

**Title:** Cultural Safety and the Protection of Indigenous Women: Lessons Learnt from Basque Fisheries

**Author:** Emma Lee

**Affiliation:** University of Tasmania

**Contact:** Emma.Lee@utas.edu.au

**Session Type:** Presentation

**Abstract:**

I am an Indigenous person, a senior woman of *trawlwulwuy* peoples from *tebrakunna* country in the north-east of Tasmania, Australia. I am concerned that the fact of my being, as an Indigenous woman, is being manufactured, shaped, and overwritten by what I term tourism's 'Establishment men'. Establishment men are academics, policy-makers, industry operators, and tourists, who commodify our black female bodies. Dark tourism, sensuous tourism, wilderness tourism—these touristic forms occur in my country and are masculine, colonising structures that seek to erase the importance of Indigenous women. These structures are cloaked as theoretical insights and experiential freedoms and trade on the geography and ownership of our black female bodies for gain. They adhere to linear, historical narratives of power that craft conditions for our exclusion and do this in the absence of our powerful voices.

An example of the practices of Establishment men is found in Franklin and Cragg's (2001) foundational paper on performance theory and sensuous tourism. Here, women are recast not as exploited 'peasants' and 'Thai bar workers', but as performance objects framing eroticized economies. When exploitation is normalised in critical theory, culturally safe spaces for Indigenous women to engage and participate in tourism research, practice, and benefit are limited. I am mindful of the places where our black female bodies are manufactured, as I consider my future task of assisting our women, Tasmanian Indigenous women, in developing a fledgling cultural fisheries industry with tourism extensions.

As the island state of Australia, and with our history extending back 40,000 years, Tasmania should be well-placed to promote cultural fisheries. Yet there are underpinning conditions that must be addressed before we have our cultural security to act as authentic black female bodies in delivering a tourism service—namely, how to combat our absence, negation, and exclusion. In preparation of this task, I have undertaken 6 months of research in the Basque Autonomous Region of northern Spain in 2016, to learn lessons, amongst other things, on how women shield themselves from exploitative elements within traditional fisheries and food tourism.

Basque women are a connecting strand in fisheries and food tourism. They, and their work, are an immediate link and mediator between seas and lands, where contributions strengthen touristic experiences. Basque women are represented symbolically in street sculpture, fiesta figures, museum exhibits, and poster design, while the tangible aspects are found in their outputs as researchers, managers, sellers, marketers, manufacturers, and distributors of fisheries products.

Through strength and visibility in communal behaviours, and a wider public acceptance of the role of women in fisheries, there is cultural safety in women's ability to articulate and shape spaces for equitable tourism participation and engagement.

Tasmanian Indigenous women aspire to a place of developing healthy economies in cultural fisheries without the commodification of our black bodies through the practices of Establishment men. Like the torn nets that the women mend on the wharves within Basque

country, exploitation practices demand our attention and careful fixes.