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Changing the Deafening Silence of Indigenous Women's Voices in Educational Leadership

Tanya Fitzgerald
School of Education
UNITEC Institute of Technology
Auckland

The critique of Western ethnocentric notions of leadership presented in this paper is informed by debates on issues such as gender and educational leadership that have produced meta-narratives that explore and explain women and men's ways of leading. One of the troubling aspects of Western leadership theories is the claim that the functions and features of leadership can be transported and legitimated across homogenous educational systems. Despite changes that have been made in definitions and descriptions of educational leadership to provide a focus on gender, there is the implicit assumption that while educational leadership might be practised differently according to gender, there is a failure to consider the values and practices of Indigenous educational leaders. Thus, the construct of educational leadership needs to be more broadly theorised in order for knowledge of Indigenous ways of leading to emerge.

Introduction

There are now considerable theoretical and empirical studies on women and educational leadership that have emerged predominantly from the United States (Chase, 1995; Grogan, 1996; Shakeshaft 1987), Britain (Adler, Laney and Packer, 1993; Coleman, 2001; Ozga, 1993), Australia (Blackmore, 1999; Limerick and Lingard, 1995) and New Zealand (Court, 1995, 1998; Strachan, 1999). These studies have fundamentally contested claims such as those expounded by two of the 'fathers' of educational administration theory, Hodgkinson (1991) and Sergiovanni (1992) that top-down 'visionary' leadership was possible and permissible and that issues of social class, gender, race and ethnicity are unproblematic. In their critique, feminist authors have argued that the primacy of positional and proprietorial leadership is a contested domain and that there can be no unitary explanation of what it means to exercise educational leadership. While the literature on educational leadership is expansive, conclusions that theorists posit pinpoint their concern with determining and defining the *nature* of educational leadership. Just *who* might be leaders and *how* circumstances of social class, location, ethnicity and cultural world view might underpin their work and identity is not fully discussed and disclosed. Essentially while these discourses of 'masculinity, rationality and leadership' (Blackmore, 1999:4) and the search for a normative theory of leadership (Duke, 1998) remain gendered, they also remain raced. That is, considerations of race and ethnicity are not uncovered to examine ways in which these trajectories impact on the exercise of educational leadership.

The reform of educational administration that was widely experienced in the late 1980s and 1990s has produced new images and understandings about the nature and role of educational leaders. In essence, good (male) leaders are portrayed as visionary, multi-skilled, self-regulatory, facilitative, goal oriented, entrepreneurial and service oriented (see for example Duke, 1998; Marsh, 2000; Senge, 1990). In a subliminal and subtle way the literature popularises women's leadership in oppositional ways and suggests that they might exercise traits characteristically described as flexible, supportive, nurturing, collaborative, collegial and socially just. Values such as openness, trust, empowerment and compassion provide a relief map for charting ways in which women *inevitably* exercise leadership in schools. In the process, debates centred on the common theme that 'gender matters in educational leadership' (Blackmore and Kenway, 1993; Hall, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1987) have produced discourses of privilege. That is, women as educational leaders have been theorised about as if they are an homogenous group and considerations of circumstances such as ethnicity/social class/location and beliefs have been discounted. Or, at the very least, distinctions *between* and *among* women have collapsed in the attempt to provide a meta-narrative that describes and defines women's experiences and practices as educational leaders. Against a backdrop of the contested and continuing reform of

educational administration, discourses that universalise the complex participation of women and 'women's leadership' have produced universal and somewhat troublesome narratives that privilege 'feminine' values. In this way categories of 'woman' and 'educational leader' have become fixed and the possibility for substantive diversity among and between women does not appear possible. And in particular, whiteness becomes a privileging construct that is played out differently across gendered lines.

This paper will examine literature relating to educational leadership and critique assumptions concerning the homogeneity of this construct and the apparent invisibility of Indigenous leadership models and discourses within these narratives. Despite the shared rhetoric about what it means to simultaneously occupy positions such as 'woman' and 'educational leader', silences surrounding Indigenous women and educational leadership are deafening.

Educational Leadership in a Reform Framework

Since 1988, educational administration and the nature of educational work in the Western world has undergone widespread reform that was predicated on the need to re-conceptualise education as a market commodity (Smyth, 1993; Thrupp, 2001). One of the direct consequences is that schools and their leaders have been required to shape their policies and practices according to the stated (and at times not stated) demands of their stakeholders (Glatter, 1999). Conservative and competing demands for parental choice and participation, school autonomy, cultural diversity, educational standards, core curricula, teacher accountability and leadership have radically altered the educational environment that teachers, students and educational leaders occupy (Court, 1998). Despite differences in location, identity and (social and educational) structure, countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Britain have exported and imported educational policy solutions to rectify and resolve these complex educational problems (Thrupp, 2001).

One of the survival mechanisms that schools in New Zealand have adopted is the shift towards entrepreneurship. In an attempt to simultaneously retain a financial and competitive advantage, schools have actively recruited fee-paying international students, sought corporate sponsorship (and in some cases have incorporated the corporate brand within the school name) and focused on image management (Ball, 1994). Schools that are able to offer well-resourced and comprehensive programmes that produce high performing students are deemed to be 'good schools' with (presumably) 'good leaders' (Education Review Office, 1998). Coincidentally, these schools are often situated in highly sought after residential areas (Gordon, 1994) and are most likely to be led by white, middle class and well educated men (Blackmore, 1999). This is primarily problematic as discourses centred on the conceptualisation of what constitutes a 'good school' have been closely connected with models of 'good leadership' that associate masculinity with rationality, accountability, efficiency, line management styles and practices, entrepreneurship and the requisite political and administrative expertise (Blackmore, 1999). In this way educational leadership is re-constituted as a 'technology of the masculine' as Marjorie Theobald (1996:174) has suggested. This is perhaps a partial explanation for the numerical dominance of men in leadership positions in schools and a central reason to interrupt orthodox educational leadership knowledge and practices in raising questions regarding the apparent silence of women's voices and more specifically, Indigenous women's voices.

Gender and Leadership

Debates about gender and leadership are, in the main, raised by women for and about women as evidenced in bibliographies provided by writers such as Jill Blackmore (1999), Diane Dunlap and Peggy Schmuck (1995) and Charole Shakeshaft (1987). What is needed therefore is gender to be located at the centre of debates on leadership, not at its periphery where it is largely ignored. For this to be achieved, a redefinition of educational management and leadership that “provides an appropriate stage for giving gender not only a speaking part” (Hall, 1999:156) should be sought. In this way, persistent masculine images of leadership and educational leaders can be contested and questions can be raised concerning taken-for-granted-assumptions surrounding the gender-neutrality of these images and discourses. Alternative possibilities for thinking about leaders and leadership may then be possible.

While systems that educators work within are hierarchical and centrally determined and controlled, this is not to suggest that individuals might exercise leadership in a variety of valid ways. What is being called for is a discourse of leadership that does not seek to privilege gender but opens up opportunities for women and men to exercise leadership in non-exclusive ways. In order to achieve this we should begin with an understanding of the systematic inclusion of masculine discourses in the definitions and descriptions of educational leadership and management and pinpoint reasons for the perpetuation of privilege based on gender.

Recent claims by Duke (1998) that a normative theory of leadership is possible exemplify the probability that educational leadership is exercised in a linear, rational and uniform way and predicated on masculine forms of leadership. Kerfoot and Knights (1993:672) have variously described this as strategic or competitive masculinity that “privileges men vis-à-vis women, ranks some men above others, and maintains the dominance of certain forms and practices of masculinity”. In this way, women’s ways of leading are defined in oppositional ways.

Blackmore (1999) has identified ways in which power relations are reproduced and maintained within schools. These power dynamics have created assumptions regarding the normative role and position of the male leader and reinforced causal hegemonic links between masculinity, hierarchy and leadership. The ‘other’ side of the picture is the inference that qualities such as nurturing and caring are necessarily feminine and that these qualities are in some way inferior to ‘normal’ leadership traits. It is reasonable to suggest therefore that the pedagogy of leadership is constructed as ‘normally’ the domain of men and the pedagogy of teaching as essentially

the work of women. This form of hierarchical managerialism (Codd, 1993) is a privileging construct. The resultant emphases on technical, task-oriented responsibilities and accountabilities have been pinpointed as one of the central reasons why women predominantly occupy the lower level of workforce hierarchies (Court, 1998; Dunlap and Schmuck, 1995; Ozga, 1993).

For women leaders the emphasis on hierarchical leadership that is embedded within a managerial framework creates tensions and uncertainties about what constitutes effective leadership. As Jill Blackmore (1999) has argued unitary theories that explain ways in which women lead and experience leadership are problematic; women leaders are neither the binary opposite of male leaders nor can there be a model of the 'natural and strong' female leader. Although accounts exist that explore the complex and contested educational work of women leaders (Strachan, 1999), further work needs to be completed on the interplay between gender, ethnicity and educational leadership. In particular I am concerned that Indigenous voices are heard; not as a harmonious choir but as a cacophony of voices that celebrates distinctiveness within an Indigenous framework.

Indigenous Educational Leadership

Discussing differences and distinctiveness within the scope of educational leadership is contested and dangerous terrain. Partially this is because these discourses are outside of my own territory as a Pakeha (white) academic in Aotearoa/New Zealand and because I neither wish to 'add-on' difference nor theorise to produce an homogenous discourse of Indigenous voices.

There is a growing body of literature on cultural diversity and leadership (Bajunid, 1996; Gunew, 1994; Henry and Pringle, 1996; Jones, Pringle and Shepherd, 2000; Pringle and Timperley, 1995) that conceptualises and constructs theories that value and recognise Indigenous ways of knowing, acting and leading. Significantly, the literature seeks to document ways in which leadership is experienced and exercised within a multicultural framework yet does not offer an understanding of strategies used to navigate dual cultures. This points to the possibility that for Indigenous leaders they face the dilemma of double consciousness as they struggle to interpret, negotiate and survive in two distinct cultural worlds – one Pakeha (European/white) and one Indigenous. For Indigenous women in particular trajectories of ethnicity and gender present a tension-ridden and deeply problematic dichotomy that has the capacity to shape and determine patterns of social interactions, relationships, mobility and life choices. There is a need to formulate Indigenous and non-western theories of educational leadership

that are grounded in research that account for and explain Indigenous women's ways of knowing and leading.

This is not however a call for the 'adding on' of Indigenous women to current narratives about educational leadership. We need to challenge debates concerned with gender and educational leadership to ensure that the role and position of Pakeha women is not placed at the center of our theorising thus re-locating Indigenous women to the margins and in redundant positions. Furthermore, given location and family/whanau circumstances, we cannot unilaterally assume that the experience of one Indigenous woman can provide a universal understanding of the interests and positioning of all Indigenous women. The effect of discourses of sameness is paralysing and constrains Indigenous women to work in particular ways. A further difficulty is that the politics of gender and ethnicity define women in general and ethnic women in particular as problems. Categorical definitions render women as a female problem and race as a minority problem. As Sue Adler et al., (1993) have pointed out these categories allow non-Indigenous women to identify themselves as *women*, not as *white women*. In this way, whiteness is the taken for granted norm that is deemed to be stable, unified and homogenous. Difference is therefore expressed as a corollary of whiteness. This therefore has the potential to create a monoculture of the powerful that is expressed in gender and race specific ways as Penny Tripconey (1995) has documented.

One further criticism of the limited literature base is that Indigenous women and women of colour are considered in unproblematic ways (Yeakey, Johnston and Adkinson, 1986). That is, all women of colour are labelled as one group thereby negating their distinctiveness based on ethnicity, family, geographical location, language, social and familial relationships, knowledge, spirituality, philosophy and aspiration (Moreton-Robinson, 2000:xviii). A further difficulty is the double bind that Indigenous women face (Blackmore, 1999:199). While Indigenous women represent their communities, they are implicitly expected (by Pakeha administrators) to work as change agents to simultaneously challenge existing power structures in their educational organisations.

In order to uncover the complexities and contradictions that women of colour face as educational leaders, it is imperative that a conscious attempt is made to understand the historical, social, economic and professional circumstances of Indigenous women's lives. It is feasible that such an understanding will permit Indigenous women leaders to define their own realities and contest prevailing notions of the 'universal educational leader.' One possible way is through a focus on bicultural life stories that examine the interplay of ethnicity and the interrelationship of the individual and her environment.

What is being called for therefore is an Indigenous theory of educational leadership that places Indigenous women at the centre of the narrative. This might reflect or be a sharper, more radical critique of the perpetuation of power and authority within traditional hierarchies that questions the pedagogy of leadership and which centralises differences. I would like to focus this critique on Aotearoa/New Zealand and propose a framework that offers a possibility for Indigenous leadership within a bicultural framework.

A Framework for Indigenous Leadership in Aotearoa/New Zealand

In 1989 the administration of New Zealand education was reformed. Although the focus was improving the quality of teaching and learning through the decentralisation of school management based on a partnership model between the school and its community, the net effect of these reforms was the demand for schools to be fiscally efficient and publicly accountable (Codd, 1993; Thrupp, 2001). This changing legislative and administrative environment and the resultant industrial relations framework impacted variously on women's participation as leaders and managers in schools. In particular, the legislative imperative to hire individuals identified as belonging to minority groups (including women, Maori, Pasifika) has satisfied specific institutional needs. Yet these demands and the intense level of scrutiny placed on minorities within a minority setting (Konrad and Pfeffer, 1991) have not been fully accounted for in explanations of educational leadership. Furthermore, as Yeakey, Johnston and Adkison (1986) have argued minority school leaders are frequently appointed in urban areas where the majority of students are of colour. This has contributed to a legalised form of urban segregation based on residential patterns and the idea that "minority school systems are the appropriate places for minority administrators" (Yeakey, Johnston and Adkison, 1986:124). In Aotearoa/New Zealand experiences and challenges faced by Maori women school leaders (as a numerical minority) cannot be articulated or explained in terms of similarities with and differences to the leadership of Pakeha (white) women (Bowkett, 1996; Smith 1992).

Studies such as those conducted by Marian Court (1995) in New Zealand, Margaret Grogan (1996) in the United States and Marianne Coleman (2001) in England and Wales have uncovered similarities in women's social, economic and educational backgrounds, career progression, family circumstances and leadership styles. However, there has not been a conscious attempt to theorise how power is exercised and differentiated in gender *and* race based ways. While some studies have provided evidence of 'black women in educational management' (Blackmore, 1999; McGee Banks, 2000; Ozga, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1987; Slack and Cornelius, 1995) a glance at

these texts suggests that this knowledge has been organised in a marginal way. Invariably it is the latter chapters of these texts that focus on the problematic nature of educational leadership and women of colour. It is not a case of arguing whether gender and ethnicity are relevant to debates surrounding the nature of educational leadership, but why the case for their centrality to our understanding still has to be made. In other words, educational leadership needs to be subject to a process of redefinition to ensure that the voices of Indigenous women and their experiences are continuously theorised and legitimised from their worldview.

Western views of leadership has placed primacy on the role of individuals (Sergiovanni, 1992), the organisation (Senge, 1990) and notions of excellence and individual success (Glatter, 1999). Ways in which women exercise leadership (Blackmore, 1999) and the interplay of gender and ethnicity have not been fully considered (Henry and Pringle, 1996). In the case of Aotearoa/New Zealand ways in which Maori women have experienced and acted as leaders have been subject to constraints of gender, ethnicity and colonisation (Smith, 1992).

It is often and erroneously assumed that Maori leadership is primarily exercised by Maori men and that Maori women are subordinate to the authority of men (Henry and Pringle, 1996; Smith, 1992). This is a colonising assumption that rests on the predication that leadership is exercised by an individual and that the individual is 'naturally' male. In traditional Maori society both men and women were necessary components of the collective whole and both formed part of the link through whakapapa (genealogy) to the past, the present and the future. All people were part of a collective identity and their survival rested on the collective responsibility of the group to value and respect each person for his/her skills, strengths and attributes. One of the more powerful indications of the gender-neutral way in which the Maori world operated was that there are no personal or possessive pronouns in the Maori language that signify a hierarchy of sex. In terms of stories, proverbs and language, women are spoken about in positive terms. For example, women are referred to as *whare tangata* (the house of humanity/people); *hapu* refers to a pregnant woman as well as the wider family group; and *whenua* means both land and afterbirth (Bishop and Glynn, 1999:11-25). The interrelationship between women, men and the life-sustaining land is evident in the phrase "*he wahine, he whenua, e ngaro ai te tangata*", the interpretation of which is commonly cited as "by women and land, men are lost". Without the nourishing influences of women and the land, survival is not, and was not, possible.

Traditionally it was the *whanau* (family) that provided women with their source of strength. Maori women were not considered the chattels of their

husbands; they identified more strongly with their own family and property was not transferred on marriage. Although a woman might live within her husband's whanau, their role was to ensure she was protected; she always remained a part of her own whanau. This form of social organisation did not confine Maori women within a nuclear family structure. Because of the extended nature of the family unit, child rearing was a communal task and this enabled women to perform a wide range of roles, including leadership roles (Smith, 1992).

Significantly, women played an important role in the maintenance and transmission of oral histories that ensured the survival of the history and identity of the iwi (tribe). Missionaries who arrived in the 1820s brought with them culturally specific understandings of the role and status of women. This produced a shift in emphasis away from the powerful female influence and the emergence of the male warrior as the primary leader. One of the direct concerns of the missionary groups was to rescue and reclaim Maori women who they considered in danger of (sexual) exploitation by men (Fitzgerald, 2000). As Linda Smith (1992:48-49) notes:

Maori women were perceived either in family terms as wives and children, or in sexual terms as easy partners. Women who had "chiefly" roles were considered the exception to the rule, not the norm . . . Maori women were considered attractive in the absence of a pool of white women. Their autonomy was interpreted as immorality and lack of discipline. Christianity reinforced these notions by spelling out rules of decorum and defining spaces (the home) for the carrying out of appropriate female activities.

One of the ways in which the colonisation of Maori women continued to occur was through the domestication of Maori women's knowledge and status via the curriculum that was offered in the mission schools (Fitzgerald, 2000). These schools trained Maori women to inculcate the values of nineteenth century Christian and Pakeha society that rendered women subordinate to men as wives and mothers located within the domestic arena of the home.

While the impact of colonisation led to debilitating changes in the role and status of Maori women, leadership was still exercised by Maori women albeit in public ways within broader Maori society. Historical evidence points to the leadership roles of Maori women in Te Kotahitanga (Maori Parliament), the suffrage movement and the Maori Women's Welfare League (Rei, 1993). In the Native Schools system, established in 1867 and disbanded in 1967, Maori women were head teachers in many of the schools as Simon and Smith (2001) have documented. This therefore raises two vital questions. In the first instance we need to question why it has become the norm to assume that

leadership in Maori society was traditionally a male domain and that female roles are of less value than male roles. Secondly, why has the perception developed that Maori women leaders are conspicuously absent? This is, as Smith (1992) argues so poignantly, the colonised reality of Maori women's lives. We must look beyond discourses that suggest that Maori women's relative absence in school leadership roles is problematic to question why leadership theories are deeply problematic and demand serious critique as they fail to provide a forum for multiple Indigenous voices to be heard, understood and theorised. This is not an easy task.

In more general terms, there are a number of central issues to be considered in the search for an understanding of 'Indigenous educational leadership'. In the first instance, it may not be possible to construct a unitary definition of Indigenous leadership particularly as leadership may be exercised in multiple ways in a variety of settings as the previous discussion on leadership in Maori society has indicated. Secondly, personal qualities, skills and knowledge that contribute to 'Indigenous leadership' cannot be articulated as differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership, yet relationships within Indigenous communities and relationships with non-Indigenous communities are inextricably linked (Bishop and Glynn, 1999). This therefore points to the possibility that two layers of leadership may exist within Indigenous communities: (traditional) community leadership that is derived from an Indigenous worldview that recognises skills and knowledge according to the mana (authority, respect) of an individual; and leadership as advocacy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. "Indigenous leadership often requires people to be able to walk confidently and with influence in two worlds" (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1998:16).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand the official rhetoric of the State espouses the primacy of the *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (1840) as the founding document of the country that acknowledges Maori as tangata whenua (the people of the land) and the affirmation of their sovereignty. The three principles that underpin this treaty are partnership, participation and protection. The expectation was that these principles would guide all aspects of public and civil activities. In terms of the provision of education and its delivery by all educational institutions, Maori were guaranteed a share in decision making (partnership), the mandate to define, guard and treasure their knowledge and language (protection) and the benefits of involvement in education at all levels (participation) (Bishop and Glynn, 1999:199). While *Te Tiriti* (the treaty of Waitangi) provides a measure of legislative compliance, accountability lies at institutional level for the implementation and institutionalisation of the three principles.

Institutions of the state, such as schools and universities, are obligated to publicly state their commitment to the principles embedded in this treaty. This raises further questions concerning *how* this partnership might be constructed, articulated and legitimated and by *whom*. The suggestion could also be forwarded that the principles on which *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is based provide an opportunity for institutions to recognise the sovereignty of their educational leaders *and* students. This is both difficult and deeply problematic. Therein lies the challenge of partnership, protection and participation within a framework of Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) leadership.

In considering *how*, if at all, Indigenous leadership might be described, the work of Bishop and Glynn (1999) is insightful. While the model developed by Bishop and Glynn (1999: 85) is directed at asking questions about power relations in education, it is a useful framework for conceptualising educational leadership that accounts for an Indigenous worldviews. There are a number of similarities with conclusions similarly drawn in the 1998 research report of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (1998:15-16). Both studies indicate the primacy of the following values:

- Initiation of the role of the leader and authority to speak and represent Indigenous communities;
- Benefits and connectedness to Indigenous communities by their leaders and wider benefits through interaction with non-Indigenous groups;
- Representation and articulation of issues for and within Indigenous communities and links with non-Indigenous groups;
- Legitimation of authority from Indigenous communities as a core credential for leadership; and
- Accountability to Indigenous communities for the actions and activities of leaders.

The following model has been adapted as an organising concept to incorporate the five values listed above (the vertical axis) and provide a possibility for considering the three principles of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, partnership, protection and participation (the horizontal axis) as a metaphor for advocacy and leadership.

Table: A Framework for Indigenous leadership and advocacy

Values & processes/ Principles	Article 1: Partnership	Article 2: Protection	Article 3: Participation
Initiation	Who initiates the appointment of an educational leader? What does each party bring to the relationship?	What are the goals of the educational leader, community & organisation?	Whose interests are established & promoted? Who allocates the work activities of the indigenous educational leader & how?
Benefits	Who will directly benefit from the appointment of the educational leader? What will the leader, community & organisation bring to the relationship & how is this recognised?	What difference will indigenous leadership make for indigenous students and community?	How might the cultural aspirations and preferences of the indigenous educational leader be evident in the organisation?
Representation	In what ways can the voice of the educational leader be heard?	What agency does each individual have and how might this be exercised?	Whose voice is heard? Who will do the work?
Legitimation	What authority does the leader have? Are the realities and experiences of the educational leader legitimised within the system?	Who determines what is accurate and how the findings might be theorised?	Who will nurture indigenous educational leaders? Who makes the decisions about the work and activities of these leaders?
Accountability	Who is the educational leader accountable to? Who makes this decision? How is accountability demonstrated?	Who will have access to the knowledge that is produced?	Who has control over the distribution of the knowledge, experiences & leadership activities?

Source: Adapted from Bishop & Graham 1997 & Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840)

This model is not an attempt to offer a unitary model; rather a framework that recognises and respects multiple voices (representation) that are authoritative (legitimation) within a partnership where there is mutual accountability from the beginning (initiation) and the protection of what is valued and important.

Conclusion

The central troubling aspect of Western leadership theories is the limited and traditional way in which the work of school leaders and managers has been constructed and conceptualised. In suggesting that a normative theory of educational leadership is possible, the assumption is tendered that leadership is an absolute and rational activity that can be exercised in culturally-specific ways. We need to sincerely question whether these forms of leadership are relevant for the twenty first century. I would suggest not. It is impossible to create conceptualisations of leading and managing without taking into account issues of gender *and* ethnicity. One of the ways this can be partially achieved is through the authentication of Indigenous women's voices and an understanding of ways in which background, ethnicity, religion, gender, family circumstances and other identities serve to transform and shape their educational work. What is needed is for multiple voices to be heard and a multi-voiced approach to educational leadership and management to be adopted. One of the ways this might be achieved is the adoption of a framework that positions Indigenous ways of knowing and leading at the centre of practice and theory.

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