

Keepers of the Pact by Karen Kelloway

A Story of Friendship, Adventure and the Deepest Mysteries of the Sea

BACKGROUND:

The Writing Process: Weaving in Indigenous Elements to the Story

Through the editing process the author had the privilege to collaborate with Elder Gloria Johnson, a gifted healer, teacher and direct descendant of Grand Chief Membertou. Elder Gloria read the manuscript in its entirety and offered suggestions on how to bring more authentic indigenous components to the story. The character of Ben, for example, who is one of the three friends, was given a Mi'kmaq father. This allowed Ben's grandmother, his Kiju, to then become a very powerful Mi'kmaq figure in the story. She is one of the Pact Keepers.

Elder Gloria Johnson is available for interviews with Karen about the book.

Here is a Q&A with Elder Gloria Johnson and the author for a bit more context.

Karen: When I was writing *Keepers of the Pact*, I created a group of characters who are essentially protectors called Pact Keepers. They have been handed down the responsibility to protect a pact that has been in place for two hundred years to keep the People of the Sea safe. When I wrote that line, I didn't realize that Mi'kmaq elders have long been given the role of Protector. Can you tell me more about this tradition....who and what they are protecting and what that means.

Gloria: Elders are each a protector of something eg. Mer people, *wiklatmu'jk*, (aka little people) fairies, etc. They stay in tune with nature and what's needed to help keep the balance.

Karen: The idea to include mer people (or People of the Sea) in the story for *Keepers of the Pact* came about from research I did which revealed a mermaid sighting in the St. John's harbour in the 1600s. After reading *Keepers of the Pact*, you said it brought back beautiful memories of the mer people that were told to you by your Ami, your grandmother. Can you share some of those stories?

Gloria: Yes, as I was reading I could actually see the story in my head like a movie. And it brought back beautiful memories of the mer people that were told to me by Ami (pronounced A mee). Ami is an intelligent and strong medicine woman with great powers. She can see the past, present and future and has remedies for every kind of ailment and injury. My *Ami* told me mystical stories of mer people helping fisherman, saving people from drowning. They are very loving beings.

Karen: Why do you think *Keepers of the Pact*, even though it is fiction, is an important story to share with young readers?

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Gloria: It's important for children to take care of the environment and care for our lakes and oceans. There are living creatures on land and sea that we may not always see with the naked eye, but they are there and we must protect them.

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