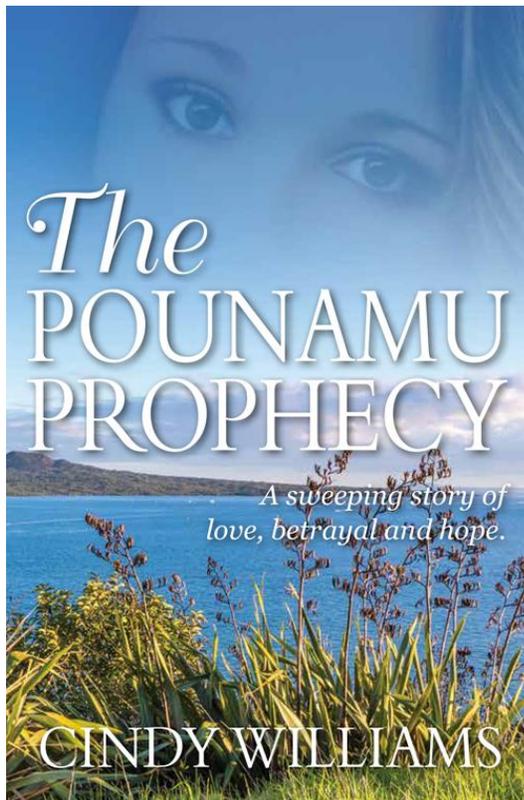




Rhiza Press Book Club Notes



The Pounamu Prophecy by Cindy Williams

ISBN: 9781925139457

Recommended retail: \$19.99

Reading level: ages 17+

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Story Summary

December 1951. Six-year-old Mere watches her village burn to the ground. The New Zealand government wants to 'tidy up' Okahu Bay in the centre of Auckland in preparation for Queen Elizabeth's visit.

Sixty years later, Mere arrives in Brisbane to stay with James and Helene and finish writing the stories of her life: stories of injustice, revenge, and reconciliation.

But Helene and James have their own problems. After five years together, their marriage has become dull, predictable, boring ... and it starts to unravel.

Betrayal and misunderstandings culminate with James taking a job in New Zealand. Mere also returns to New Zealand, leaving with Helene her treasured greenstone pendant. It attracts the attention of a woman from Mere's tribe who insists Helene is part of the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy – a prophecy foretelling the coming of a new culture and the significance of whoever wears the pounamu.

Key Learning Areas

- Colonisation
- Revenge versus forgiveness
- Women's choices in marriage
The wise woman builds her house but with her own hands the foolish one tears it down. Prov 14:1
- Friendships – helpful and harmful
He who walks with the wise becomes wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Prov 13:20

Themes

- How do people handle betrayal and injustice?
- The challenge of forgiveness; the power of love.
Love covers over a multitude of sins. 1Pet 4:8
- The mind, body, spirit health connection. How spiritual and emotional health affects physical health.
A cheerful heart is good medicine. Prov 17:22
- The impact of parents and grandparents.
A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children. Prov 13:22
- Who controls your life? You, fate or God?
A man sets his plans but the Lord directs his steps.' Prov 16:9

Related Texts

Orange, Claudia. (1989). *The Story of a Treaty*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books.

Grieve, W. & Hawke, S. (Producers). (1999). *Bastion Point – The Untold Story*. (Television program). New Zealand On Screen. <http://www.nzonscreen.com/title/bastion-point---the-untold-story-1999>

Taonui, Rawiri. 'Ngāti Whātua', *Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 24-Aug-15
URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/ngati-whatua>

Sharon Hawke. *Takaparawhau – The People’s Story: 1998 Bastion Point 20 Year Commemoration Book*. Moko Productions. 1998.

Harley, W. (2002). *His Needs Her Needs*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Smalley, G. (1988). *If Only He Knew*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Smalley, G. (1988). *For Better or For Best*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.



About the Author

Cindy Williams grew up in a culturally rich part of New Zealand singing Maori songs, playing Maori games at school and hearing Maori stories.

She studied at Otago University, trained as a dietitian and worked for over 20 years as a nutrition consultant to Woolworths (Qld), Brisbane Lions, and the Healthy Food Guide magazine, amongst others. She has a Master of Public Health and a Graduate Diploma in Communication.

While staying at Orakei Marae as part of a Maori language course, she heard another story – one of injustice suffered by the Ngati Whatua people. She listened to the elders who spoke about forgiveness and moving forward and knew *The Pounamu Prophecy* was a story that had to be told.

Cindy lives in Sydney with her husband and teenage son. She is working on her second novel and writes a blog – www.nutritionchic.com.

Facebook author page: www.facebook.com/CindyWriter

Questions and Reflections

1. Why did Mere's grandmother and the other old women (kuia) refuse to walk? What happened to them over the next year? Why do you think this happened?
2. Suggest and discuss a metaphor for the rose which appears in both Mere and Helene's stories.
3. Compare the diet and food habits of the Maori people before and after the British arrived. What were the results of their changed diet – positive or negative?
4. Why did the New Zealand government burn Mere's village? Do you think they had a valid reason? How would you feel watching government officials burn down your home?
5. Why was Lucy wary of doctors? How did Maori traditionally treat their sick? Find examples of this in the story.
6. Why did Mere burn the boat? How would you have acted in her situation and at her age? What effect did it have on her? What effect did it have on others?
7. Was Titahi's prophecy fulfilled? How? Prophecy can be described as pattern. Looking at New Zealand history and this book, do you agree?
8. What effect did the Bastion Point protest have on the everyday life of the families who lived there? What were the benefits? What were the difficulties?
9. How did the leaders at Bastion Point maintain peace during the 506 days? Why was the situation so volatile? Have there been other examples of peaceful protest against a government? How would you have reacted if you had been arrested as a protestor that day? How do you think the Maori policeman felt?
10. Compare the relationship of Mere's parents to Helene's. How did this affect each of them?
11. What does Helene's dream mean? Who do you think are the man and woman in it?
12. Mere tells James the story of a flea searching for a dog. Do you think some marriages are like this? Does Helene have needs that James doesn't meet and vice versa? Are their expectations of each other reasonable?
13. Mere says to Helene, 'A man sets his plans but the Lord directs his steps.' Compare Mere's view of planning her life to Nicolette's. Which works better for Helene?
14. Utu is a Maori concept that Mere, in her limited understanding, describes as pay-back or revenge. What is the true meaning of utu? How does it compare to the bible verses of Exodus 21:24 and Matthew 5:38.
15. Mere and Helene and James all have friendships. Which friendships are most positive? Which are not? Why?
16. What is the significance of the greenstone pendant to Mere, to Helene and to Lucy?