

CCAIHG and BC NEIHR host and present at the Indigenous Health Research Ethics in Clinical Research Symposium

On April 16th, 2024, the BC Network Environment for Indigenous Health Research (BC NEIHR) and the BC SUPPORT Unit, Michael Smith Health Research BC co-hosted the Indigenous Health Research Ethics in Clinical Research Symposium, with support from the Centre for Collaborative Action in Indigenous Health Governance (CCAIHG). Nearly 100 guests attended the symposium, including Indigenous community members, health researchers, trainees, allies and research ethics board members and health systems leaders. The symposium was hosted on the traditional and unceded territory of the hə́nqə́mí́nə́m speaking xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people, at the University of British Columbia.

The symposium aimed to:

- Advance the engagement and understanding of Indigenous health research ethics in clinical research
- Support research talent development opportunities for Indigenous scholars, students, and early-career clinicians and researchers
- Provide networking and mentorship opportunities

The day began with an opening prayer by Elders Barb Hulme and Glida Morgan, followed by welcoming remarks from Dr. Krista Stelkia, Co-Director of CCAIHG, Tara Erb, Network Coordinator for BC NEIHR, Dr. Stirling Bryan (Scientific Director, BC SUPPORT Unit), and Gillian Corless (Senior Manager, Indigenous Partnerships, Michael Smith Health Research BC). Following, Dr. Evan Adams (Deputy Chief Medical Officer, First Nations Health Authority) provided a keynote presentation sharing his professional and personal reflections as an Indigenous physician and researcher, navigating the colonial harms and racism within the health care system while also upholding his family and Tla'amin values, teachings and practices. In closing, Dr. Adams shared two key pieces of advice to the audience; 1) to bring a daily commitment to ethical practice and 2) to remember that resilience is resistance.

Dr. Jeffrey Reading, Co-Director of CCAIHG and Nominated Principal Applicant of BC NEIHR, presented his research on the Silent Genomes Project during the morning plenary session. The three-afternoon sessions were moderated by Indigenous trainees. Elizabeth (Liz) Hunter, CCAIHG Research Analyst, moderated the first session on "Building Research Relationships with Indigenous Communities, Collectives and Organizations (ICCOs)". Taylor Atwater, BC NEIHR and CCAIHG Indigenous Health Research Facilitator, moderated session #2, "Showcasing Innovative Models or Case Studies on Existing Indigenous-led Research". During session #2, Dr. Jeffrey

Reading and Liz Hunter presented research on “Knowledge for Health” and “Community Driven Policy Development”. Keiten Brown, CCAIHG affiliated Indigenous Research Associate, moderated session #3 “Wise or Promising Practices and Training the Next Generation (Future Thinking)”. Tara Erb presented in session #3 with Dr. Jessie King on two environmental scans: [BC Research Ethics Board Environmental Scan and Ethics Sharing Circles](#) and [Indigenous Knowledges for Decolonized Research and Evaluation Practices](#).

Within the overarching topic of Indigenous research ethics, some key themes emerged throughout the day. Many presentations discussed the importance of Indigenous data sovereignty. The necessity for Indigenous leadership and ownership of research was stressed, as well as the importance of communities taking active roles in research. Research should be led by communities, focusing on their needs and participation, rather than non-Indigenous researchers’ goals. Self-determination in research is essential.

Decolonization of research was highlighted throughout the symposium. Educating oneself on guidelines and resources which are available is vital before engaging in research with Indigenous communities, and there is a need for engagement across research institutions. Within the topic of health and medicine, decolonizing the integration of Indigenous knowledge into western medical systems was discussed. Presenters touched on the continuous challenge of dismantling colonial structures, and the importance of creating new and better practices within research.

Conducting research with Indigenous communities must prioritize Indigenous community values. As non-Indigenous partners, whiteness must be de-centered, researchers must come prepared and educated, and remember that it is not the responsibility of the community to educate non-Indigenous researchers. The symposium fostered meaningful discussions and connections among attendees, with commitments made for future collaboration in Indigenous health research.

The symposium closed with performances by Indigenous dance groups, the Dancers of Damelahamid, and Compaigni V’ni Dansi. Elder Barb Hulme and Elder Glida Morgan concluded the symposium with a prayer and song.

Are you an Indigenous community, collective and organization (ICCO), health system partner, and/or allied health organization interested in collaborating on future knowledge-sharing mobilization gatherings with the BC NEIHR and CCAIHG? Reach out to our teams at **BC NEIHR:** bcneihr@uvic.ca and **CCAIHG:** indigenoushealthgovcentre@sfu.ca