Danny Bigtree's family has moved to a new city, and Danny can't seem to fit in. The nine-year-old is homesick for the Mohawk reservation they left behind and faces daily teasing from his classmates. When Danny's father shares the story of the great Iroquois peacemaker Aionwahta (Hiawatha), Danny begins to understand the powerful message of peace and how to make friends out of classroom enemies.

**WITS Connection:** Talk it out, Seek help

### Questions and Activities

#### PRE-READING ACTIVITIES
- Find out more about author Joseph Bruchac on his website [www.josephbruchac.com](http://www.josephbruchac.com/).

#### PRE-READING QUESTIONS
1. What do you think is meant by the title *Eagle Song*?
2. "She':kon" is a Mohawk word for peace. Predict why you think "she':kon" is the first chapter heading. What do you think will happen in the book?
3. Look at the boy on the cover of the book. How do you think the boy is feeling?
4. 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

1. How is Danny different from the other boys? *Danny has longer hair and different coloured skin. He likes to play different games like lacrosse.*
2. What does Danny miss about his hometown, Akwesasne? *There were fields and woods to play in and lots of children like him.*
3. Why does Danny close his eyes on the subway and keep his head down while walking home? *He does these things so he won't notice people staring at him.*
4. Why did Danny's family leave Akwesasne? *There was no work for his parents and the river was too polluted for fishing.*
5. Why is Danny surprised to see his parents when he gets home after school? *His mother usually arrives home later and his father works out of town.*
6. How do Danny and his father greet one another? *They say the word "she:kon" (meaning peace) to one another.*
7. How are Danny's parents different? *His mother is tall and strong. His father has long "crow-black" hair and is strong and round "as the trunk of a big tree."*
Chapter Two
Vocabulary: Gustoweh, Mohawk, Iroquois, clan, rez
1. If you were Danny, what would you do to be accepted by the other kids?
2. How do you think the kids will treat Danny during and after his father's visit?
3. Why does Danny's father paint an eagle on his hard hat? Danny's father believes the eagle will take care of him.
4. Why is Danny concerned when his father suggests he will speak to the class about the Iroquois' form of governing? Danny is worried that his classmates will call his father names.

Chapter Three
Vocabulary: Aionwahta, Adodarhonh, Great Turtle, Peacemaker
1. What does Aionwahta learn about trying to make peace? He cannot make peace by himself.
2. What does Peacemaker do for Aionwahta? Using the strings of white shells, Peacemaker listens to Aionwahta and lifts the sorrow from him.
3. How does Adodarhonh become good? A great multitude of people invade the place where he lives. Peacemaker and Aionwahta enter his lodge and heal his body and mind.
4. What do they do with all the weapons? They throw the weapons into a large pit and plant a pine tree.
5. What is the Tree of Peace? The pine tree that was planted where the weapons were buried.

Chapter Four
Vocabulary: wampum belt, intercom, colonists, constitution
1. 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.
2. How did the classmates respond to Danny's father? They showed interest in his story and asked questions.

Chapter Five
Vocabulary: microwave, tower, gusher
1. What was Danny hoping for? He hoped his classmates would treat him better.
2. What happened on the playground? Consuela invited him to join her group but then Tyrone caught his attention and threw a basketball at him.
3. How was Danny injured? He couldn't catch the ball and it hit him in the face.
4. 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"
1. How does Danny know that Will is in a gang? Will has a red handkerchief in his back pocket and red laces in his sneakers.
2. Why did Will join a gang? He thinks that joining a gang is the only way to survive at school.

3. 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 girder, spud wrenches, crane operator

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

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

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

Chapter Eight

1. Did Tyrone mean to hurt Danny with the basketball? No, Tyrone said it was an accident.

2. 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 he wanted to be friends and taught him the Mohawk word for peace.

3. What did Danny want to do next? He wanted to show others what he learned about peace with the eagles.

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

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

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

- Distribute the Tree of Peace handout to students and ask them to write words that describe acts of peace on the branches of the tree. In the hole under the tree, students should write actions that bring about hurt. Remind students of how Aionwahta and Peacemaker threw the weapons into the hole after they saved Adodarhonh.

Notes: