



News Release

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September 25, 2009
NR09109

Constitution Day celebrated at Northern Maine Community College

Aroostook County - Northern Maine Community College recently provided their students, employees, and community members the opportunity to take part in a variety of activities held on campus in celebration of Constitution Day. The cornerstone festivity of the day for this event was a presentation by Jan Grieco, English instructor at the college.

Held annually on September 17, Constitution Day commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution by thirty-nine men who changed the course of history as early colonists knew it.

Grieco delivered a presentation on freedom of speech, protected by the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights. The rights are often misunderstood under the First Amendment, according to Grieco, especially since the First Amendment provides: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion" or "prohibiting the free exercise thereof". Grieco underscored the importance of understanding how freedom of speech and freedom of religion are related and what responsibility we have in expressing those freedoms.

Grieco discussed how violations in the First Amendment occur with the banning of books, citing examples such as Mark Twain's 1884 novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

"If we ban all literature that contains hateful words, students cannot learn how these words become so powerful. For example, if students cannot read *Huckleberry Finn*, they are less able to understand how these words turn people into despised, faceless, non-human objects. Young readers will never behold Huck learning to regard the runaway slave, Jim, as a real human being," stated Grieco.

Other festivities included Constitution themed refreshments and a *Test Your Constitution IQ Challenge*, where students were quizzed on their knowledge on the Constitution and had the chance to be entered into a drawing for a \$25 NMCC Bookstore gift certificate. John Parent was among the students that successfully completed the quiz challenge and was drawn as the winner of the bookstore certificate.

Thursday evening, members of the campus community wrapped up the day of events by attending a screening of Walt Disney's *National Treasure*.



Members of the campus and local community were invited to participate in a variety of activities celebrating Constitution Day on September 17 at Northern Maine Community College. A key event was a presentation by NMCC English instructor Jan Grieco on the Freedom of Speech and Religion.