



The New Brunswick Declaration

Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada

Ongoing reform of the Canadian ethics review system and fears for the potentially undemocratic nature of Research Ethics Boards (REBs) in Canada and Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) in the USA work led to an invitation summit - *The Ethics Rupture* in Fredericton, New Brunswick in October of 2012. This brought together leading researchers from Canada, USA, UK, Brazil, Italy, New Zealand and Australia who are committed to enhancing the practice of research ethics and to suggesting innovative alternatives to the status quo. The meeting resulted in the New Brunswick Declaration which champions the protection of research participants and researchers and declares as a truism that, even without formal ethics, research should respect persons, do no harm and privilege benefit over risk. The Declaration is aspirational, believing formal ethics review will only reach its full potential when policies, procedures and committees treat researchers in the same manner as researchers are expected to treat research participants – a culture of mutual respect. The point is to place the key responsibility for good research behaviour onto researchers themselves.

The New Brunswick Declaration:
A Declaration on Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance resulting from the
1st Ethics Rupture Summit,
Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada 2013

As signatories of the New Brunswick Declaration, we:

- **seek to promote respect for the right to freedom and expression;**
- **affirm that the practice of research should respect persons and collectivities and privilege the possibility of benefit over risk.** We champion constructive relationships among research participants, researchers, funders, publishers, research institutions, research ethics regulators and the wider community that aim to develop better understandings of ethical principles and practices;
- **believe researchers must be held to professional standards of competence, integrity and trust,** which include expectations that they will act reflexively and responsibly when new ethical challenges arise before, during, and long after the completion of research projects. Standards should be based on professional codes of ethical practice relevant to the research, drawn from the full diversity of professional associations to which those who study human experience belong, which include the arts and humanities, behavioural, health and social sciences;
- **encourage a variety of means of furthering ethical conduct involving a broad range of parties** such as participant communities, academic journals, professional associations, state and non-state funding agencies, academic departments and institutions, national regulators and oversight ethics committees;
- **encourage regulators and administrators to nurture a regulatory culture that grants researchers the same level of respect that researchers should offer research participants;**
- **seek to promote the social reproduction of ethical communities of practice.** Effective ethics education works in socially-embedded settings and from the ground-up: it depends on strong mentoring, experiential learning and nurturance when engaging students and novice researchers with ethics in research settings;
- **are committed to ongoing critical analysis of new and revised ethics regulations and regimes** by: highlighting exemplary and innovative research ethics review processes; identifying tensions and contradictions among various elements of research ethics governance; and seeing that every venue devoted to discussing proposed ethics guidelines includes critical analysis and research about research ethics governance, and
- **shall work together to bring new experience, insights and expertise to bear on these principles, goals, and mechanisms.**

Background to the Declaration can be found at:

van den Hoonaard, W.C. and Hamilton, A. (eds.) (2016) *The Ethics Rupture: Exploring Alternatives to Formal Research Ethics Review*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p.431-2
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