

Panelists



Ask Me Anything
A Courageous Conversation on
Black History Month

Time: 1:00 pm EST **Date:** February 9, 2022 **Hosts:** Samantha Moonsammy and Diana Kinimah

Ask Me Anything: Black History Month

Featuring: Sean Foyn, Richard Sharpe, Karen Spencer-Cousins
and Commodore Jacques Olivier

Co-hosted by: Diana Kinimah and Samantha Moonsammy

Date and time: Wednesday, February 9th 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 Live Event](#)

Ask Me Anything is now on GC Wiki Collab <https://wiki.gccollab.ca/AMA> and GC Collab!
Click HERE to join the group. Access [past recordings of AMAs on YouTube](#).

Event description

Black History Month means more than holding events to educate the public; it means initiating and practicing change and challenging preconceived notions of what it means to be black. Black History Month is not only a time to reflect on the hardships that black people have gone through and continue to go through, in and out of the workplace; it's also a time to celebrate and uplift black voices and black lives. Facilitating changes in the workplace and in our personal lives means hosting courageous conversations about anti-racism, systemic racism, unconscious biases, discrimination, and racially motivated micro-aggressions. Black History Month extends beyond the past and serves to better the future.

Experiences heard and lived throughout black history benefit us all. Our panellists come together from various backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives as public servants.

The panel will close with an open discussion on what systemic changes could help increase diversity, inclusion and belonging within the federal public service.

About the Ask Me Anything Series

This session is part of a series of Ask Me Anything sessions that are giving 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, 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.

Meet Our Amazing Panelists

Sean Foyn, Senior Strategic Policy Advisor, Federal Black Employees Caucus



As a Public Servant Sean has held various policy development, corporate planning and reporting, and citizen engagement positions. Sean has worked on several diversity and equity related files within the Public Service and across Canadian communities. As a Senior Policy and Program Officer at Canadian Heritage, Sean was responsible for developing four of the Government of Canada's Black History Month and Asian Heritage Month Campaigns.

He is a happily unapologetic history geek who cannot remember a time when he wasn't listening to storytellers, reading history, visiting historic sites, researching and sharing what he has learned. His article [Troika of Programs: African Nova Scotian Education at Dalhousie University, RE/](#)

[VISIONING: Canadian Perspectives on the Education of African in the Late 20th Century](#) explores initiatives designed to redress historic educational and social inequities in Nova Scotia. Sean's MA Thesis, [The Underside of Glory: AfriCanadian Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1917](#), was nominated for Excellence in Research in Graduate Studies. Sean was a historical researcher for Anthony Sherwood's the docudrama [Honour Before Glory](#), and he wrote and produced the audio documentary [Africville Not For Sale](#). Recently, Sean worked with the Michaelle Jean Foundation to produce a two-part Podcast, [Emancipation Day: What Now is Our Past, Present and Future](#). He is an active member of [Black History Ottawa](#) and frequently makes community-based presentations.

Richard Sharpe, Director of the Equity, Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion, Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Secretariat, Department of Justice Canada



Richard has worked within the Canadian Federal Public Service for over 25 years. He is currently the Director of the Equity, Anti-racism, Diversity and Inclusion Leading the Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Secretariat at the Department of Justice Canada where his work focusses on ensuring equity and inclusion for all equity seeking groups within the organization. Over the years, his work has involved leading initiatives in support of Government of Canada commitments to the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent. Richard is one of the founders of the Federal Black Employee Caucus that has been working with federal public service and union leadership to address anti-black racism in the federal public service.

Richard's work regionally, nationally and within the federal public service is intended to improve the condition of Black and African diaspora communities in Canada. Over the last few years, Richard has been a speaker on addressing systemic racism, anti-black racism and how to be a Black ally within the Black Lives Matter movement.

Karen Spencer-Cousins, Citizen Service Officer, Employment and Social Development Canada, CEIU Ontario Regional Women's Committee



Born in Toronto, Ontario Canada to proud Jamaican parents; Karen and her siblings grew up with a strong work ethic, passion for activism, and emphasis on education. She is now married with 2 children, with over 15 years experience in the Public Service and a lifelong dedication to promoting equity, diversity and social change.

Karen is a graduate of the University of Toronto and possesses her BSc in Psychology and Crime and Deviance accented by minors in Women's Studies and Sociology. She has also obtained her Citizen Service Professional designation while working for Service Canada through ICCS. Within CEIU she is Vice-President of Local 633 and is a member of the Ontario Regional

Women's Committee. Karen has enjoyed participating in the Lifting as you Lead initiative and looks forward to sharing some of her layers during Black History Month.

Commodore Jacques Olivier, National Defence



In June 2021, Commodore Jacques Olivier joined the newly established Chief Professional Conduct and Culture organisation tasked to unifying and leading a fundamental transformation in the way systemic misconduct is understood and addressed in the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Commodore Olivier is a seasoned naval engineer with more than 35 years of service in the CAF, and with a natural inclination for transformational change and strategic initiatives. His current role includes strengthening professional conduct across the Defence Team through inclusive leadership, training and education.

Meet Our Moderator

Diana Kinimah, co-founder and business manager of the IRCC's Black Employee Network, Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada



Diana Kinimah is the co-founder and Business Manager of the IRCC's Black Employee Network at Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada. "Inclusion by design" is her middle name. With over 5 years experience as a social justice advocate, Diana is passionate about leveraging her skill set to advocate on behalf of racialized public servants' in career development while equipping them with the right tools in order to succeed.

Diana is much more than an advocate, she is a trailblazer, a community builder, a mother and a champion of impactful change. She believes that, to have an

inclusive and equitable world free from discrimination, individuals need to avoid outdated cultural anecdotes. This will help everyone to feel empowered, included and valued, especially the younger generation.

Meet the Host of Ask Me Anything



Samantha Moonsammy, L1 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, 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 a 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, Health Canada, National Defence.

MCs: Diana Kinimah and Samantha Moonsammy

Panelists: Sean Foy, Richard Sharpe, Karen Spencer-Cousins, and Commodore Jacques Olivier

AMA Team: Tara Lockhart, Terri-Ann Hurst, Melissa Michaud, Natasha Lim, Jasmine Cousineau, Shelby Racine, Katie Freer, Michel Mainville, Lyrique Richards, Abigail Theano-Pudwill, Theresa Graham, Liliya Ishkaeva, Laura Raine, Lorraine Mason, Katherine Thompson and Kelly Brewer-Balch.