, filming practices, post production review and community engagement.

The production acknowledges that aspects of the story intersect with First Nations history, culture and Country, and therefore requires meaningful and ongoing collaboration with First Nations people connected to the Walcha region.

2. Cultural Governance Principles

The EPONA production team commits to the following principles throughout development, production, post production and community engagement.

Respect for Cultural Authority

The production recognises that cultural authority remains with the relevant First Nations people and community representatives connected to Walcha Country.

The production commits to listening to, respecting and appropriately consulting with cultural representatives regarding culturally sensitive material, representation, protocol and engagement processes.

Ongoing Consultation

Consultation will begin during development and continue throughout:

- script development
- Research
- pre production
- Filming
- post production
- community engagement activities where appropriate

The production acknowledges that consultation is an ongoing and evolving process that requires continued communication, listening and responsiveness.

Transparency and Accountability

The production commits to maintaining:

- open communication processes
- documented consultation pathways
- respectful collaborative discussion
- clear governance structures
- accountability throughout decision making and engagement processes

Cultural Safety

The production is committed to fostering a culturally safe, respectful and inclusive working environment for First Nations collaborators, cast, crew and community participants.

Respect for Country

The production acknowledges the importance of Country and commits to following appropriate on Country cultural protocols throughout development, filming and community engagement activities.

Recognition of Cultural Knowledge

The production recognises that cultural knowledge, consultation and lived experience are valuable professional contributions that must be appropriately acknowledged and compensated.

Community Benefit and Legacy

The production seeks to support meaningful long term outcomes through:

- cultural documentation and preservation
- education and cultural learning
- relationship building
- community participation
- respectful truth telling
- regional engagement
- knowledge sharing

3. Cultural Governance Structure

The EPONA production is committed to maintaining a collaborative and transparent cultural governance structure that supports ongoing consultation, respectful engagement and clear communication throughout all stages of development and production.

The production recognises the importance of ensuring that cultural consultation and governance processes are embedded operationally within the project, rather than existing separately from production decision making and filmmaking processes.

The governance structure distinguishes between production authority, creative responsibility and cultural authority. VAM Paddock Productions retains responsibility for production management and final film decisions, while relevant First Nations people retain cultural authority over the cultural knowledge, histories, language, locations and protocols they contribute or are authorised to speak for.

The following roles and structures are intended to support ongoing consultation, accountability and collaboration throughout the life of the project.

Lead Production Team

Leila McDougall

Role: Writer, Director, Lead Producer and Cultural Governance Implementation Lead

Responsibilities

- Responsibility for implementing the Cultural Governance Framework in collaboration with First Nations cultural leadership and participating community representatives
- ensuring consultation occurs throughout all stages of development and production
- maintaining ongoing communication with collaborators and community representatives
- ensuring cultural consultation and engagement processes are appropriately documented and budgeted
- ensuring agreed cultural protocols are embedded throughout production operations
- maintaining records of consultation sessions, feedback and agreed actions
- ensuring governance processes remain active throughout development, production and community engagement
- ensuring that cultural matters requiring community authority are referred to the appropriate First Nations representatives rather than determined solely by the production team

David Gregory OAM

Role: Strategic Governance and Communications Oversight

Responsibilities

- supporting governance and communication processes throughout development and production where required
- assisting continuity of communication between the production team and community representatives during periods where production demands may limit availability of key creatives
- supporting governance accountability and documentation processes
- assisting stakeholder communication and relationship management where appropriate
- supporting the implementation of collaborative and culturally respectful engagement processes throughout the project

Chris Odgers

Role: Producer, First Assistant Director and Cultural Production Liaison

Responsibilities

- assisting communication between the production team and First Nations community representatives throughout development and production
- supporting implementation of the Cultural Governance Framework during production operations
- ensuring production scheduling and logistical planning appropriately accommodate cultural protocols, consultation requirements, community obligations and on Country considerations
- working collaboratively with cultural representatives to ensure culturally significant dates, practices and community priorities are respectfully incorporated into production planning where appropriate

- supporting cast and crew adherence to agreed cultural expectations and production protocols
- acting as an operational point of contact between production departments and cultural representatives during filming where required

First Nations Creative and Cultural Leadership

Shannon Green

Role: First Nations Co Writer, Cultural Creative Lead and Community Liaison

Responsibilities

- co development of script, themes and cultural storytelling elements
- participation in historical and cultural research processes
- guidance regarding authenticity, representation and cultural integrity
- participation in story development workshops and consultation sessions
- assisting communication and collaboration with community representatives where appropriate
- review of cultural references, themes and representation throughout development
- contributing to cultural education and awareness processes developed for cast and crew
- helping identify which matters require broader community consultation or specialist cultural authority
- supporting the integration of consultation outcomes into screenplay development
- participating in cultural review of relevant screenplay drafts and creative materials
- advising the production when a matter is outside her own cultural authority or knowledge and requires consultation with another person or group

The production also intends to explore opportunities for Shannon Green to undertake a Director's Attachment role throughout development and production in support of long term First Nations creative pathways and leadership development within the screen industry.

First Nations Cultural Governance Representative

Role: Lead Cultural Governance Representative and Community Liaison

Status

To be identified and confirmed collaboratively through ongoing consultation with the Walcha First Nations community. Until the appointment is confirmed, cultural governance matters will be coordinated through Shannon Green and the production team, with advice sought from relevant community representatives according to the subject matter.

Purpose of the Role

The production recognises the importance of maintaining clear, respectful and ongoing communication between the production team and the broader Walcha First Nations community.

Rather than relying solely on individual consultation processes, this role is intended to support broader community engagement, collaborative discussion and culturally appropriate communication pathways throughout the life of the project.

Responsibilities may include

- assisting communication between the production team and community representatives
- providing guidance regarding culturally appropriate consultation pathways and on Country cultural protocols
- supporting coordination of consultation sessions and community discussions
- assisting identification of cultural sensitivities, concerns or community feedback where appropriate
- supporting cultural accountability throughout development and production processes
- supporting on Country communication and consultation processes during filming where required
- supporting the identification of appropriate cultural authority for specific stories, histories, locations, language and cultural knowledge

This role will be determined collaboratively with the Walcha First Nations community following ongoing consultation sessions.

Walcha First Nations Community Advisory Group

The production intends to establish an ongoing Walcha First Nations Community Advisory Group consisting of:

- Shannon Green
- the appointed First Nations Cultural Governance Representative
- additional First Nations community representatives connected to Walcha Country who choose to participate and who hold relevant community, historical, cultural or lived experience knowledge

Membership will be voluntary in the sense that participation is chosen by community members, but all agreed professional consultation, advisory, research and workshop contributions will be appropriately compensated from the approved project budget.

The production acknowledges that different community members may wish to participate at varying levels throughout the life of the project and is committed to supporting an inclusive consultation environment that allows for broad community involvement where appropriate.

Participation in the Advisory Group does not require all members to agree on every matter. Differing views will be respectfully documented and, where necessary, further consultation will be undertaken before a cultural or creative decision is finalised.

The Advisory Group may support:

- script review and cultural feedback
- guidance regarding cultural protocols, local customs and cultural sensitivities
- review of historical and cultural representation
- discussion regarding culturally sensitive material, locations and themes
- support regarding community engagement and relationship building
- review of cultural education materials developed for cast and crew
- ongoing consultation feedback throughout development and production

The production is committed to group consultation processes wherever possible to ensure the project reflects broad and respectful engagement with community perspectives rather than relying solely on individual consultation pathways.

Community representatives participating within the Advisory Group will be identified and confirmed through ongoing consultation with the Walcha First Nations community.

Broader Community and Stakeholder Collaboration

The EPONA production recognises the importance of collaboration beyond the immediate production team and intends to work respectfully with a broad range of local stakeholders connected to the Walcha region.

This may include collaboration and consultation with:

- First Nations community members
- local councils
- National Parks representatives
- regional historians and researchers
- local landholders and community members
- environmental and cultural heritage stakeholders
- regional organisations connected to the Walcha area

The production aims to create a collaborative regional project environment grounded in:

- Respect
- Inclusion
- Transparency
- cultural integrity
- shared storytelling
- community participation
- collaborative learning and engagement processes

The production acknowledges that meaningful collaboration and respectful relationship building are ongoing processes that require listening, responsiveness and continued engagement throughout the life of the project.

5. Consultation Process

The EPONA production commits to maintaining ongoing consultation throughout the life of the project.

The production recognises that meaningful consultation is an evolving and collaborative process that requires ongoing communication, listening, responsiveness and cultural respect throughout all stages of development and production.

Consultation processes are intended to support:

- respectful collaboration
- cultural guidance
- shared discussion and feedback
- identification of cultural sensitivities and considerations
- culturally informed storytelling and production practices
- ongoing relationship building between the production team and the Walcha First Nations community

CONSULTATION COMMENCED

Chief Executive Officer of the Dunghutti Elders Council (Walcha), and Cindy Bloomfield, a respected First Nations community leader connected to Walcha Country.

These early discussions introduced the vision for *EPONA*, explored the proposed development methodology and confirmed a shared commitment to developing the project through ongoing collaboration with the Walcha First Nations community.

Initial consultation has focused on:

- introducing the story, themes and creative vision for *EPONA*
- discussing opportunities for meaningful First Nations collaboration throughout development
- identifying culturally appropriate consultation pathways and governance structures
- discussing historical, cultural and research priorities relevant to the screenplay
- exploring opportunities for community participation throughout the development process
- establishing a collaborative approach to the ongoing refinement of this Cultural Governance & Collaboration Framework

Shannon Green and Cindy Bloomfield have indicated their support for progressing the project through the development phase and have agreed to assist in facilitating broader community engagement, cultural research and consultation with members of the Walcha First Nations community.

A letter of support acknowledging the community's participation in the development phase accompanies this application.

The production acknowledges that these initial discussions represent the commencement of an ongoing collaborative relationship. Broader consultation, cultural governance arrangements and community participation will continue to evolve throughout the funded development period, ensuring that this framework, the screenplay and associated research continue to be informed by community guidance.

Ongoing Consultation

Consultation during the funded development period will build upon the relationships already established with Shannon Green, Cindy Bloomfield and participating members of the Walcha First Nations community. The development program has been specifically designed to allow sufficient time for consultation, cultural research, screenplay refinement and governance development to occur collaboratively rather than as isolated consultation activities.

Consultation will continue throughout development and production through:

- consultation sessions and community discussions
- script workshops and story development discussions
- research collaboration processes
- location consultation and on Country discussions
- cultural review of script drafts and creative materials where appropriate
- production planning discussions
- cultural education and induction planning
- post production consultation where appropriate

The production acknowledges that consultation feedback may continue to shape and influence aspects of:

- story development
- Representation
- cultural protocols
- production methodology
- research direction
- community engagement approaches

The production is committed to remaining responsive to consultation feedback throughout the life of the project.

The funded development period will not only strengthen the screenplay but will also provide the time and resources required to collaboratively refine the project's cultural governance, production protocols and consultation documentation. This recognises that meaningful cultural governance is an evolving process that develops alongside the creative work and is strengthened through ongoing relationships with the Walcha First Nations community.

Consultation Documentation and Record Keeping

The production will maintain respectful and transparent records of consultation throughout development.

Consultation records will distinguish between:

- information approved for general project use
- information provided for contextual understanding only
- confidential information
- culturally restricted knowledge
- matters requiring further consultation before creative use
- agreed actions arising from consultation
- The production recognises that documenting consultation does not in itself constitute permission to use cultural knowledge, oral histories, language, imagery or community experiences within the screenplay or completed film.

Where appropriate, consultation summaries will be shared with participating representatives to confirm:

- consultation outcomes
- agreed actions
- cultural guidance
- any restrictions regarding the use or representation of cultural knowledge

This process supports transparency, accountability and the respectful integration of consultation into the ongoing development of *EPONA*.

No consultation record will automatically constitute permission to use cultural knowledge, oral history, language, imagery or community experience within the screenplay or film.

The production acknowledges that some discussions, cultural knowledge or community feedback may be considered private, sensitive or confidential and commits to respecting any cultural or community guidance regarding documentation and information sharing.

Where appropriate, consultation summaries will be returned to participating representatives for review so that agreed actions, cultural guidance and any restrictions can be confirmed.

CONSULTATION REVIEW AND CREATIVE RESPONSE

Consultation will be connected directly to the creative development process through a documented review and response pathway.

Where cultural feedback relates to the screenplay or other creative materials, the production will:

- record the issue or recommendation
- identify the relevant cultural authority

- discuss the matter with the appropriate writer, producer or creative collaborator
- determine the required creative response
- document any agreed change, further consultation requirement or reason for retaining an element
- return the revised material for further cultural review where appropriate

This process is intended to ensure consultation leads to meaningful creative consideration and is not limited to receiving feedback without a documented response.

Group Consultation Approach

The production is committed to group consultation processes wherever possible and acknowledges the importance of engaging broadly with community perspectives rather than relying solely on individual consultation pathways.

The production recognises that different community members may wish to participate at varying levels throughout the life of the project and aims to support inclusive opportunities for participation where appropriate.

Consultation processes are intended to create space for:

- collaborative discussion
- community feedback
- cultural guidance
- respectful listening
- relationship building
- shared learning and engagement

The production acknowledges that meaningful consultation requires ongoing trust, communication and responsiveness throughout the development and production process.

6. Research Methodology

The EPONA production intends to undertake respectful, collaborative and culturally informed research throughout all stages of development.

The production recognises that research connected to First Nations histories, cultural perspectives and Country requires ongoing consultation, cultural guidance and careful consideration throughout the research and storytelling process.

Research activities are intended to support:

- authentic and culturally respectful storytelling
- historical care and accuracy
- place based understanding of Walcha Country
- culturally informed creative development
- collaborative learning and engagement processes
- respectful exploration of themes connected to history, identity, memory and connection to land

Historical Research

Research areas may include:

- Walcha regional history
- First Nations histories connected to Walcha Country

- colonial settlement history within the region
- rural Australian stockman history
- Celtic mythology and migration history
- historical relationships between people, land and community
- historical relationships between First Nations communities and colonial settlement within the Walcha region

The production acknowledges that aspects of regional history may involve sensitive themes connected to:

- frontier conflict
- Dispossession
- Violence
- Displacement
- Loss
- intergenerational trauma experienced by First Nations communities

The production commits to approaching research connected to these histories with:

- cultural sensitivity
- historical care and accuracy
- trauma informed research practices
- respect for cultural authority
- ongoing consultation and guidance from First Nations community representatives

Cultural Research

Research may include:

- cultural storytelling traditions
- oral histories where appropriate
- local customs and cultural practices
- environmental and geographical understanding of Country
- language consultation where appropriate
- cultural symbolism and spiritual connection to land
- cultural perspectives connected to memory, place and storytelling
- on Country learning opportunities and community discussion processes

The production acknowledges that some cultural knowledge, histories, stories or locations may be considered:

- Private
- culturally sensitive
- Restricted
- inappropriate for public storytelling or screen representation

The production commits to respecting community guidance regarding what may or may not be included within the project.

Research into culturally sensitive material, oral histories or historical events will only occur with appropriate consultation, cultural guidance and support from relevant First Nations community representatives.

Cultural research will not proceed on the assumption that material may be used merely because it has been shared during consultation. Specific approval will be sought where cultural knowledge, language, oral history, cultural practices, identifiable experiences or sensitive locations are proposed for inclusion in the screenplay or film.

Community Based Research

Research processes may include:

- consultation sessions and community discussions
- collaborative story development discussions
- cultural review sessions
- historical research collaboration
- lived experience perspectives where appropriate
- on Country learning and engagement opportunities
- collaboration with local stakeholders, historians and cultural representatives where appropriate

The production intends for research processes to prioritise:

- respectful collaboration
- listening and shared discussion
- culturally safe engagement processes
- ongoing consultation and feedback
- appropriate acknowledgement of cultural contributions
- transparency and accountability throughout the research process

Trauma Informed Research and Storytelling Approach

The production acknowledges that aspects of historical research connected to frontier conflict, violence and community trauma may involve emotionally and culturally sensitive material.

The production is committed to approaching these histories with care, restraint and cultural guidance throughout both the research and creative development process.

The production does not intend to create graphic or literal visual reenactments of acts of massacre or violence involving First Nations people.

Where appropriate and supported through consultation, the project may instead explore aspects of historical trauma and memory through:

- Atmosphere
- Landscape
- sound design
- Symbolism
- oral storytelling
- emotional and spiritual tone
- visual implication rather than direct depiction

The production acknowledges that some histories may be more appropriately explored through suggestion, memory, Country and emotional presence rather than explicit visual representation.

All creative decisions regarding culturally sensitive historical material will be guided collaboratively through consultation with First Nations community representatives and cultural collaborators throughout development and production.

7. Cultural Knowledge Management

The EPONA production acknowledges the importance of protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and respecting cultural knowledge, cultural authority and cultural sensitivities throughout all stages of development and production.

The production recognises that cultural knowledge, oral histories, community perspectives and historical material connected to Walcha Country may involve culturally sensitive information that requires ongoing consultation, careful handling and appropriate cultural guidance.

The production commits to:

- identifying culturally sensitive, restricted or confidential material where appropriate
- seeking permission before using cultural knowledge, oral histories or historically sensitive material within the project
- maintaining confidentiality where requested by community representatives or cultural collaborators
- appropriately acknowledging cultural contributions and collaborative participation
- documenting consultation respectfully and transparently
- storing consultation records and research documentation responsibly
- respecting cultural guidance regarding the use, representation or exclusion of culturally sensitive material

Representation of Sensitive Historical Material

The production acknowledges that aspects of historical research connected to the Walcha region may involve sensitive themes relating to:

- frontier conflict
- Violence
- Dispossession
- Displacement
- Loss
- intergenerational trauma experienced by First Nations communities

Any exploration, discussion or representation of these histories within the project will occur through ongoing consultation with relevant First Nations community representatives and cultural collaborators.

The production is committed to ensuring that culturally sensitive historical material is approached with:

- Care
- Respect
- Restraint
- cultural guidance
- trauma informed storytelling practices
- historical sensitivity and accountability

The production acknowledges the importance of avoiding the sensationalisation or exploitation of historical trauma within the storytelling process.

Trauma Informed Storytelling Approach

The production does not intend to create graphic or literal visual reenactments of acts of massacre or violence involving First Nations people.

Instead, where appropriate and supported through consultation, the project may explore aspects of historical trauma, memory and cultural presence through:

- Atmosphere
- Landscape
- sound design
- Symbolism
- oral storytelling
- visual implication
- emotional and spiritual tone
- the presence and emotional resonance of Country

The production recognises that some histories may be more appropriately explored through:

- Memory
- Suggestion
- emotional presence
- oral reflection
- sound and atmosphere
- connection to Country

rather than through explicit visual depiction.

All creative decisions regarding the representation of culturally sensitive historical material will be guided collaboratively through consultation with participating First Nations community representatives and cultural collaborators throughout development and production.

The production also acknowledges that some stories, histories, locations or cultural knowledge may be considered:

- culturally restricted
- Private
- Sacred
- inappropriate for public storytelling or screen representation

The production commits to respecting community guidance regarding what may or may not be included within the project.

Cultural Documentation and Knowledge Preservation

Where appropriate and agreed upon through consultation processes, the production intends to provide participating First Nations collaborators and community representatives with copies of:

- approved research documentation
- historical findings
- consultation summaries
- cultural documentation generated through the project where appropriate

This process is intended to support:

- community record keeping
- cultural preservation
- respectful documentation practices
- future historical reference where appropriate
- ongoing collaborative engagement processes

The production acknowledges that cultural authority and rights connected to culturally sensitive knowledge, oral histories, language and community guidance remain with the relevant First Nations people and communities from whom that knowledge originates and community representatives connected to Walcha Country.

The production is committed to ensuring that all cultural documentation and research processes are approached with transparency, accountability and ongoing cultural consultation throughout the life of the project.

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE REGISTER

The production will maintain a confidential Cultural Knowledge Register recording:

- the source of cultural information
- the person or group with relevant cultural authority
- the purpose for which the information was shared
- any restrictions or confidentiality requirements
- whether permission for creative use has been granted
- required attribution or acknowledgement
- any further consultation required

Access to this register will be limited to authorised production personnel and relevant cultural representatives.

8. On Country Filming Protocols

The EPONA production is committed to ensuring that all filming activities connected to Walcha Country are conducted respectfully, collaboratively and in accordance with appropriate cultural protocols and community guidance.

The production acknowledges the importance of Country and recognises that filming on Country carries cultural responsibility, requiring ongoing consultation, respectful engagement and cultural awareness throughout all stages of production.

The production intends to work collaboratively with First Nations community representatives to ensure that on Country filming practices are approached with:

- Respect
- cultural sensitivity
- Accountability
- ongoing consultation
- clear communication
- culturally safe production practices

On Country Cultural Protocols

On Country filming protocols may include:

- Welcome to Country or other culturally appropriate acknowledgements where appropriate
- cultural inductions and awareness processes prior to filming
- guidance regarding culturally sensitive locations, stories or material
- respect for significant sites, areas and cultural considerations connected to Country
- consultation regarding filming access and location suitability where appropriate
- flexibility regarding Sorry Business, cultural obligations or community priorities
- cultural liaison support during filming where required

- clear communication pathways between the production team and community representatives throughout filming activities
- ongoing consultation regarding culturally appropriate behaviour and engagement practices while filming on Country

The production acknowledges that cultural protocols and expectations may evolve throughout consultation and commits to remaining responsive to community guidance throughout the filming process.

Cultural clearance for one location or activity will not be assumed to apply to another location, cultural matter or stage of production. Advice and permission will be sought according to the specific cultural authority and circumstances involved.

Respect for Culturally Sensitive Material and Locations

The production acknowledges that some locations, stories, histories or cultural material connected to Walcha Country may be considered:

- culturally sensitive
- Restricted
- Sacred
- Private
- inappropriate for filming or public representation

The production commits to respecting community guidance regarding:

- access to locations
- filming activities on Country
- representation of culturally sensitive material
- use of stories, histories or imagery connected to Country

No culturally sensitive locations, stories or material will be filmed, represented or included within the project without appropriate consultation, guidance and cultural approval processes where required.

The production is committed to ensuring that all on Country filming activities prioritise respectful engagement, cultural integrity and ongoing collaboration with First Nations community representatives throughout production.

9. Cast and Crew Cultural Handbook

The EPONA production intends to develop a dedicated Cultural Handbook for all cast, crew and production personnel engaged on the project.

The purpose of the handbook is to support:

- cultural awareness and understanding
- respectful engagement on Country
- culturally safe production practices
- clear communication and accountability processes
- stronger collaboration between production personnel and community representatives
- ongoing learning and respectful relationship building throughout the production process

The production recognises the importance of ensuring that all personnel working on the project understand the cultural responsibilities connected to filming on Walcha Country and

engaging with First Nations community representatives throughout development and production.

Cultural Handbook Content

The Cultural Handbook may include:

- an overview of Walcha Country and local regional history
- information regarding First Nations cultural perspectives connected to the Walcha region where appropriate
- cultural awareness guidance and respectful engagement practices
- guidance regarding culturally appropriate communication and behaviour while filming on Country
- information regarding local customs, sensitivities and cultural protocols
- cultural safety expectations for cast, crew and production personnel
- guidance regarding respectful interaction with community members and cultural representatives
- procedures for raising cultural concerns or cultural safety issues during production
- communication pathways and contact details for cultural liaison personnel where appropriate
- guidance regarding access to culturally sensitive locations, stories or material where relevant
- information regarding production expectations connected to cultural governance and respectful collaboration practices

The handbook will be developed collaboratively through consultation with First Nations community representatives and cultural collaborators where appropriate.

Cultural Induction Process

All cast, crew and production personnel will be expected to participate in a cultural induction process prior to filming activities occurring on Country.

The induction process may include:

- cultural awareness discussions
- guidance regarding on Country cultural protocols
- respectful engagement expectations
- information regarding culturally sensitive locations and considerations where appropriate
- discussion regarding the Cultural Governance Framework and production responsibilities
- opportunities for cultural learning and collaborative discussion with community representatives where appropriate

The production recognises that cultural learning is an ongoing process and intends for cultural awareness and respectful engagement practices to remain active throughout all stages of production.

Commitment to Respectful Engagement

The EPONA production is committed to fostering a production environment grounded in:

- Respect
- Listening
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- cultural integrity
- ongoing learning and awareness

The production intends for the Cultural Handbook and induction process to support a working environment where First Nations collaborators, community representatives, cast and crew feel respected, informed and culturally supported throughout the life of the project.

10. Financial Recognition and Compensation

The EPONA production recognises that cultural consultation, community participation, cultural guidance, research collaboration and knowledge sharing are valuable professional contributions that must be appropriately recognised and compensated.

The production acknowledges the time, cultural labour, lived experience, knowledge and ongoing participation contributed by First Nations collaborators, cultural representatives and community participants throughout the development and production process.

The production is committed to ensuring that consultation and cultural engagement processes are approached with:

- Fairness
- Transparency
- Accountability
- respectful communication
- appropriate financial recognition of cultural contributions

Fee structures will be confirmed before participation wherever reasonably possible and will distinguish between community consultation, cultural advisory work, research collaboration, writing, creative development, cultural liaison, cast or crew employment and the use of specific cultural material.

Cultural Consultation and Engagement Budgeting

The production intends to allocate budget provisions for:

- cultural consultation fees
- workshop participation and consultation session fees
- advisory group participation
- cultural research collaboration
- travel and accommodation costs where applicable
- cultural induction facilitation
- development of cultural education and handbook materials
- community meeting and consultation expenses
- on Country consultation and engagement activities where appropriate
- cultural liaison support during development and production where required

The production acknowledges that consultation and engagement requirements may evolve throughout development and production and commits to maintaining flexibility within planning and budgeting processes to support ongoing cultural governance and collaboration activities.

Compensation and Engagement Processes

Compensation structures and engagement arrangements will be discussed collaboratively with participating First Nations collaborators and community representatives throughout the consultation process.

The production is committed to ensuring that:

- contributors clearly understand the scope of their participation and engagement
- consultation expectations and responsibilities are communicated transparently
- engagement arrangements are approached respectfully and professionally
- financial recognition processes are documented appropriately
- participation does not rely upon unpaid cultural labour or community goodwill alone

The production acknowledges that cultural consultation and community participation do not constitute voluntary advisory processes, but form an important and professionally recognised part of the project's governance, research and creative development methodology.

Respect for Cultural Contributions and Intellectual Property

The production acknowledges the importance of protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) throughout all consultation, research and engagement processes.

- The production is committed to ensuring that:
cultural contributions are appropriately acknowledged
- consultation processes are documented respectfully
- cultural knowledge is handled responsibly and in accordance with community guidance
- engagement and compensation arrangements are approached transparently and ethically throughout the life of the project

Where culturally specific material, oral history, language, imagery or other Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property is proposed for inclusion, the production will discuss the appropriate permission, attribution, credit, payment, restrictions and future use arrangements with the relevant cultural authority.

Participation within consultation and governance processes does not create ownership of the completed film or ongoing financial participation in future revenues generated by the project unless separately agreed through formal written contractual arrangements.

EPONA remains an original feature film project owned and produced by VAM Paddock Productions Pty Ltd.

11. Community Participation and Legacy

The EPONA production aims to support meaningful long term cultural, creative and community outcomes beyond the completion of the film itself.

The production recognises that respectful consultation, collaboration and community engagement have the potential to create lasting relationships, cultural learning opportunities and broader regional participation throughout the life of the project.

The production intends for the project to contribute positively to:

- cultural documentation and preservation where appropriate
- increased cultural awareness and respectful engagement through storytelling
- opportunities for local participation and involvement throughout production
- education and cultural learning opportunities for cast, crew and production personnel
- stronger connections between regional communities and the creative industries
- long term collaborative relationships between the production team and community representatives
- greater understanding of the cultural, historical and environmental significance of Walcha Country

The production acknowledges that meaningful community participation extends beyond consultation alone and includes ongoing listening, collaboration, responsiveness and respectful engagement throughout development and production.

Collaborative Participation and Community Engagement

The production seeks to ensure that participating First Nations collaborators, advisors and community representatives have meaningful opportunities to contribute to:

- consultation and governance discussions
- cultural guidance processes
- research collaboration
- storytelling discussions where appropriate
- cultural education and awareness initiatives connected to the project
- ongoing feedback and collaborative engagement processes throughout development and production

The production is committed to supporting a project environment grounded in:

- Listening
- Respect
- Transparency
- Collaboration
- cultural integrity
- ethical storytelling practices
- shared participation throughout consultation and creative development processes

The production acknowledges the important contributions of participating First Nations collaborators and community representatives throughout the development and consultation process and is committed to maintaining respectful and professionally accountable engagement practices throughout the life of the project.

Long Term Relationship Building and Cultural Learning

The production recognises the importance of building respectful long term relationships with community representatives connected to Walcha Country.

The project intends to support:

- ongoing cultural learning and awareness
- respectful relationship building
- collaborative engagement opportunities
- continued dialogue and consultation throughout development and production\
- greater understanding of culturally informed storytelling practices within the production environment

The production also recognises that community engagement processes may continue to evolve throughout consultation and commits to remaining responsive to community guidance and participation preferences throughout the life of the project.

12. Intellectual Property, Creative Control and Collaboration Terms

EPONA is an original Australian feature film project created and produced by VAM Paddock Productions Pty Ltd.

VAM Paddock Productions Pty Ltd remains the overarching owner, producer and controlling entity of the project and retains responsibility for:

- underlying intellectual property ownership

- screenplay ownership and development
- production rights
- distribution rights
- marketing and exploitation rights
- financing and commercial management of the project
- final creative and production decision making
- ongoing management of the completed film and associated project materials

The production acknowledges and deeply values the cultural knowledge, consultation, lived experience, research collaboration and creative contributions provided by participating First Nations collaborators, advisors and community representatives throughout the development and production process.

The production is committed to ensuring that all consultation and collaborative engagement processes are approached with:

- Transparency
- Respect
- professional accountability
- ethical engagement practices
- clear communication regarding participation and project structures

Recognition of Cultural Contributions

All cultural consultation, advisory participation, research collaboration and community engagement contributions will be:

- appropriately acknowledged where applicable
- respectfully documented throughout consultation and governance processes
- appropriately compensated through agreed consultation, engagement or participation arrangements
- approached in accordance with respectful cultural engagement and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) principles

The production acknowledges that cultural knowledge, oral histories and community guidance remain connected to the relevant First Nations people and community representatives contributing to the consultation process.

Intellectual Property and Ownership

Participation within consultation, governance, advisory or collaborative engagement processes does not transfer ownership of the underlying intellectual property of the film or create ongoing financial participation in future revenues generated by the project unless separately agreed through formal written contractual arrangements.

VAM Paddock Productions Pty Ltd retains ownership and control of:

- the screenplay and associated written materials
- production assets and creative materials
- the completed film and associated audiovisual content
- distribution, licensing and exploitation rights
- commercial management and future use of the project

The production acknowledges that collaborative consultation and cultural engagement are intended to support culturally informed storytelling, respectful representation and ethical creative development throughout the life of the project.

Engagement Transparency and Communication

The production is committed to ensuring that all collaborators, advisors and participating representatives clearly understand:

- their role within the project
- the scope of their participation and engagement
- consultation and governance processes
- approval processes where applicable
- intellectual property structures and ownership arrangements
- crediting and acknowledgement arrangements
- payment and engagement terms

The production is committed to maintaining clear and respectful communication regarding all consultation, collaboration and engagement processes throughout development and production.

Respect for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property

The production acknowledges the importance of protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) throughout all stages of development, research, production and community engagement.

The production commits to:

- respecting cultural authority and community guidance regarding cultural material and representation
- approaching cultural knowledge and historical material with care, accountability and ongoing consultation
- ensuring culturally sensitive material is handled respectfully throughout creative development and production processes
- maintaining ongoing collaborative engagement regarding cultural representation and storytelling practices

The production acknowledges that respectful collaboration, consultation and cultural engagement remain ongoing responsibilities throughout the life of the project.

CONSULTATION AND CULTURAL REVIEW PATHWAY

STAGE	CONSULTATION ACTIVITY	DOCUMENTED OUTCOME
Project introduction	Community presentation and listening session	Consultation priorities and preferred engagement pathway
Cultural governance establishment	Confirm representatives, authority and communication processes	Cultural Governance structure and Advisory Group
Research	Community discussion, On Country learning and historical consultation	Approved research directions, restrictions and cultural guidance
Story development	Writers Room participation and story discussion	Cultural input integrated into character, story and themes
Screenplay review	Review of relevant drafts and cultural material	Written feedback, agreed revisions and matters requiring further consultation

Production planning	Location, protocol, schedule and cultural safety consultation	On Country protocols, Cultural Handbook and production requirements
Production and post production	Cultural liaison, review and continued communication	Cultural compliance, review outcomes and community engagement planning

13. Next Steps

Following the commencement of formal consultation with members of the Walcha First Nations community, the production will revise this framework in response to the feedback, priorities and preferred governance pathways identified through the consultation process.

The production intends to:

- review and update this framework in response to consultation feedback and community guidance
- confirm participation within the Cultural Advisory Group and broader consultation processes
- establish ongoing consultation timelines and communication pathways
- identify and prioritise key historical, cultural and research areas for further development
- continue developing cultural induction and education materials for cast, crew and production personnel
- refine governance, consultation and engagement structures where required
- continue developing culturally informed research, storytelling and production methodologies
- maintain ongoing dialogue regarding cultural protocols, representation and community engagement throughout development and production
- prepare and circulate a respectful consultation summary
- confirm which information may be recorded, shared or incorporated into project materials
- identify the appropriate cultural authority for priority story, history, language and location matters
- confirm the membership, role and payment arrangements for the Community Advisory Group
- establish a consultation calendar for the funded development period
- confirm the cultural review pathway for screenplay drafts and relevant creative materials
- document how consultation feedback is considered and actioned by the creative team

The production acknowledges that consultation and governance processes may continue to evolve throughout the life of the project and is committed to remaining responsive to community feedback, cultural guidance and collaborative discussion.

This framework is intended to remain a living document that supports ongoing consultation, respectful collaboration and culturally informed production practices throughout development and production.

Acknowledgement

The EPONA production team acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands connected to this project and pays respect to Elders past and present.

The production recognises that storytelling connected to Country carries cultural responsibility and commits to approaching this work with:

- Care
- Humility
- Respect
- Accountability
- ongoing consultation
- cultural integrity

The production acknowledges the importance of listening to and learning from First Nations community representatives throughout the life of the project and is committed to fostering respectful, collaborative and culturally safe engagement practices throughout development and production.

The EPONA production team acknowledges that meaningful consultation, respectful storytelling and cultural collaboration are ongoing responsibilities that extend beyond the completion of the film itself.

Confidentiality and Copyright Notice

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This document is intended solely for consultation, collaborative discussion and governance development with participating collaborators, advisors and community representatives connected to the EPONA project.

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