

**Module 2 – Research in Context****Second Response Paper**

Animals are an essential and significant aspect of indigenous cultures in British Columbia. In Vancouver, our food industry relies heavily on the wide variety of seafood available to us. With my projects being focused on restaurants and art, there is risk of ignoring the exploitation of the land we live on and the indigenous communities within it. Recognizing the possibility of local businesses and artists culturally appropriating our indigenous peoples or depleting local ecosystems is especially important. Therefore, my research will have to be thorough when it comes to analyzing the logistics of the restaurants I wish to investigate and the art it houses. Communication is key when it comes to understanding the motivations and inner workings of businesses. Therefore, communicating the motivations and practices of the subject being researched is necessary now more than ever.

Northwest coast indigenous art has been exploited endlessly. It's sold as a commodity on almost every souvenir in the Vancouver airport and placed in advertising and designs that have nothing to do with the culture itself. I've seen our local indigenous art designs in many restaurants that seemed to be using it simply for its aesthetic value rather than recognizing its cultural significance. Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes that indigenous art has become "the subject of Western artistic interpretations of indigenous peoples" (51) which are rarely accurate. When researching these places, it'll be particularly interesting to interview the staff and evaluate their knowledge on the art that surrounds them. A more colonial approach would be to only evaluate

the space and its contents based on how they appear and their overall aesthetic appeal. This is a toxic methodology when there are multiple things worth investigating in front of the researcher.

Cindy Charleyboy's talk emphasized the importance of listening. Her protests and court appearances to protect her community's land have forced people to recognize and listen to what they have ignored for generations. In order to conduct thoughtful and considerate research in the modern age, a researcher must listen to what those involved have to say. When it comes to my projects, any and all controversy surrounding the subject of which I'm researching must be taken in to account. It is not enough to research the surface level of the business, art, or entity. In order to create elaborate and successful research, one must consider all the cultural and social aspects involved. This becomes especially important with restaurants. Restaurants are often representing a culture's cuisine and their interior design is usually based around a cultural aesthetic as well. The questions then arise as to who runs these spaces, what their background is, what kind of people are they employing, and what are their overall influences/goals.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith outlines the western concept of the individual and the Western hypocritical obsession with it (47-50). She notes that "Human nature, that is, the essential characteristics of an individual person, is an overarching concern of Western philosophy even though 'human' and 'nature' are also seen to be in opposition to each other" (48). One of the most natural ways humans connect to nature is the food they eat. The colonial attitude towards food often removes the natural element of it. The modern restaurant as we know it eliminates

any association to what is delivered on a plate to where it came from. Customers don't tend to think about or acknowledge the animal they're about to consume in any way. This is in complete contrast to indigenous practices in which the animal is treated with a profound respect and connection. The question worth exploring is how a restaurant can acknowledge the unceded territory it exists on along with the wildlife it is utilizing. This can be done in many ways, including surrounding guests with art relevant to the food that's on their plate. Perhaps acknowledging where the animal comes from and indigenous uses of it on the menu would also be a good practice. As long as these things are done with a genuine goal of reconciliation and respect rather than purely profit motive.

The film *Arrival* outlined the dangers of interpreting things wrong. The aliens in the film can be looked at as a culture in their own right. We can imagine a similar experience happened during colonialism, where one group was unable to communicate with or understand the other group. This easily leads to aggression, violence, or lack of empathy and patience. The result can be catastrophic and have future consequences (as the film brilliantly outlined). For research to be successful, one must understand their limitations. If something is new and unfamiliar it is necessary not to act out of emotion. For research to be successful, the researcher must approach their subject with patience and view it as something that can eventually be understood. This is what I intend to use as a guideline. With these intentions, the conclusions made by the research can be modern and considerate, perpetuating a positive worldview on our indigenous communities.

Works Cited

Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies*. London: Zed Books Ltd, pp.42-57.