

Panelists



Marilou Moles **Alfonso Ralph Mendoza Manalo** **Jennifer Hong**

Ask Me Anything

Asian Heritage Month

A Courageous Conversation on Disrupting Invisibility

Time: 1:00 pm EST **Date:** May 18, 2022 **Hosts:** Jasmine Cousineau and Lamare Robinson

Ask Me Anything: Asian Heritage Month

A Courageous Conversation on Disrupting Invisibility

Featuring: Marilou Moles, Alfonso Ralph Mendoza Manalo and Jennifer Hong

Co-hosted by: Jasmine Cousineau and Lamare Robinson

Date and time: Wednesday, May 18 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

May is Asian Heritage Month in Canada, a time to reflect on and celebrate the contributions that Canadians of Asian descent have made and continue to make, to the growth and prosperity of Canada.

Over the last two centuries, immigrants have journeyed to Canada from East Asia, Southern Asia, Western, Central and Southeast Asia, bringing our society a rich cultural heritage representing many languages, ethnicities and religious traditions. Asian Heritage Month has been celebrated across Canada since the 1990s. In May 2002, the Government of Canada signed an official declaration to designate May as Asian Heritage Month.

This event is aimed at disrupting invisibility of public servants of Asian descent across the federal public service. Join in as a diverse group of panellists share their lived experiences

and highlight their work to eliminate racism and discrimination towards creating a more diverse and inclusive public service.

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.

Meet Our Amazing Panelists



Alfonso Ralph Mendoza Manalo, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy Advisor, Race-based Data Collection Policy Advisor, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

Alfonso Ralph Mendoza Manalo is a fourth-year undergraduate student at the University of Toronto Scarborough, majoring in Co-op Public Policy and Global Asia Studies and minoring in Critical Migration Studies. He currently works as an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy Advisor and as an Ad-Hoc Race-based Data Collection Policy Advisor for the RCMP. Outside of government he also works as an Administrative Assistant and Grant Writer at the Filipino Centre

Toronto and as a Research Assistant at the University of Toronto's Department of Political Science under Professor Moreau.

Alfonso is an avid writer and academic researcher. Some of his passions include Filipinx, Southeast Asian Studies, Diasporic Studies, Race and Racism, Anti-Asian Racism, Public Administration, and Queer Studies.

One of Alfonso's fondest memories as a public servant is successfully advocating for the inclusion of anti-Asian racism and religious discrimination into the RCMP's national anti-racism course and authoring the sub-module on the former. He is also heavily involved in the RCMP's Race-based Data Collection Working group, providing research and policy analysis for the collection of disaggregated data on police interactions, wherein he advocated for the collection of perception-based data. Alfonso is a proud queer first-generation Filipino-Canadian, residing in Tkaronto who has always dreamt of being a public servant and academic who supports underrepresented communities across social axes.



Marilou Moles, Senior Advisor, Integrated Planning and Coordination in the Afghanistan sector, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

With a diverse background across policy, regulations, communications, issues management, Marilou Moles has recently taken on the role of the Senior Advisor to the Director General at the Integrated Planning and Coordination in the Afghanistan sector at IRCC. She is a recipient of the Strategic Policy and Program Assistant Deputy Minister Awards for Going Above and Beyond the Call of Duty.

Born in Manila, Philippines, Marilou is proud of her Filipino Asian heritage. Her experience moving to Canada as a young teen has shaped her passion and commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity.

Named one of the Best Influencers and Media Personalities in Ottawa, many years in a row, Marilou is the Founder of one of the longest-established blogs in the nation's capital. Marilou launched [Twenty York Street](#) after noticing the huge lack of representation in mainstream media, social media and industries such as fashion, where we should see ourselves reflected as we participate, consume and live it, every day of our lives.

She is also a recipient of the Parliament of Canada Award for outstanding contribution to the community in fashion and lifestyle. A sought-after travel blogger, writer and content creator and also a frequently requested speaker and mentor, Marilou has a massive social media following, a platform she uses to support local businesses, showcases Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour-owned businesses/artists and to advocate for important charities and social issues. Marilou is often featured/interviewed on TV, newspapers, magazines, podcasts and online sites.



Jennifer Hong, Co-chair of Visible Minority Advisory Council (VMAC), Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN)

Under Jennifer`s leadership, VMAC has successfully organized and delivered over 10 virtual inclusive and accessible-by-design events. She has also developed and facilitated NRCAN`s first-ever Safe Space Session on the topic of anti-Asian racism and continues to support spaces that allow for meaningful dialogue, intersectionality, and learning amongst staff.

Jennifer is a recent graduate from the University of British Columbia holding a Bachelor of Science Honours in Forest Sciences specializing in Forest Ecosystem Services and currently is a policy analyst for the Circular Bioeconomy and Supply Chain Economics team at the Canadian Forest Service (CFS).

She is passionate about engaging youth in environmentalism and has worked for the Parks Canada Agency developing community outreach programs for diverse public audiences including new-to-Canada and Indigenous communities and has led a student team to complete environmental restoration activities for the City of Surrey`s Salmon Habitat Restoration Program. Previously, she has supported NRCAN`s employees in 19 different innovation-related projects and has international experience working for Singapore`s National Parks Board. In addition, Jennifer has experience analyzing environmental policy solutions and programming to implement the Pan-Canadian Framework for Environment and Climate Change Canada.

She is also a member of the CFS EDI Working Group, the events organizer for NRCAN`s Young Professionals Network, an NRCAN Mental Health and Wellness Ambassador, and has been trained in Positive Space and Gender Based Analysis (GBA+).

Meet Our Co-Hosts



Jasmine Cousineau, Event Officer and Communication Advisor, Internal Communications, Event Management and Publications Team, Canadian Coast Guard

Jasmine Cousineau started her federal service career in 2019 at PSPC where she worked in events and internal communications, closely working with the Diversity and Inclusion file. She began working for the Canadian Coast Guard in May of 2021 where she took on an Event Officer and Communication Advisor role with the Internal Communications, Event Management and Publications team. She has a background in Illustration and Concept Art as well as Communication

and Media Studies.

Jasmine has always taken interest in the Diversity and Inclusion field and is proud to bring a different perspective to the table while highlighting her heritage and experiences as a mixed-race person (half Sri Lankan, half French-Canadian). Specifically, she is passionate about issues like representation in media and believes in the importance of creating intentional spaces for marginalized groups of people to be seen and heard.

Outside of work, Jasmine enjoys creating visual art in both traditional and digital mediums as a freelance illustrator and teaching the occasional paint night. Her other hobbies include playing the guitar, piano, rollerblading and spending time pampering her rescue dog, Cody.



Lamare Robinson, Acting Section Head, Lead Advisor for Diversity and Inclusion, Materiel Group, National Defence

Lamare has been a public servant for more than ten years, serving in various roles across Parks Canada Agency. While working in Internet Content and New Media, she had the great privilege to work in and visit most regions of Nunavut, and her love of the territory -- the people, the languages, the culture, and the land – endures. She is a proud SWANA woman, born in Lebanon in the region of South West Asia and North Africa, who immigrated to Canada as a young child. She is a partner and

the mother of two strong young women. She is a storyteller, first and always. She is a student, survivor, proud public servant, and optimist. She is working to co-create meaningful and lasting change in our workplaces and in our communities, where we all feel – and *are* – safe to be our authentic selves and where inclusion, diversity, equity, and true belonging are expected and assured. Her vision: One day, people will look back on this time and think us silly and tragic. They'll say, *Of course, diversity is our strength. Of course, we belong here.*

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, Natural Resources Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

MCs: Jasmine Cousineau and Lamare Robinson

Panelists: Marilou Moles, Alfonso Ralph Mendoza Manalo and Jennifer Hong

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