

Ti Rakau – Traditional Maori Stick Games

TEACHER: *What are these kids holding in this photo?*

STUDENTS: *Sticks*

What are the sticks made from?

Wood

These sticks are made of wood from trees in New Zealand. The children holding the sticks are also from the country of New Zealand. Did you know that people in New Zealand have a nickname for themselves? Do you know what it is?

(Give the kids a chance to guess a few nicknames.)

People in New Zealand call themselves “Kiwis.”

What do you think these Kiwi kids are doing with the sticks in the photo?

Tapping them; playing a game; making music; etc.

These kids are playing a stick game called, “Ti Rakau.” Ti Rakau is a game traditionally played by the Maori people of New Zealand. The Maori are Pacific Islanders who have lived in New Zealand for over 800 years. The Maori people believe it is important for children to play games that help them learn important skills they will need when they became adults. A long time ago, the stick game helped children develop their hand eye coordination. It was important for kids to have quick and steady hands, so they could grow up to be good at hunting, fishing, weaving, dancing, and defending themselves against their enemies. Ti Rakau also taught them the importance of sharing ideas through music and stories. Maori culture is oral, which means that many ideas are told through speaking and singing, instead of being written down on paper or in books.

Today, almost all kids in New Zealand, whether or not they belong to the Maori culture, learn Ti Rakau at school. Can you think of a song or game that you and your friends sing or play at school?

Old McDonald, Ring Around the Rosie, Hokey Pokey, BINGO, tag, jump rope, Simon Says, etc.

(If you choose, you can record the children’s answers on the board.)

You thought of a lot of songs and games that we sing or play at school. The Kiwi kids learn other songs and games too. Ti Rakau is a favorite, because large or small groups of kids can play it together, and it is always easy to find a couple of sticks on the ground.

Playing Ti Rakau takes some practice, but the idea of the game is simple to learn. Once you try it, you can always change the rules to make it easier or harder. The kids in this picture are playing a simpler version of the game. They are tapping and passing their sticks to the beat of the music.

Let's practice some basic movements together.

Put your hands out in front of you. Pretend that you are holding a pair of sticks, like the kids in the picture. Cross your sticks and make an X shape.

(Make sure you demonstrate each movement as you give instructions, and give the kids time to complete each action.)

Tap your sticks together three times.

Now, uncross your sticks and hold them out in front of you.

Tap the ends of your sticks three times on the floor.

Turn towards the person next to you, and pretend that you are carefully throwing your sticks back and forth. You need to throw your sticks one at a time, and try to catch your partner's stick before it hits the ground. That's the trickiest part!

(Allow the kids a minute to play the pretend version of the stick game.)

Great job following directions and being careful with your pretend sticks! Now you know some of the steps to Ti Rakau. If you really want to play the game, you also need to learn the words to the song. (Or, you can always sing a song you know, and make up motions with the sticks to go along with the beat.)

There are so many ways to play this exciting game. Warm up your hands, and have fun!

Kindergarten Standards:

NYS Common Core Kindergarten Social Studies Standards

- K.2.b Cultures include traditions, beliefs, and shared values and ideas generally accepted by a particular group of people.
- K.2.c Children, families, and communities from different cultures all share some common characteristics, but also have specific differences which make them unique.
- K.9.a Children, families, and communities of today can be compared with those in the past.
- K.10.a People use folktales, legends, oral histories, and music to teach values, ideas, traditions, and important events from the past.

Kindergarten ELA Power NYSCCLS (ICSD Power Standards in Bold)

Reading Standards for Informational Text: Kindergarten

- **Integration and Knowledge of Ideas**

7. With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).

Speaking and Listening Standards: Kindergarten

- **Comprehension and Collaboration**
 - 1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *kindergarten topics and texts* with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
 - a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).**
 - b. Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.**
 - c. Seek to understand and communicate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.****
 - 2. Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.**
 - 3. Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.**
- **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**
 - 6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.**

Language Standards: Kindergarten

- **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**
 - 6. Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.**

NYS K Math Standards

Count to tell the number of objects

- CCSS.Math.Content.K.CC.B.4 Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities; connect counting to cardinality.