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Emma Fielding Baker



Induction Category:

Education &
Preservation

Born: 1828

Died: 1916

Inducted: 1994

Town: Uncasville

Emma Fielding Baker, a member of the Mohegan Pequots, played an integral role in the preservation of the tribes' historical records and oral traditions. Her involvement in the field of traditional herbal medicine resulted in her posthumous election as the Medicine Woman of the Mohegan Tribe in 1992. Her protégé and niece, Gladys Tantaquidgeon, was installed in that position at the same time.

In the mid-19th century, the Mohegans were under pressure to Christianize and assimilate into white culture. At the same time, they were fragmented, and tribal lands were being broken up. While serving as president of the Church Ladies Sewing Society in 1860, Baker revitalized the Mohegan Green Corn Festival (nicknamed "The Wigwam") in order to unify the Mohegan people before their reservation was disbanded that year. Under Baker's direction, the elaborate festival showcased Mohegan foods and crafts. The Wigwam Festival continues today as a celebration of Mohegan culture and thanksgiving.

By the late-19th century, Baker had also been elected by the tribe to represent a group in Hartford, Conn., regarding land disputes, particularly involving Indian burial desecration. She was also responsible for tribal land divisions and maintaining historical records and oral traditions.

During This Time

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