



# News Release

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## **NMCC to host local Inauguration Day watching party and Presidential food fiesta; event to serve as early kick-off to College Community Black History Month activities**

*Aroostook County* - History will be made on Tuesday, January 20, when Barack Obama officially becomes the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States and the first African American to serve as Commander in Chief, and students at Northern Maine Community College aren't letting the momentous occasion pass without fanfare. A unique event that will also serve as an early kick-off to a series of Black History Month activities is planned on campus and the local community is invited to take part.

The Presque Isle Inaugural Watching Party and Presidential Food Fiesta will get underway at 11:30 a.m. on January 20 in the Reed Dining Commons at NMCC. The event will feature the live broadcast, on a large projection screen, of Obama's swearing in at 12:00 noon and a buffet of foods that are significant, in some way, to every U.S. President since John F. Kennedy.

"The excitement that was seen on college campuses across the country leading up to last November's election was certainly the case here at NMCC. So many students here were and still are very interested in what is happening politically. We want to be engaged and involved," said Candice Rivera, a liberal studies student who is organizing the Inaugural watching party. "Many students were talking about how neat it would be to get together to watch the Inauguration and see history in the making together and how this will be one of those moments that you will remember where you were and what you were doing when it happened. We decided to add a little to the event to make it that much more memorable."

Rivera, who lives in Bridgewater and is also taking a lead in coordinating Black History Month activities at NMCC, sees the upcoming events as an additional opportunity to engage the surrounding community with the College. The Inaugural event in particular, she feels, will provide a chance for area residents to take part in a local celebration to witness history.

“We hope people from the community come join us and share in the excitement. It will be fun to welcome people from both on and off campus. Think of it as something like an early Super Bowl Party, but for a different reason and with a different twist. Rather than hot wings and pizza, attendees can eat their way through every Presidential administration of the last five decades,” said Rivera.

During NMCC’s semester break, Rivera researched and worked on a menu that combines the favorite foods of past Presidents and other dishes that capture a memorable time during the respective administrations. NMCC dining services manager and head chef Mark Strang and his staff of Sodexo Inc. will prepare the cuisine and serve the Presidential Food Fiesta.

“We often host theme meals on campus, but this is definitely unique,” said Strang. “It’s sort of a lighthearted culinary history lesson. We plan on having fun with it and hope the students and community members who attend will enjoy it.”

The menu will feature John Kennedy’s New England Clam Chowder, Lyndon Johnson’s Texas Chili, Richard Nixon’s Watergate Salad, Gerald Ford’s Pecan Ice Cream with Peach Slices, Jimmy Carter’s Georgia Peanuts, Ronald Reagan’s Jelly Beans, George H.W. Bush’s Pork Rinds, Bill Clinton’s Chicken Enchiladas and George W. Bush’s Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches. In addition to other dishes, the featured entrée will be the Barack Obama – Yes We Can! Pasta bar, where NMCC dining services staff will sauté to order, pasta with a number of different sauces in honor of Obama citing Italian food – specifically from the Italian Fiesta Pizzeria in Hyde Park, Chicago – as his favorite.

The buffet lunch is open to the public. Cost for the meal is \$6.50 and includes salad bar, assorted desserts and beverage.

The Inaugural event comes the day after NMCC observes Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, which the College has set as the official start date of Black History Month on campus. Black History Month was first launched in 1926 as Black History week. It was established by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who founded the Journal of Negro Life and History in 1915. The commemoration was held during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. In 1976, the bicentennial of America, it began to be celebrated as Black History month.

Other ways NMCC will mark Black History Month include a display of numerous books and other materials representing and depicting the many African American icons and literary figures in the E. Perrin Edmunds Library. The display is being coordinated by Gail Roy, assistant dean of learning resources, and Kim Ferguson, librarian II.

Roy has also worked with Rivera to coordinate a film festival that will extend over four weeks during NMCC’s observation of Black History Month. The movie showings will begin on Monday, January 26, with *Raisin in the Sun*. Spike Lee’s *Crooklyn* will be shown on Tuesday, February 3. The film *Lackawanna Blues* will be shown on Wednesday, February 11, and *Night John*, will be shown on Thursday, February 26, after the College February break. All film showings will begin at 3:00 p.m. in the Christie Lecture Hall.

Another event which is being planned for early February will be a presentation on the multi-generational experience of Black America presented by Shawn Cunningham, WAGM-TV news anchor.

“My parents are a civil rights couple; they are in their mid 60’s and were very much involved in the civil rights movement. My mother grew up in segregated South Carolina and my father grew up in segregated Cleveland, Ohio and neither one of them ever thought they would live to see the day an African American would be elected President,” said Cunningham. “My 90 year old grandfather, who lives in South Carolina, rallied together elderly people and spent the entire day picking them up and driving them to the polls.” Cunningham is hoping to make it to Washington with her parents for the Inaugural.

A date and time for Cunningham’s presentation will be announced at a later date.

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