



# News Release

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## **NMCC to mark Native American Heritage Month with presentation on Traditional Native American Culture and Spirituality and display of books in memory of student**

*Aroostook County* - The community is invited to join in a presentation on Traditional Native American Culture and Spirituality on Tuesday, November 24, at 12:00 noon in the E. Perrin Edmunds Library on the Northern Maine Community College campus.

The discussion, led by Joseph Davis, the cultural advisor and traditional ceremonial leader to the Wesget Sipu Tribe, is being coordinated by NMCC to mark National Native American Heritage Month. Davis will speak about the spiritual values of Native life found in tribes across the country.

In his presentation, Davis will address the universal importance of the environment to Native peoples and also discuss the differences that emanated from geography. For example he will speak about the importance the Plains Indians placed over generations on the buffalo, and how comparatively ancestors of the Wesget Sipu Tribe looked to the caribou and moose.

“Essentially the traditions of Native American culture and spirituality are based on the same basic tenets. Some of the traditions vary depending on the geography and climate of where the tribes are located across the country. However, we are all defined by our geography and the environment, and many of the traditions come from these two,” said Davis.

Davis, who also serves on Council for the Wesget Sipu Tribe in northern Aroostook County, was born in Louisiana and grew up in Niagara Falls, New York before joining the U.S. Military. When he returned from his service in the Army, he lived in Buffalo, New York for a while before relocating to Chicago. While in Chicago, he was a frequent guest lecturer on Native American culture and history at several colleges and universities. He relocated to the St. John Valley three years ago.

“It’s an honor and a pleasure to be asked and to come to Northern Maine Community College to help celebrate Native American Heritage Month. I look forward to speaking about a topic that is very important to both me personally and to this region,” said Davis.

The Wesget Sipu (Mi'kmaq for Fish River People) Tribe is comprised of the Maliseet and Mi'kmaq people that have lived on the native lands along the Fish River and the St. John River for many generations. Many Wesget Sipu people are French speaking Native Mi'kmaq descendants who came along with the Acadian people to the St. John Valley in the years following the Great Deportation.

In addition to the presentation by Davis, NMCC will mark Native American Heritage Month with a display of the College library's recently expanded collection of books both on Native American topics and written by Native American authors. Many of the books in the collection were purchased and donated by the NMCC community to the library in memory of Katherine (Katie) Pictou.

The 27-year-old single mother of two and student leader on the Presque Isle campus passed away unexpectedly earlier this year, just prior to the start of classes for the spring semester, which was to be her final before graduation in May. She was well-known and well-respected, having served as an officer for both the NMCC Student Senate and the campus chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society, as well as a student representative on the NMCC Foundation Board of Directors. Just prior to her passing, Pictou was named one of two Maine All-Academic Scholars from NMCC.

In addition, Pictou, who was of Native American descent, aspired to one day be a tribal leader and was passing on the traditions of her culture to her two children.

“The books purchased in Katie's memory exemplify the value of Native American women authors and serve as a wonderful tribute to the mother, daughter, friend, student and leader,” said Gail Roy, NMCC's assistant dean of learning resources. “We have a growing collection of books that celebrate Native American Heritage, and we encourage members of the public to stop by the College library through the end of this month to check them out.”

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*Gail Roy (left), NMCC assistant dean of learning resources, and Kim Ferguson, librarian, at Northern Maine Community College proudly display a collection of books written by Native American women authors and purchased in memory of NMCC student leader Katherine Pictou. The books will be on display, along with others in NMCC's collection of Native American publications, through the end of November in honor of Native American Heritage Month.*