

**Panelists**



**Ask Me Anything**  
International Women's Day  
Representation Matters

**Time:** 1:00 pm EST    **Date:** March 22, 2023    **Hosts:** Maryse Cétoute and Samantha Moonsammy

## Ask Me Anything International Women's Day: Representation Matters

**Featuring:** BGen Jamie Speiser-Blanchet, Melissa Talbot, and Michelle Hunt

**Opening remarks by:** Julia Scouten

**Co-hosted by:** Maryse Cétoute and Samantha Moonsammy

**Date and time:** Wednesday, March 22 at 1:00 to 2:30 PM EST

**Audience:** Open to all Government of Canada employees

**Register:** [Online registration form](#)

**Link to join:** [Join the webinar](#)

Ask Me Anything is now on GC Wiki Collab <https://wiki.gccollab.ca/AMA>.

### Event Description

March 8 is International Women's Day. It's a global day to recognize and celebrate women's social, economic, cultural, and political achievements. It's also a time to raise awareness of the progress made towards achieving gender equality and the work remaining to be done.

The gender representation we are currently witnessing in various industries and spheres of life needs to be translated into the workplace as well. There is still room for more representation – and less bias. Seeing more women and intersections in global leadership positions will offer a great deal of hope and motivation. It will foster the belief that anything is possible and that hard work pays off. Perhaps more importantly, though, such representation will create a better and a more inclusive world for future generations.

Join us this month on the Ask Me Anything stage as we explore careers outside the norm and spotlight our colleagues unapologetically owning their space.

## About the Ask Me Anything Series

This session is part of a series of Ask Me Anything discussions that give us a platform to share stories, listen, ask respectful questions and continue on our journey to have more inclusive organizations.

As individuals, you can't necessarily change where you live. You certainly can't change your past, but you can adjust who influences you—through the authors you read, the music you listen to, movies you watch and interactions with your community. The *Ask Me Anything* series provides you with an opportunity to increase your perspective—to learn from the lived experiences of individuals who are bravely sharing their stories to help educate and move the public service towards a culture where equity is embedded.

The series also provides an opportunity for you to know that you aren't alone. These experiences, especially the negative ones, are systemic and happen all too frequently throughout the public service. The objective by shining this light is to continually increase the network of public servants ready to take action and move forward towards a culture of inclusivity and belonging.

## Opening Remarks by Julia Scouten



Julia Scouten is currently the Director for the Joint Defence Cloud Program at the Department of National Defence with the mandate of bringing cloud technology to the Department of National Defence/Canadian Armed Forces to enable digital transformation. She has over 21 years of experience within the Federal Government, including 18 of them in cyber security in various federal government departments and agencies. She is also a former serving member of the Canadian Armed Forces with a tour of duty on Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) Toronto to the Persian Gulf in 2004.

Julia volunteers with Women in Defence and Security (WiDS) where she is passionate about promoting and supporting women in these fields and creating a community where everyone belongs.

## Meet Our Amazing Panelists



**Brigadier-General J.R. Speiser-Blanchet, CD,  
Commander Cadets and Junior Canadian Rangers,  
Canadian Armed Forces**

Brigadier-General Speiser-Blanchet joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1990 and graduated from the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) in 1994 with a degree in Computer Engineering.

Earning her pilot wings in March 1996 on the CH146 Griffon helicopter, her postings include 430e Escadron tactique d'hélicoptères in Valcartier, 1 Wing Headquarters in Kingston, 1 Canadian Air Division Headquarters in Winnipeg and 403 Helicopter Operational Training Squadron in Gagetown.

BGen Speiser-Blanchet deployed as a helicopter pilot during United Nations and NATO missions in Haiti and Bosnia and was appointed Deputy Commander (Operations) for JTF-IMPACT in Kuwait. In Canada, she has deployed on domestic operations in response to regional emergencies and support to other government agencies.

She has served in high profile staff appointments as military assistant to the Minister of National Defence and as the Special Advisor to the Chief of the Defence Staff. Her last command was Commander of the Canadian Forces Intelligence Group.

BGen Speiser-Blanchet holds a Masters degree in Defence Studies from RMC and a Masters degree in Politics and Policy from Deakin University in Australia.

A mother of three, BGen Speiser-Blanchet is honoured to be entrusted with the responsibility of one of Canada's most important youth programs in her position as Commander, Cadets and Junior Canadian Rangers.



**Melissa Talbot (they/them/she/her), Senior Policy  
Advisor, Fisheries and Oceans Canada**

Melissa Talbot is a Senior Policy Advisor working to advance horizontal reconciliation policy. They joined Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the federal public service in 2015 and have worked in various roles as a Program Officer, Policy Advisor at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. They hold a Master's in Economics from the University of Ottawa and a Bachelor's in Economics and Resource & Environmental Management from Simon Fraser University.

Melissa is passionate about applying an intersectional, diversity and inclusion lens in her policy work and in fostering a more inclusive workplace. She is a Positive Space Ambassador, and a member of the Anti-Racism Ambassador Network and Federal Black Employee Caucus. She received a Prix d'Excellence 2019 award for her contribution to the Positive Space Initiative and a DG Merit Award in 2021 for her anti-racism work.



**Michelle Hunt, Acting Manager, Indigenous Relations and Partnerships, Western Region, Canadian Coast Guard**

Michelle Hunt is a member of the Kwakiutl First Nation and lives in her traditional Village of Tsakis on the Northern Tip of Vancouver Island. Alongside working for the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG), she served on her Nation's elected Chief and Council and works closely with her Hereditary Chief's and Matriarch's. Michelle comes from a long line of leaders, world renowned master carvers and artists and is also the great-granddaughter of Mungo Martin, who hosted the first potlatch after the potlatch ban was lifted in 1952.

Michelle's career in CCG started as the liaison between CCG and the Kwakiutl First Nation. She helped facilitate meetings, exercises and discussions of a new CCG Base in her traditional territory of Port Hardy. In 2021, she became a Senior Advisor for the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships program in the Western Region and now has the honor and privilege to work with many Nations up and down Vancouver Island.

Michelle is a huge advocate of diversity and inclusion and believes everyone has a voice that deserves to be heard. She believes in each person being able to live a life that brings them happiness and peace. You can often find Michelle on hikes, assisting the local Search & Rescue teams, traveling the North Island back roads or curled up on a couch reading a book, her favorites focusing on indigenous issues or about life here on our beautiful west coast!

## Meet Our Co-Hosts



**Maryse Cétoute, Senior Talent and Performance Management Advisor, Department of Canadian Heritage**

Maryse joined the Public Service over 16 years ago, serving in various roles across several Departments such as Statistics Canada (STC), Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and, currently, Canadian Heritage (PCH). As a Team Leader and Senior Talent and Performance Management Advisor within Executive Services, Maryse provides strategic advice and guidance to senior management on many complex and sensitive human resources (HR) files. She has rich experience in executive talent management, performance management, planning and resourcing.

Passionate about all things HR and with a heart for service excellence, her vision is to continue to contribute to the evolution of the human resources role with innovative ideas, enable change and advance diversity and inclusion in the Public Service.

Maryse currently resides in Montreal, Quebec with her spouse and two daughters who enjoy the world of sports, dance, and music. She is also a sister, a daughter, an aunt, and a friend.



**Samantha Moonsammy, Section Head Lead Advisor for Diversity and Inclusion, Materiel Group, National Defence.**

Samantha has spent over 15 years in the public service working in numerous communications, outreach and engagement initiatives that focuses on the people side of business. But Samantha is much more than that. Her layers include being a woman, mother, partner, daughter, sister, community builder and immigrant.

As an Indo-Caribbean Canadian she was born in Guyana, South America and immigrated to Canada as a toddler. From a young age, dating back to elementary school to the present, Samantha has been a leader in diversity, inclusion and equity, always helping to amplify the voice of others and create sustainable change in organizations to build deeper

respect and understanding for all humans. Samantha lives in the Ottawa area and spent some time in Toronto and Barbados during her Master's degree in Communications and Culture. She is a passionate world traveller who has worked and studied in India, China, France and the Caribbean. Her daily mantra: Be the change you wish to see in the world.

## **Mission - Ask Me Anything Series**

We recognize that individuals are composed of a multitude of layers that make us who we are. We do not fit easily in one box or another and we can't be neatly counted. We represent the mosaic of Canada.

It is important that we find value in each other's experiences, differences and unique characteristics. When we build our cultural competencies, we are able to work better together in our teams and respond to each other with relevance, empathy and compassion. By celebrating and sharing our authentic selves, we gain greater appreciation of each other and the diversity that surrounds us.

We know through diversity, that workplaces and communities are stronger, more successful and resilient. And most important, it creates spaces of inclusion and fosters a workplace of belonging where people feel valued.

## **#AMACHallenge**

We encourage others to have courageous conversations with their peers. Use the monthly Ask Me Anything sessions as an opportunity to have brave conversations in your workplaces with your teams.

Here's what you need to do:

- Invite your leaders and colleagues in your organization to an Ask Me Anything watch party, tune in live and watch the session together. Make sure it's in their calendars.
- Before the watch party, book an "After the AMA – Team Session" with your immediate team for the day after the event for 30-60 minutes. Share the resource guide and have these questions for discussion.

### **After the AMA – Team Session Discussion Questions**

1. What was my main takeaway – expand and share an amazing quote, story or moment
2. What made me uncomfortable/ what was one of my blind spots?
3. What is an example of systemic discrimination that I am aware of in my life?
4. What am I not going to do anymore?

5. How can I use my voice/ influence? – both overtly/covertly
6. Where am I going to dig in and learn more?
7. How will I continue this conversation?

It is important that we find value in the experiences, the unique characteristics of each other. When we develop our cultural competence, we are able to work better together within our teams and respond to each other with relevant empathy and compassion. By celebrating and sharing our authentic selves, we gain a greater appreciation for each other and the diversity that surrounds us.

### **Thank you to our contributors**

Thank you to our contributors from across the Public Service of Canada – Canadian Coast Guard, National Defence, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of Canadian Heritage, Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

MCs: Maryse Cétoute and Samantha Moonsammy

Speakers: BGen Jamie Speiser-Blanchet, Melissa Talbot, Michelle Hunt, Julia Scouten

Production Team: Terri-Ann Hurst, Tara Lockhart, Shelby Racine, Michel Mainville, Melissa Michaud, Quinn Brown, Emily Princi, Bernadeth Betchi, Liliya Ishkaeva, Kelly Brewer-Balch, Katherine Hogan, Lyrique Richards, Terri Graham