

Statement of Intent:

Kia ora, I am going to talk about personal experiences I've had with pounamu. I hope to communicate the importance of pounamu to me as I've grown up. This is intended for young adults or older to read. I hope that some people can relate to these experiences and find comfort in the familiarity.

My brother and I grew up on our awa, Arahura. It trailed down snow capped mountains and flowed into the roaring tides of Te Tai Poutini. That's where my brother and I, along with my cousins, found our entertainment. We'd walk up from the pā and traverse over boulders towards the fast and chilling waters. My cousins and my brother would run off to find rocks to throw into the deep spots or sticks in the shape of blasters. I would look around for cool rocks, white ones with rusty orange, rocks with golden sparkles embedded in their cold bodies or a deep green gloom that I could take home. Scattered through the waters was pounamu, a glowing green rock embedded into Poutini Kai Tahu's history, to the present day still. Hopping from stone to stone, my head craned down to see if I could catch sight of a glimmer of green. I never did. Instead, I would pick up rocks that mocked the green glow pounamu possesses. Throughout my life the cold, crashing waters of Arahura call to me.

As a pounamu princess I spent lots of time on the awa, searching for pounamu. When I was thirteen, I found my first piece of pounamu. I had trekked down to the mouth of the river with a small group of people. Crashing rapids surrounded us as I walked through the river's chilling waters, my head craned down to scan for pounamu. I spotted it. It lay curled up like a cat on the bottom of the river. I reached out, picking up the missing piece of my wairua. As it hit the light its glow pierced like a disco ball glimmer. Even though I was sure I had found the piece I scurried over to my Taua Emma to ask her if it really was a piece. She took it in her hand, rolling its narrow body in her wrinkles hand. Her eyes pierced it with a knowing gaze.

"Yes, this is pounamu. It's a beautiful piece."

Ooo I was so excited. My face lit up like a christmas tree, my eyes glimmering like the star as i started to trot off to my cousin to show her.

"Remember you give your first piece away."

My face fell. I really wanted to keep it. In the end I gave it to my cousin. She hadn't found a single piece so I gave it to her.

A few years after gifting her the pounamu I was standing behind a stage for Word to the Frontline: Slam Poetry. My clammy hands trying to find anything to help myself regulate. Around my neck fella hei pounamu. Carved from kawakawa, twin of my brother's own one. Its beady eyes glaring into the dimly lit hallway. I wrapped my hand tight around its wide body and began to hum. Its coolness spread through me like water breaking from a dam. Pounamu has always been there for my tipuna, my kaumatua and me.