

**Bowdoin College
Commencement 2015**

Molly Neptune Parker, master basket weaver, community leader, and distinguished elder of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Bowdoin College honors you today for your artistic excellence; generosity of spirit; and commitment to honoring, carrying forth, and sharing ancient traditions of the Passamaquoddy people.

Born in Indian Township, you graduated from the University of Maine, pushing the institution to recognize the Passamaquoddy language as your mother tongue and English as meeting your foreign language requirement. Your subsequent leadership in the Passamaquoddy Tribal Government includes heading the housing department, running the elderly feeding program, and directing the health center and department of child welfare services. Also, you were the first woman to serve as Lieutenant Governor of the Passamaquoddy Tribe.

In addition to your six children, you have fostered more than twenty tribal youngsters – and have remarked that you love children even more than you love making baskets. And oh, how you love making baskets! You have taught your children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, along with dozens of others, traditional basket making; ensuring the survival of this once-endangered Wabanaki art form.

Your own exquisite ash-wood baskets are so finely woven one wonders if a mortal actually made them. Some are based on shapes you inherited from your mother, grandmother, and those before them; others are the result of your creativity and playfulness.

In 2012 you were the recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts' Heritage Fellowship, this nation's highest honor given to a traditional artist. Your baskets are on display in museums across the country and are sought by people throughout the world.

With skill, creativity, love, and grace, you weave together things of the earth – wood and sweet grass – transforming them into wisdom that you generously share with others – and for this we honor you.

President Mills, on behalf of the College, I am honored to present **Molly Neptune Parker** for the degree of **Doctor of Fine Arts**, *honoris causa*.

Presented by Susan A. Kaplan, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology