

Ask Me Anything

A Courageous Conversation on
Microaggressions and Mental Health

Panelists:



Ikram Warsame
Human Rights
Lawyer



Natalie Taite
Anti-Racism and
Anti-Discrimination Secretariat



Holly Ellingwood
Diversity and Inclusion
Secretariat, Public Safety Canada

Time: 1:00 pm EST | **Date:** January 12, 2022

Hosts: Samantha Moonsammy and Danielle MacKinlay

Ask Me Anything: Microaggressions and Mental Health

Featuring: Natalie Taite, Ikram Warsame and Holly Ellingwood

Co-hosted by: Danielle MacKinlay and Samantha Moonsammy

Date and time: Wednesday, January 12th at 1:00 to 2:30 PM EST

Audience: Open to all Government of Canada employees

Register: [Online registration form](#)

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

Event description

Words are powerful. They can build teams up and they can also destroy them. We have all heard the saying, “Be careful with your words. Once they are said they can be forgiven but not forgotten.” The same goes for microaggressions in the workplace. We may call microaggressions “micro” aggressions, but their cumulative impact can be measured on a “macro” scale. Day-by-day, slight-by-slight, microaggressions can feel like “death by a thousand papercuts.” While the word “micro” means “small,” each instance of microaggression has a big impact on the employee experience, physical health, and psychological well-being.

In today’s AMA we are shining the light on microaggressions in the workplace. Let’s lean in together to help understand how these often everyday, subtle, intentional and

unintentional words, actions or behaviors perpetuate bias toward marginalized groups in the workplace and its harmful effects on psychological safety for all team members.

After we identify the different types of micro aggressions, let's come together and learn actionable steps we can each take to create a psychologically safe and inclusive workplaces for everyone. Together we can do this and level up 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

Natalie Taite, Strategic Advisor, Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Secretariat, Justice Canada

Natalie Taite, was born and raised in the nation's capital. She graduated from Carleton University with an Honours degree in Law and Human Rights and now works at the Department of Justice Canada as a Strategic Advisor with the Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Secretariat. Prior to this, she accepted an assignment as the lead of strategic planning with the Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC), an organization that aims to address anti-Black racism within the federal public service. Natalie also has extensive experience in the areas of results and delivery and strategic planning and reporting with Public Services and Procurement Canada, where she worked for several years.



Natalie has always been interested in creating and innovating to develop solutions to issues hindering the advancement of a project, a program, a person or a people. Which is why her current position with Justice Canada, supporting the Department in its effort to become a representative, diverse and inclusive organization at all levels, is a perfect match.

Holly Ellingwood, Lead Departmental Strategist, Diversity and Inclusion Secretariat, Public Safety Canada



Dr. Holly Ellingwood has lived experience as a person with a visible disability as well as professionally as Lead of the Diversity and Inclusion Secretariat as a part of the Deputy Minister's Office for Public Safety Canada. He comes to us with several years of learned experience with degrees in psychology, law with an emphasis on social justice and human rights. As a community leader who has volunteered countless hours for the City of Ottawa Accessibility Advisory Committee and in Orleans, he works in the community to enhance and create more accessible spaces.

Ikram Warsame, Human Rights Lawyer

Ikram Warsame is a United Nations Human Rights fellow, a human rights lawyer and litigator, a 2021 “100 Most Influential People of African Descent (MIPAD)”, and a Co-founder of the Global Black Collective Institute.

Ms. Warsame is a human rights lawyer. Her practice focuses on complex litigation of human rights cases dealing with disability, sexual harassment, pay equity, intersectional systemic discrimination, racial profiling in the financial industries and anti-black racism in the government, prisoners' rights, women's rights in the workplace etc. In this capacity, she has successfully negotiated intricate multi-party settlement agreements and litigated before all levels of court including the Supreme Court of Canada, the Federal Court of Appeal, the Federal Court and administrative tribunals.

Ms. Warsame is also the Co-Founder and Co-chair (Finances and Operations Committee) of the Global Black Collective institute, an international non-governmental organization founded by several UN Human Rights Fellows. This organization is dedicated to advocating the human rights of People of African descent through international human rights law and other human rights instruments.

A *Magna cum laude* graduate, Ms. Warsame holds a Bachelor of Social Science in Criminology and Sociology and received her Juris Doctor degree in 2000 from the University of Ottawa (Canada). She is a member of the bar (Law Society of Ontario) since 2002 and is fluent in French, English and Somali.



Meet Our Moderator



Danelle (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.

Meet the Host of Ask Me Anything



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, 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.

MCs: Danielle MacKinlay and Samantha Moonsammy

Panelists: Natalie Taite, Ikram Warsame and Holly Ellingwood

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