

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

Survey of Language Use in Maori Households  
and Communities

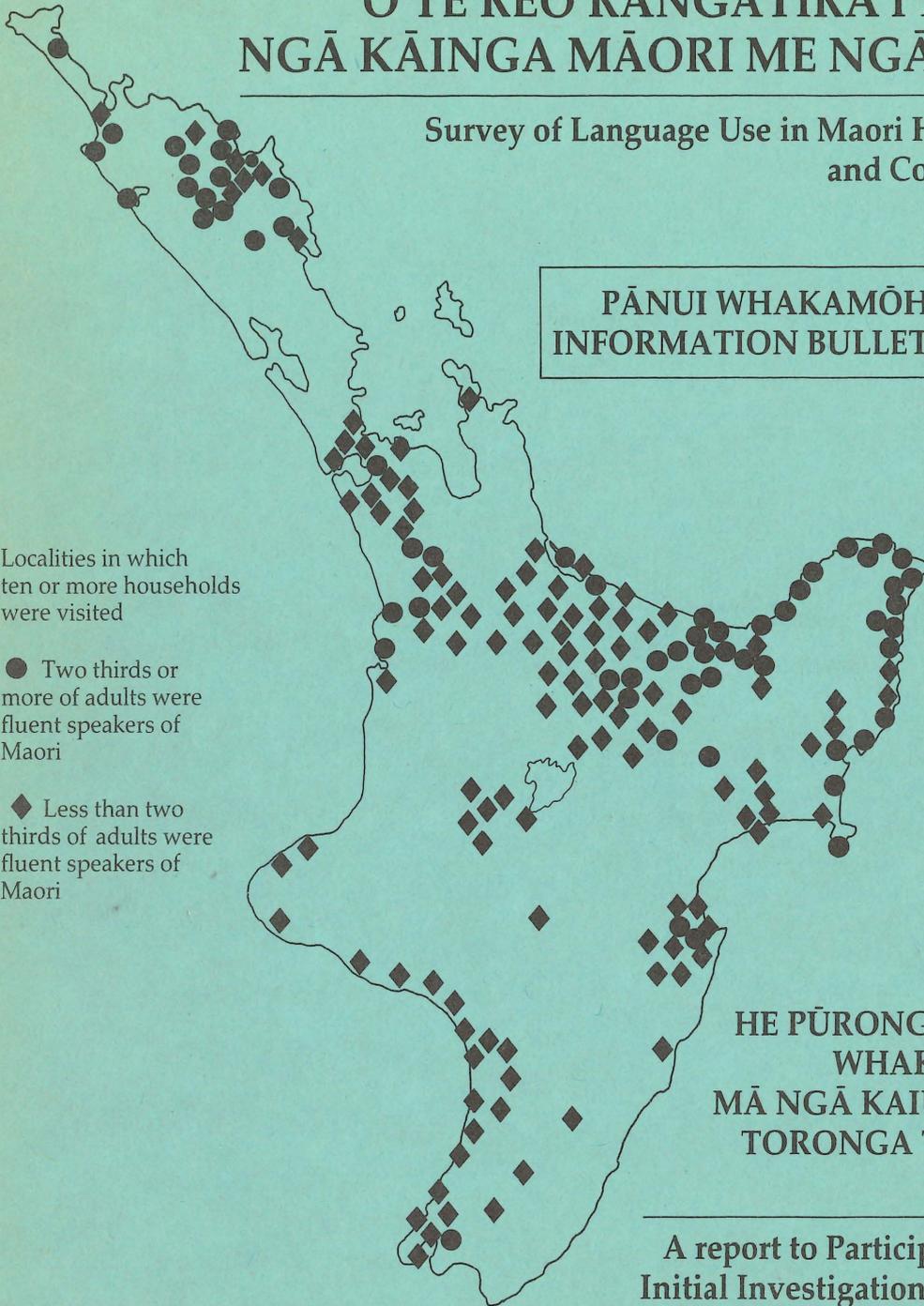
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO  
INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Localities in which  
ten or more households  
were visited

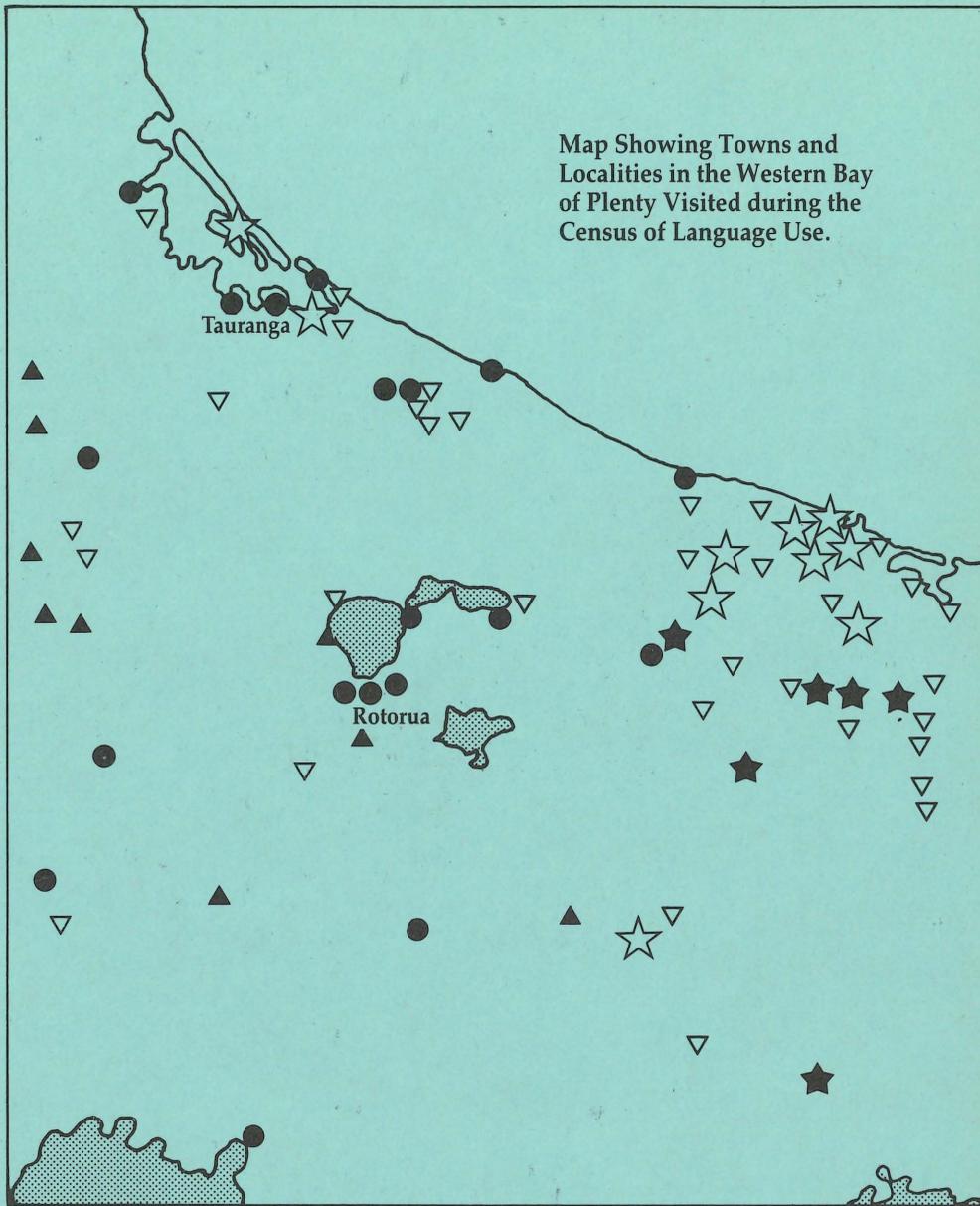
● Two thirds or  
more of adults were  
fluent speakers of  
Maori

◆ 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



Percentage of Fluent Speakers of Maori among Persons Aged 25 and over in Households Visited.

- ★ 90% or more
- ☆ 66% to 89%
- 46% to 65%
- ▲ 45% or less
- ▽ Fewer than 10 households visited

## THE MAORI LANGUAGE IN MAKETU

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 23 households in Maketu in January 1977. The interviewers were Judith Brown Hawera, Phillip Hawera, Tawini Rangihau and Joe Rua. Twenty-two interviews were carried out in English; one was partly in English and partly in Maori.

The households surveyed had a combined population of 150, of whom 149 were of Maori descent. This was nearly two-thirds of the total Maori population of Maketu township at the time.

## RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

### *Iwi Affiliation*

The people interviewed mentioned 12 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. The main iwi represented was Te Arawa with 103 members or 69 percent of the total.

### *Ability to Speak and Understand Maori*

The information in the table on the next page shows us that all the fluent speakers of Maori were adults over the age of 25; two-thirds of them were kaumatua over the age of 45. A little more than a quarter of the people taking part in the survey understood the language with ease, and by far the most of these were also adults. While 1 person in 9 under the age of 24 understood Maori well, nearly three-quarters of this age group would not have been able to understand even a simple Maori conversation.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN MAKETU (1977)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	14	82	16	94	0		1	6
25-44	6	21	13	45	9	31	7	24
15-24	0		3	10	5	17	21	72
2-14	0		9	12	10	14	54	74
Overall	20	14	41	28	24	16	83	56

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

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*Use of Maori Language In The Household*

All 23 households visited had dependent children and in 17 of them everyday conversation was all in English. In the other five, although Maori was spoken sometimes by the parents or older children English was the main language used. Many parents had been raised in homes where English was spoken most of the time (or where Maori was used when adults did not want the children to know what was being talked about), and were therefore unable to pass on the language to their children - apart from a few simple orders, words and sentences.

*The Maori Language In The Community*

Although most elderly people interviewed in Maketu preferred to speak Maori with each other, they and other fluent speakers were almost always forced to use more English when talking with younger members of the community. Over half the adults included in the survey were unable to speak Maori fluently, and talk with friends, neighbours and workmates was therefore all in English. But this did not mean that they had no time for the Maori language. Many of them had just grown up in a time when they and their parents had been told they had to know English well, if they wanted to get on, and they had been put off using Maori by teachers and people in important positions.

The Maori language continued to be very important in receiving visitors, farewelling the dead, and other ceremonies on local marae, and many religious services, in both public and private occasions, were held in Maori. For several families, the saying of grace in Maori was an important part of their daily lives.

If any two members of the community were to meet by chance, the odds were about 25 to 1 that they would not be able to talk with each other in Maori. However, if both people were adults the chances were much better - about 1 in 3 in favour.

*Attitudes Towards The Maori Language*

Many people we spoke to were very sorry that they did not have the chance to learn Maori as children, and several of them were going to study the language, or were actually studying it, with teachers or other people who spoke Maori. Those who were able to do so were themselves teaching their children and mokopuna, although this was often a more difficult task than they had thought. The schools support in this regard was sought by most parents who felt that they had been deprived of part of their cultural heritage

when they were at school, and did not want their children to suffer the same fate. On the other hand, several parents regarded the learning of English to be of greater importance in the future lives of their children, particularly when they were looking for good jobs.

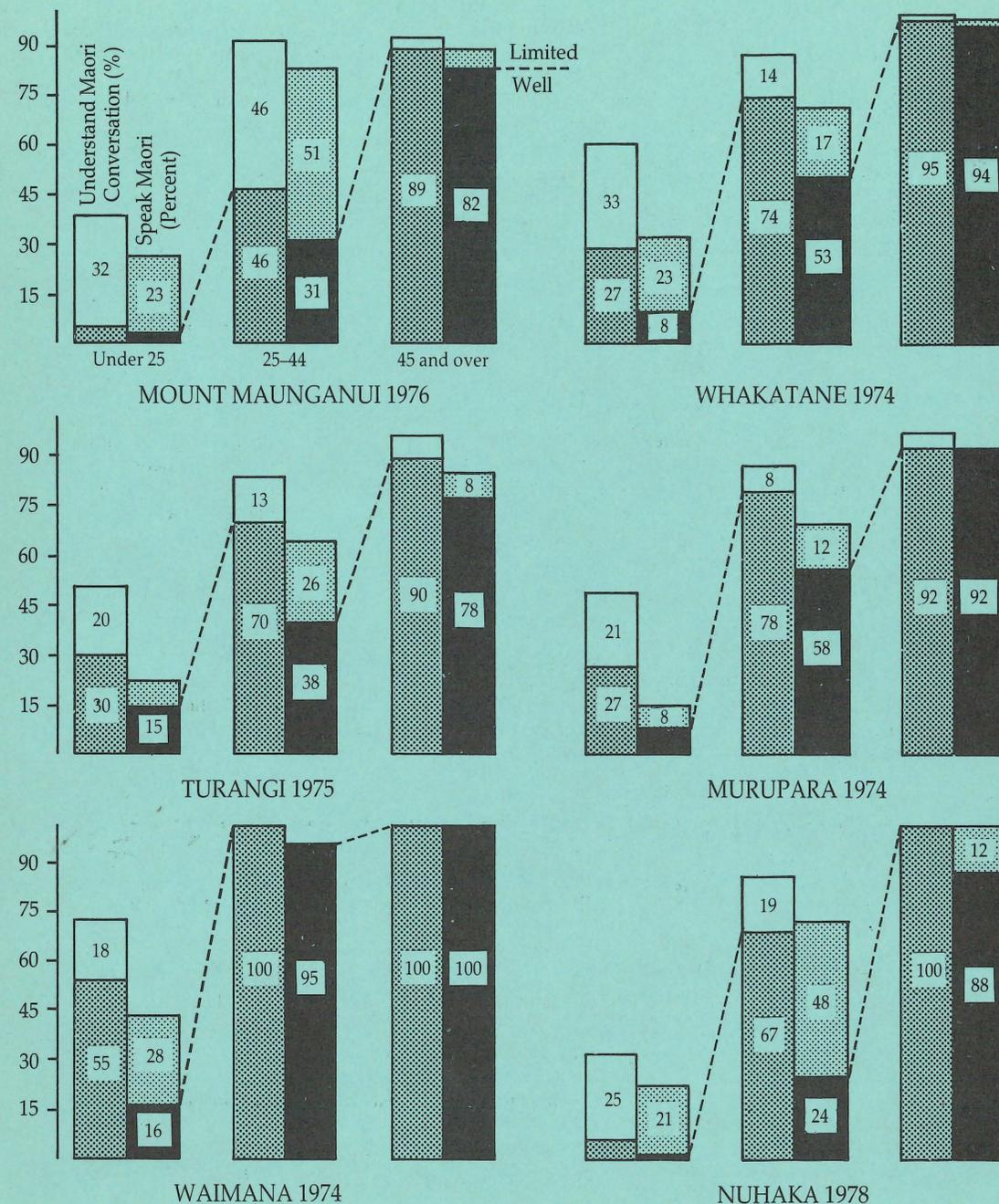
### CONCLUSION

Many of the people in the survey were very concerned that there were few competent speakers of Maori still living in the community, most of whom were kaumatua and other people over 45. As the everyday language in the home and in the community, English went ahead of Maori one or perhaps even two generations ago. Although they are unhappy about it, some of the people in Maketu have accepted this situation. They believe that Maori has no chance against English, which is both spoken in the community and used in newspapers, radio, and particularly on television. They felt that the Maori language's main importance nowadays was its use in ceremonies on the marae. Other people, however, said that even on the marae the future of the language was not certain, as there were few people who could take over the duties carried out by local elders when they passed on. This worried many parents, who were beginning to learn Maori and to teach their children also, to prevent the total loss of the language in this Te Arawa community, which has had such an important place in New Zealand history.

This report was written 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.