

# The Canadian Ethics Bowl

## a way to develop inquisitive minds

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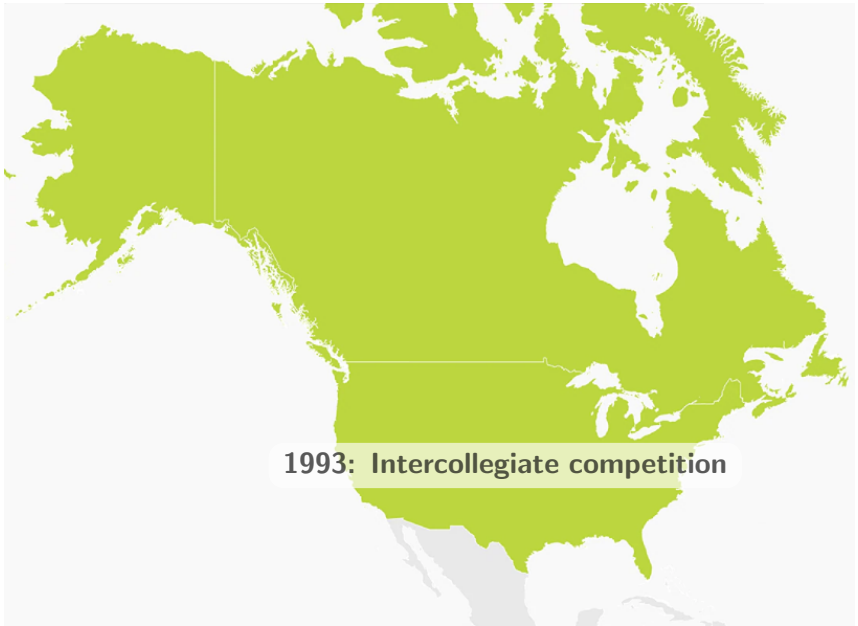


## What is an Ethics Bowl?

How the Ethics Bowl competition works  
Developing inquisitive minds

## A bit of history

Bringing the Ethics Bowl to BC  
Beyond traditional debate competitions



**1993: Intercollegiate competition**

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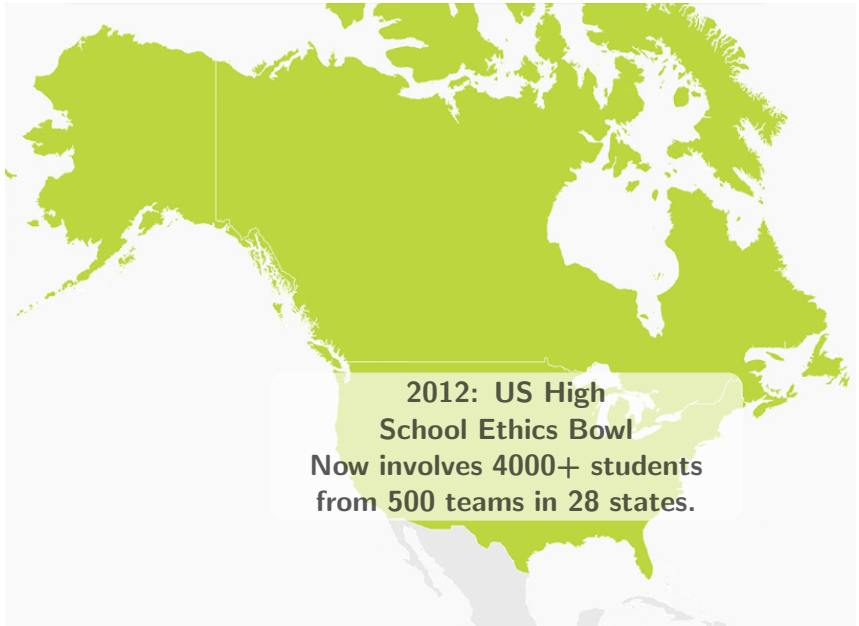
now hundreds of schools, with  
topical variants: business ethics,  
bioethics, engineering ethics, etc.

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**2012: US High  
School Ethics Bowl**  
Now involves 4000+ students  
from 500 teams in 28 states.

A map of Canada with a red dot indicating the location of Winnipeg. The text "2015: Canadian High School Ethics Bowl Born in Winnipeg" is overlaid on the map.

**2015: Canadian High School Ethics Bowl  
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A map of North America, including Canada, the United States, and Mexico. A semi-transparent white text box is overlaid on the United States. A black dot is located in the central United States, near the border with Canada.

Now involves  $\approx 200$  students from  
25+ teams, in English and French

A map of North America, showing Canada and the United States. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is overlaid on the central part of the map, containing text. Two black dots are placed on the map: one in the Pacific Northwest region (near the US-Canada border) and another in the central Canadian region (near the US-Canada border).

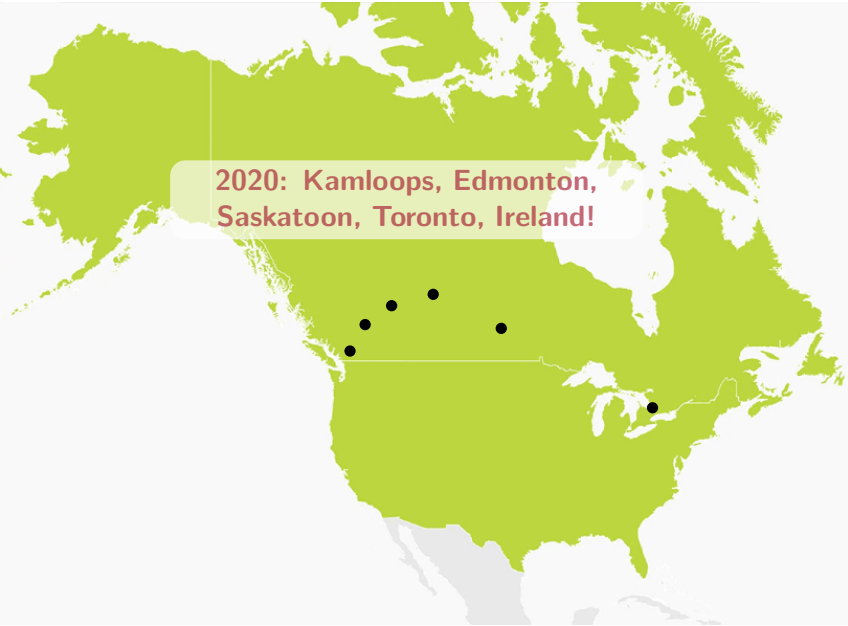
**2019: First BC Ethics Bowl, held at SFU**  
**2020: From 5 to 9 schools**

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2020: Kamloops, Edmonton,  
Saskatoon, Toronto, Ireland!

A map of North America, including Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Six black dots are placed on the map to indicate the locations of the 2020 Ethics Bowl competitions: one in Kamloops, BC; one in Edmonton, AB; one in Saskatoon, SK; one in Toronto, ON; one in Ireland; and one in the United States (likely representing the US team's location). A semi-transparent white box with a red border contains the text '2020: Kamloops, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Toronto, Ireland!'.



## 2019 Regional Ethics Bowl SFU, Burnaby Campus

Ideal Mini School, Prince of Wales,  
Princess Margaret, Sands, Van Tech



## 2020 Regional Ethics Bowl SFU, Burnaby Campus

Ideal Mini School, Prince of Wales,  
Princess Margaret, Sands, Van Tech  
Fraser Heights, Moscrop, Rick Hansen, Seaquam





## Round 1: Sands vs Princess Margaret



## Round 1: Ideal Mini vs Van Tech



Van Tech preparing for the next round, guided by their coach Liam





Pizza lunch!



The two BC finalists (Sands & Ideal) at the National in Winnipeg



- The CHSEB website: [www.ethicsbowl.ca](http://www.ethicsbowl.ca)
- The SFU Ethics Bowl page:  
<https://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/bcethicsbowl.html>



What are the **benefits** and **shortcomings** of traditional debates?



- Develops oratory skills
- Develops self-confidence
- No choice of position (?)
- Develops persuasion skills

etc.



- Purely adversarial
- May lead to overconfidence
- Strenghtens biases reasoning
- Limited critical thinking

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They neglect or negatively affect the development of crucial inquisitive **skills** and **attitudes**.





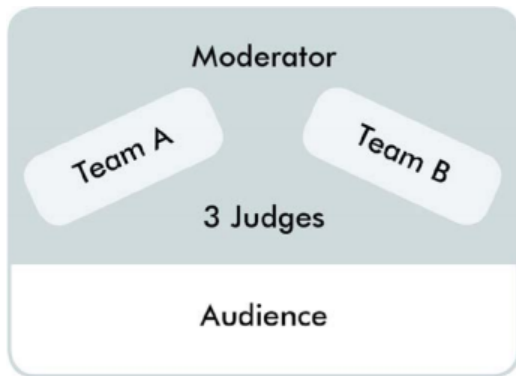
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An Ethics Bowl is both a **collaborative and competitive event**, where teams of students **analyze and discuss ethical dilemmas.**

They imagine, criticize, and compare bold strategies, and may even **amend** their original positions when faced with convincing arguments. Students have opportunities to **pose and respond to probing questions**, which results in a deepening awareness of the stakes and principles that animate the discussion.



Two teams of 3-5 students participate in a round

Each team leads a case, and responds to another case.

The judges ask probing questions.

## Sample Case 1

### Freedom of Speech or Protection against Hate Speech?

In the past few years, many radical speakers on both the far left and the far right have been prevented from speaking on university campuses due to protests from opposing viewpoints. For example, Ann Coulter (author of *In Trump We Trust*) was initially banned from speaking at University of California, Berkeley, which was ironically the stronghold of the Free Speech Movement that took place in the 1960s. The reason for the ban was stated as “active security threats,” although many far-right supporters of Ms. Coulter suggest it was an infringement of her right to free speech (BBC News). Protesters often cite hate speech as their rationale for preventing people who speak hateful rhetoric from entering their campus. This was the case for students at Middlebury College who peacefully protested social scientist Charles Murray by standing up during his speech with signs reading: “Your message is hatred, we cannot tolerate it” (CBC). Should campuses be a haven for free speech regardless of what is said? Or are campuses meant to be a haven for students who feel threatened by speakers’ hateful speech? What are we losing if we do not allow dissenting voices to meet?

### References

- BBC. “Berkeley reverses decision to ban Ann Coulter from speaking.” *BBC News* 22 Apr. 2017. [www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-39657088](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-39657088). (18 Sept. 2017).
- CBC. “Why a campus protest has the right and left calling for more civilized discourse.” *The Current*. 20 Mar. 2017. [www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-march-20-2017-1.4032269/why-a-campus-protest-has-the-right-and-left-calling-for-more-civilized-discourse-1.4032535](http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-march-20-2017-1.4032269/why-a-campus-protest-has-the-right-and-left-calling-for-more-civilized-discourse-1.4032535) (18 Sept. 2017).

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The cases are known ahead of time, but the specific questions are not.



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A competition has **5 rounds**. Each round addresses 2 cases, for a total of **10 cases**.

As opposed to traditional debates, we want participants to display the following:

- mutual respect
- open-mindedness
- meaningful dialogue
- critical conversation
- active listening
- flexibility, adaptability

Note that those have to do with **positive attitudes associated with critical & creative thinking**.

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Note that those have to do with **positive attitudes associated with critical & creative thinking**.

If a team adopts a **brash attitude** as is common in traditional debates, they will be **penalized** for it.

In light of **BC's new curriculum**, there is an additional reason to be involved in the Ethics Bowl:

It is the perfect way to **develop each of the six core competencies in an integrative/holistic manner.**

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In the first issue of the BCSSTA's new journal ([detoursjournal.org](http://detoursjournal.org)), I will have a paper explaining the value of the Ethics Bowl for the new BC curriculum:

"Developing core competencies with the Ethics Bowl: Perspectives from British Columbia," *Detours: Social Science Education Research Journal*.



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Dale Martelli and I use the phrase **collaborative learning challenge (CLC)** to describe this activity more broadly.

This activity allows students to engage in **structured self-directed inquiry** focused on exerting **critical & creative thinking skills** in a **collaborative** way.

It can be used in **most Social Studies** courses.



## Why the Ethics Bowl fosters autonomous learning

Ethics Bowl	Traditional debate
<p>Collaborative dimension</p> <p>Starts with a question</p> <p>Solution-driven argumentation</p> <p>Appreciates complexity of issues</p> <p>Based on months-long inquiries</p> <p>Fair-minded deliberation</p> <p>Amenable to rational persuasion</p> <p>Opens new perspectives</p> <p>Rewards active listening &amp; positive attitudes</p>	<p>Purely oppositional</p> <p>Starts with a conclusion</p> <p>Partisan argumentation</p> <p>Oversimplification of issues</p> <p>Rhetorical strategy developed in minutes</p> <p>Defend a preconception at all cost</p> <p>Rhetorics trumps critical thinking</p> <p>Leads to entrenched views</p> <p>Doesn't penalize negative attitudes</p>

## VACCINATION AUTONOMY

Should high school students be able to seek vaccinations for themselves in cases in which their parents have, against doctor's advice, decided not to get them vaccinated? At what point does a young person get to decide for him or herself on such matters pertaining to their health and wellbeing? We already have rules (which vary by province) to protect the privacy of young adults seeking sexual health advice and young mothers seeking care and advice around teen pregnancy issues. Should we also accept other exceptions, allowing young people to sidestep or overrule their parents' authority in matters of medical decision-making? What age would be appropriate for getting this autonomy to decide for oneself? Do young people deserve or need this freedom to choose? What potential problems could emerge from allowing teens to get out from under parental decision-making? (Would we, for example, be as inclined to allow a teen to avoid vaccination if his parents would have vaccinated him, just because that is his choice?)

**Thank you  
for taking part in this workshop!**