

TE TIROHANGA I TE KŌREROTANGA O TE REO RANGATIRA I ROTO I NGĀ KĀINGA MĀORI ME NGĀ ROHE

Survey of Language Use in Maori Households
and Communities

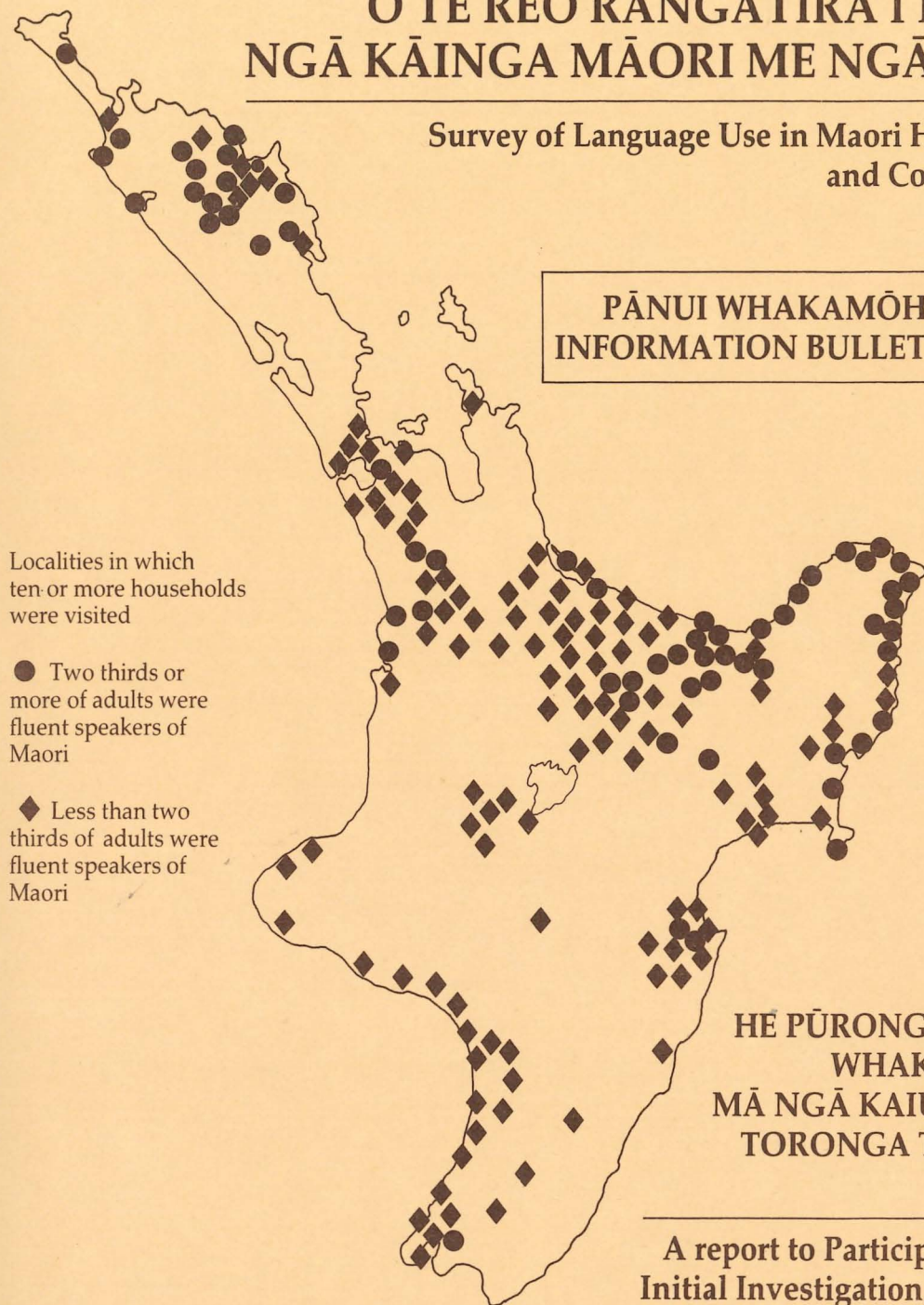
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

37

Localities in which
ten or more households
were visited

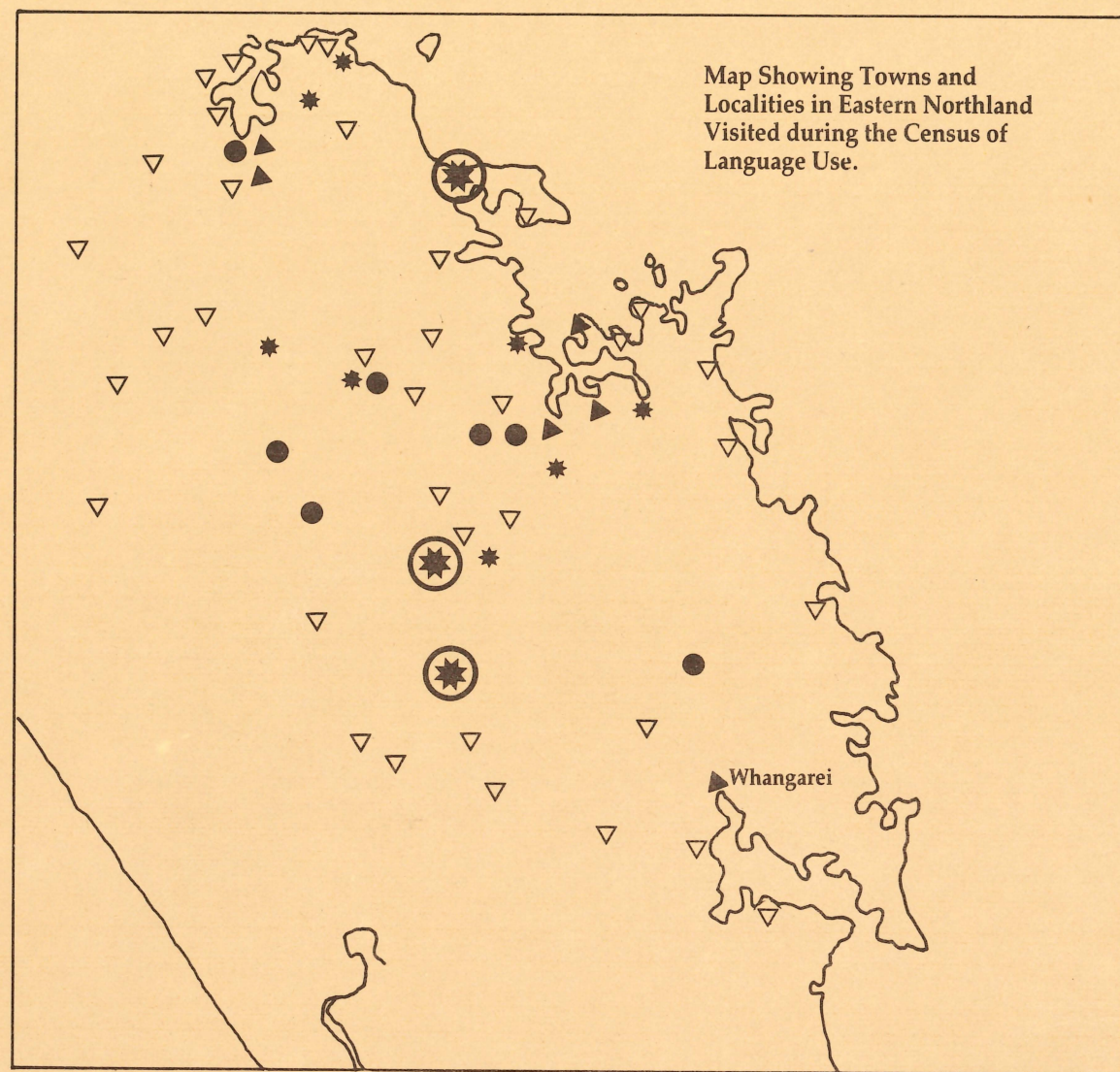
● Two thirds or
more of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori

◆ Less than two
thirds of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori



HE PŪRONGORONGO
WHAKAMŌHIO
MĀ NGĀ KAIURU KI TE
TORONGA TUATAHI,
1973-1978

A report to Participants in the
Initial Investigation, 1973-1978



THE MAORI LANGUAGE IN KAIKOHE

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 50 households in Kaikohe in January 1975. Twenty-four interviews were carried out partly or entirely in Maori; the rest (26) were in English.

The interviewers were Gerard Ngawati (Ngapuhi), Carol Hindmarsh Ngawati (Ngati Porou), Titihuia Pryor (Tuhoe), Ameria Ponika (Tuhoe), Iriaka Wensor (Ngapuhi), Peter Wensor (Ngapuhi), Joe Rua (Te Whanau-a-Apanui), Suzanne Hills (Ngai Tahu), Ani Allen (Ngati Awa), Lorna O'Sullivan (Ngati Porou), Hiiti Tientjes (Tuhoe) and Gillian Moerkerk (Maniapoto).

The households surveyed had a total population of 254; 248 of these people were of Maori descent. This was about one-fifth of the Maori population of Kaikohe at the time.

RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned 6 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. By far the most, 216 people or 85 percent of the total, belonged to Ngapuhi.

Ability To Speak and Understand Maori

The information in the table on the next page shows that more than a third of the people surveyed spoke Maori fluently, while half of them understood the language well. More than three-quarters of these fluent speakers were adults over 25, but there were few speakers of Maori under 15. A quarter of the people under 25, however, understood the language well, while a third of the total number, most of them school-age children, could not understand Maori at the time.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN KAIKOHE (1975)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	39	83	41	87	5	11	1	2
25-44	31	59	43	81	2	4	8	15
15-24	8	24	12	36	7	22	14	42
2-14	6	6	23	21	22	20	64	59
Overall	84	35	119	49	36	15	87	36

(Numbers and percentages refer to members of households visited; percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number).

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The Use Of Maori Language In The Household

There were 40 households with dependent children visited, and in seven of them people spoke mostly or entirely in Maori. In 13 homes, both Maori and English were used equally often, while the people in 14 homes spoke mostly or entirely in English. In the rest, some Maori was used but English was spoken more often.

There were 10 childless households visited, and in these Maori was the main language spoken by residents among themselves or with visitors.

The Maori Language In The Community

Nearly three-quarters of the people we interviewed spoke Maori regularly in the community with neighbours, friends and work-mates. However, these people (many of them kaumatua over 45)

were forced to use English a lot more than they wanted to because most people in Kaikohe could not speak Maori fluently. Conversations between members of the Maori community under 25 were usually in English.

Maori was still regarded as the proper language for ceremonies on the marae and in certain religious services. Many people used Maori for private and family prayer and when they said grace.

If any two members of the Maori community in Kaikohe were to meet unexpectedly, the chances were 1 in 5 that they could understand each other in Maori. If both were adults over the age of 25 the chances were about 3 in 5, but it was very unlikely that school-age children would be able to speak in Maori with each other.

Attitudes Towards The Language

Although English had begun to take over from Maori as the everyday language in the household and community, the Maori language had kept its cultural importance in the lives of many of the people we interviewed. Some people were whakama for not being able to speak or understand Maori very well, or to teach it to their children. This is why a lot of people wanted Maori taught in schools, while one person even said that all students should have to learn the language.

Others blamed television and radio, in particular, for the growing number of people who did not know or use Maori. As children spent a lot of their time listening to programmes in English, parents had a hard job trying to teach them Maori in the home. Several people said that Maori was a dead language which belonged to the past and that teaching 'Maori Culture' should be put ahead of the language, while others said that the person who spoke both Maori and English would be able to live a fuller, richer life in the Maori and the Pakeha worlds. Many grandparents were teaching Maori to their mokopuna with this in mind.

CONCLUSION

At the time of the survey more than two-thirds of the Maori people in Kaikohe over the age of 25 spoke Maori well, while only a tenth of those under 25 could do so. This was a great worry for many people in the area, and, although a lot of them wanted Maori to be taught in schools, others said the language could survive only if it was taught and spoken regularly in the home. As mentioned earlier, this was often very difficult as many children would rather watch TV than learn Maori from parents who were often too tired after a day's work to teach them properly. Grandparents often took on this important task.

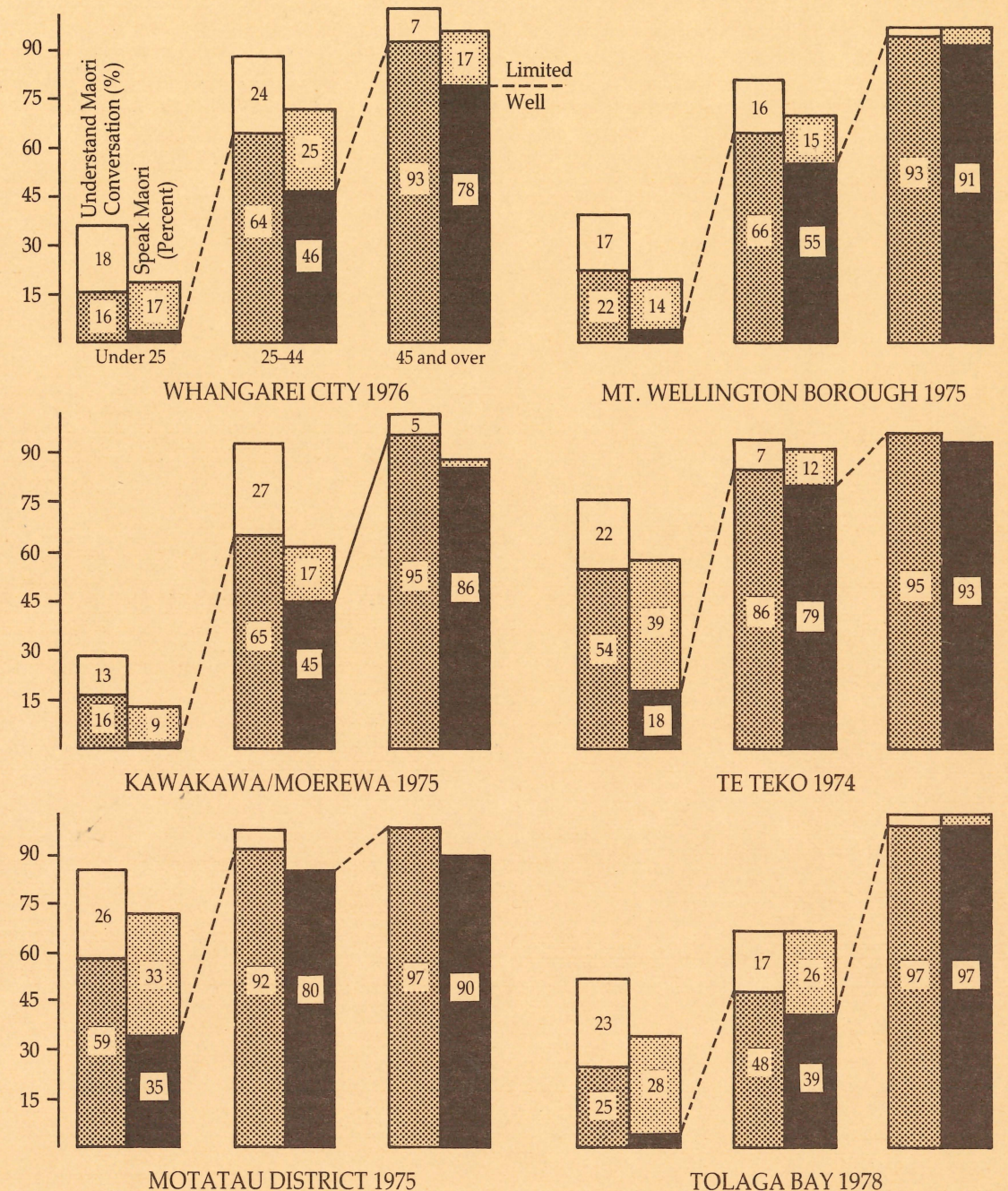
Although Maori was still important for ceremonies on the marae, more and more people were worried that Maori may have no future as a language for everyday use, as more than half the school-age children did not understand Maori at all.

The setting up of Maori speaking pre-schools (Te Kohanga Reo) throughout the country is seen as one important move to make sure that the language would not be lost. As well as this, language courses based in the community have been successful in teaching Maori to adults. Local Maori Affairs Department officers can provide interested people with more information on these schemes. (Bilingual schools, where Maori and English are equally important in teaching and learning, have been set up in several places at the request of Maori communities, but so far none of these schools has been started in Northland).

This report was prepared by Lee Smith (Ngati Kahungunu).

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Knowledge of Maori Language by Age Groups in Selected Areas at the Time of the Linguistic Census



The Survey of Language Use in Maori Households and Communities

The census of language use on which this report is based is the first part of a general study of the place of the Maori language in Maori communities, its structure, how it is spoken and written under modern conditions, and its relevance to New Zealand as a nation. This study is being conducted by the Maori Unit of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Fieldwork for the census phase began in Whangaroa County and Te Tii in August 1973, and ended in August 1978. Follow-up studies and studies in additional communities will be undertaken from time to time (the first of these was conducted in Waverley in August 1979).

The map on the front cover shows the approximate localities in which ten or more households were visited between 1973 and 1979. Since the linguistic census was completed, the major task of the Unit has been the analysing and reporting of the information collected. At the same time, however, studies of the structure and usage of the Maori language have commenced; these will result in a series of handbooks and other materials for teachers of Maori (including parents), and for people wishing to learn the language. An example of this is *The First Basic Maori Word List*, published in 1982. Other publications have included background studies for bilingual education projects, and reports on policy issues affecting the Maori language and Maori speakers – for example, the legal status of Maori in New Zealand.

The Purpose of This Report

This report has been prepared for the people who participated in the original survey and who provided the information on which it is based. It is hoped that it will encourage people to compare the situation now with that at the time covered by the report, and that this information will provide a basis for discussion and debate about what action, if any, each community might take to ensure that the Maori language is at least as important in the twenty-first century as it was in the 1970s.

Further Information

One copy of this report is provided free to each person interviewed during the linguistic census in the area concerned, and to local schools, Maori Language Boards, and Maori Committees. Further information about the linguistic survey, and lists of publications, may be obtained from the Maori Unit, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, P.O. Box 3237, Wellington.



Ngā Mihi/Special Thanks

Our first thanks must go to the 6,500 Maori families who entrusted us with the information presented in this series of reports. Fieldwork for the survey was funded substantially by contributions from the Lottery Board of Control, Fletcher Holdings Limited, the Maori Purposes Fund, and the Maori Education Foundation. The coding and analysis of the data was supported initially by a grant from Fletcher Holdings Limited, and further financial assistance for these purposes has been provided by Mobil Oil N.Z. Limited, the Post Primary Teachers Association, the New Zealand Educational Institute and the Raukawa Trustees. The writing of these reports was made possible by the generosity of the J.R. McKenzie Trust.