

**Panelists**



**Ask Me Anything**  
**A Courageous Conversation on**  
Self-Discovery and Difficult Journeys

**Time:** 1:00 pm EST    **Date:** July 13, 2022    **Hosts:** Siobhán O'Meara and Danielle MacKinlay

## **Ask Me Anything: Pride Season**

### **A Courageous Conversation on Self-Discovery and Difficult Journeys**

**Featuring:** Olivier Beyer, MS Erin Rautenstrauch and Jason Bett

**Opening Remarks by:** Veronica Merryfield

**Closing Remarks by:** Hélène Genest

**Co-hosted by:** Siobhán O'Meara and Danielle MacKinlay

**Date and time:** Wednesday, July 13 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**

This Pride Season, we celebrate authenticity and our LGBTQ2+ peers. Pride Season marks the series of events that take place from June to September. Pride is most commonly represented by a rainbow flag, created by Gilbert Baker and first flown in 1978 at the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade. Red is for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, blue for harmony, and violet for spirit. On June 1st, the raising of the Pride flag, on Parliament Hill, marked the start of Pride Season.

There are more than 20 flags to celebrate Pride. From an Ally Pride Flag, an Agender Pride Flag to a Two-Spirit Pride flag. Inclusivity is an essential theme for Pride. For this month's Ask Me Anything, our panellists will explore inclusivity through a courageous

conversation on self-discovery and difficult journeys. Pride is a symbol of diversity, inclusion and authenticity.

Join us in our Ask Me Anything positive space and celebrate Pride with us.

## **About the Ask Me Anything Series**

This session is part of a series of Ask Me Anything sessions that give us a platform to share stories, listen, ask respectful questions and continue on our journey to becoming 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 Veronica Merryfield (she/her/elle), founder Cape Breton Transgender Network**



Veronica was born in the east end of London, grew up in Southampton, did her electrical and electronic engineering degree in Portsmouth and then worked in Cambridge. She then lived and worked in Tel Aviv and Vancouver before moving to Cape Breton. She has also traveled extensively. She works with a number of tech startups as CTO in Cape Breton and further afield. She is an expert in residence at the Dalhousie Emery ideaHUB.

Veronica's journey to womanhood is a road less travelled and identifies as intersex and transgender - her transgender journey uncovered the intersex condition. Drawing from her lived experiences, Veronica has provided training to the Cape Breton

Partnership, the staff of Transition House, the Elizabeth Fry Society and social services, speaks at schools and GSA conferences and teaches equity, diversity and inclusion at CBU's nurses' program, at Marine Atlantic and the Canadian Coast Guard. She also

speaks at events and to organizations further afield. She is chair at the Every Woman's Center and CBRM diversity committee, and on the board at Transition House, Cape Breton Pride (director of education) and Conversion Therapy Survivors Connect (communications director) and others. She is the founder of the Cape Breton Transgender Network ([www.cbtn.ca](http://www.cbtn.ca)). She has worked successfully to get changes to legislation with more to come. You may have noticed her name in the media.

Veronica has two daughters and four grandchildren, dabbles in instrument making and speaks on the subject, she plays bass guitar and keyboards, is a writer, photographer and partial to a decent cup of tea.

### **Closing Remarks by H  l  ne Genest (elle/she/her), Parks Canada**



H  l  ne leads the GBA Plus application at Parks Canada and chairs the LGBTQ2+ network. She is a part-time facilitator at the Canada School of Public Service and Marquette returning officer for   lections Qu  bec. She has successively worked for Crossroads International, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, M  decins sans fronti  res and the Canadian Armed Forces. H  l  ne lives in Montr  al with her wife and their two teenagers. She loves biking, rowing, reading and following the news.

## Meet Our Amazing Panelists



### **Olivier Beyer, Campus Services Manager, Canadian Coast Guard College**

After receiving a diploma in Hospitality Management in Strasbourg, France, Olivier Beyer held a wide range of positions in hotels, resorts and cruise ships around the world. Olivier moved to Quebec in 1999, then to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia in 2010. He started working at the Canadian Coast Guard College (CCGC) in January 2015 as Front Desk Supervisor, where he continues to apply his experience to serve clients and support the CCGC operation.

Olivier has been assuming the duties of Campus Services Manager since November 2019.

In 2017, Olivier's personal life was touched by the LGBTQ2+ community. This experience led him on his journey to creating initiatives in support of Pride. He had the opportunity to take a Positive Space Ambassador course, as well as a Train the Trainer Positive Space course.

These opened Olivier's eyes to a new world that, although he knew existed, he didn't know exactly how much it had to offer. Once he saw the abundance of information, Olivier knew that he had to share it with his colleagues. This is how he became an Ambassador for Positive Space at the CCG College.

The Positive Space Committee trains employees of the CCG College to be ambassadors for other employees in need of Positive Space information. Although the Positive Space Committee does not replace professional help/support groups, they enjoy being able to organize activities that provide a safe space for our LGBTQ2+ community. Some of these activities include participating in our city's Pride Parade, inviting guest speakers to the CCG College and holding presentations about Positive Space regularly for staff.

For the past three years, Olivier was allowed the opportunity to give presentations to all new Officer Cadets on Positive Space, what the LGBTQ2+ community is, and what it is not.





**Master Sailor Erin Rautenstrauch, Naval Combat Information Operator, National Defence**

Master Sailor Erin Rautenstrauch joined the Canadian Armed Forces in August 2011 as a Naval Combat Information Operator. In 2015 she deployed for Operation Caribbe and then from 2015 to 2016 for Operation Reassurance on Her Majesty's Canadian Ships (HMCS) Winnipeg. After coming out in 2017, she has been met with challenges, along with successes while being open with who she is. In 2021 she became the first Maritime Forces Pacific Defence Team Pride Advisory Organization's military co-chair where she is able to lean on her lived experience to identify systemic barriers

that affect the LGBTQ2+ community. In addition to being the local co-chair, she works closely with the national pride organization to effect change across the Armed Forces.

In her free time, Erin enjoys being active with rock climbing and spending time in the alpine. After finding strength and growth in the sport, she started a non-profit on Vancouver Island that promotes queer folks in the sport of climbing.



**Jason Bett (he/him/lui), Champion, Public Service Pride Network, Executive Director, Strategic Engagement and Innovation, Treasury Board Secretariat**

Jason Bett joined the Office of the Chief Information Officer at Treasury Board Secretariat in April 2020 as Executive Director, Strategic Engagement and Innovation. His role is to engage and establish partnerships with the IT industry and external stakeholders to attract and recruit talent in the public service.

Prior to his role at TBS, he was the Director-General for Operations in the Strategic Communications and Marketing Sector at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED). His role is to provide communications advice, briefings and services to multiple ministers and senior officials of the department and the ISED Portfolio at large.

He first joined the public service in 2007 and has occupied various communications positions at Industry Canada, ISED and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Jason is the Champion for Public Service Pride and former Chair of the LGBTQ2+ Network at ISED, building on his vision to send a clear message that the public service is committed to cultivating a diverse, safe, respectful, healthy and inclusive workplace.

Jason completed his studies in political science at the University of Ottawa and is the recipient of a 2020 APEX Award of Excellence.

## **Meet Our Co-Hosts**



**Siobhán O'Meara (she/her/hers),  
Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator,  
Fisheries and Oceans Canada**

Siobhán is the Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator for Salmon Enhancement facilities at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) in Vancouver. She's spent over 19 years in the public service, with a diverse experience in office administration, records management, materiel management, and program administration.

Siobhán is a woman, partner, aunt, cat mom, and an adopted person. She is a queer cis ally and an advocate for LGBTQ2IA+ rights and Positive Space Ambassador. She has multiple invisible disabilities and advocates for accessible and inclusive spaces. Siobhán has worked abroad in Belgium and Austria and travelled in more than 11 countries. Connecting with people from different cultures and backgrounds has given her a greater appreciation and understanding of humanity.



**Danielle (Dan) MacKinlay (she/they), Senior Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion, Canadian Coast Guard**

Their substantive position is at the Canadian Coast Guard College where they have been the Manager, Library Services since 2005. They have a Master's degree in Library and Information Studies from Dalhousie University, a BA(Hons) from Mount Allison University in French Studies and Psychology, and recently completed a Leadership and Inclusion Certificate from Centennial College (Toronto) and the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.

Danielle is also a bilingual, queer person, parent of three young children, an avid reader and craftsperson, of French Canadian and Scottish descent, who lives with an invisible disability. Their career passions are advocating for others and amplifying voices, with the goal of building a more compassionate workplace. They believe that access to services, information and knowledge are the key to safe and creative workplace culture. Born and raised on Unama'ki (Cape Breton Island), they are influenced by the rich culture and history that defines the island. They are interested in how we can speak more mindfully and effectively to one another.

**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, 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, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Treasury Board Secretariat, and Parks Canada

MCs: Siobhán O'Meara and Danielle MacKinlay

Panelists: Veronica Merryfield, Hélène Genest, Olivier Beyer, MS Erin Rautenstrauch, and Jason Bett

AMA Team: Tara Lockhart, Terri-Ann Hurst, Natasha Lim, Jasmine Cousineau, Shelby Racine, Danielle MacKinlay, Michel Mainville, Melissa Michaud, Lamare Robinson, Bernadeth Betchi, Liliya Ishkaeva, Terri Graham, Kelly Brewer-Balch, Lyrique Richards, Wanda Lewis