

Fire Song

Adam Garnet Jones

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Full of sorrow and longing, Adam Garnet Jones's *Fire Song* is a beautifully written story about self-discovery and navigating the difficult path between dreams and responsibility.

Shane is an Anishinaabe teenager from Ontario torn between his home responsibilities and his desire to go to college. His inheritance from his father can't be used for tuition; it is needed at home. His sister committed suicide and his mother is lost in mourning. He is also torn between his socially acceptable relationship with Tara and his secret love for David, the grandson of a tribal elder.

Fire Song is an emotionally challenging book. Life on the reservation is shown to be desolate; poverty, drugs, alcohol, and hopelessness dominate the community. The promise of a better life off of the reservation is an abstract dream, and leaving would be seen as selfish, a dereliction of duty to the tribe.

Themes of self-discovery and coming of age are universal, and Shane is sympathetic as he tries to strike a balance between his dreams and his obligations. The choices he faces are painted with unflinching honesty—no matter what he decides, there's no guarantee of happiness.

Jones's writing shines. Shane is a wonderfully complex character, and his conflicting emotions as he interacts with Tara, David, and his family come across well. Lovely spiritual aspects are included as Shane contemplates life and death, the ceremonies and traditions of his tribe, and the landscape of the world around him.

Fire Song is a powerful, challenging book that is full of deeply meaningful turns as it boldly encourages living life to the best of one's abilities.

CATHERINE THURESON (LGBTQ+ 2018)

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