

Eagles Circle the Drum — A Novel

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A Thesis submitted to The Graduate School at the University of Missouri—St. Louis
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Fine Arts in Fiction Writing

December 19, 2014

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Mark Shaw's *Eagles Circle the Drum*: A Novel

My thesis, for the Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Missouri—St. Louis, is a Native American Literary Novel.

When Jimmy Moses—a member of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Nation—dies, his mother chooses to have a Christian funeral instead of an American Indian burial ceremony. The reservation community becomes upset, particularly Johnny Bear Moses, her son and Jimmy's older brother. The novel shifts between various points of view, including Reylene Fisherman, the mother; Johnny Bear; and his daughter, Akasha. These three major characters represent a different opinion of creed and culture for their respective generation. Also, they all have various beliefs regarding what it means to be a Native American in the Twenty-first Century.

The race and religion debate that occurs in this novel and in Indian Country is a microcosm of what happens throughout the United States and all over the world. People fight, in big ways and small ways, over these schisms and wounds develop that are centuries deep.

The novel also tells stories that have never been told about Native Americans. Reservations are fascinating, exotic, dangerous, ugly, beautiful, and broken. Otherworldly things happen in these societies and very few people know about them (even in their neighboring districts). Stories have the ability to express injustices and truths about humanity in a way that no other medium can. They bring awareness, understanding, and empathy to the world and that is why fiction is important. This is why American Indian Literature is valuable. The Indigenous voice is rarely heard in the United States and in the world.