

# STUDENT RESEARCH WEEK

POSTERS · TALKS CREATIVE WORK

## Hide & seek: Whiteness culture on university campuses

**Talk:** Brittany Pitruniak  
*Open Studies, MacEwan University*

**Faculty mentor:** Dr. Iain Macpherson  
*Communication Studies: Professional Communication, MacEwan University*

### Abstract

This study serves to analyze the whiteness culture on university campuses. It is exploring what the current preconceptions of race on campus and ultimately looks at “how to reconstruct [the] current habits regarding race” (MacMullen, 2009, p. 169). Bay (as cited in Kolchin, 2002) continues to explore privilege and the impact race has on it:

Every racial identification implies a negative judgement of outsiders-feeling that it is ‘good’ to be white (or black or Asian) inevitably implies there is something less good about being non-white (or nonblack or non-Asian) — encouraging a renewed sense of whiteness is unlikely to promote a more equitable or harmonious social order. (p. 169-170)

The onset of this research does not assume whiteness culture is a social structure that naturally exists on university campuses, but rather explores whiteness culture as a conversation, and if it does exist then how it is perceived, felt, contested, denied, discussed, and debated. Primarily, the study serves to answer the question: How is whiteness perceived and articulated by students on campus? Furthermore, the study will also reveal insight into a subsidiary question: what are universities implementing to create an inclusive and secure campus for all students?

The study will be conducted using a mixed method approach. Data is gathered using quantitative methods, succeeded by qualitative research. Through content analysis of public materials on MacEwan University campus, including posters, videos, social media, and policies, a foundation of what currently exists will be established. This will be then be succeeded by critical discourse analysis of these public materials followed with interviews and focus groups with current MacEwan students, in which the feelings, perceptions of whiteness culture are discussed, contested, debated, or possibly denied.

# STUDENT RESEARCH WEEK

POSTERS · TALKS CREATIVE WORK

Diversity and multicultural communities are constantly increasing within Canada, and this activity can be seen at a hyperlocal level on a university campus. Universities are striving to increase international ties to increase their international student population, as well as create ties for domestic students to take advantage of. In doing so, campuses are becoming a mosaic of cultures and interrelations are naturally forming. This is the ideal environment one hopes exists on an inclusive campus, and this research will provide data supporting this model or revealing the underpinnings that create barriers within a university community.

## References

MacMullen, T. (2009). *Habits of whiteness: A pragmatist reconstruction*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press