

# Identifying key dimensions of indigenous led child welfare services: A qualitative literature review

Natalie Paki Paki (Taranaki)<sup>1</sup> |

Paula Toko King (Te Aupōuri, Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whātua, Waikato Tainui, Ngāti Maniapoto)<sup>2</sup> | Lashana Lewis (Ngāti Kahungunu Ki Te Reinga)<sup>3</sup> |

Shayne Walker (Kai Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu)<sup>4</sup> |

Hunia Te Urukaiata Mackay (Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngāti Koata, Ngāti Rangitihi,

Rongowhakaata)<sup>5</sup> | Daniel Anderson (Ngāti Maniapoto, Tainui)<sup>3</sup> | Eunice Amante<sup>5</sup> |

Susan P. Kemp<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

<sup>2</sup>Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare, University of Otago, Wellington, New Zealand

<sup>3</sup>Te Hou Ora Whānau Services, Dunedin, New Zealand

<sup>4</sup>University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

<sup>5</sup>VOYCE-Whakarongo Mai, Auckland, New Zealand

## Correspondence

Susan P. Kemp, Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland, New Zealand.  
Email: [s.kemp@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:s.kemp@auckland.ac.nz)

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## Abstract

National and state governments in settler colonial countries are increasingly committing to policies and practices aimed at strengthening Indigenous frameworks, programmes and leadership in child protection services. However, research-based information on Indigenous child welfare services and programmes is sparse. This qualitative literature review explores and documents key features of Indigenous child welfare and protection models and/or frameworks in an international context, with a specific focus on Indigenous children, young people, families, and communities. Twenty-four publications meeting the inclusion criteria were included in the analysis. Published frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes within the broader area of child welfare and children protection that are Indigenous-designed and/or led or developed in partnership or collaboration with Indigenous peoples were identified. The review highlights 11 key dimensions that underpin the frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes. Findings of the review also reveal commonalities across Indigenous cultures and contexts that from an Indigenous perspective are considered fundamental to supporting Indigenous children, young people and families involved with child protective services. Additionally, the findings point to the critical need for ongoing advocacy for Indigenous-designed and led services and programmes, including support for Indigenous research, evaluation and intellectual leadership.

## KEYWORDS

child protection; child welfare; child, youth, and family services; indigenous; indigenous led; self-determination

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Despite increasingly strident calls for action to address the significant over-representation of Indigenous children and young people in child protection systems globally, settler states such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the USA (CANZUS countries) continue to see alarming numbers of Indigenous children in state care (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019; Edwards et al., 2023; Hyslop, 2021; Quinn et al., 2022). As public outrage grows over the harms done to Indigenous children, young people, and families by this 'long emergency' (Haight et al., 2018, p. 398), national and state governments in CANZUS countries are increasingly committing to policies and practices aimed at strengthening Indigenous frameworks and leadership in child welfare services (Creamer et al., 2022). Undergirding these efforts is growing recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and rights, as delineated in the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and related national laws and treaties (Cleland, 2022; King et al., 2018).

Efforts to indigenise child welfare services take a range of forms. Frequently these focus on enhancing the cultural responsiveness and safety of mainstream child protection services and strengthening the cultural literacy of child protection social workers (for instance, Alberta's Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework, ICUF) (Ministry of Children's Services, 2019), or New Zealand's Māori Centred Practice Framework (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Center, 2021). More fundamental changes include investments in Indigenous-designed and/or led services, and moves to devolve responsibility for child protective services to Indigenous peoples and their nations (for instance, Canada's Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, 2019).

At the same time, Indigenous communities and scholars are actively building health and social service frameworks grounded in and informed by Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, being, doing and relating. This body of work has its own integrity and purposes. Nonetheless, it intersects with and informs other efforts to strengthen Indigenous content in child welfare services generally, and child protection services in particular. In New Zealand, for instance, Indigenous models with broad influence across social and health services, including child protection services (Dobbs, 2021), include 'Te Whare Tapa Whā' (Durie, 2001) and 'Pōwhiri Poutama' (Huata, 2011).

From both mainstream and Indigenous perspectives, services that are Indigenous-designed and/or led, or informed by Indigenous models and/or frameworks are increasingly viewed as critical to enhancing the cultural safety and responsiveness of child protection services (Creamer et al., 2022), safeguarding the cultural identity and connections of Indigenous children and young people (Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023), and reducing the over-representation of Indigenous children and families in child welfare systems (Waitangi Tribunal, 2021). Although the research base in this area is limited, studies of Indigenous child welfare and child and family services indicate that these improve the quality of services to Indigenous families (Haight et al., 2018) and enhance their engagement with supportive

and preventive services (Lucero & Bussey, 2012; Richardson, 2008). In general, Haight et al. (2018) concluded, '... our scoping study suggests that a promising path forward is for ... child welfare professionals to look to Indigenous child welfare beliefs and practices for models of culturally appropriate policies and practices' (p. 408).

From a range of perspectives, investments in Indigenous leadership and sovereignty in child welfare systems thus represent an important area of Indigenous child protection service provision. Nonetheless, efforts to strengthen the authority of Indigenous peoples in the child protection arena are hampered by a range of challenges, including inaction in ceding control for child protection to Indigenous nations (Libesman & Gray, 2023), constraints on resourcing (Blackstock et al., 2023; Haight et al., 2018) and the strictures of western-centric service frameworks and contracting, monitoring and evaluation models (Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Blackstock et al., 2023; Eggleton et al., 2022). Concerns thus persist regarding the extent to which there is genuine political investment in advancing Indigenous self-determination in this domain (Blackstock et al., 2023; Libesman & Gray, 2023). Furthermore—and specifically relevant to the focus of this paper—relatively little research-based information is available to inform efforts to expand Indigenous-designed and/or led programs and services (Haight et al., 2018; Sinha et al., 2021).

In part, the dearth of published information on Indigenous-designed and/or led child protection services reflects the comparatively sparse literature on Indigenous child protection programs and services generally. Much of the extant literature has focused on documenting the over-representation of Indigenous children, young people, and families in public child protection services (De La Sablonnière-Griffin et al., 2023; Sinha et al., 2021) and exploring the deeply problematic consequences of this involvement (Haight et al., 2018). Studies documenting the negative impacts on Indigenous children, young people and families of involvement in the child protection system make clear both the compelling need for and relative lack of investment in Indigenous-designed and/or led services. In their scoping review of the involvement of Indigenous families in North American public child welfare systems, for example, Haight et al. (2018) found high levels of need in tandem with a lack of accessible, culturally appropriate services for Indigenous families. Their review also highlighted the significant challenges facing Indigenous families involved with mainstream services, including racism, a lack of responsiveness and consequent mistrust. At the same time, they identified a gap in knowledge-building around Indigenous-informed and Indigenous-led programmes and services. The authors concluded both that '... the question of how to strengthen child welfare with Indigenous families is clearly under-researched' (p.397), and that 'More work is ... needed to design, implement, and evaluate culturally-based child welfare practices' (p.397).

Related studies underscore these points. Reviewing the literature on Australian programmes designed to enhance the wellbeing of Aboriginal young people in out of home care, Lindstedt et al. (2017) identified a striking absence of studies in this area. Similarly, in a review of the international literature on the involvement of Indigenous children in child protection services, Sinha et al. (2021) noted

that their study 'illustrates the limits of the academic literature in representing the knowledge and experience of Indigenous Peoples' (abstract). A 2023 review of scholarship on Indigenous led child and family services in Canada corroborates these conclusions, pointing out that 'we found few studies documenting the process and outcomes of Indigenous led, culturally based solutions' (Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023, p. 48). In the child mental health arena, a domain closely linked to child protection services, O'Keefe et al. (2022) have likewise noted a lack of research centring Indigenous knowledges and 'Indigenous-led solutions' (p.6271).

Findings of these reviews consistently highlight both a lack of investment in Indigenous governed and led child welfare services and related research and evaluation studies, and a significant need for more of them. Factors constraining Indigenous led research and programming include limitations on funding, and contractual arrangements that pre-determine the form and duration of services (Blackstock et al., 2023). However, as Sinha et al. (2021) noted, it is also likely that more Indigenous research knowledge exists than is captured in review articles, which typically rely on published material and academic data bases.

Given calls for significantly greater investment in Indigenous-designed or -led services, and promising indications of their efficacy, it is important to build a stronger knowledge base to support these efforts. To our knowledge, there has not been an exploration of existing frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes grounded in Indigenous ways of being, knowing, relating, and doing within the broader area of child welfare and child protection. Consequently, this qualitative literature review has three aims: to identify published child welfare frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes that are Indigenous-designed and/or led, and/or developed in partnership or collaboration with Indigenous peoples; to describe the key characteristics of the identified publications; and to identify and describe key dimensions that underpin these frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes. We conducted the review as part of developing the evidence base for a larger research project focused on ensuring meaningful participation of Indigenous children and families in child protection decision-making and services.

Our research team for the project includes six Indigenous members (including the first and second authors) representing diverse tribal affiliations and connections, and two non-Indigenous members. The review recognizes and acknowledges that while it is essential to honour the distinctiveness of Indigenous peoples in particular places and contexts, there are likely commonalities that may offer insights, understandings, and learnings to support future design and operationalisation of frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes.

## 2 | METHODS

Our overarching research question for this qualitative literature review was: *What are the key dimensional elements underpinning frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes applied within*

*the broader area of child welfare and protection that focus on Indigenous children, young people, and families?* Our approach was informed by published methods (Haight et al., 2018; King et al., 2023; Trudgett et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2021), the updated PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021) and the 'CONSolidated critERTia for strengthening the reporting of health research involving Indigenous peoples (CONSIDER) statement' (Huria et al., 2019).

The parameters of our search strategy were guided by the work of Haight et al. (2018), who noted a dearth of literature pertaining to child welfare with Indigenous families prior to the year 2000. However, mindful of the epistemic injustice experienced by Indigenous peoples (Lewis et al., 2023a,b), we were interested in privileging the Indigenous knowledge contributed to this area by Indigenous researchers. Our inclusion criteria comprised: frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes within the context of care and protection focussing on Indigenous peoples that were Indigenous-designed and/or led or developed in partnership or collaboration with Indigenous peoples; publications including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, books, and grey literature (in the form of theses or dissertations); and publications in the English language.

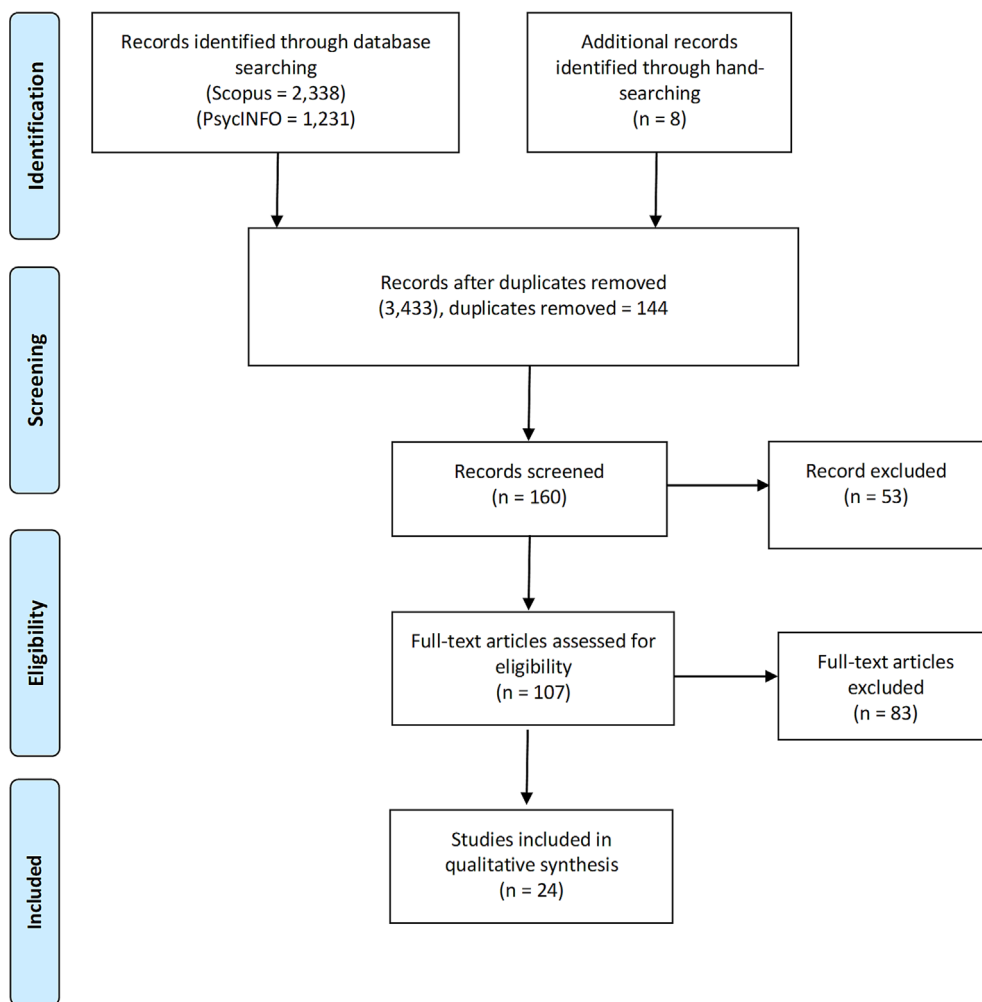
We searched the SCOPUS and PsychINFO electronic databases from January 2000 to May 2022 using various combinations of the following search terms (for example, with and without use of the \* symbol denoting plural forms or use of macrons/acute accents): child welfare, child protection, child abuse, child neglect, child maltreatment AND ethnic groups, minority groups, Indigen\*, 'First Nation\*', Māori OR Torres OR Hawai\* OR Aborigin\* OR Inuit OR Métis OR Sami OR 'Native American' OR 'American Indian'. We kept the search terms deliberately broad as we did not want to miss any potential frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes within the literature. Other relevant literature was sourced from a systematic hand-search of the reference lists for selected full publications.

We identified a total of 3569 potential records from the two electronic databases, with an additional eight records identified through hand-searching from reference lists. Identified titles and abstracts were imported into reference management software where they were screened by the first and second authors to identify those to retrieve as full texts.

After duplicates were removed and titles and abstracts screened were screened by the first and second authors to assess fit with the inclusion criteria (with 20% cross-checking by other members of the research team), 107 records were identified for full text screening. A further 83 of the 107 were excluded following screening of the full texts. Overall, 24 publications were included in the data analysis (Figure 1).

### 2.1 | Data analyses

Data from the 24 publications were first extracted into standardized tables in Excel by the first author and information collected around key features of each publication. Data were then further extrapolated and coded into the following categories by the first and second



**FIGURE 1** PRISMA chart of review strategy.

authors; year of publication; authors; type of publication; country; ethnicity of the population of interest (as explicitly reported in the publications); the type of activity specified (whether framework, model, service, intervention or programme); whether frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes described were Indigenous-designed and/or led or developed in partnership/collaboration with Indigenous peoples (as explicitly reported in the publications); Indigenous led authorship or co-authorship of the publication; whether evaluation was undertaken; and, noting the specific title of the framework, model, service, intervention or programme presented in the publications. During this step, the first and second authors utilized applicable CONSIDER criteria (categorized under governance; prioritization; relationships; methodologies, participation; capacity; analysis and interpretation; and dissemination) to assess the quality of the publications (Huria et al., 2019).

The data synthesis was led by the first and second authors, occurred over three stages, and involved identifying and mapping the aggregated data in accordance with our overarching research question. Underlying concepts were identified and then grouped thematically. The first and second authors then deliberated and agreed upon a common set of dimensional themes across the dataset. These dimensional themes were further discussed, checked against the

categorisation of the publications, and refined by the first two authors, with 20% cross-checking from the broader research team. Once a final set of key dimensions were agreed upon, the frequency with which each of publications (implicitly or explicitly) cited each of the dimensions was then quantified.

### 3 | RESULTS

Table 1 presents key characteristics for the final set of 24 publications that meet the inclusion criteria for this scoping literature review.

#### 3.1 | Publishing date and type of study

Similar to those found by Haight et al. (2018) our results show that most publications were published from 2010 ( $n = 22$  publications) and nearly all were published journal articles ( $n = 21$  publications). Three of the publications were doctoral theses (Cameron, 2010; Hansen, 2012; Ullrich, 2020). Table 1 provides a description and the name of each respective framework, model, service, intervention and/or programme presented in the publications.

TABLE 1 Description of reviewed studies.

Source	Type of document	Country	Ethnicity	Indigenous led or partnered/collaborative	Indigenous author(s)	Description	Name	Evaluation (Y/N)
Blacklock et al. (2018)	Journal article	Australia	Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander	Indigenous led	Indigenous author led	Culturally appropriate tool for assessment of Aboriginal kinship carers	Winangay Kinship Carer Assessment Tool	Y
Bussey and Lucero (2013)	Journal article	USA	American Indian, Alaska Native	Partnered	Indigenous co-authorship	Family preservation model including services to Native families and child protection system level interventions to reduce out of home placement for children and families	The Denver Indian Family Resource Centre Family Preservation Model	Y
Cameron (2010)	Doctoral thesis	Canada	First Nations	N/A <sup>a</sup>	Indigenous author led	A framework outlining Anishinabe approach to social work with First Nations families	Anishinabe Identity Circle	N
Gerlach and Gignac (2019)	Journal article	Canada	First Nations	Partnered	Indigenous co-authorship	Indigenous community based programme promoting spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical development of Indigenous preschool children, and supporting their parents/caregiver as their primary teachers	Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities	N
Grace et al. (2018)	Journal article	Australia	Australian Aboriginal	Partnered	Indigenous co-authorship	Practice resource supporting practitioners to encourage children and young people to share their experiences and participate in decision making	Kids Say Project	Y
Hamley et al. (2023)	Journal article	NZ	Māori	Indigenous led	Indigenous author led	A model of whanaungatanga (nurturing of relationships) to support rangatahi (Māori young people) wellbeing	Te Tapatoru	N
Hansen (2012)	Doctoral thesis	Canada	First Nations	Indigenous led	Indigenous author led	Culturally appropriate model in working with urban Aboriginal children and families involved with the child welfare system	N/A <sup>b</sup>	N
		USA	Alaska Native	Partnered				Y

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Source	Type of document	Country	Ethnicity	Indigenous led or partnered/collaborative	Indigenous author(s)	Description	Name	Evaluation (Y/N)
Johnson et al. (2015)	Journal article				No Indigenous authorship	Tribally based in-home service with Alaska Native communities	Alaska Disproportionality Reduction Project	
King et al. (2018)	Journal article	NZ	Māori	Indigenous led	Indigenous author led	A tāngata whenua rights-based framework to health and wellbeing for Māori children and young people	Oranga Mokopuna	N
Lawton et al. (2020)	Journal article	Australia	Australian Aboriginal	Indigenous led	Indigenous co-authorship	Aboriginal led community programme addressing complex needs and reducing risk of out of home placement for Aboriginal children and families	Aboriginal Family Planning Circle	Y
Lucero and Leake (2016)	Journal article	USA	American Indian, Alaska Native	Partnered	Indigenous author led	Framework outlining cultural approach to child welfare practice	Tribal Child Welfare Practice Framework	N
Makoare et al. (2021)	Journal article	NZ	Māori	Indigenous led	Indigenous author led	Practice model outlining cultural approach to wellbeing for rangatahi (Māori young people) and whānau	Taikoko (Rising Spring Tide)	<sup>b</sup> N
Makokis et al. (2020)	Journal article	Canada	First Nations	Indigenous led	Indigenous author led	Cree relationship mapping resource	nēhiyaw kesi wāhkotohk (How We Are Related)	N
Mindell et al. (2003)	Journal article	USA	American Indian	Partnered	Indigenous co-authorship	Culturally driven practice model including services to Native families and child protection system level interventions to address the needs of urban Native American communities	Native American Advocacy Programme	<sup>b</sup> N
Moss and Lee (2019)	Journal article	Australia	Australian Aboriginal	Partnered	Indigenous co-authorship	Therapeutic model of practice incorporating Aboriginal concepts of healing and spirit alongside Western based healing practices within a creative therapeutic framework	TeaH (Turn 'em around Healing)	<sup>b</sup> N

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Source	Type of document	Country	Ethnicity	Indigenous led or partnered/collaborative	Indigenous author(s)	Description	Name	Evaluation (Y/N)
Napoli and Gonzalez-Santin (2001)	Journal article	USA	American Indian	Partnered	Indigenous co-authorship	Intensive home-based and wellness services to Native American families living on reservations.	<sup>a</sup> >N/A	N
O'Donnell et al. (2020)	Journal article	Australia	Australian Aboriginal	Partnered	Indigenous co-authorship	Home visiting and advocacy programme for Aboriginal maternal and child health, pre- and postnatal	Aboriginal Cradle to Kinder	Y
Onnis et al. (2020)	Journal article	Australia	Australian Aboriginal	Partnered	No Indigenous authorship	Describes a model for sustainable implementation of a family wellbeing empowerment programme developed by Indigenous peoples	Family Wellbeing Empowerment Program	Y
Radke and Douglas (2020)	Journal article	Australia	Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander	Partnered	No Indigenous authorship	Describes Murri Courts (specialist criminal law practice including elders and community leaders in sentencing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the criminal justice system) and impacts of state ordered out of home care on their children	Murri Courts	<sup>b</sup> N
Robinson et al. (2017)	Journal article	Australia	Australian Aboriginal	Indigenous led	No Indigenous authorship	Therapeutic intervention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in remote communities in Northern Australia who are subject to child protection measures	Let us Start	<sup>b</sup> N
Satour and Goldingay (2021)	Journal article	Australia	Australian Aboriginal	Partnered	Indigenous author led	Teaching resource for students that privilege Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning	Tree of Life	N
Ullrich (2020)	Doctoral thesis	USA	Alaska Native	N/A <sup>a</sup>	Indigenous author led	Conceptual framework supporting relational healing within the context of Alaskan Native child welfare	Indigenous Connectedness Framework	N

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Source	Type of document	Country	Ethnicity	Indigenous led or partnered/collaborative	Indigenous author(s)	Description	Name	Evaluation (Y/N)
van Schilfgaarde and Shelton (2021)	Journal article	USA	American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian	Partnered	Indigenous author led	Describes circle processes as a framework for re-Indigenising the tribal child welfare system through privileging Indigenous worldviews and improving outcomes	Circle Processes	N
Zinga (2012)	Journal article	Canada	First Nations	Indigenous led	No Indigenous authorship	Conceptual approach to re-centre Indigeneity in child and youth care	Youth Mentorship Program	N

<sup>a</sup>N/A refers to sources where name not provided.

<sup>b</sup>Publication is not an evaluation but notes that model has been previously evaluated.

### 3.2 | Location of studies

Nine out of the 24 publications discussed frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes that were located in Australia (Blacklock et al., 2018; Grace et al., 2018; Lawton et al., 2020; Moss & Lee, 2019; O'Donnell et al., 2020; Onnis et al., 2020; Radke & Douglas, 2020; Robinson et al., 2017; Satour & Goldingay, 2021), seven were located in the USA (US) (Bussey & Lucero, 2013; Johnson et al., 2015; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Mindell et al., 2003; Napoli & Gonzalez-Santin, 2001; Ullrich, 2020; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021), five in Canada (Cameron, 2010; Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; Hansen et al., 2012; Makokis et al., 2020; Zinga, 2012) and three in New Zealand (Hamley et al., 2023; King et al., 2018; Makoare et al., 2021). When recording the population that a model and/or framework was serving or aimed at, we coded the ethnicity that was explicitly stated by the author in each respective study. Out of the 24 publications, the US-based publications included frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes that were aimed at or served Alaska Native ( $n = 5$ , Bussey & Lucero, 2013; Johnson et al., 2015; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Ullrich, 2020; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021), American Indian ( $n = 5$ , Bussey & Lucero, 2013; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Mindell et al., 2003; Napoli & Gonzalez-Santin, 2001; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021) and Native Hawaiian ( $n = 1$ , van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021) populations. Of the nine Australian publications, two also included Torres Strait Islanders as well as Indigenous Australian Aboriginal (Blacklock et al., 2018; Radke & Douglas, 2020).

### 3.3 | Authorship of publications

When examining publications and their presentation of frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes, we were interested in whether the authorship of publications was Indigenous led, co-authored with Indigenous authors, or if there was no Indigenous authorship. Out of the 24 publications, 19 were either exclusively led by Indigenous authors ( $n = 11$ ) (Blacklock et al., 2018; Cameron, 2010; Hamley et al., 2023; Hansen, 2012; King et al., 2018; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Makoare et al., 2021; Makokis et al., 2020; Satour & Goldingay, 2021; Ullrich, 2020; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021) or co-authored by an Indigenous author ( $n = 8$ ) (Bussey & Lucero, 2013; Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; Grace et al., 2018; Lawton et al., 2020; Mindell et al., 2003; Moss & Lee, 2019; Napoli & Gonzalez-Santin, 2001; O'Donnell et al., 2020). Five of the 24 publications were authored by non-Indigenous authors (Johnson et al., 2015; Onnis et al., 2020; Radke & Douglas, 2020; Robinson et al., 2017; Zinga, 2012).

### 3.4 | Indigenous-designed and/or led or developed in partnership or collaboration with indigenous peoples

Nine publications presented a framework, model, service, intervention and/or programme that was Indigenous led (Blacklock et al., 2018;



Hamley et al., 2023; Hansen, 2012; King et al., 2018; Lawton et al., 2020; Makoare et al., 2021; Makokis et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2017; Zinga, 2012). Of these nine publications, three were based in New Zealand, and were also all Indigenous author led (Hamley et al., 2023; King et al., 2018; Makoare et al., 2021), with the remainder based in Australia (Blacklock et al., 2018; Lawton et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2017) or Canada (Hansen, 2012; Makokis et al., 2020; Zinga, 2012). Thirteen publications referred to services, programmes and/or interventions that were developed in partnership or collaboration with Indigenous peoples (Bussey & Lucero, 2013; Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; Grace et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2015; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Mindell et al., 2003; Moss & Lee, 2019; Napoli & Gonzalez-Santin, 2001; O'Donnell et al., 2020; Onnis et al., 2020; Radke & Douglas, 2020; Satour & Goldingay, 2021; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021). Two publications were not applicable to this analysis category as they were empirical explorations of and elaborations on conceptual frameworks (Cameron, 2010; Ullrich, 2020).

### 3.5 | Evaluation of programmes, services, models or frameworks

We were interested if publications were evaluating a framework, model, service, intervention and/or programme. Of the 24 publications, seven were evaluation studies (Blacklock et al., 2018; Bussey & Lucero, 2013; Grace et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2015; Lawton et al., 2020; O'Donnell et al., 2020; Onnis et al., 2020). A further six publications, while not evaluative studies per se, did discuss a model that had been evaluated in the past (Hansen, 2012; Makoare et al., 2021; Mindell et al., 2003; Moss & Lee, 2019; Radke & Douglas, 2020; Robinson et al., 2017).

### 3.6 | Key practice and programme dimensions

We identified 11 key dimensions of Indigenous led frameworks, models, services, interventions or programmes across the 24 publications (Table 2). Several of these overlapped with one another, and more than one dimension was often identified in a single publication. The 11 key dimensions were: Relationality; Cultural Safety; Indigenous Knowledge Systems; Cultural Connectivity; Family/Kinship/Whānau Connectivity; Self-determination; Collective Wellbeing; Place; Time; Partnerships; and Rights. In the following sections we present these dimensions, ordered from most frequently to least frequently identified.

#### 3.6.1 | Relationality

Relationality and relational practices emerged as a key dimension in a majority of the publications. Eighteen of the 24 publications highlighted the importance of honouring Indigenous worldviews and

holistic understandings of the relationships and relational processes within and between families, communities, ancestors and the natural environment (Cameron, 2010; Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; Grace et al., 2018; Hamley et al., 2023; Hansen, 2012; Johnson et al., 2015; King et al., 2018; Lawton et al., 2020; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Makokis et al., 2020; Moss & Lee, 2019; Napoli & Gonzalez-Santin, 2001; Onnis et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2017; Satour & Goldingay, 2021; Ullrich, 2020; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021; Zinga, 2012). This strong emphasis on relationality spanned geographic locations. In the Hamley et al. (2023) study, for instance, Indigenous Māori rangatahi (young people) underscored the central importance to their wellbeing of supportive relationships not only with immediate family/whānau (Indigenous Māori meaning extended family/family group) but across 'a wide variety of elders, ancestors and atua/environments' (p. 8). Similarly, Ullrich (2020) emphasized the centrality of 'relational continuity to siblings, parents, extended family, tribal community, environment and culture/spirit' (p. 111) in the wellbeing of Alaska Native children involved with child welfare services. In the USA, van Schilfgaarde and Shelton (2021) likewise noted that, 'Indigenous families are not isolated trees. They are part of a vast, ancient, and intricate society that is connected, communicative, and interdependent' (p. 702).

#### 3.6.2 | Cultural safety

Fourteen of the 24 publications highlighted the importance of cultural safety when working with Indigenous communities (Blacklock et al., 2018; Cameron, 2010; Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; Grace et al., 2018; Hansen, 2012; Lawton et al., 2020; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Makokis et al., 2020; Mindell et al., 2003; Moss & Lee, 2019; Napoli & Gonzalez-Santin, 2001; O'Donnell et al., 2020; Onnis et al., 2020; Satour & Goldingay, 2021). Defining cultural safety, Curtis et al. (2019) emphasized that it 'encompasses a critical consciousness where ... professionals ... and organisations engage in ongoing self-reflection and self-awareness and hold themselves accountable for providing culturally safe care, as defined by the [user of services] and their communities' (p. 14). Although terminology varied across studies in the sub-sample, there was consistent emphasis on the importance of critical reflection on cultural differences, preferences and power dynamics (for instance, Satour & Goldingay, 2021), as well as ongoing engagement in cultural learning by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers (for instance, O'Donnell et al., 2020).

#### 3.6.3 | Indigenous knowledge systems

Indigenous knowledge systems constitute a 'cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment' (Berkes, 2012, p. 7). Thirteen of the 24 publications in this review described the need for frameworks, models,

TABLE 2 Frequency with which key dimensions are explicitly or implicitly cited in the 24 studies.

Source	Collective wellbeing	Cultural connectivity	Cultural safety	Family/kinship/Whanau connectivity	Indigenous knowledge systems	Partnerships	Place	Relationality	Rights	Self-determination	Time
Blacklock et al. (2018)	✓	✓	✓								
Bussey and Lucero (2013)		✓		✓		✓	✓				
Cameron (2010)		✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓
Gerlach and Gignac (2019)		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓			✓
Grace et al. (2018)		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Hamley et al. (2023)				✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Hansen (2012)		✓	✓	✓				✓			✓
Johnson et al. (2015)					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
King et al. (2018)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lawton et al. (2020)		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Lucero and Leake (2016)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Makoare et al. (2021)		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				
Makokis et al. (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Mindell et al. (2003)			✓			✓				✓	
Moss and Lee (2019)	✓		✓		✓			✓			
Napoli and Gonzalez-Santin (2001)		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
O'Donnell et al. (2020)		✓	✓								
Omnis et al. (2020)			✓					✓			
Racke and Douglas (2020)	✓			✓					✓		
Robinson et al. (2017)			✓	✓				✓			✓
Satour and Goldingay (2021)		✓	✓					✓			
Ullrich (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
van Schilfgaarde and Shelton (2021)	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Zinga (2012)		✓		✓				✓			
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>

services, interventions and/or programmes to be grounded within Indigenous knowledge systems (Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; Hamley et al., 2023; Hansen, 2012; Johnson et al., 2015; King et al., 2018; Lawton et al., 2020; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Makoare et al., 2021; Makokis et al., 2020; Moss & Lee, 2019; Napoli & Gonzalez-Santin, 2001; Ullrich, 2020; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021). For instance, Makokis et al. (2020) stressed the importance of critiquing and disrupting colonial concepts and definitions of children and childhood with 'nēhiyaw [Cree] ways of knowing, being and doing in relation to children and their families' journey in this world' (p.45). Similarly, van Schilfgaarde and Shelton (2021) emphasized that indigenizing child welfare systems requires attentiveness to Indigenous life-ways and worldviews.

### 3.6.4 | Cultural connectivity

Twelve of the 24 publications emphasized the centrality of cultural connectivity for Indigenous children and families and/or whānau. Learning about and participating in their own culture was highlighted as contributing to a sense of belonging, development of identity, and holistic wellbeing for Indigenous children and families/whānau, in addition to contributing to the collective preservation of Indigenous culture (Blacklock et al., 2018; Bussey & Lucero, 2013; Cameron, 2010; Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; King et al., 2018; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Makoare et al., 2021; Makokis et al., 2020; O'Donnell et al., 2020; Satour & Goldingay, 2021; Ullrich, 2020; Zinga, 2012). Aboriginal mothers in the Cradle to Kinder (AC2K) home visiting programme in Australia identified opportunities to connect with their culture, and by extension their community, as a key strength of the programme (O'Donnell et al., 2020). Likewise, in New Zealand, the *He kaiawhakatere hau ahau* practice model (Makoare et al., 2021) identified connections with cultural heritage and practices—'knowledge of how to be Māori and the skills of how to do Māori' (p. 13)—as a core mechanism in enhancing the wellbeing of rangatahi (young people) and whānau Māori.

### 3.6.5 | Family/kinship/Whānau connectivity

Eleven of the 24 publications accentuated the importance of maintaining family/kinship/whānau connectivity for Indigenous children and young people (Bussey & Lucero, 2013; Cameron, 2010; King et al., 2018; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Makoare et al., 2021; Makokis et al., 2020; Radke & Douglas, 2020; Robinson et al., 2017; Ullrich, 2020; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021; Zinga, 2012). In Indigenous child welfare programs and services, this emphasis on family connections honours not only the centrality of connectedness with family and kin to the wellbeing of Indigenous children and young people (Ullrich, 2020) but also the vital roles that Indigenous children and young people play in relation to the collective health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities (Makokis et al., 2020). As King et al. (2018) and Radke and Douglas (2020) point out, the importance of kinship

ties to the integrity and wellbeing of Indigenous children, families and communities is also supported by both domestic and international rights instruments.

### 3.6.6 | Self-determination

Ten of the 24 publications referred to the centrality of Indigenous self-determination in the development and/or implementation of frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes, underscoring the need for Indigenous priorities and preferences to be honoured not only in the design and delivery of programs and services, but in policy making and planning (Cameron, 2010; Grace et al., 2018; Hamley et al., 2023; King et al., 2018; Lawton et al., 2020; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Mindell et al., 2003; Napoli & Gonzalez-Santin, 2001; Ullrich, 2020; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021). Studies in this group also emphasized the importance of implementation occurring in ways that honour the interdependence, interconnectedness and reciprocity of Indigenous worldviews.

### 3.6.7 | Collective wellbeing

Eight of the 24 publications referred to the importance of supporting collective wellbeing for Indigenous children, young people, families and communities (Blacklock et al., 2018; King et al., 2018; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Makokis et al., 2020; Moss & Lee, 2019; Radke & Douglas, 2020; Ullrich, 2020; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021). van Schilfgaarde and Shelton (2021) highlight how from an Indigenous worldview, issues impacting Indigenous children and young people (such as child welfare involvement or removal to foster care) result in a loss of balance for the entire community. Corollary to this is the obligation this places on communities to redress any imbalance. As Lucero and Leake (2016) emphasized, keeping children safe requires Indigenous communities to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all community members: from this perspective, Radke and Douglas (2020) noted, child safety is a collective construct, requiring 'community-connected responses' (p. 396).

### 3.6.8 | Place

Eight of the 24 publications highlighted the centrality of place in relation to Indigenous children, young people and families/whānau, and the need to recognize and acknowledge the Indigenous histories embedded within physical environments (Bussey & Lucero, 2013; Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; Grace et al., 2018; Hamley et al., 2023; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Makoare et al., 2021; Makokis et al., 2020; Ullrich, 2020). Hamley et al. (2023) noted that for Indigenous Māori children, young people and families/whānau, attachment to place is fundamentally underpinned by ancestral and familial relationships that are expressed through Māori ways knowing, being and doing in relation to place. Similarly, Ullrich (2020) underscored the importance of

environmental connectedness, including opportunities for culturally-grounded participation in land-based skills and activities, to the identity, wellbeing and generational continuity of Alaska Native children and families.

### 3.6.9 | Time

Six of the 24 publications emphasized the importance of valuing and respecting the time required for developing, building, and maintaining necessary relationships in and with Indigenous communities (Cameron, 2010; Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; Hamley et al., 2023; Hansen, 2012; Lucero & Leake, 2016; Robinson et al., 2017). Studies in this group emphasized the importance of taking time to build trusting relationships, primarily for cultural reasons (Cameron, 2010) but also recognizing that mistrust of services is pervasive among Indigenous peoples as a result of generations of harmful interactions with colonizing systems (Hansen, 2012), and the need for ongoing responsiveness to the structural and practical issues negatively impacting Indigenous families and their children (Gerlach & Gignac, 2019). The relationships between Indigenous concepts of time (in the present and over generations) and Indigenous wellbeing were also highlighted (Cameron, 2010; Hamley et al., 2023), alongside the ways in which for Indigenous peoples, 'colonisation and neoliberalism have reconfigured our relationship to time to prioritise productivity, efficiency, and control' (Hamley et al., 2023, p. 9) over relationality and responsiveness to cultural practices.

### 3.6.10 | Partnerships

Five of the 24 publications described the importance of meaningful partnerships with Indigenous peoples (Bussey & Lucero, 2013; Johnson et al., 2015; King et al., 2018; Lawton et al., 2020; Mindell et al., 2003). For instance, in their description of a tribal in-home service, Johnson et al. (2015) highlighted the centrality of trust when it comes to meaningful partnering with Indigenous communities, noting that partnerships based on trust 'create community buy-in and support, as well as improve collaborative relationships between tribal and state child welfare stakeholders to work together as partners' (p. 503). Writing as external researchers, Lawton et al. (2020) identified key dimensions of culturally responsive partnerships between Aboriginal-led family services and external, non-Aboriginal evaluators, while also advocating for more funding to support Aboriginal-led research and evaluation.

### 3.6.11 | Rights

Five of the 24 publications referred to the importance of Indigenous rights, whether under Indigenous laws, local rights instruments (treaties) and/or other human rights instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Grace et al., 2018;

Johnson et al., 2015; King et al., 2018; Radke & Douglas, 2020; van Schilfgaarde & Shelton, 2021). In addition to underscoring the fundamental right of Indigenous children and families to connections with kin, community, and culture (King et al., 2018; Radke & Douglas, 2020), King et al. (2018) highlighted the requirement to disrupt western concepts of rights (presumed to have universal relevance), instead re-centring Indigenous and decolonial rights-based approaches to developing and implementing frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes.

## 4 | DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative literature review was to explore and illuminate the key dimensional elements underpinning frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes applied within the broader area of child welfare and protection with a focus on Indigenous children, young people, and their whānau/families. Just 24 publications met our review criteria, confirming the conclusion from other studies that the literature in this area is still relatively modest. Nonetheless, findings of the review reveal commonalities across Indigenous cultures and contexts that from an Indigenous perspective are considered fundamental to supporting Indigenous children, young people and whānau/families involved with child welfare and child protective services. This pan-Indigenous perspective is itself a valuable contribution. In their review of the literature on the involvement of Indigenous children in Anglo child welfare systems, Sinha et al. (2021) noted that 'despite the large number of articles we coded as *programs and services*, we did not find any pieces that provided clear, explicit discussions in terms of commonalities in terms of approaches, underlying practice values or paradigms' (p. 21). In contrast, the current study clearly identified core domains that are shared across Indigenous nations, even as they are enacted in ways that are context specific (Wildcat & Voth, 2023).

The majority of the cross-cutting practice and programme dimensions identified in our review, particularly those most consistently identified across studies, align closely with those highlighted in the broader literature on services to Indigenous children, young people and families, including the central importance of relational practices and interventions that support and strengthen connections to culture and cultural identity (Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Krakouer, 2023; Krakouer et al., 2018; Ritland et al., 2020; Ullrich, 2019), and collectivist understandings of Indigenous children and young people as inseparable from family, community, and tribal networks (O'Keefe et al., 2022). At the programme level, the broader literature also supports our findings regarding the importance of services grounded in Indigenous knowledges (O'Keefe et al., 2022), of robust and trusting partnerships between Indigenous and mainstream and other agencies (Lewis et al., 2023a,b; Jongen et al., 2022), and of policies and practices that honour Indigenous rights, including the fundamental right to self-determination (Cleland, 2022).

Also identified in our review are two domains—place and time—that are less consistently highlighted in the wider literature, and indeed were not as prominent in the literature we reviewed as some

other dimensions. Yet both domains, we suggest, warrant greater emphasis and attention in relation to Indigenous child and family/whānau services. As Murton (2012) noted, connections to place and land are integral to the identity of Indigenous peoples: 'there is no place without self and no self without place' (p. 90). In the papers we reviewed that foregrounded this domain, place was described as both a vital source of cultural identity and wellbeing, and a critical element in service provision. In practice, attentiveness to place occurred at two levels: first, through the creation and delivery of place-based services that support and nurture belonging and cultural and tribal continuity (Gerlach & Gignac, 2019), and second, through interventions that provide opportunities for Indigenous children, young people, and families/whānau to engage with the physical environment and the natural world (Ullrich, 2020). In the broader literature, the importance and value of 'safe care spaces and places' has been underscored by Van Herk et al. (2012, p. 649), whose research on strengthening access to and engagement with preventive health services by urban Indigenous families illuminated the critical role played by service settings that enact and embody Indigenous ways of relating and being. Likewise, the natural world as a powerful medium for intervention is supported by the literature on the wellbeing of Indigenous children and young people, which points to engagement with land and the natural environment as helpful in managing stress, calming emotions, sustaining intergenerational relationships, and (re)engaging with cultural practices (Hatala et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2023a,b; Ullrich, 2019).

Similarly, our review highlights the importance of programming that is responsive to Indigenous constructions of time, both in day-to-day relationships and in the structuring and availability of services. As King et al. (2023) point out, settler colonial time, with its emphasis on both the here-and-now and on time boundedness, imposes a temporal structure that is inconsistent with expansive Indigenous temporalities. For Indigenous peoples, time is typically understood as continuous, dynamic, cyclical, and open-ended (King et al., 2023). In practical terms, attention to Indigenous temporalities in child and family services involves ensuring that there is space and time for relationships to evolve with children, young people and families (Lewis et al., 2023a,b), for attentiveness to the family and community responsibilities of service users, and for open-ended responsiveness to emerging issues and needs (Lo & Houkamau, 2012).

Despite the commonalities we identified across the studies in the review, it is essential to note that unlike western models of evidence-based services, which emphasize the importance of fidelity to core aspects of interventions and services across settings (Bartley et al., 2017), the programs and services identified here are also highly customized. They have shared elements, but consistent with the wide diversity among Indigenous peoples, their specific teachings, and the places they relate to (Sumida Huaman & Martin, 2020), they are also unique: contextual, locally tailored and specific to place and community. Deep connections with place and land, for example, are common to Indigenous peoples around the world. However, in programmes and services at the local level, connections to local places and the practices that relate to these places, are enacted in ways that are contextually and culturally specific. For example, in Alaska, participants in Ullrich's

(2020) study identified involvement in culturally grounded subsistence activities such as hunting and fishing as a key element sustaining the cultural identity of Alaska native children and families. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Makoare et al. (2021) described an environmentally oriented summer camp for rangatahi Māori/young people focused not only on outdoor activities but on learning the whakapapa (genealogy and history) of that particular land/place and its people.

Our findings on the dimensions that from an Indigenous perspective are essential to culturally safe programs and services—such as place, time, relationality and the connectedness of children, families, kin, communities and place/land, in the present and over time—bring into view the need for attention to the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of programme design: the worldviews and deep structure of assumptions about ways of being, knowing, and doing that powerfully shape programmatic practices and priorities. As Blackstock et al. (2020) point out, Indigenous peoples are 'bound together by shared ontological viewpoints and knowledges that situate our societies, and relationships with all things, including the land, within expansive concepts of time and space' (p. 1) These ontologies underpin and inform the principles guiding Indigenous services and programs that seek to serve Indigenous children, young people, and families. The onto-epistemological assumptions embedded in mainstream child protection services, in contrast, are western: 'thinking [that] is deterministic, segmented, privileges new knowledge, and gives primacy to individual rights and current reality' (Blackstock et al., 2020, p. 2).

In considering the potential implications of these onto-epistemological differences for contemporary child protection services, we draw attention to the important distinction Whyte (2018) makes between how Indigenous knowledges are typically regarded in mainstream settings, and their role in Indigenous communities. For Indigenous peoples, Whyte asserts, Indigenous knowledges 'serve as irreplaceable sources of guidance' (p. 63). In mainstream contexts, however, Indigenous knowledges tend to be treated as 'supplemental' (p. 63): that is, as extensions to, but not fundamentally transformative of, existing systems and practices.

This distinction is exemplified in the child protection context, where many of the core programmatic principles identified in this review are not yet fully embraced. For instance, expansive understandings of time and commitments to open-ended relational processes (Eketone, 2021) frequently sit in tension with the time-limited services and time-pressured workers typical of mainstream public child protection services (Hjärpe, 2022). Similarly, although recent policy efforts recognize Indigenous collectivist understandings of children and families (for instance in Canada and New Zealand), in practice these understandings contend with, and are frequently undermined by, longstanding emphases in Western child protection systems on the safety, wellbeing, and 'best interests' of the individual child (Blackstock et al., 2023; Keddell, 2023).

These complexities flow into and present challenges for Indigenous led child and family services. As Blackstock et al. (2020) noted, 'Another area of contemporary colonial discrimination is the tendency ... to promote Indigenous managed services that are embedded in western laws and approaches. While these services augment culturally

appropriate services for Indigenous children they fall far short of respecting Indigenous self-determination' (p. 3). Examples include tensions over individualistic versus collectivist understandings of rights (Cleland, 2022; King et al., 2018), or practices that disconnect children's best interests from those of their families and communities (Ullrich, 2019). The findings of this review, in contrast, highlight domains that for Indigenous peoples hold what Whyte terms 'governance value' (p. 63). That is, they identify dimensions of programs and services that from an Indigenous perspective are essential to their trustworthiness and cultural integrity.

#### 4.1 | Strengths and limitations

To our knowledge, this is the first review that examines existing frameworks, models, services, interventions and/or programmes within the area of care and protection with a specific focus on Indigenous children, young people, families and communities. Our focus on Indigenous-designed and/or led or partnered work ensured we privileged Indigenous worldviews. As noted, the review breaks new ground in identifying commonalities across Indigenous cultures and contexts, while remaining mindful of the many ways in which Indigenous peoples and cultures are distinct.

Additionally, our analytical framework assessing the presence of Indigenous lead authors or co-authors of publications contributes further insights to the knowledge base around ongoing issues of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007) in knowledge practices in this area. For instance, despite their central focus on Indigenous children, young people and families, five of the 24 publications did not have any Indigenous authors. Of these five, only one publication demonstrated that the authors had clearly reflected upon and outlined their own positionality as non-Indigenous scholars researching and publishing within this specific space.

Limitations of the review include that the 24 publications were located in peer reviewed journals and grey literature available in searchable data bases, specifically dissertations and theses. This was to manage the scope of the review. However, we note that as a result, selection bias cannot be excluded. There is also the chance that some applicable publications were excluded due to the search strategy, for instance, the two databases searched, and the timeframe restriction (last 20 years). The data synthesis generating the 11 key dimensions was also an interpretive process. As such, others may have had different interpretations. Nonetheless, the study findings contribute valuable insights to efforts, across jurisdictions, to strengthen Indigenous leadership and content in the child protection sphere, and to reduce the need for interventions that remove Indigenous children from their families and communities.

## 5 | CONCLUSION

Child welfare and protection services that are Indigenous-designed and/or led, and/or developed in partnership or collaboration with Indigenous peoples are increasingly recognized as a vital element in addressing the profound over-representation of Indigenous children

and young people in public child protection systems, preventing the removal of Indigenous children and young people from their families and communities and healing the ongoing harms to Indigenous children, young people, families and communities that come from public system involvement. The findings of our review identify cross-cutting principles, grounded in Indigenous knowledges and practices, that ought to undergird and inform frameworks, services, programmes focused on Indigenous peoples in the child welfare space. There are strong arguments in support of vesting the responsibility for delivering these services primarily with Indigenous peoples and communities (Blackstock et al., 2023). However, the principles identified here also provide guidance on the programmatic elements essential to centring Indigenous knowledges, standpoints, and priorities in mainstream child welfare and child protection services (Hamilton et al., 2022).

We acknowledge the growing awareness, across CANZUS countries, of many of the key dimensions identified in this review, together with increased efforts to ensure that child protection services are culturally safe for Indigenous families. Nonetheless, concerns persist about the extent to which Indigenous knowledges and practices remain largely peripheral to mainstream child protection services and frameworks (Blackstock et al., 2020, 2023; Libesman & Gray, 2023; Oates, 2020; Sinha et al., 2021). Our findings similarly underscore the need for ongoing—and vigilant—advocacy for Indigenous-designed and led work, including support for Indigenous intellectual and scholarly leadership. Only 24 publications met the criteria for inclusion in our review, highlighting the need for greater investment in Indigenous designed and led programmes and services. Furthermore, five of these publications did not include Indigenous authors, underscoring the parallel need for diligence in ensuring that much-needed research and evaluation studies, and related knowledge production and dissemination activities, are led by Indigenous organizations and researchers.

'Making room' (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020) for Indigenous led child welfare and protection services requires action on multiple levels: creating policy and practice space for interventions and services informed, designed, or led by Indigenous peoples, ensuring that these programmes and services are well funded and resourced, growing opportunities for Indigenous workers and leadership in mainstream child protection services, and encouraging Indigenous led evaluation of Indigenous programmes. Importantly, it also requires reflection on and critical engagement with the deep structure and guiding assumptions of mainstream child welfare and child protection services and paradigms, which currently hamper efforts to fully centre policies, programmes and practices grounded in Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, being, doing and relating. As Walters et al. (2020) have pointed out, for efforts to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and support Indigenous leadership to truly transform policies and programs and advance Indigenous self-determination, 'we must decolonize simultaneously as we indigenize interventions' (p. S56).

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**CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

None declared.

**DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

**ORCID**

Susan P. Kemp  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7481-8911>

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