EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

REBA HARMONIZATION & EDUCATION EVENT

June 4, 2026

Clinical Trials British Columbia

Interior Health

UBC

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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 sə̓ilwətaʔɬ (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 fourth annual Research Ethics Board Administrators (REBA) Harmonization and Education Event was held virtually on June 4th, 2026.

Dedicated to REBAs in BC, this event supports the Research Ethics Harmonization Initiative community to come together. It was hosted by Clinical Trials British Columbia, part of Michael Smith Health Research BC, and organized with Interior Health and the University of British Columbia (UBC).

This year, the event explored the theme: "Ethics in transition: Adaptive approaches to innovation, inclusion, and accountability." At a time where the provincial, national, and international ethics landscape is shifting, the REBA Harmonization and Education Event emphasized purposeful engagement and respectful relationships for connection, learning and collaboration.

The 2026 event brought together 66 members from 23 research ethics boards (REBs) across British Columbia to connect with one another, share wisdom, and gain practical insights to strengthen their work in research ethics.

Event opening

It was an immense honour and privilege to invite Elder Kelly White to open the event. Elder Kelly White is a member of the White Owl Clan, born in Cedar, of Snuneymuxw Nation. A celebrated visual artist, Elder Kelly sang a traditional song to start the gathering in a good way, grounding the work in respect for the lands and communities that make research ethics possible.

Alison Orth, Director of Clinical Trials British Columbia, then provided welcoming remarks. She emphasized the role of community and relationships in BC's research ethics landscape — not only between research ethics professionals, with researchers and people who place trust in the research process, but also among research ethics professionals themselves. Events like the 2026 REBA Harmonization and Education Event can help cultivate a space to continue building those relationships between REBAs.

Pictured right: Elder Kelly White in regalia (top) and Alison Orth (bottom).

The event's morning sessions centered on environmental updates and large initiatives, balanced by a deeper dive into two select topics. Attendees heard from a breadth of perspectives, including REBAs, Ministry of Health representative, and patient partners.

SESSION 1

Strengthening research ethics in British Columbia: A call for leadership and collective action

Asma-na-hi Antoine, Toquaht Nation
Director, Indigenous Research, UBC
Indigenous Advisor, Michael Smith Health Research BC
Chair, BC Research Ethics Strategic Action Group

Commencing the morning sessions, Asma-na-hi presented on a position paper from the BC Research Ethics Strategic Action Group. Developed collectively with 11 colleagues and advisors, the paper examines today's evolving research landscape and what BC needs to build a stronger, sustainable path forward for research ethics.

She emphasized the necessity of collaboration and relationship-building in research ethics work, particularly as it relates to reconciliation and Indigenous cultural safety. When it came to collective action, Asma-na-hi shared a metaphor of paddling together in a canoe, which was commonly referenced by former Indigenous Member of the Legislative Assembly and cabinet minister Melanie Mark: that people are at different stages and levels of understanding, but that we must all paddle together to move forward.

> "This [session was] really helpful for new REB professionals such as myself, and was really timely for discussions happening at our REB.
>
> **– EVENT ATTENDEE**

SESSION 2

BC Common Clinical Informed Consent Form Template project update

Sara O'Shaughnessy, Manager, Research Ethics and Compliance, Fraser Health
Karen Medler, Research Ethics Coordinator, Island Health
Jessica Chu, Research Ethics, Clinical Trials British Columbia

Sara, Karen, and Jessica gave an update about the BC Common Clinical Informed Consent Form (BC CCICF) Template project. This project aims to develop a concise, practical, province-wide template that reflects BC's collaborative environment. Both the template and guidance document needed revisions to align with best practices, legislation, and compliance, and to incorporate feedback from users like patient partners and community members.

The speakers covered challenges around the current form, ways to improve inclusivity and adoption, and the process to date – including working group assembly, engagements for feedback, and revisions.

Pictured right: Sara O'Shaughnessy (top) and Jessica Chu (bottom).

SESSION 3

Equipping reviewers for assessing vulnerable populations in ethics applications

Jim Mann, Researcher, Educator, and Speaker

Jim Mann, one of the patient partners working on the BC CCICF Template project, then shared his perspective on the ethics review process. He focused on research that includes people living with dementia as participants, emphasizing the importance of co-created engagement and reviewer education.

Jim asked research ethics boards to think about consent considerations, stigma faced by community members, and ways those living with dementia could be meaningfully engaged in research without causing harm or reinforcing biases.

> "What a great reminder to REBs to not make assumptions about participant vulnerability. We need to hear that.
>
> **– EVENT ATTENDEE**

SESSION 4

Research Approvals Processes Project Overview & Update

Julia McFarlane, Director of Research, BC Ministry of Health

Julia provided a background and recent updates on the Research Approvals Processes Project (RAPP), particularly how it relates to research ethics and how policies are driving change. She highlighted the complex ecosystem that RAPP takes place in, as well as the way it is guided by national and provincial initiatives.

SESSION 5

Ask Me Anything (AMA): Ask a REBA expert

Facilitator: Dorothy Herbert, Research Ethics Board, Interior Health

This engaging session invited attendees to put forward questions for collective solutions and knowledge sharing.

Attendees discussed a breadth of topics, including guidance to consistently operationalize direct reciprocity between organizations, considerations for working across multiple jurisdictions with Indigenous partners in research ethics and governance, and available resources for ethics review teams to navigate emerging ethical challenges.

Dorothy also highlighted how the communities of practice are great learning spaces where senior REBAs act as mentors and share expertise with their fellow administrators on best practices.

After lunch and a lively interactive activity, the event delved right in to the afternoon sessions. These presentations brought in researchers and AI specialists to share their experiences with research ethics.

SESSION 6 | PANEL DISCUSSION

Lifecycle of a research study — Ethics perspective

While research teams submit progress reports and close out summaries to their research ethics board, this material can be high-level and doesn't capture the full impact of the research or activities out of scope of research ethics review.

The researchers in this panel reflected on how their work has been meaningfully shaped by the research ethics review at the outset of their projects. Panel members shared some of the outputs of their research, allowing the research ethics administrators to see the full circle impact of research from application to outcomes.

The human brain: During the dying process and beyond

Mypinder Sekhon, Intensivist & Clinical Associate Professor, UBC

Mypinder spoke about a series of studies, specifically one where he worked very closely with the UBC Clinical Research Ethics Board. This study looked at the dying process in humans while simultaneously monitoring the brain and body.

During the talk, Mypinder explored ethical questions around minimizing risks for donors in organ donation medicine, and how this study enabled transplants for people who might not have otherwise received them.

The continuous cycle of community-based health equity research on HIV/AIDS

Nathan Lachowsky, Dean & Professor, Faculty of Human and Health Sciences, UNBC

In his talk, Nathan presented a community-based, oral history research project. This work focused on the day-to-day lives of people who lived with HIV/AIDS epidemic in BC 1980s, centering on narratives that have not traditionally been shared. He drew connections between community-based research principles and the practice of ethics.

Nathan expressed gratitude towards the harmonized ethics review process in BC, which allowed team members from SFU, UBC, and the University of Victoria to work together in a much more streamlined way.

Building across divides: Building a One Health communications platform

Kaylee Byers, Assistant Professor, School of Population and Public Health,
UBC Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University

Kaylee's research draws on the One Health framework, which considers how health challenges must be addressed collaboratively across human, animal and environmental health practitioners.

She spoke not only about her project, but also her experience navigating the behavioural ethics process as an early career researcher and as someone who had worked largely with animals in her prior research. She expressed appreciation for the guidance of research ethics review teams, and for the single harmonized ethics review system in BC, especially for a large project like One Health that spans multiple provinces.

SESSION 7 | PANEL DISCUSSION

Artificial intelligence (AI) and research ethics

Advancements in AI have changed every field, and research ethics is no exception.

This panel discussion brought Diane, Jean-Christophe, and REBA attendees together to understand how AI is shifting the research ethics landscape, and how to navigate challenges and opportunities emerging for AI and research ethics boards.

Central to this discussion was the importance of the REBA role, as human judgment, expertise, and oversight remain at the heart of the review process.

The shifting conversation with AI

Diane Gutiw, Vice President, AI Research and Strategic Advisory, CGI

Diane's talk focused on how AI considerations have changed over the years, and how human-AI partnerships might take place in a research ethics context. She spoke to common themes across ethics in AI and research ethics, like principles of bias, privacy, security, and transparency, and how they should be applied to AI models if the goal is to create AI that is ethical and responsible.

Diane also shared ways that AI is currently driving value in sectors like healthcare, clinical research, and research ethics, and the role of using AI responsibly in different areas.

Five years on – AI in research ethics: What BC REBs may want to know about in 2026

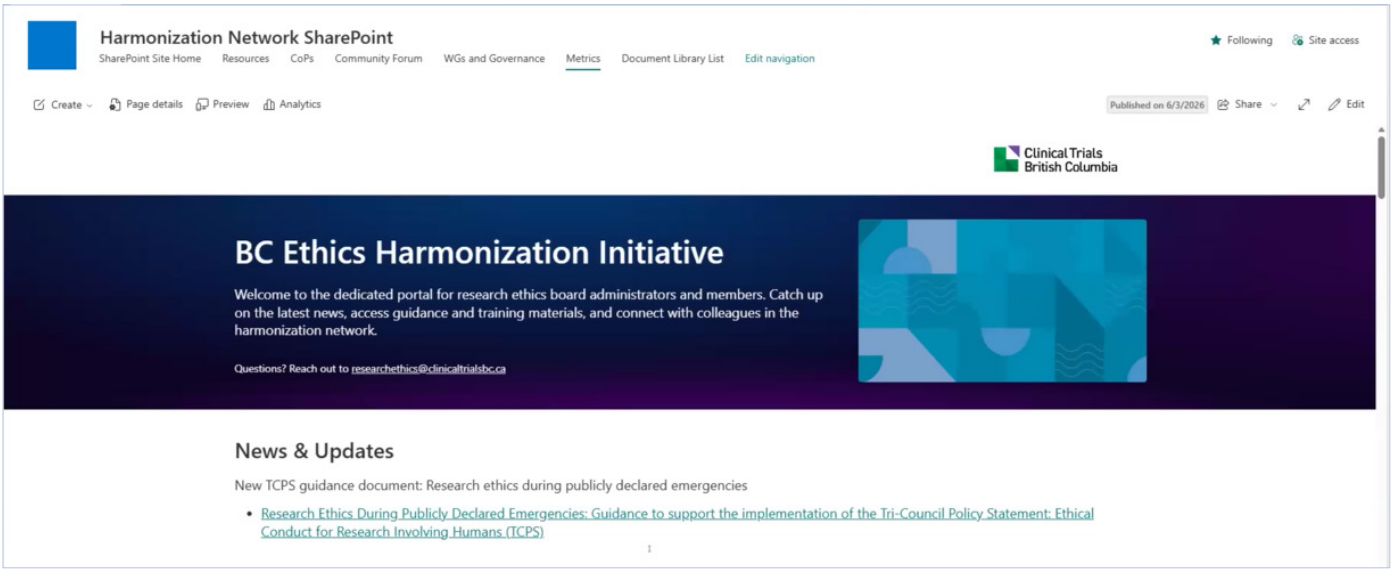
Jean-Christophe Bélisle-Pipon, Assistant Professor, SFU

Jean-Christophe provided a reflection on how AI in research ethics has changed over the years, looking back at a 2021 scoping review on the topic. He focused on five considerations that exist now: synthetic data, AI in recruitment, mid-study model draft, AI agents, and what happens when REBs use AI. For each, Jean-Christophe gave an overview, pros and cons of AI use, and special considerations related to research ethics.

He emphasized the importance in learning and remaining informed about policy and practice changes as they relate to AI in research.

> "Good, timely guidance on AI provided.
>
> **– EVENT ATTENDEE**

SESSION 8



Harmonization Network SharePoint site demonstration

Hanna Jones-Eriksson, Manager, Research Ethics, Clinical Trials British Columbia

To wrap up the presentations, Hanna gave a walkthrough of an in-development SharePoint site that is being built for REBAs. This space is meant to act as a central hub that connects and supports the Research Ethics Harmonization Initiative. Hanna showed key parts of the site structure, including a resource library, communities of practice spaces, and a forum for conversations and peer-to-peer support.

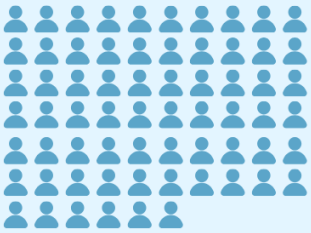
Closing remarks

To close the event, Jessica Chu reflected on the key themes and patterns from conversations throughout the event.

She reaffirmed the importance of building strong, respectful relationships in research ethics, especially in work with Indigenous communities and patient partner communities, where trust, listening, and reciprocity must guide knowledge exchange and engagements. She also reflected on the importance of showing up with presence and purpose, embracing accountability, and learning from missteps as a community.

Lastly, Jessica thanked attendees for their engagement and contribution, with the hope that they would bring their learnings back to their organizations and communities to continue strengthening and shaping the future of research ethics together.

Attendees: *Session recordings are now available on the BC Ethics Harmonization Initiative SharePoint. We welcome you to revisit the valuable sessions or share with colleagues who missed the event. For permissions or inquiries, please email: researchethics@clinicaltrialsbc.ca.*



66 people attended from 23 institutions

82% would recommend the event to colleagues

LEARNING

95% gained new knowledge, insights, or practical information

SESSIONS

89% found content extremely or very relevant to their role or work

Feedback at a glance

When asked about program topics, many respondents indicated that the AI sessions, the patient partner perspective session, and the call for collection action in research ethics were particularly valuable. The event itself saw 66 people join from across 23 institutions.

The majority of attendees also agreed that the event content was relevant and applicable. 95% felt they gained new knowledge, insights, or practical information, and 89% felt the content was very or extremely relevant to their role or work.

Overall, the event was well-received: 94% of respondents indicated that they would attend future REBA events, with 82% noting they would recommend this event to colleagues.

This year's event was convened by Clinical Trials British Columbia, part of Michael Smith Health Research BC, and organized with Interior Health and the University of British Columbia (UBC).

Thank you to the organizing committee for making the event a success:

- Dorothy Herbert, Research Ethics Board, Interior Health
- Hanna Jones-Eriksson, Research Ethics, Clinical Trials British Columbia
- Jessica Chu, Research Ethics, Clinical Trials British Columbia
- Kaila Bonnycastle, Clinical Trials British Columbia
- Maria Valente, Behavioural Research Ethics Board, University of British Columbia
- Pia Ganz, Clinical Research Ethics Board, University of British Columbia

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