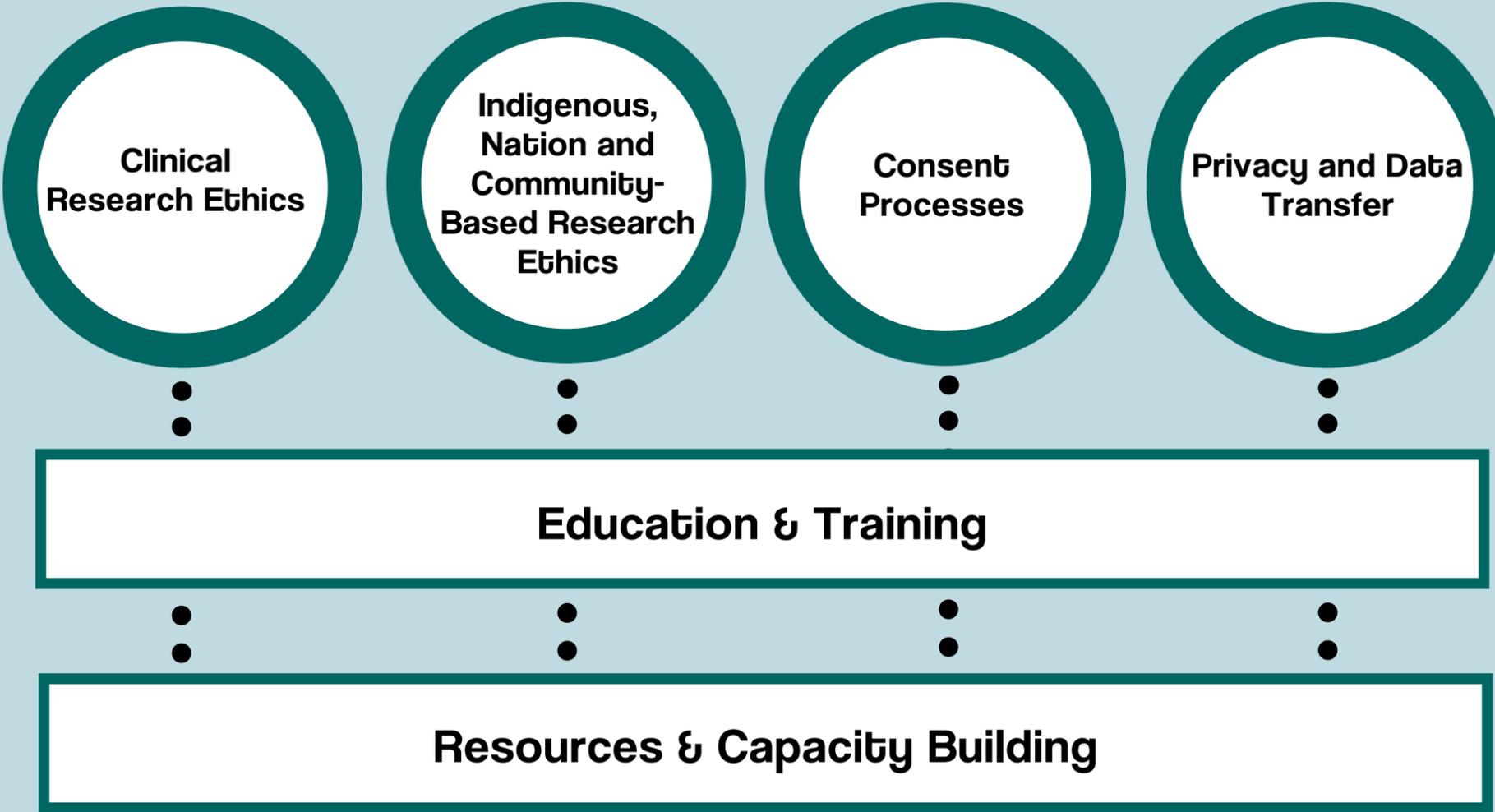


# Research Ethics BC

## Summary of Activities: Fall 2019 to Fall 2020

Research Ethics BC supports a community of human research ethics boards in the province to streamline processes by providing a harmonized system for multi-jurisdictional studies, education and training, and resources to support capacity building.



REBC now has a community of 19 ‘harmonized’ research ethics boards using the Provincial Research Ethics Platform (PREP)



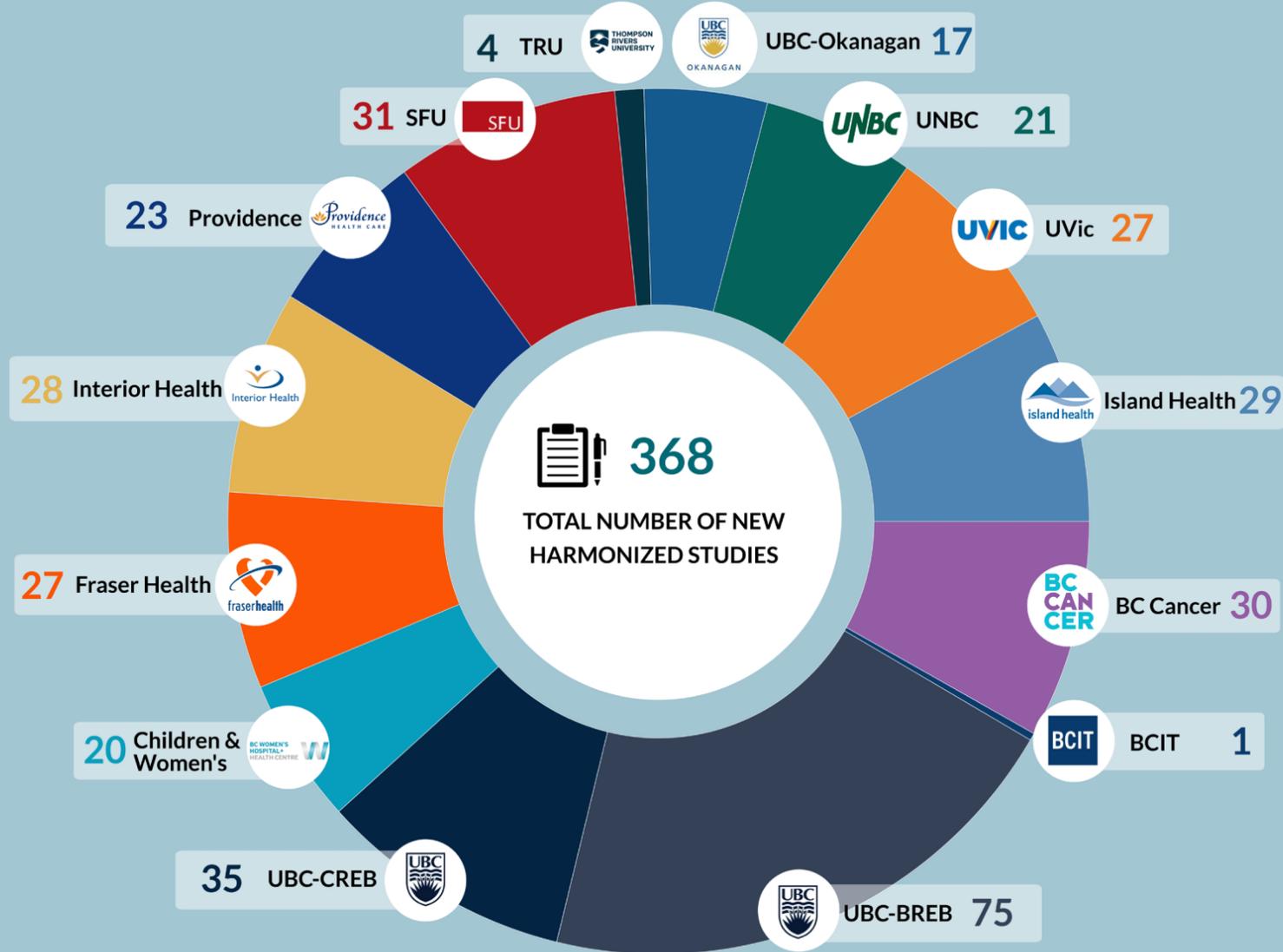
Harmonized studies across the province continue to increase, as does the spread in the Board of Record designation for the studies.

Additionally, in the fall of 2019, REBC developed two new models for harmonized review of studies. The [Clinical Trials Harmonized Review PILOT – Instructions for Researchers](#) created a model whereby clinical trials could be reviewed in PREP under one ethical review process.

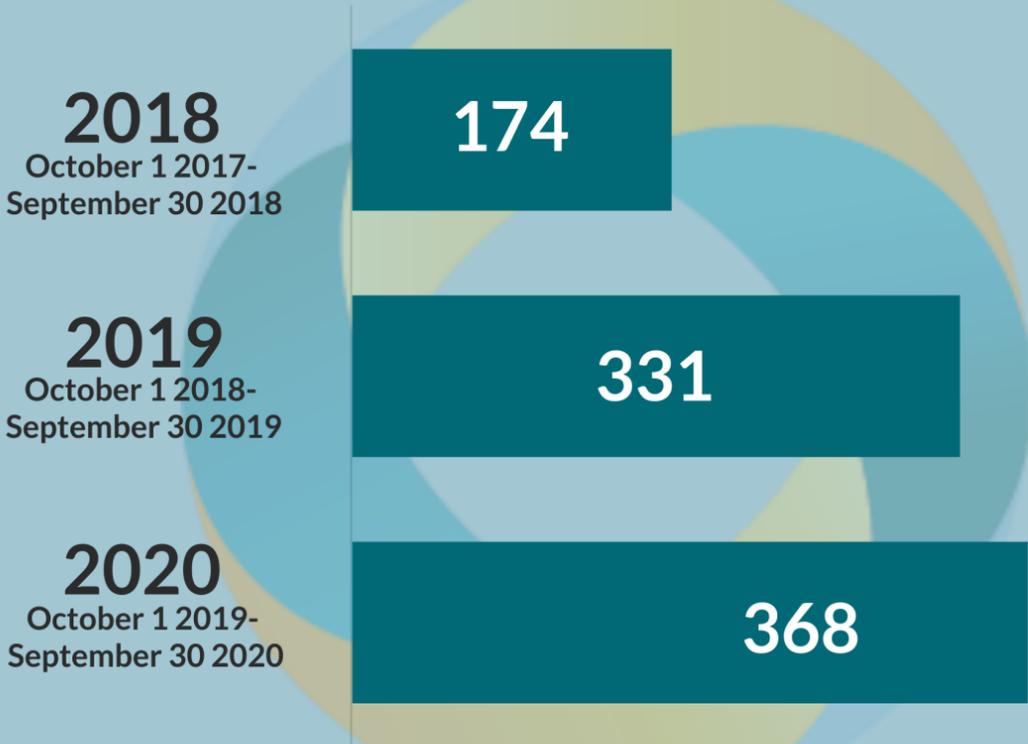
We also went into new territory by creating [Guidance for BC Cancer Studies](#) that would declare BC Cancer REB as a disease-specific REB, and eliminate duplicate reviews of cancer studies that were conducting using resources from health authorities only because they shared the same 'campus'. While both new models have been reported as 'working' by the REB offices involved, they have not yet had a review for effectiveness, and potential further improvement.

# Resources and Capacity Building

**2020** New Harmonized Studies by Board of Record (BoR)  
September 1, 2019 - August 31, 2020



## New harmonized submissions in PREP



Source: Provincial Research Ethics Platform -UBC RISE

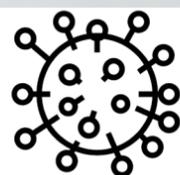
## Rapid ethical review process for harmonized clinical research<sup>1</sup> pertaining to COVID-19

<sup>1</sup>including Health Canada regulated clinical trials

COVID-19 was declared as a pandemic and a public health emergency in the province of British Columbia in March of 2020. With this came a halt to ongoing research as all universities, research institutions, and hospitals turned their eyes to researching the new virus while trying to keep their communities safe. Research Ethics BC provided a central place for information and guidance for researchers and research ethics boards.

Additionally came a call-out to the research ethics community in the province to develop a rapid review process to support clinical research studies into COVID-19. As research funding became available for COVID-19, it was critical that unified provincial support be in place throughout the research ethics process to enable researchers to respond quickly and effectively. To accomplish this REBC and the REB community worked together and agreed to a rapid review process of five days for clinical research for COVID-19.

## BC COVID-19 Research Inventory



The establishment of the [BC COVID-19 Research Inventory](#) on April 1 was a true BC AHSN-wide effort. REBC worked with their network of research ethics boards and UBC RISE system to populate the inventory with the approved COVID-19 studies.

The inventory of over 400 studies is now being used as a decision-aid for setting research priorities for stakeholders in BC. REBC, MSFHR, and BC AHSN are working together to ensure that researchers are able to send in any online links to their study results.

## COVID-19 Response



**Terri Fleming, Unit Director,  
Research Ethics BC**

“

Our close relationships with the network of research ethics boards allowed us to be agile and divert our efforts quickly to help meet the challenges presented by the pandemic.

”



**E. Sarah Bennett,  
REBC Advisory Council, Chair  
Research Ethics & Compliance Manager,  
Island Health**

“

It is heartening in a challenging time with so many difficulties to work with a professional, and devoted group of research ethics administrators, reviewers and our Advisory Council members. I am very proud to work with such group of individuals. REBC again has shown itself to have a major role in the province for supporting participants access research. This experience has shown us how much better we are when we work together.

”

## REBC welcomes Gillian Corless



Gillian Corless MA,  
Senior Advisor, Indigenous Research and Ethics,  
First Nations Health Authority  
Research Ethics BC

2020 was intended to be the year when REBC and FNHA would work together to engage with First Nations and Metis Nations in BC. We started by strengthening our relationship with FNHA by arranging for Gillian Corless to join our team two days a week. Gillian has brought a very important perspective on development of relationship with First Nations communities for research, and we are continuing her role with us into 2022.

In an effort to remind researchers of the need, especially during a pandemic, to consider the effects of trauma when conducting research with First Nations communities, the FNHA was supported by REBC to develop and publish [Culturally Safe and Trauma-Informed Practices for Researchers during COVID-19](#).



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

As part of the [BC Research Ethics Virtual Symposium: Ethical Implications of COVID-19](#) in October, one of the four sessions was “Cultural Safety During a Pandemic”.

This session was planned and led by First Nation’s representatives on our Advisory Council, Namaste Marsden and Angie Bain, and with the support of Gillian. This session was the most well-attended of the four parts of the Symposium and feedback from attendees was

## Meaningful Engagement

As part of the commitment to help researchers develop meaningful engagement in research involving First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Indigenous peoples, REBC created a dedicated Resource area on the REBC website. This area will provide easy reference for researchers, research ethics offices and boards, and the public to stay informed about Indigenous research ethics. NEW articles include two recent publications by incoming Co-Chair Namaste Marsden, Director of Health Economics and Analytics in Community Health and

extremely appreciative. In fact, it has led to more engagement with the Research Ethics Board Administrators (REBA) group, and early in 2021 we are looking forward to being able to host a ‘coffee chat’ with Namaste, Angie, and other First Nations community members with the REBA group.



We are so pleased to be working closely with Gillian and are grateful to the FNHA for entering into an agreement that creates the opportunity for mutual commitment to OCAP® principles and trust between organizations.



Terri Fleming, Unit Director,  
Research Ethics BC

Wellness Services for First Nations Health Authority: [“Nothing about us without us in writing: aligning the editorial policies of the Canadian Journal of Public Health with the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples”](#) (2020) and [“Requirement for Meaningful Engagement of First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Indigenous Peoples in Publications About Them”](#) (2020).

# Consent Processes

COVID-19 and the accommodations that needed to be made by researchers and institutions in order to continue to conduct priority research was a huge focus of activities this year. Research Ethics BC partnered with Clinical Trials BC and Fraser Health to publish the [Guidance Notes on Informed Consent During a Pandemic](#).



# Ethical oversight for non-research projects

Terri worked with colleagues at Island Health, Fraser Health, and Alberta Innovates to develop a web-based course for [Physician Quality Improvement \(PQI\)](#) program delegates. The basis of the course was to provide the skills and knowledge to consider the ethical implications and mitigations required in projects where they are exempt from research ethics under [TCPS2 Section 2.5](#).



# Privacy and Data Access



We have heard about a few 'unintended consequences' coming out of the pandemic, in BC and elsewhere. One that was related directly to the development of the Rapid Review process was the focus on the need for institutions to streamline processes for approving research under institutional policies. REBC is pleased to have been able to support the development of a Briefing Note that has been provided to the Ministry of Health, highlighting the issues and potential solutions.

Additionally, Terri has supported Island Health to further develop their **Quality Improvement Ethics Decision Making** tool for screening projects to determine if they require research ethics review, or if they require a consult with the QI Ethics team at Island Health. For more information, please see their [website](#) or contact Terri.



## ‘REBA COVID-19 Calls’ move to general REBA calls

2020 was an incredibly busy year, starting with the launch of our [new video](#) created by Paola, Education and Communications Coordinator, to show stakeholders what REBC is all about. Prior to the pandemic, we had ideas on how we could engage with the research ethics community, but a ‘need’ arose and as we worked to fill that need, it created momentum of its own.

In April we began bi-weekly “REBA COVID-19 Calls” hosted on Zoom. This was intended to bring together the Research Ethics Board Administrators from across the province, even those who are not using PREP, and provide a safe and supportive place to discuss the challenges we were all facing in research. The bi-weekly calls progressed since April 9th, and are now once every three weeks. We have changed them from being specific to managing research challenges during the pandemic, to a more generalized discussion of research ethics topics. Aoife Kelly, our new Project Coordinator, hosts the meetings and manages a growing list of topics for upcoming events.

## Research Ethics Symposium Highlights

Two of the three main education opportunities for research ethics were cancelled due to the pandemic, namely REB West 2020 and CAREB 2020. We took the initiative to convert the fall Clinical Research Ethics Symposium normally hosted by UBC into a 2-day virtual symposium entitled “Ethical Implications of COVID-19”.

The educational event for REB’s and Administrators was opened up to include a broader audience for the first time. Patient partners and members of the public, as well as researchers, and colleagues from across Canada, joined this online event. The event attracted 293 people, approximately 3 times the number we would have been able to accommodate at an in-person event. The symposium was followed up with an informal knowledge exchange to facilitate what key learnings could be taken from the information shared at [the event](#).



**Elder Syexwáliya, from the Squamish Nation, opens the Virtual Research Ethics Symposium on October 21 2020**

# BC AHSN support activities



**Terri Fleming, Unit Director**

Terri Co-Chairs the Occupational Health and Safety Committee for BC AHSN. The committee ensures the provision of a safe working environment at the Vancouver office of BC AHSN, including the development of safety plans during the pandemic required under WorkSafe BC and the Provincial Health Officer.

Terri was also featured as the guest speaker on [episode six of SPORCast - Stronger Together,](#)



**Aoife Kelly, Project Coordinator**

Aoife joined us in a joint administrative support role to both Research Ethics BC and Clinical Trials BC. We are grateful that she has agreed to join us full time in the role of Project Coordinator. As a team player, Aoife continues to support CTBC for the short term.

Aoife has joined the BC AHSN website redesign team that will begin in early 2021.



**Paola Pinto Vidal, Education and Communications Coordinator**

Paola has used their graphic design skills to create the [BC AHSN](#) and [Clinical Trials BC](#) annual reports in the fall of 2020, bringing a fresh and consistent reporting format suitable for online readers. Paola was a member of the “BC AHSN Code of Ethics Development” working group and created the ‘BC AHSN Family ValuesTree’ graphic which highlights our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Paola has recently joined the communications team that will lead the BC AHSN website redesign project in 2021.

**A very special thank you to our community of research ethics board administrators, members, patient partners and stakeholders for their support and engagement with REBC!**

## Contact Us



British Columbia Academic Health Science Network

