

The first New Zealanders

The Maori people were the first people to live on the islands of New Zealand. They arrived on the islands about 1,200 years ago. Their name means “ordinary people.”

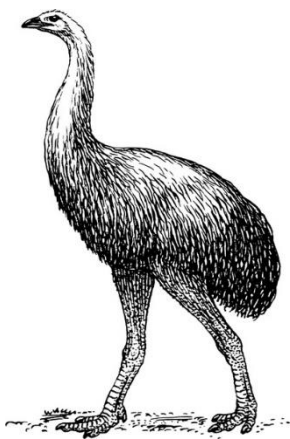
The Maori people are Pacific Islanders, who traveled the seas in giant canoes. Using the stars, sun, and sea currents to navigate and find land, they traveled from island to island. Over a period of 500 years many canoes brought people to Aotearoa, "The Land of the Long White Cloud," as New Zealand was then called.

The early Maoris believed in gods which represented the sky, earth, forests, and forces of nature. The Maori people fought many wars. They believed that the spirits of their ancestors could be called upon to help them in times of need or war.

Today Maori people live a modern lifestyle all over New Zealand.

The earliest Maori people are sometimes called the Mōa Hunters. Their main source of food was the moa, a huge flightless bird that is now extinct. After the moas were gone, the Maori ate smaller birds. They also caught fish and grew crops for food.

The kiwi is a small flightless bird still living in New Zealand today. Another small flightless bird is the kakapo, a kind of parrot.



Make a picture chart to show how the first New Zealanders lived.