Reference No. 93

Summarising: Petersen (2006), *Culture*
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: Culture


Name of Researcher(s): N. Peterson (a participant in the CAEPR sponsored NATSISS seminar)

Time period: 2002

Geographic location: Australia-wide

Methodology: A statistical analysis of the culture-related items contained in the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.

Aims: The purpose of this paper is to assess the quality and scope of information collected about Indigenous culture in the 2002 NATSISS and, where possible, to compare these data with the data collected in the 1994 NATSISS.

Selected findings and insights: Whilst the prime purpose of the paper was to assess the quality and scope of NATSISS data, the paper provides some interesting analyses of information about some aspects of Indigenous culture.

The research identified substantial differences in participation in cultural activities between those living in remote areas compared to those living in non-remote areas:

- **Attendance at funerals** was high, with 74% of remote Indigenous people aged 15+ years having participated in funeral ceremonies and 36% of those living in non-remote areas over the previous 12 months;
- Participation in ceremonies, sports carnivals and art/craft music or dance festivals was also high with between 53% and 42% of remote Indigenous people attending these events over the previous 12 months. For Indigenous people living in non-remote areas, the percentage ranged from 34% to 16%, depending on type of activity;
- No attendance at cultural activities was reported by 13% of remote Indigenous people and 39% of non-remote Indigenous people.
Overall, a greater proportion of Indigenous people living in remote areas tended to participate in these types of cultural/social activities than those living in non-remote areas. Nevertheless, participation by non-remote Indigenous people remained quite high, suggesting significant cultural retention for these people.

The interest in sport was high, with some 46% of Indigenous people 15+years claiming to have been actively involved in sport as a player or participant. Including those involved in some other official capacity such as coach or administrator, overall some 50% of Indigenous people 15+years reported being actively involved in sport during the 12 months prior to the 2002 NATSISS.

Cultural identification with a tribal group, a language group or a clan⁁ continued to be high: 54% responded that they did identify with a cultural grouping, slightly down from 1994. The large majority (85%) of those living in remote localities recognised homelands/traditional country as did 63% of those Indigenous people living in non-remote areas of Australia.

Educational implications:

The continuing connection of Indigenous people with their culture and country provides opportunities for schools to engage Indigenous students in meaningful ways — through activities which are deeply relevant to Indigenous students and their cultural experience. Teachers are also able to build on the Indigenous culture to promote better understandings among non-Indigenous students of Indigenous culture, thus providing additional incentive for engagement by Indigenous students. [teachers] [curriculum]

Relevance:

Introductory Topic: Culture, Community and Family Life

Domain 2: School and Community Educational Partnerships

Complexity and diversity of communities

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1. The NATSISS item refers to tribal grouping, clan or language group. There is considerable overlap in the use of these terms. Clan is more focused upon group identification with land tracts and country and tribes generally refer to all of those identified with a particular Indigenous language variety. Many Aboriginal people now use the term clan to describe various sets of kin who share common identities based on social relatedness and connection to smaller or larger areas of ‘country’. Kin and kinship is a grouping based upon the degree and type of relatedness between Aboriginal persons.