



News Release

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NMCC plans community events to celebrate Constitution Day on September 17

Aroostook County - Monday, September 17, 2007 will mark the 220th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution. To mark the occasion students, faculty and staff at Northern Maine Community College have planned an afternoon of events and are inviting community members to join in the celebration.

Constitution Day is an American federal holiday that recognizes the ratification of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787. Festivities to mark the occasion are planned throughout the country.

The Aroostook County celebration at NMCC will begin at 2:00 p.m. in the College library located in the E. Perrin Edmunds building. Members of the Aroostook County Veterans of Foreign Wars color guard, led by well-know Veteran Peter Miesburger of Caribou, will present the colors to start the celebration, while NMCC student Alysa Snow performs the national anthem.

Following the opening ceremony, David Raymond, NMCC arts and sciences faculty member, will deliver a presentation on the changing views of the Constitution through history.

“Despite our veneration of the Constitution, it is useful to remember that it has not always been celebrated as the culmination of a great democratic revolution. Some historians have viewed it as an undemocratic document that was devised to thwart the will of the people. Was the Constitution the result of economic conflict or democratic consensus? In my presentation I will try to sort through the varying interpretations by providing a brief overview of the shifting views of the Constitution held by American historians,” said Raymond.

Following Raymond’s presentation, NMCC student activities will host a Community Constitution Day reception featuring red, white and blue refreshments in the lobby of the Edmunds Conference Center.

At 3:00 p.m., student activities will sponsor a College Constitution Jeopardy contest in the Edmunds Conference Center. The game show will feature trivia questions relating to the Constitution and will pit teams of students against teams comprised of NMCC faculty and staff.

As part of the September 17 event, the College library will mark Constitution Day with an exhibit of books in the College collection that are listed as “banned books.” The books that have been challenged on the national level by one group or another will be on display through the week of September 29 through October 6, which has been designated by the American Library Association as Banned Books Week.

NMCC’s collection includes nearly three dozen books that have been challenged for their content. In addition to these books, the library display will feature publications on the first amendment.

“It is hard to consider the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution without immediately thinking of the First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. Particularly in a library setting one has to be conscious of the right of free speech,” said Peggy O’Kane, NMCC assistant dean of learning resources. “Each of us has a right to choose what we want to read and what we will allow our minor children to read. But none of us has a right to determine what other adults read. The American Library Association tracks challenges to books and advocates for free expression. Since September includes both Constitution Day and Banned Books Week it makes sense to highlight both.”

The law establishing Constitution Day was enacted in 2004 with the passage of an amendment by Senator Robert Byrd (D-West Virginia) to the Omnibus spending bill of that year. Before this law was passed the holiday was known as Citizenship Day. The act mandates that all publicly funded educational institutions provide educational programming on the history of the American Constitution on that day or an adjacent weekday.

Members of the public are invited and encouraged to attend the NMCC events. For more information, contact the development office at 768-2809.

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