



Ask Me Anything: Bilingualism – Event Recap

By: Shelby Racine, Events Management Officer

On Wednesday, September 14, we held our interdepartmental Ask Me Anything event on the topic of Bilingualism, in collaboration with the Department of National Defence and Health Canada. This topic was chosen in recognition of Official Languages Day, September 8, 2022.

Participants tuned in virtually from many departments to take part in a powerful and compelling conversation about their experiences and thoughts on bilingualism, its importance in our work environments, and its impact on our lives. Simultaneous sign language interpretation was also offered throughout the event.

The event was opened by Dave Morton, Administrative Assistant at Parks Canada. Outside of his role at Parks Canada, Dave is also an American Sign Language instructor, teaching undergraduate students about deaf culture and understanding the structure of sign language. In his opening remarks, he shared some important considerations: “bilingualism is not only French and English—French also has SLQ (Langue des signes Québécoise) and American Sign Language (what we interpret when listening to English).” He also shared: “Sign language is a manual language, but it is certainly just as valid as any other language.” Dave also shared other insightful considerations and stories with us—and left us all with some important messages to reflect on.

Our amazing panelists from this Ask Me Anything event included:

- Raymond Théberge, Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada
- Lamare Robinson, Acting Senior Analyst, DG Culture Change (DGCC), Chief Professional Conduct and Culture (CPCC), National Defence
- Andrew McArthur, Senior Analyst, Risk Management, Department of Justice Canada

The conversation was co-moderated by Mary Ann Dewey-Plante, Director, External Relations and Industry Engagement, Canadian Coast Guard; and Bernadeth Betchi, Acting Section Head, Lead Advisor for Diversity and Inclusion, Materiel Group, National Defence.



The conversation covered many different topics. Along with discussing their individual experiences, panelists spoke about some specifics about being bilingual in the public service and the road they took to get there.

Bilingualism is a key component of diversity and inclusion. Communication is a basis of human nature, and being able to communicate with each other creates spaces for cooperation, understanding, and inclusion. Conversations like this one help us all to reflect on issues of discrimination and why we need to work hard to ensure our workplace environments are inclusive for everyone.

Thank you to all of our speakers for sharing your sincere thoughts, feelings, and ideas with us, and for ultimately helping public servants keep open minds when it comes to building our multilingual co-workers up and elevating their voices. Thank you also to all who attended the event or watched the recording online for being a part of the change we are creating in government. Together, we're creating space for these important conversations within the Government of Canada.

For those who didn't get a chance to tune in live, we invite you to watch the [event recording](#) and to share this event with members of your family, friends, and community.

DFO-CCG events: Diversity and Inclusion and Ask Me Anything series

Have ideas for upcoming AMAs, want to share more of yourself with our organization, or share general feedback? Contact the [Internal Communications, Event Management and Publications Team](#)! We are committed to learning more and doing better and hope you join us on this challenge.

To get involved with the Ask Me Anything Community and access documentation from past events, join us on our new [Ask Me Anything site on GC Wiki collab](#). Together, we're creating a safe space for these important conversations within the Government of Canada.