

# ASK ME ANYTHING



**A COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION ON  
INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCE: EXPLORING  
ANTI-RACISM SECRETARIATS**



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**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2021 AT 1PM EST  
FEATURING: FARAH BOISCLAIR, SEEMA  
CHOWDHURY AND MICHELLE SEYMOUR**

**Canada** 

# ASK ME ANYTHING (AMA) RESOURCE GUIDE

## NOTE FROM OUR TEAM

**Thank you for participating in the [November Ask Me Anything \(AMA\): Institutional Influence: Exploring Anti-Racism Secretariats](#). We are excited that you joined us for this event! An extensive list of resources has been collected and curated, that we believe will be helpful for our colleagues however, it is not an exhaustive list. We recognize that not every resource will be valuable to every reader, however we hope that helpful and interesting resources can be found within our guide.**

**In collaboration, The AMA Team**  
[DiversityandInclusion-Diversiteetinclusion@forces.gc.ca](mailto:DiversityandInclusion-Diversiteetinclusion@forces.gc.ca)

## EVENT DESCRIPTION

For November, we are celebrating the institutional progress being made by innovative public servants who lead departmental anti-racism initiatives. We are pleased to provide a platform for these amazing individuals who are trailblazing anti-racism work in the federal public service.

Anti-racism secretariats are rooted in the truth that racism and discrimination exists at systemic and individual levels. To create a more equitable system, change is required at the organizational and individual level. Individuals working in this area, and departments supporting this initiative, understand that harm is done in many ways; both purposely and through a lack of understanding and awareness.

**OPENING REMARKS** **Aalya Dhanani (She/Her), Co-Founder and Head of Engagement & Community Building, Anti-Racism Ambassadors Network (ARAN)**



Aalya is a community connector and policy professional with Transport Canada. She has worked in the Federal Public Service for over 12 years. More recently, she has also joined the Canada School of Public Service as Associate Faculty to deliver training on Anti-Racism and Mental Health topics. She holds a B.A. in Psychology and an M.A. in Sociology with specialization in Feminist and Gender Studies. Aalya brings her education, insight and experience of working across horizontal communities, GBA+, and mental-health background to the team. Her lived experiences as a WOC in the South Asian diaspora, passion and commitment to dismantle systemic racism, led her to the Network. Aalya was born in Tanzania and immigrated to Canada with her family in the 1990's. Aalya is a firm believer in bringing empathy to the way we work and live.

## PANELISTS



### **Farah Boisclair, Anti-Racism Task Force, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada**

Farah Boisclair is the lead of the newly created Anti-Racism Task Force at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Farah has extensive experience in Human Resources, working in this field for over 13 years, both at IRCC and at the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. Farah is passionate about advancing equity through action and creating spaces where people can be free to be themselves.

### **Michelle Seymour, Director of the Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion Division, Infrastructure Canada**

Michelle Seymour is a wife, a mother and a dynamic leader in the Public Service with over 23 years of professional experience; many of which were at the Department of National Defence. Michelle is the Director of the Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion Division at Infrastructure Canada, a Black woman and a vocal advocate in the call to address Anti-Racism. She provides a holistic approach that combines personal and professional knowledge to create space for the braver and much needed discussions necessary to advance the dismantling of institutional barriers within the Public Service. Michelle is dedicated to making a difference so future public servants and next generations of Canadians won't face the same systemic racism, discrimination and barriers from institutions and the world around them.



### **Seema Chowdhury, Civilian Advisor, Anti-Racism Secretariat, National Defence**

Seema Chowdhury is a Civilian Advisor with the Anti-Racism Secretariat under the newly created Chief Professional Conduct and Culture organization (CPCC). She has been with the department of National Defence for over 15 years, and has significant experience in the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion area including Human Resources Planning and Programs. Seema is a strong advocate for promoting open dialogue and conversations and turning them into meaningful action in advancing equity and inclusion within the Defence Team.



## CO-MODERATOR & HOST

### **Peter Flegel, Executive Director, Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat**



Peter Flegel is the Executive Director of the Government of Canada's Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, a cornerstone of Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy. With his diverse team, Peter is driving whole-of-government systems change in the federal government from an anti-racism perspective. This has entailed reaching and engaging close to 4 million people across Canada to inform policy making, helping shape new federal policies and legislation, collaborating with foreign allies and working with federal departments and central agencies to implement an anti-racism framework for the entire federal public service.

Peter has a distinguished career as a social entrepreneur, fundraiser, columnist, community organizer and musician, with extensive Canadian and international experience working in multilingual and multicultural settings. He has a history of leadership in the government, non-government organizations and philanthropic sectors, in areas including anti-racism, equity, human rights, innovation, culture, international affairs and entrepreneurship

### **Meet the host: Samantha Moonsammy, National Defence**



Samantha Moonsammy is the Section Head Lead Advisor for Diversity and Inclusion for the Materiel Group founded at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa, Canada. She 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.

# ASK ME ANYTHING (AMA)

## #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 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 a “After the AMA – Team Session” with your current team for the day after an event for 30-60mins. Share the resource guide and have these questions for discussion.

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## 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 blindspots?
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.

## SUPPORT

Remember, **support is available for you and your family when you need it.** Some of the discussions, at the AMA, or the content shared may bring forward past trauma or uncomfortable feelings; please seek professional help if this is the case.

**Employee Assistance Program** (for Federal Government employees) - Canada.ca  
Toll-free: 1-800-268-7708 TTY (for people with hearing impairments): 1-800-567-5803

**The Canada Suicide Prevention Service** - Connect with a responder now by calling our toll-free number 1-833-456-4566.

# RESOURCES

**If in crisis visit your local emergency department, general hospitals or call 911**

- <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/24-7-crisis-line/>
- Ottawa and region distress center: Distress: 613-238-3311 | Crisis: 613-722-6914 or 1-866-996-0991 | TEXT 343-306-5550 | Chat & Text 10am-11pm

Wellness Together Canada

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Support.

<https://wellnesstogether.ca> and toll free 1-866-585-0445.

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## BOOKS

- The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power by Desmond Cole
- Building a House for Diversity: A Fable about a Giraffe & an Elephant Offers New Strategies for Today's Workforce by Roosevelt Thomas and Marjorie Woodruff
- How to Be an Anti-Racist by Ibram Kendi
- Viola Desmond's Canada: A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land by Graham Reynolds et al.

## EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS

- Get comfortable with being uncomfortable (Ted Talk)  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/luvvie\\_ajayi\\_jones\\_get\\_comfortable\\_with\\_being\\_uncomfortable?\\_ke=eyJrbF9lbWFpbCI6ICJlbW1hQHNNZmYub3JnliwglmtsX2NvbXBhbmlfaWQiOiAiTjV1YkRTIn0%3D&language=en&utm\\_campaign=Statement+of+Solidarity+-+June+Newsletter+Replacement+%28UyRErm%29&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=April+Workshop](https://www.ted.com/talks/luvvie_ajayi_jones_get_comfortable_with_being_uncomfortable?_ke=eyJrbF9lbWFpbCI6ICJlbW1hQHNNZmYub3JnliwglmtsX2NvbXBhbmlfaWQiOiAiTjV1YkRTIn0%3D&language=en&utm_campaign=Statement+of+Solidarity+-+June+Newsletter+Replacement+%28UyRErm%29&utm_medium=email&utm_source=April+Workshop)
- How to get serious about diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Ted Talk)  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/janet\\_stovall\\_how\\_to\\_get\\_serious\\_about\\_diversity\\_and\\_inclusion\\_in\\_the\\_workplace](https://www.ted.com/talks/janet_stovall_how_to_get_serious_about_diversity_and_inclusion_in_the_workplace)
- How diversity makes teams more innovative (Ted Talk)  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/rocio\\_lorenzo\\_how\\_diversity\\_makes\\_teams\\_more\\_innovative?referrer=playlist-a\\_blueprint\\_for\\_diversity\\_in\\_the\\_workplace](https://www.ted.com/talks/rocio_lorenzo_how_diversity_makes_teams_more_innovative?referrer=playlist-a_blueprint_for_diversity_in_the_workplace)
- The world needs all kinds of minds (Ted Talk)  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/temple\\_grandin\\_the\\_world\\_needs\\_all\\_kinds\\_of\\_minds?referrer=playlist-a\\_blueprint\\_for\\_diversity\\_in\\_the\\_workplace](https://www.ted.com/talks/temple_grandin_the_world_needs_all_kinds_of_minds?referrer=playlist-a_blueprint_for_diversity_in_the_workplace)

# RESOURCES

- You-tube: What is Anti-Racism by Leslie Picca, PhD (2:31 mins)  
<https://youtu.be/h6J8h65rfg>
- You-Tube: The Path to Building an Anti-Racist Workplace by Susan Long-Walsh (14.31mins)  
<https://youtu.be/GnKGa380Z10>
- You-Tube: How studying privilege systems can strengthen compassion:  
<https://youtu.be/e-BY9UEewHw>

## ARTICLES

- Racism in Canada is ever-present, but we have a long history of denial  
[https://www.huffpost.com/archive/ca/entry/racism-canada-anti-black\\_ca\\_5ecd6c6cc5b670f88ad48d5c](https://www.huffpost.com/archive/ca/entry/racism-canada-anti-black_ca_5ecd6c6cc5b670f88ad48d5c)
- Comment l'inclusion et la diversité peuvent améliorer votre entreprise  
<https://www.roberthalf.ca/fr/blog/conseils-de-gestion/comment-linclusion-et-la-diversite-peuvent-ameliorer-votre-entreprise>
- Women of Color Progress – Guide to being an ally  
<https://www.womenofcolorforprogress.org/allyguide>
- Diversity wins: How inclusion matters  
<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>
- Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat Newsletter(Issue 2)  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/federal-anti-racism-secretariat/newsletter/issue-2.html>
- Anti-Racism Secretariat Report-2019-2022.pdf  
<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pch/documents/campaigns/anti-racism-engagement/ARS-Report-EN-2019-2022.pdf>
- Hillnotes: An Overview of Canada's Federal Anti-Racism Strategy  
<https://hillnotes.ca/2020/11/13/canadas-federal-anti-racism-strategy-an-overview/>
- Call to action on anti-racism, equity, and inclusion in the Federal Public Service  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/clerk/call-to-action-anti-racism-equity-inclusion-federal-public-service.html>

## WEBSITES

- LinkedIn Learning – learn the practical skills you need to excel in your career (e.g. Anti-Racism)  
[https://www.linkedin.com/learning/search?keywords=anti-racism&upsellOrderOrigin=default\\_guest\\_learning&trk=learning-serp\\_learning-search-bar\\_search-submit](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/search?keywords=anti-racism&upsellOrderOrigin=default_guest_learning&trk=learning-serp_learning-search-bar_search-submit)

## RESOURCES

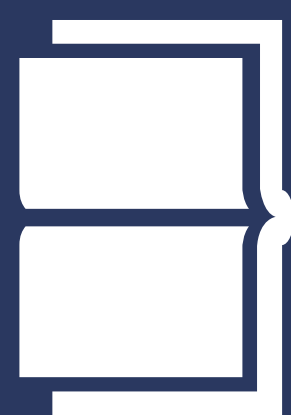
- LinkedIn Learning – learn the practical skills you need to excel in your career (e.g. Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging)  
[https://www.linkedin.com/learning/search?keywords=diversity&upsellOrderOrigin=default\\_guest\\_learning&trk=learning-serp\\_learning-search-bar\\_search-submit](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/search?keywords=diversity&upsellOrderOrigin=default_guest_learning&trk=learning-serp_learning-search-bar_search-submit)
- Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion // Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion  
<https://ccdi.ca/> // <https://ccdi.ca/accueil/>
- Centre for Race and Culture  
<https://cfrac.com/>
- Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/federal-anti-racism-secretariat.html>
- Lean In Organisation  
<https://leanin.org/about>

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**Thank you for attending Ask Me Anything - A Courageous Conversation on institutional influence: exploring anti-racism secretariats. To access all the resources visit this [folder](#).**







**Prerequisite:** Watch AMA

**Objective:** to facilitate a discussion with my work team about institutional influence and anti-racism

**Time:** 60 minutes

What was my main takeaway – expand and share an amazing quote, story or moment:

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What made me uncomfortable/ what was one of my blind spots?

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What is an example of a systemic discrimination that I am aware of in my life?

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What am I not going to do anymore?

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**Time:** 60 minutes

How can I use my voice/ influence – both overtly/covertly

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Where am I going to dig in and learn more?

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How will I continue this conversation?

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What are some of the challenges unique to your identities that you face in the workplace?

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