

無事生非

wu2 shi4 sheng1 fei1

Is the Earth round or flat? That was what a 56-year-old man and his son's girlfriend could not agree on as the family was sitting around a campfire at a park in Brockville, Ontario.

The discussion soon turned into a full-blown squabble as the woman insisted on her flat-Earth theory despite the man's repeated attempts to convince her otherwise.

The two soon descended into a let's-see-who-is-more-outrageous contest by throwing items into the bonfire, until the man chucked in a propane BBQ gas tank, which sent everyone running for their lives. Firemen and police had to be called in too.

A police statement said the man was on the run and could be charged with "mischief." The whole drama was what we can be called "無事生非" (wu2 shi4 sheng1 fei1).

"無" (wu2) is "without," "nil," "nothing," "事" (shi4) "affairs," "trouble," "business," "matter," "生" (sheng1) is "to give birth to," "to produce" and "非"

Idiom by Lon Yan

(fei1) is "wrong," "improper," "error," "to blame," "to censure." "是非" (shi4 fei1) is "right and wrong," "a dispute." Literally, "無事生非" (wu2 shi4 sheng1 fei1) is "nothing the matter but ends in a dispute."

It means "to make uncalled-for trouble," "to create problems where none exists," "to make trouble out of nothing," "to be deliberately provocative."

Anyone can see the shape of the Earth is a non-issue and the woman was just trying to provoke her boyfriend's father. So she was "無事生非" (wu2 shi4 sheng1 fei1).

The man was equally to blame. Whatever the woman said did not justify endangering everyone's life. So he was also "無事生非" (wu2 shi4 sheng1 fei1).

Terms containing the character "非" (fei1) include:

非常 (fei1 chang2) - very; extraordinary; unusual

非法 (fei1 fa3) - illegal

非禮 (fei1 li3) - indecent assault

非洲 (fei1 zhou1) - Africa