Ki o Rahi is a game of skill, strategy, whanaungatanga - team work, tikanga - conduct, purpose, motive, pūrākau and whakapapa - history. Ki o Rahi involves strategic thinking and skills which are transferable to a range of sports and applicable to many life skills.

The game is played between two teams ‘team kioma’ and ‘team taniwha’ on a circular field and is a game for all ages and abilities. Traditionally played with a flax ‘ki’, but more usually now with a small, softer ball, ‘team kioma’ aims to score points by touching the ball onto outlying posts and then returning it in hand, rugby style, over a central try line. Meanwhile, ‘team taniwha’ aims to score points by throwing the ball and hitting the tupu (central target). Each area in the circular area relates to a part of the legend of Ki o Rahi. It can be played full contact, touch or ‘flag’ style. It is an entertaining game whether a player or spectator, with a small playing area meaning lots of action!

The game of Ki o Rahi has been thriving in the Wellington region since 2009. The momentum began when local sports trust, Sport Wellington, invited Dr Ihirangi Heke, a leading Māori health and physical activity practitioner, to run a Taonga tākaro (traditional Māori games) workshop for community and recreation organisations. Through this initial workshop a connection evolved between Rangatahi Tu Rangatira (R2R), a national provider contracted to deliver Taonga tākaro using Ki o Rahi as the flagship, Sport Wellington and Wellington City Council. Together these organisations have since provided opportunities for young people and whānau to ‘have a go’ at Ki o Rahi. Staff from each organisation have trained to teach and deliver Ki o Rahi and have provided a number of community Ki o Rahi events, school and community based training sessions across the region. From these successful initiatives there was a strong interest for the game of Ki o Rahi to grow across Wellington.

In 2013, a successful application led by Wellington City Council in partnership with Regional Public Health, Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ngā Mokopuna and Sport Wellington was made to Sport New Zealand’s Active Communities fund for a 3-year Ki o Rahi Poneke development project. The vision for Ki o Rahi Poneke is to grow the knowledge and interest of Ki o Rahi in Wellington and to engage and empower communities with low participation in sport and recreation through Ki o Rahi. The project aims to connect with organisations already working with whānau and individuals in areas of high deprivation and where engagement in sport and recreation is low.

Some key achievements from the programme so far include:

• an increase in the confidence to teach, play and referee the game of Ki o Rahi empowering individuals to recognise and grow their leadership skills.

• strong relationships and connections with a number of community organisations including schools, youth trusts and local council’s city housing complexes.

• whānau participating in Ki o Rahi events after being inactive for many years and finding a sport that they enjoy and can participate in, whatever their fitness level.

• an increase in kupu Māori me ona tikanga through the planning, teaching and delivery of Ki o Rahi.

Feedback from a recent event held at Te Rauparaha Arena, Porirua with Te Kohanga Reo Kaiaka. Participants ranged from 10 years to 50 years.

“When can we play again?”

“Loved it…….awesome”

“Mum I didn’t know you could run!!!!”

“Nan, you are ruthless, no one wanted to “rip your tag”

“Can we have a whānau challenge???”

“Rawe (awesome)…. didn’t think I could do this for 10 minutes, but half a day later and I’m still going”

To find out more about Ki o Rahi click here or contact:

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