



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

REBA HARMONIZATION & EDUCATION EVENT

June 6, 2025

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As a provincial organization, we recognize that our work extends across many Indigenous lands and territories throughout British Columbia. We acknowledge with respect and humility that our Vancouver offices are located on the traditional and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́ilwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

We also acknowledge the diverse First Nations across British Columbia, who have inherent rights rooted in the connection to their lands and waters, which have never been surrendered. In the spirit of reconciliation, we will aim to practice cultural safety value, Indigenous ways of knowing, and respect the rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

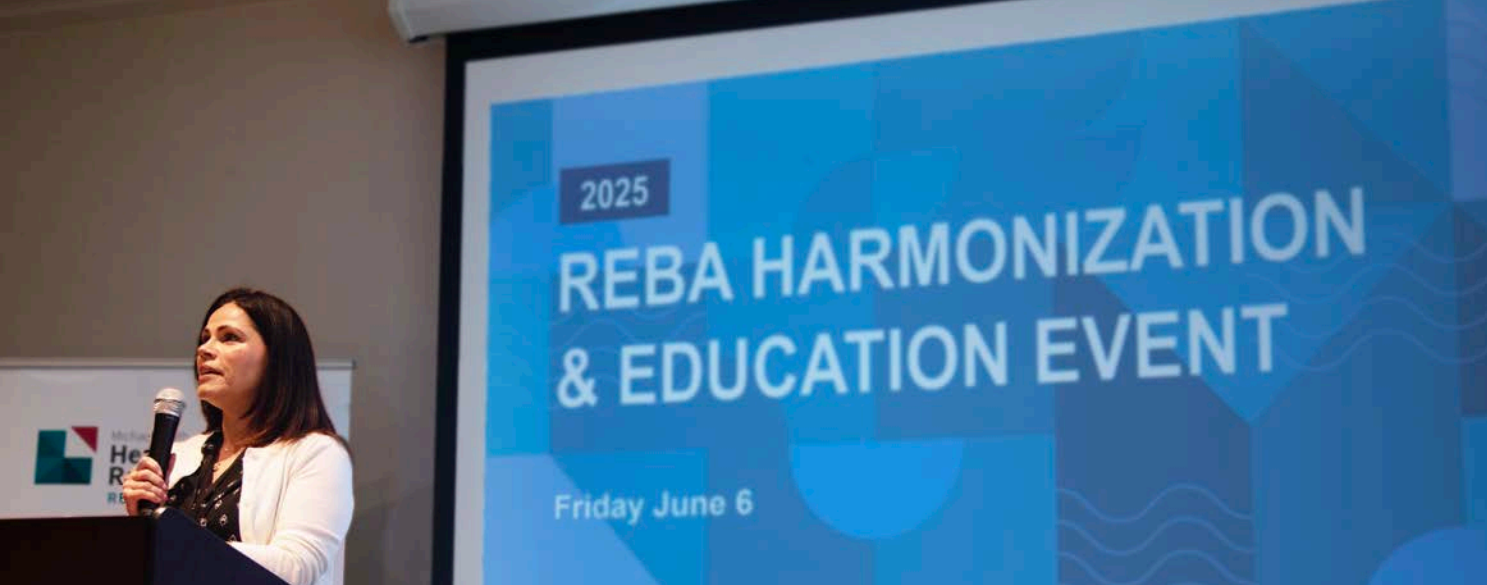


The third annual in-person education event for British Columbia's Research Ethics Board Administrators (REBA) was held on June 6th at Granville Island Hotel in Vancouver.

This year, the event was co-organized by Michael Smith Health Research BC (Health Research BC), UBC, UBC Okanagan and Interior Health. Funding was provided by Health Research BC and the BC SUPPORT Unit.

This engaging event brought together new and seasoned members from 27 REBs across British Columbia to reconnect in-person, share knowledge, and learn alongside one another.





The event opening

It was a privilege and honour to have Musqueam Elder Martin Sparrow and his wife, Shona Sparrow, open the event with a traditional Musqueam welcoming song. This allowed attendees to ground themselves and set their intentions for the day.

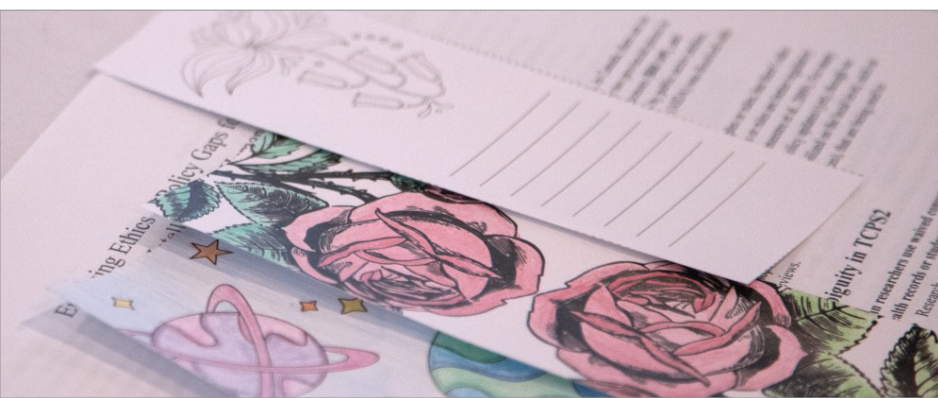
Alison Orth, Portfolio Director, Clinical Trials BC, welcomed attendees and emphasized the importance of research ethics in shaping a more equitable, effective health research ecosystem in BC. Strongly aligned with Health Research BC's strategic directions, research ethics is key to:

- Building and retaining health research talent, by supporting ethics administrators with access to new information, resources and training, which then enables consistency and quality in the ethical review and approval process
- Catalyzing health research system solutions, by working to create a unified, streamlined and provincial approach to research ethics reviews
- Mobilizing action on health research priorities, by strengthening research ethics so that health research in priority areas becomes a reality

Following the opening, attendees participated in an intention-setting activity, which involved colouring and decorating bookmarks of their choice.

As they expressed their creativity, attendees were encouraged to reflect on what they wanted to learn or to accomplish that day, and to write their intentions on their bookmarks.

To close the activity, each person then gifted the bookmark to another attendee, creating a meaningful and personal moment of connection to start the day.



Emerging trends in research ethics



CanReview — A pan-Canadian single research ethics review for clinical trials: How to make it work for you and your researchers

Susan Marlin, President and CEO, Clinical Trials Ontario, and Erika Basile, Director of Research Ethics and Compliance, Western University

Susan provided an overview of CanReview's vision and goals, as well as updates on current engagement with 94 partner institutions, recruitment of other organizations, and public discourse.

Erika then talked about how to make single REB review for multi-centre research work at institutions. She shared how Western University adopted a second REB management system, the importance of balancing institutional alignment with REB responsibilities, shifting REB oversight to another board, and the benefits of a qualification process.



Emerging ethics & policy gaps for artificial intelligence in human subjects research in Canada

Victoria Philibert, Research Ethics Board Coordinator, Island Health

In her session, Victoria presented on emerging ethics and policy gaps for artificial intelligence in human subjects research in Canada. In her presentation, Victoria discussed the absence of regulation on AI in Canada that impacts REB review, the ambiguity in TCPS2, using AI to assist with REB review, and how AI creates new and more urgent grounds for disclosing material incidental findings.



Ethical considerations in patient-oriented research

Larry Mróz, Community Engagement Lead, BC SUPPORT Unit, Health Research BC, and Maria-Jose Torrejon, Capacity Sustainability Specialist, BC SUPPORT Unit, Health Research BC

Larry and Maria presented on ethical considerations on patient-oriented research. The presentation provided a clear definition of patient-oriented research and the difference between participants and partners. Larry and Maria also emphasized the importance for clinicians to clearly define and set boundaries in a privacy or confidentiality agreement when they have the dual role of providing care and engaging with a patient.

Advancing EDI in research ethics: Turning principles into practice



Munaza Jamil, Faculty, Applied Clinical Research Program, McMaster University

Munaza led an interactive learning session that aimed to equip learners with practical strategies to integrate EDI principles into the research ethics process.

After an introduction on EDI in the context of research and research ethics, attendees were divided into three groups for three breakout discussions:

1. Reviewing research proposals with an EDI lens:
Strategies for identifying bias and improving inclusivity in research design
2. Community engagement & ethical considerations: How to create meaningful partnerships with equity-diverse groups
3. Addressing systemic barriers in research ethics:
Institutional policies and structural changes to advance EDI outcomes

Each group was invited to share their thoughts on each topic, and how they could envision change taking place at their institutions in their local contexts.

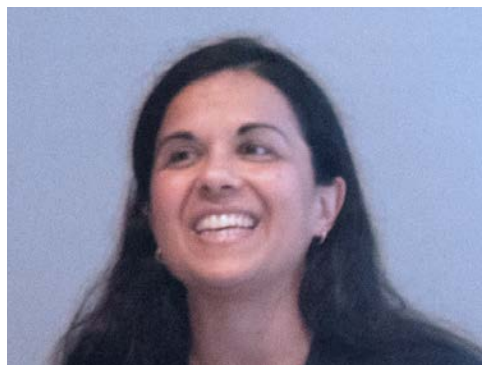
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[I enjoyed] seeing colleagues in person, and sharing the concerns and finding common solutions together.

– EVENT ATTENDEE

Advancing Indigenous research sovereignty

The third session of the day featured a series of sessions from different teams working to advance Indigenous research sovereignty across research ethics.



Grounded in community: Designing FNHA's research ethics review structure and process — Guiding principles, progress, and next steps

Shiva Ghorbanpour, Ethics Coordinator, Senior Research Ethics Coordinator, First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), and Taban Behin, Manager, Ethics, FNHA

This team presented FNHA's ethics review structure and process. They gave an overview of research ethics at FNHA and their guiding principles. Then, they provided some historical background to the ethics framework, the work to date, as well as progress updates in 2025.



Indigenous-led research ethics review: A how-to guide for racist and colonized institutions and the people in them trying to enact and embody acts of Reconciliation

E. Sarah Bennett, Manager, Research Ethics & Compliance, Island Health, and Marjorie Reid, Project Lead, the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nations (GNN) Chronic Disease Surveillance Tool, New Horizons Indigenous Association

Together, Sarah and Marjorie presented on Indigenous-led research ethics review. In particular, Sarah shared the example of the Quw'utsun Tribes' ethics review process for the project "Far Too Many Preterm Births in Cowichan Tribes: Generating Knowledge to Inform Service Delivery and Strengthen Motherhood Journeys", while Marjorie shared the example of the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nations ethics review process for the project "A Community-Led Surveillance Approach for Chronic Diseases: Pilot Study with the Gwa'sala -'Nakwaxda'xw Nations."



UBC-BREB Alternate Indigenous Research Ethics Application

Wendy Bond, Research Ethics Project Officer, Office of Research Ethics, University of British Columbia

Finally, Wendy presented on the pilot project UBC-BREB Alternate Indigenous Research Ethics Application. In the presentation, Wendy talked about why the pilot was necessary, the development of the project, its current status, and next steps.

Ask me anything: 2025 Harmonized Review RISe Refresher



Elmira Chan, Pre-Post Review Manager, UBC Clinical Research Ethics Board

For the final learning session of the day, the planning committee invited Elmira to provide a refresher on harmonizing research ethics applications on the RISe platform. The presentation set the stage for the Ask Me Anything session, sparking discussions and encouraging attendees to engage with their questions.

WHAT DID YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT THE EVENT?

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Advancing Indigenous Research Sovereignty — so great to see this work, which has been a major part of my almost 20 year career, really moving — advancing, as we say!

Connecting with everyone, the wonderful organizing from Research Ethics BC team, and support from Health Research BC. We are really moving the needle on ethics review here, and we are an amazing group of folks.

— EVENT ATTENDEE



40 people
attended



82% felt the event
was excellent

EVENT GOALS

94% felt the objectives of
the day were met

NETWORKING & COMMUNITY

88% walked away feeling more
connected to their colleagues

Feedback at a glance

When asked about the most valuable part of the event, attendees highlighted the in-person networking and reconnection opportunities with their colleagues.

Being able to engage face-to-face with one another on a professional and personal level was important to building new – and reinforcing old – relationships within the research ethics community.

Attendees also appreciated having a space which allowed for knowledge exchange through the presentations and interactive discussions. The range in topics covered in the learning sessions along with the expertise of the presenters and ethics administrators, facilitated meaningful education and fruitful discussions about how previous and current efforts are truly advancing the future of health research ethics in BC, particularly in the area of Indigenous research ethics. This event provided a space where attendees were able to connect on shared success and challenges which strengthens this community of practice and is a gentle reminder that there is and will continue to be support for one another.

Overall, the REBA Harmonization and Education Event fostered meaningful learning and connection creating a safe space for open discussion for our community. In creating tools, leaning on each other's expertise and knowledge, and providing clarity of definitions, processes and scope, we will be better equipped to facilitate health research going forward.



In our event planning survey, we asked REBAs what came to mind when they thought of research ethics in BC.

Some common words, responses and themes we received were: landscapes, rivers, waves, oceans and mountains in BC, as well as safety, guidance, collaboration and transparency

We worked to include these elements into the front and back cover of the program design.