



News Release

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NMCC celebrates Constitution Day

Aroostook County - Monday, September 17 marked the 220th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution. Students and employees at Northern Maine Community College celebrated the occasion by hosting a presentation on the Constitution by NMCC humanities instructor David Raymond, as well as fun round of "College Constitution Jeopardy" with a team of employees competing against a team of students.

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 first, more formal event, was open to both the public and the campus community. Peter Miesburger, Joseph Gaston and Douglas Michaud of the Caribou Chapter 9389 Veterans of Foreign Wars color guard presented the colors to start the celebration, while NMCC student Alyssa Snow and UMPI student Isaac Raymond performed the national anthem on their violins.

Following the opening ceremony, instructor David Raymond delivered a presentation on the changing views of the Constitution through history, showing how historians are influenced by what is happening around them. Views on the Constitution have varied over the years, depending on other factors taking place in the economy and the world that can drive what kinds of questions historians are asking.

Raymond explained the five different schools of thought that have transitioned over centuries: the Nationalist School, who thought the founding fathers were men of great principal and the Constitution was a continuation of the American Revolution; the Progressive School of the early 1900s who thought the Constitution was an economic, undemocratic document designed to benefit the economic interests of those who held public debt; the Neoconservatives of the Cold War era who believed the Constitution was a product of consensus, not class conflict; the New Intellectual Historians who focused on the ideas of the Founding Fathers; and the Neo-Progressives, coming out of the turmoil of the 1960s, who revived the idea that the American society is made up of polarized groups driven by economic interests and that the Constitution was a conservative counter-revolution document.

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

Student activities also sponsored a College Constitution Jeopardy contest, a game show format featuring trivia questions relating to the Constitution which pitted a team of students against a team of NMCC employees. Competing on the student team were first year students Matt Turnbull of New Sweden and Ryan Sanders of Mapleton and senior Alysa Snow of Ashland. Representing the employees were Tammy Nelson and Johna Lovely from the counseling office and Wendy Bradstreet from the business office.

Despite a rough start by employees, who ended up 900 in the hole after a daring bet on a daily double, the team came back to defeat the students. The event was a light hearted affair, with a lot of laughs from some of the team actions as well as a few technical glitches.

The College library also marked 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. 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.

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Getting the Constitution Day ceremony held at NMCC on September 17 started on the right note were, from left, NMCC student Alyssa Snow from Ashland and UMPI student Isaac Raymond from Mapleton, who performed a beautiful rendition of the national anthem. Members of the Caribou Chapter 9389 Veterans of Foreign Wars color guard were on hand to official begin the ceremony. They are, from left: Peter Miesburger, Joseph Gaston, and Douglas Michaud, all of Caribou.



NMCC humanities instructor David Raymond delivered a presentation on the changing views of the Constitution through history.