Reference No. 43

Summarising: Finlayson, Daly & Smith (2000), The Kuranda Community Case Study
Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990–2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

Title of Research:
The Kuranda Community Case Study

Research Publication:


Name of Researcher(s):
J.D. Finlayson, A.E. Daly and D.E. Smith

Time period:
The research was undertaken between 1999 and 2001

Geographic location:
The research was undertaken in Kuranda (Qld), considered part of 'settled' Australia.

Methodology:
This research combines both ethnographic data-gathering and quantitative analysis to the study of 'family', 'households' and 'governance' in the Kuranda community.

Aims:
The paper aims to provide insights about:

- Contemporary Indigenous family and household formation and domestic economies in settled Australia;
- The impact of mobility on families and their households;
- The role of parenting and child-rearing; and
- The relationship between family structure and community governance.

Selected findings and insights:
The Kuranda households displayed a youthful demographic profile. Of a total 180 household members, 43% were children under 16 years of age and 57% were adults.

- The 28 households were fairly evenly split between males and females (averaging 3.03 males and 3.2 females per household). The households had an average of 6.4 persons per dwelling (comprising 3.6 adults and 2.8 children per household). By both Indigenous and non-Indigenous indicators, Kuranda households were unequivocally overcrowded when compared to the national average of 3.7 persons per Indigenous household and three times higher than the non-Indigenous national average of 2.7 persons per household.

- Of the 28 households, 57% had three or more generations of related kin present (7% had four generational levels) and 36% had two generations. Only 7% consisted of single generation sets of kin-related members. No households had only unrelated members or single persons.
Both adult and child members of households had a network of other residences in the Kuranda area between which they moved:

- 59% of respondents stated there were other places in Kuranda where they sometimes stayed, and 58% had done so in the past four weeks.
- Children traveled with or without their parents and siblings, and the flow was unpredictable. Some 50% of children in the same households sometimes resided in other places in the same community.
- There remained a core of adults who maintain very stable 'home bases' (or usual residences) in the midst of the more short-term mobility of others.

The compositional complexity of families within households was paralleled by equally complex child-care arrangements.

- 43 per cent of children in the surveyed households had both biological parents present and looking after them;
- 56 per cent of children had sole parents (either present in the household, or absent). In the absence of sole parents, the primary carer of their children in the majority of cases was a person from the grandparental generation: either biological grandmother or grandfather (from either the maternal or paternal side), or other relations of that generation;
- In some cases children were split between relations: some staying with the mother and others reside elsewhere; and
- Like adults, some children had a circuit of usual 'home bases' between which they move.

Educational implications:

The paper's detailed account of the composition of Indigenous families and households, family mobility, the nature of extended families, parenting responsibilities and shared child care arrangements has direct implications for the effective introduction of educational partnerships between the school and community and the delivery of educational services. These are threefold:

- Determining who might be the most appropriate person to be a 'signatory' on an agreement regarding the education of a student will not be straightforward as several people may be responsible for and assist in the development of the student;
- Responsibility of parents or care-givers for monitoring student behaviour such as school attendance and assisting with learning will be made all that more difficult by the high mobility of young people between households; and
• Increased understanding among school staff about the home-life of Indigenous students and the impact this may have upon learning. [culture] [education partnership agreements]

Relevance:

Introductory Topic: Culture, Community and Family Life

Domain 1 - Early Childhood Education

Domain 2 - School and Community Educational Partnerships

Complexity and diversity of communities

Related papers:


