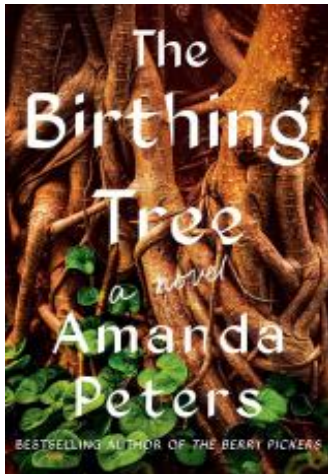


The Birthing Tree

by Amanda Peters



About the Book

From the bestselling author of *THE BERRY PICKERS*, an unforgettable novel about a woman who must confront her family's buried truths and memories of passionate young love when her grandmother's death leaves her as the only guide to her community's future.

Born under the shadow of a birthing tree sacred to generations of Miꞵkmaq women, Aliet Paul grows up outside a small Nova Scotia town with her fierce, loving grandmother, Kiju. Her mother died bringing Aliet into the world under that very tree. Her father remains a mystery no one will name. Aliet's childhood is shaped by seasonal apple pickers, the medicinal wisdom of the old ways, and the quiet, steadfast presence of John, a boy who becomes her anchor.

But the world beyond their community is changing. Traditional midwifery is condemned, prejudice deepens, and when the wrong person witnesses a birth, the consequences are disastrous. As Aliet comes of age, she navigates love, loss and a personal tragedy that veers her from the path her grandmother wanted for her. She becomes a nurse trained in modern medicine, yet she carries Kiju's teachings close, tucked beside memories of the tree that once welcomed new life.

Years later, when the call comes that Kiju has died, Aliet returns home to a crumbling house, a community scattered, and a past she thought she'd outrun. As Aliet restores the house room by room, something inside her stirs awake: the threads of her lineage, the old ways of her grandmother, and the mystery of her own bloodline.

As Aliet digs to uncover who her family really is, each revelation pulls her deeper into a web of long-guarded silences, dangerous loyalties and generational wounds that refuse to stay buried. Someone knew the truth about her mother's final moments. Someone knew what happened in the orchard all those years ago. And someone wants the past to remain undisturbed.

Spanning decades of loss and reclamation, this sweeping yet intimate novel follows one woman's journey to protect the

land, the traditions, and the memory of the women who came before her --- and to decide which parts of her inheritance she will carry into the future.

Discussion Guide

1. What preconceptions did you bring to the story of childbirth traditions across cultures? Did the book challenge your expectations or beliefs?
2. Have you read Amanda Peters' debut novel, *THE BERRY PICKERS*? If so, do the two books seem to share the same perspective and worldview? How has Peters evolved as a storyteller? Which book did you enjoy the most, and why?
3. Before she returns to Kiju's house, it's clear that Aliet has been gone a long time. What do you make of her choice to live in the city up until Kiju's death?
4. How did you like the dual timeline structure of the book? How did the perspective of Aliet as a child inform your perspective of her as an adult?
5. While most of the novel features Aliet's perspective, there are interludes in italics interspersed. How did this shift in perspective impact your reading experience? From whose perspective do you think these are written?
6. Miriam and Kiju are/were both midwives. How do their practices differ from one another? What do you think of Miriam's pursuit of traditional Mi?kmaw birthing practices?
7. The setting of the Western hospital appears frequently. What purpose does this serve? How is it characterized compared to the tree?
8. Multiple characters in the novel tell Aliet that she doesn't "look" Indigenous. How does her experience with racism differ from John and Kenneth in the novel? Have you ever been told that you don't "look" how people expect you to compared to others from your culture or background? How did that affect your sense of identity?
9. Aliet is surrounded by women, from her grandmother as a child and young woman, to Sally and Susan when she returns home and reconnects with her roots. How does that friendship change throughout her journey, as she gets more comfortable with opening up? How do female friendships and familial bonds guide your own journey?
10. How did Aliet's relationship with John influence her feelings about herself and her community when she was growing up? Do you think he has an impact on her choices as an adult and at the end of the book?
11. How did you feel about Kenneth's apology as an adult? Have you ever felt that an apology came too late, or that you didn't want to accept it?
12. Aliet says that the birthing tree is a sacred site because it holds the stories of her Mi?kmaq people. Do you have a personal item or place that holds your family stories?

Author Bio

Amanda Peters is a writer of Mi?kmaq and settler ancestry. Her debut novel, THE BERRY PICKERS, was the winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction and the 2023 Barnes & Noble Discover Prize, and was a finalist for the Atwood Gibson Writers? Trust Fiction Prize and the Amazon First Novel Award.

Peters is a graduate of the master of fine arts program at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and has a certificate in creative writing from the University of Toronto. She lives and writes in the Annapolis Valley Nova Scotia where she is an Associate Professor in English and Theatre at Acadia University.

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