Eagle Song
By Joseph Bruchac

Story Summary
Danny Bigtree and his family have moved from a Mohawk Reservation to Brooklyn and they face many challenges in adapting to life in a big city. Danny feels very different from the other children and he faces daily teasing and taunts at school. Danny's father shares traditional stories with Danny to help him deal with the conflicts he encounters. The teachings of Aionwahta (Hiawatha) and the Great Law of Peace bring comfort for the nine-year-old boy. Danny begins to understand the powerful message of peace through this traditional story. Learning how to deal with the bullying and name-calling allows Danny to make friends out of classroom enemies.

WITS Connection
Talk It Out
Seek Help

Learning Outcomes

Social Responsibility Expectations

Solving Problems in Peaceful Ways

☐ Tries to solve problems independently; shows increasingly good judgment about when to get help.

☐ Shows empathy and can describe other's feelings in an increasing range of situations.

☐ Predicts consequences of own and others' behaviour.
Valuing Diversity and Defending Human Rights

☐ Treats others fairly and respectfully including those who are different in some way.

☐ Recognizes that some form of stereotyping can have negative effects.

Language Arts
(For descriptions see appendix)

Grade Three Objectives 2, 3, 5, 7

Pre-Reading Activities and Resources

Find out more about the author at http://www.josephbruchac.com/
This site includes audio and video recordings of the author.

Pre-Reading Questions

• What do you think is meant by the title, “Eagle Song”?

• "She':kon" is a Mohawk word for peace. Predict why you think "she':kon" is the first chapter heading. What do you think may happen in the book?

• Look at the boy on the cover of the book. How do you think the boy is feeling?

• What are some ways this boy looks different?

• What are some familiar characteristics of this boy?
Chapter Discussion Questions

Chapter One

Vocabulary: tenements, lacrosse, Akwesasne, ironwork

• How is Danny different from the other boys?
  Danny has longer hair and different coloured skin. He likes to play different games like lacrosse.

• What does Danny miss about his home town, Akwesasne?
  There were fields and woods to play in and lots of children like him.

• Why does Danny close his eyes on the subway and keep his head down while walking home?
  He closes his eyes so that he doesn’t notice people staring at him.

• Why did Danny’s family leave Akwesasne?
  There was no work for his parents and the river was too polluted for fishing.

• Why is Danny so surprised to see his mother and father when he arrives home after school?
  His mother usually arrives home later in the day and his father works out of town.

• How does Danny and his father greet one another?
  They say the word, “she:kon” (meaning peace) to one another.

• How are Danny’s mother and father different?
  Danny’s mother is very tall and strong. Danny’s father has long “crow-black” hair and he is strong and round “as the trunk of a big tree”.
Chapter Two

Vocabulary: Gustoweh, Mohawk, Iroquois, clan, rez,

If you were Danny Bigtree, what would you have done to be accepted by other kids?

How do you think the kids will treat Danny during and after his father's visit?

Why does Danny's father paint an eagle on his hard hat?
*Danny's father believes the eagle will take care of him.*

Why is Danny concerned when his father suggests that he will come and speak to the class about the Iroquois' form of governing?
*Danny is worried that his classmates will call his father names.*

Chapter Three

Vocabulary: Characters of The Great Peace: Aionwahta, Adodarhonh, Great Turtle, Peacemaker

• What does Aionwahta learn about trying to make peace?
  *He cannot make peace by himself.*

• What does Peacemaker do for Aionwahta?
  *Using the strings of white shells, Peacemaker listens to Aionwahta and lifts the sorrow from him.*

• How does Adodarhonh become good?
  *A great multitude of people invaded the place where Adodarhonh lived. Peacemaker and Aionwahta entered Adodarhonh’s lodge and healed his body and mind.*

• What did they do with all the weapons?
  *They threw the weapons into a large pit and planted a pine tree.*

• What is the tree of Peace?
  *The pine tree that was planted where the weapons have been buried.*

Chapter Four

Vocabulary: wampum belt, intercom, colonists, constitution

• Why was Danny so nervous on the afternoon of his father’s visit to his class?
  *He wasn’t sure how his father would be treated by the other students.*

• How did the classmates respond to Danny’s father?
  *They showed interest in his story and asked questions.*
Chapter Five

Vocabulary: microwave tower, gusher

• What was Danny hoping for on this day?  
  He hoped that his classmates would treat him better.

• What happened on the playground?  
  Consuela invited him to join her group but as he was moving in that direction  
  Tyrone caught his attention and threw a basketball at him.

• How was Danny injured?  
  Danny could not catch the basketball and it hit him in the face.

• Did Tyrone purposely toss the basketball at Danny’s face?  
  At this point in the story we’re not sure.

Chapter Six

Vocabulary: “Skin”, “disses”

• How does Danny know that Will is in a gang?  
  Will has a red handkerchief in his back pocket and red laces in some sneakers.

• Why did Danny’s friend, Will join a gang?  
  Will thinks that joining a gang is the only way to survive at school.

• How is Danny different than Will?  
  Will believes in different ways to resolve conflicts. Will’s mom doesn’t notice  
  what is happening to her son.

Chapter Seven

Vocabulary: steel girders, spud wrenches, crane operator

• What was Danny’s dream?  
  A beautiful eagle was knocked out of a tree and spun to earth.

• How was Danny’s father injured?  
  He was injured when he saved another man from being knocked off a steel  
  girder by a crane.

• What does Danny’s father say about friendship?  
  It takes more courage to make a friend than to make an enemy.
Chapter Eight

• Did Tyrone mean to hurt Danny with the basketball? *Tyrone said that it was an accident.*

• What did Danny say to Tyrone about his own expectations? *Danny told Tyrone that his name was Daniel and this is what he wished to be called. He also told Tyrone that he wanted to be friends and taught him the Mohawk word for “peace” which is “she’:kon”.*

• What did Danny want to do next? *He wanted to show others what he learned about peace.*

Post-Reading Activities

• Discuss what it is like to be the new kid at school. Have students list ways in which they could make a person feel welcome.

• Using a flip chart, label a large piece a paper with two words. Write the word, “Different” on the left side of the page and write, “Same” on the right side of the page. Discuss with the students how we are the same in different. These differences may include where we are from, languages we speak at home, foods we eat, holidays we celebrate. Some similarities may include activities we like, having friends, feeling pain when hurt, or that which we find funny.

• Using the "Tree of Peace" sheet students will write words that describe acts of peace on the branches of the tree. In the hole under the tree, students will write actions that bring about hurt that need to be thrown in the hole just as the Aionwahta and Peacemaker threw the weapons into the hole after they saved Adodarhonh.