

# 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

100

Localities in which  
ten or more households  
were visited

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

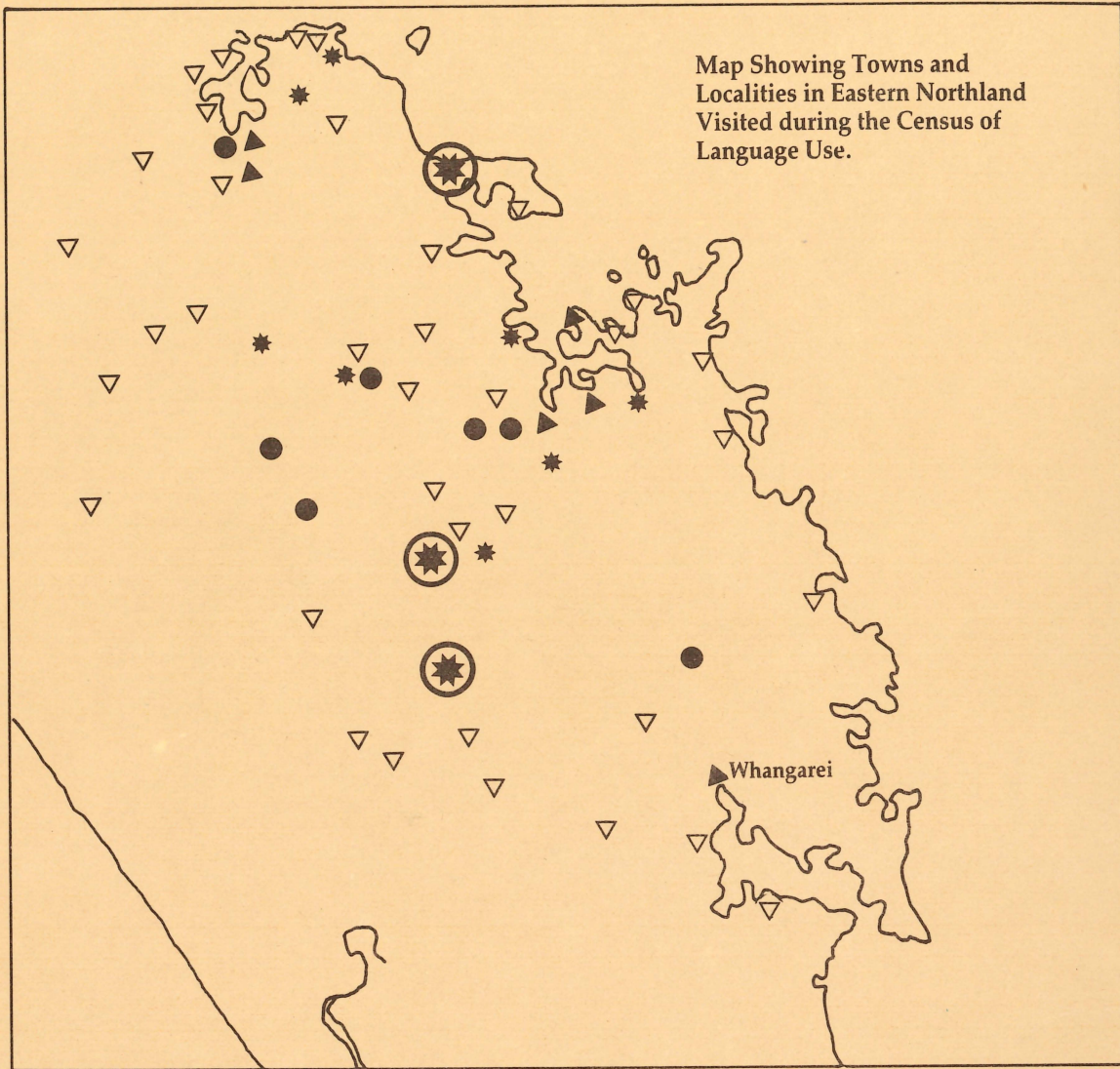
◆ Less than two  
thirds of adults were  
fluent speakers of  
Maori

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

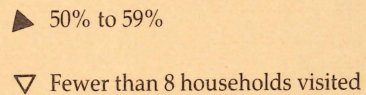
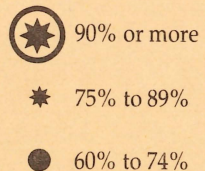
A report to Participants in the  
Initial Investigation, 1973–1978



Map Showing Towns and Localities in Eastern Northland Visited during the Census of Language Use.



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



## THE MAORI LANGUAGE IN RUSSELL, NGAIOTONGA AND PUNARUKU

This report summarizes the results of the linguistic survey conducted in January 1975 in the township of Russell and the nearby community of Rawhiti, and also two communities along the Russell-Whangarei road: Ngaiotonga, in the Bay of Islands County, and Punaruku, just across the border in Whangarei County. Several other nearby communities were also included in the survey at that time, and the results of the survey there have already been reported in other bulletins in this series: Waihaha (Waikare) in Report No. 36; Karetu (No. 49); Kawakawa (No. 50); and Waitangi (No. 48).

The interviews in the Russell area were conducted by Evelyn Te Uira (Waikato), Judith Brown (Waikato), Susan Rikihana (Tuhoe), Helen Gillespie, Dora Pryor (Tuhoe), Rena Tito (Ngati Whatua), Tira Pryor (Tuhoe) and Titihuia Pryor (Tuhoe). Five interviews were in Maori, eight in both Maori and English, and the rest completely in English.

Altogether 28 households were visited: 15 in Russell and 2 in Rawhiti, with a combined total of 77 people (72 of Maori descent, about half the Maori population of the Russell district at the time); 6 in Ngaiotonga, with 33 people (29 Maori, most of the Maori community there); and 5 in Punaruku, with 31 people (all Maori, about two-fifths of the Maori population).



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**Knowledge of Spoken Maori in Ngaiotonga and Punaruku (1975)**

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Age Group	Fluent Speakers	Understand Easily	Limited Understanding	No Knowledge
45 years & over	14 (93%)	15 (100%)	.. (...)	.. (...)
25-44 yrs	.. (...)	.. (...)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
15-24 yrs	1 ( 7%)	5 (29%)	6 (43%)	3 (21%)
2-14 yrs	.. (...)	.. (...)	5 (15%)	27 (82%)
Overall	15 (23%)	20 (31%)	12 (19%)	31 (48%)

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*(Figures refer to members of households visited;  
percentages have been rounded to nearest whole number)*

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**Results of the Linguistic Survey**

**Iwi Affiliation**

In Russell, six different iwi were mentioned by the people we interviewed, but four out of five of the members of their families had Ngapuhi as their main iwi, as did almost everyone in Ngaiotonga. Punaruku people also mentioned six iwi to which they or members of their families belonged, but most were members of Ngati Wai (just under half gave Ngati Wai as their iwi; most of the rest said they were Ngapuhi, but many of these gave Ngati Wai as their hapu). In all districts most of the heads of the households we visited had been born and brought up in the Bay of Islands or Whangarei County.

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**Knowledge of Spoken Maori in Russell and Rawhiti (1975)**

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Age Group	Fluent Speakers	Understand Easily	Limited Understanding	No Knowledge
45 years & over	14 (70%)	14 (70%)	3 (15%)	3 (15%)
25-44 yrs	2 (17%)	5 (42%)	4 (33%)	3 (25%)
15-24 yrs	2 ( 9%)	2 ( 9%)	4 (17%)	17 (74%)
2-14 yrs	1 ( 5%)	1 ( 5%)	3 (14%)	18 (82%)
Overall	19 (25%)	22 (29%)	14 (18%)	41 (53%)

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*(Figures refer to members of households visited;  
percentages have been rounded to nearest whole number)*

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**Ability to Speak and Understand Maori**

As the tables on these two pages show, Maori was pretty much an adult language in all these districts at the time of the survey. In the country districts almost all the older people could speak and understand Maori easily; the proportion in Russell was slightly less, although there were a few more younger people there who knew enough Maori to follow an ordinary conversation at the time. But, all in all, most children and young adults had English as their only language for everyday use.

In all three districts half the household heads we interviewed had Maori as their first language; one person in Russell and another in Punaruku had learned English and Maori together as an infant. Four of these 18 native-speakers of Maori had also learned to write Maori before they learned to write English, but all the rest had learned to read and write at school, so although only 14 of the people we spoke to had English



as their sole mother tongue, 28 of them had English as the language that they first learned to write.

Use of the Maori Language in the Household

It can be seen from the chart at the bottom of this page that English was the main language in most of the homes we visited in all these communities, at least where there were school-age and pre-school children in the family. In the households without children under 16 years of age (2 in Ngaiotonga and 7 in Russell), the situation was much the same, with 6 of the 9 using more English than Maori. Despite this, however, most families reported that Maori was occasionally used within the family -- only two families, both in Russell, said that Maori was never used at all when those at home were talking to each other. Except for four families in Russell (3 with children), there was at least one fluent Maori-speaking adult in each home; as is shown in the diagrams on pages 6 and 7, all families had at least one senior member with some understanding of the language.

LANGUAGE USED WHEN ALL THE FAMILY WERE TOGETHER  
(Households with Dependent Children Only)

	Russell	Ngaiotonga	Punaruks
Mostly Maori	1 (10%)	.. (...)	1 (25%)
Half and half	1 (10%)	.. (...)	.. (...)
Mostly English	6 (60%)	3 (100%)	3 (75%)
Entirely English	2 (20%)	.. (...)	.. (...)
No. of Households	10	3	4

Maori Language in the Community

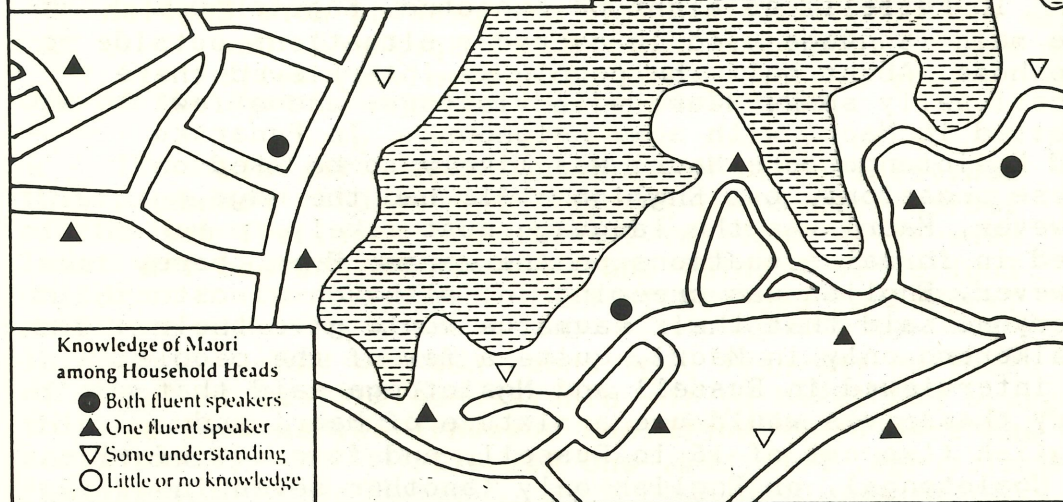
In Russell, as might be expected, English was the main language used in everyday situations outside the home. About half the people we interviewed there occasionally spoke Maori with visitors, and a few chatted in Maori with some neighbors. In Punaruks and Ngaiotonga more Maori was likely to be used on these occasions, but English still had the edge. However, Maori was the language most likely to be used in formal situations on the marae. Even there, however, English was creeping in: although almost everyone said that their kaumatua would give their whaikorero only in Maori, quite a few of the people we interviewed in Russell and Ngaiotonga said that they themselves would use a mixture of Maori and English (two out of 16 in Russell, and four out of six in Ngaiotonga), or English only (another seven in Russell) when giving a formal speech.

In many Northland Maori communities Maori had a special place in certain religious contexts, for example in prayers for the sick, or in the prayers said to open or close meetings. This was more or less the case in Ngaiotonga, where 5 of the 6 family heads interviewed said they would use Maori (or both Maori and English) in prayers for the sick, and 4 of them used only Maori in prayers for opening and closing meetings. In all three communities half the people said they would say grace in Maori, at least occasionally, while the rest said they would use only English. In Russell and Punaruks English was also more likely to be used than Maori in other religious contexts.

Quite a few of the grandparents and some parents we spoke to had unpleasant memories of their school days as far as the Maori language was concerned: even in Russell eight out of the 20 people interviewed (40 percent) had received corporal punishment at school for speaking Maori, and another three were punished in



This is a purely imaginary map of the district covered by this report, on which the households included in the survey have been located to show the Maori language resources of the area.



RUSSELL TOWNSHIP

other ways; the proportions in Punaruku and Ngaiotonga were higher still. This is one thing which has obviously changed for the better over the years. Maori language now has a well-accepted place in the primary school curriculum, and we were told that the teachers in these communities supported moves to teach more of the language; in Russell, for example, arrangements had been made for a fluent speaker to visit the school regularly for this purpose.

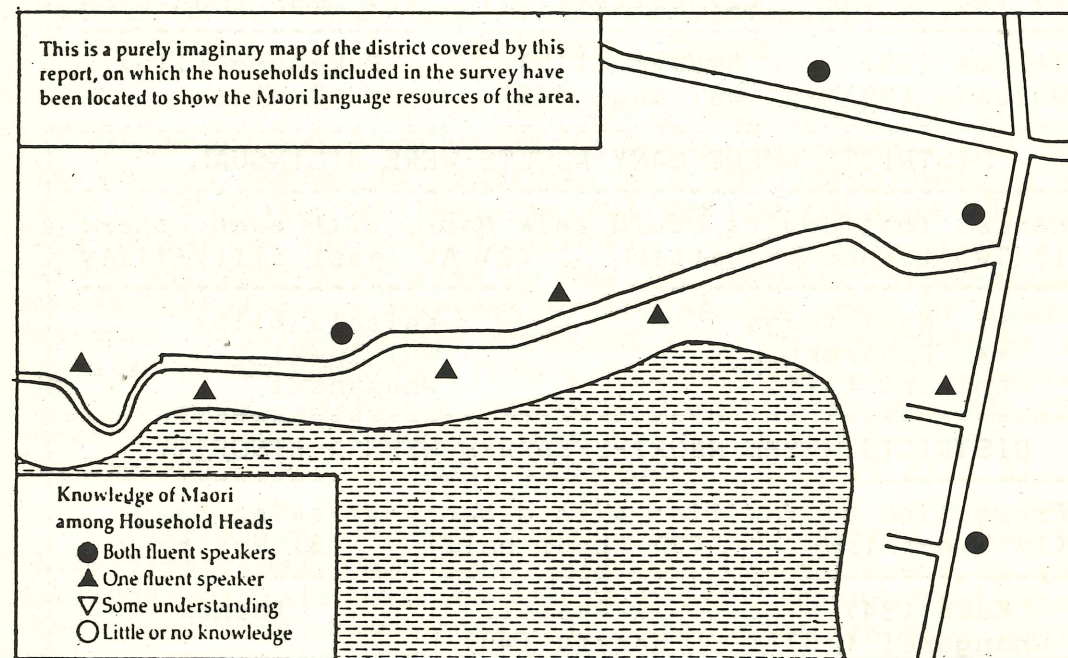
In both Punaruku and Ngaiotonga, adults included in our survey who met by chance at the time would have had a better than even chance of being able to carry on a conversation in Maori, but in Russell the chances against this would have been more than two to one; in none of the communities would there have been much prospect of adults and children talking freely together in Maori. Because so much of their everyday

conversation was with English-speakers, inside and outside the community, even people in the country areas had got into the habit of speaking more English than Maori, even with other Maori speakers. One elderly lady summed up the situation very well:

I have to go back to Te Kao for a good conversation in Maori because even the old ladies (older and younger than myself) round here speak English. The [local] Maori all use English so I think and speak in Pakeha and I'm laughed at back in Te Kao.

The chart on the next page shows how the Maori language had fared by the nineteen-seventies, in Te Kao and some other Northland communities, as well as in Ngaiotonga, Punaruku, and Russell.

This is a purely imaginary map of the district covered by this report, on which the households included in the survey have been located to show the Maori language resources of the area.



NGAIOTONGA AND PUNARUKU



USE OF MAORI IN THE MAORI COMMUNITY (1973-79)  
(SELECTED DISTRICTS IN NORTHLAND)

MAORI-SPEAKING DISTRICTS

(1) Wholly Maori Speaking	(2) Mainly Maori-Speaking
(None)	Matawaia (14) Panguru (28)

MARGINALLY MAORI-SPEAKING DISTRICTS

Te Hapua (25) Pipiwai (53) Motatau (23) Te Tii (24)

DISTRICTS WHERE AT LEAST ONE CHILD IN FIVE  
UNDERSTOOD MAORI EASILY

Chances that ADULTS could talk Maori with each other:  
(1) Two-to-one (2) Fifty-fifty (3) Less than even

Te Kao (25)	Awanui (115)	Pukepoto (115)
Waiomio (39)	Waitangi (48)	Rawene

DISTRICTS WHERE MANY ADULTS WERE BILINGUAL

Chances that adults could talk Maori with each other:  
(1) Two-to-one or better (2) At least fifty-fifty

** Ngaiotonga	Kaitaia (115)
** Punaruku	Whirinaki
Ahipara (115)	Whananaki

DISTRICTS WHERE MAORI-SPEAKERS WERE A MINORITY

Proportion of families with a Maori-speaking head:  
(1) Two-thirds (2) About half (3) Not many

Kaero (34)	** Russell	(none)
Whangarei (15)	Karetu (49)	

\*\* Included in this report: ( ) Other report numbers.

Attitudes Towards the Maori Language

One important observation which can be made about all three communities is that the Maori language had some place in most homes. There were only two households, both in Russell, where Maori was practically never used among members of the family. However, most people had more or less given up trying to use it as the main language in most situations, both at home and in the community. Some old people expressed disappointment at what they considered to be an uncaring attitude on the part of today's parents. One kuaia from a country district remarked, for example, that she had taught Maori to some of the local children, but was disappointed that their parents did not bother to support her efforts by using Maori at home. She said that the children of some of her pakeha neighbors now spoke Maori more fluently when talking to her than some of her own mokopuna who also lived nearby.

Some parents had deliberately suppressed the use of the Maori language in their homes. One parent in the Russell area, for example, said that they had kept to English "so that the children could think in English and so do well in school". Where one spouse could not speak Maori well, English had also usually become the family language by choice; one man, for example, said he always spoke English "in fairness to my wife". On the other hand, one non-Maori parent had actually learned to speak Maori well, at a time when the country district she and her husband lived in was still mainly Maori-speaking.

Several of the Maori-speaking parents we interviewed said that they had come to regret a previous decision not to use Maori when speaking with their children; obviously, they had once thought that a knowledge of Maori would make it harder for their children to succeed in school. By the time of



the survey, however, some thought that their children were now handicapped by knowing only English. Some of those who themselves did not speak Maori well also found this a disadvantage; one person in Russell, for example, said that he wished he could speak Maori because being unable to "is embarrassing when older people are around".

Many people expressed an interest in Maori language, whether or not they could speak it, and in Maoritanga. There was obvious support in Russell and in the other districts for the Maori language to be taught in the school (although, as we have already mentioned, one or two people were still worried about the effect Maori might have on their children's ability in English), although no-one actually mentioned the idea of bilingual education (where Maori would be used, along with English, for teaching ordinary subjects). In other parts of the Bay of Islands people were thinking along those more radical lines, and in 1985 a bilingual school was approved in Matawaia.

Half the household heads we interviewed in Russell and a third of those in Ngaiotonga and Punaruku preferred to speak English in normal conversation; the rest either preferred Maori or felt equally at home in both languages. Most people in Russell and Ngaiotonga (whatever their first language) preferred English for reading and writing, although two or three people in Russell still liked Maori best in these situations. In Punaruku, three of the six people interviewed did not mind which language they used for reading and writing, one preferred Maori, and the other two English.



## Conclusion

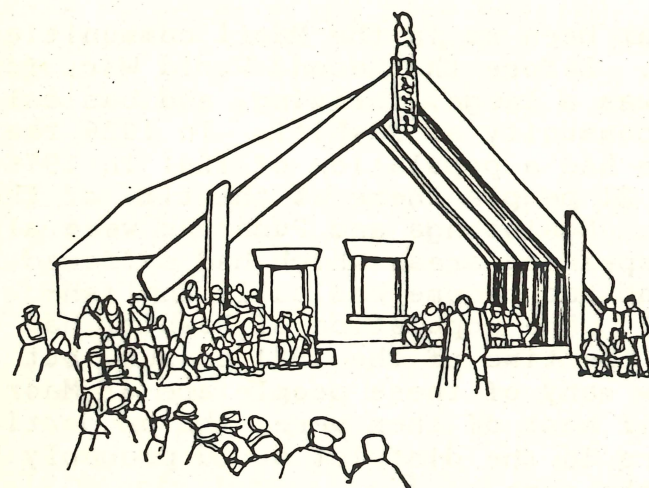
Russell is the oldest township in New Zealand. It was originally named Kororareka, but took on its present English name in memory of the first capital of New Zealand, a town laid out near Okiato Point (on the way to Opuia) and named in honour of Lord John Russell, secretary for war and the colonies in the British cabinet from 1839 to 1841. Old Russell was soon abandoned in favour of Auckland as the site for the new colonial capital, but the colonial language and heritage gained a firm hold in the re-named Kororareka. Like most older Northland townships, Russell itself has long been basically English-speaking, even though many of its residents have been fluent in Maori.

This has not been so in the Maori communities nearby, however. Before the Second World War, for example, there was a large, thriving, and basically Maori-speaking community at Rawhiti. In 1936 the settlement there had a population of 124; in 1976 there were only 21 people there at the time of the national census. Ngaiotonga and Punaruku were also formerly Maori-speaking areas which had suffered depopulation, and had become basically English-speaking as well. The population of Rawhiti had jumped to 70 at the time of the 1981 census, but it is not known how many of these people are of Maori ancestry; even if most of them were, the proportion of Maori-speakers in the district would probably have remained about the same.

Even in the ethnically mixed community of Russell (where people of Maori descent made up less than a fifth of the total population) there was quite widespread support for the local primary school's efforts to teach some elements of Maori language and culture. In Ngaiotonga and Punaruku there was still sufficient knowledge of Maori in the community as a



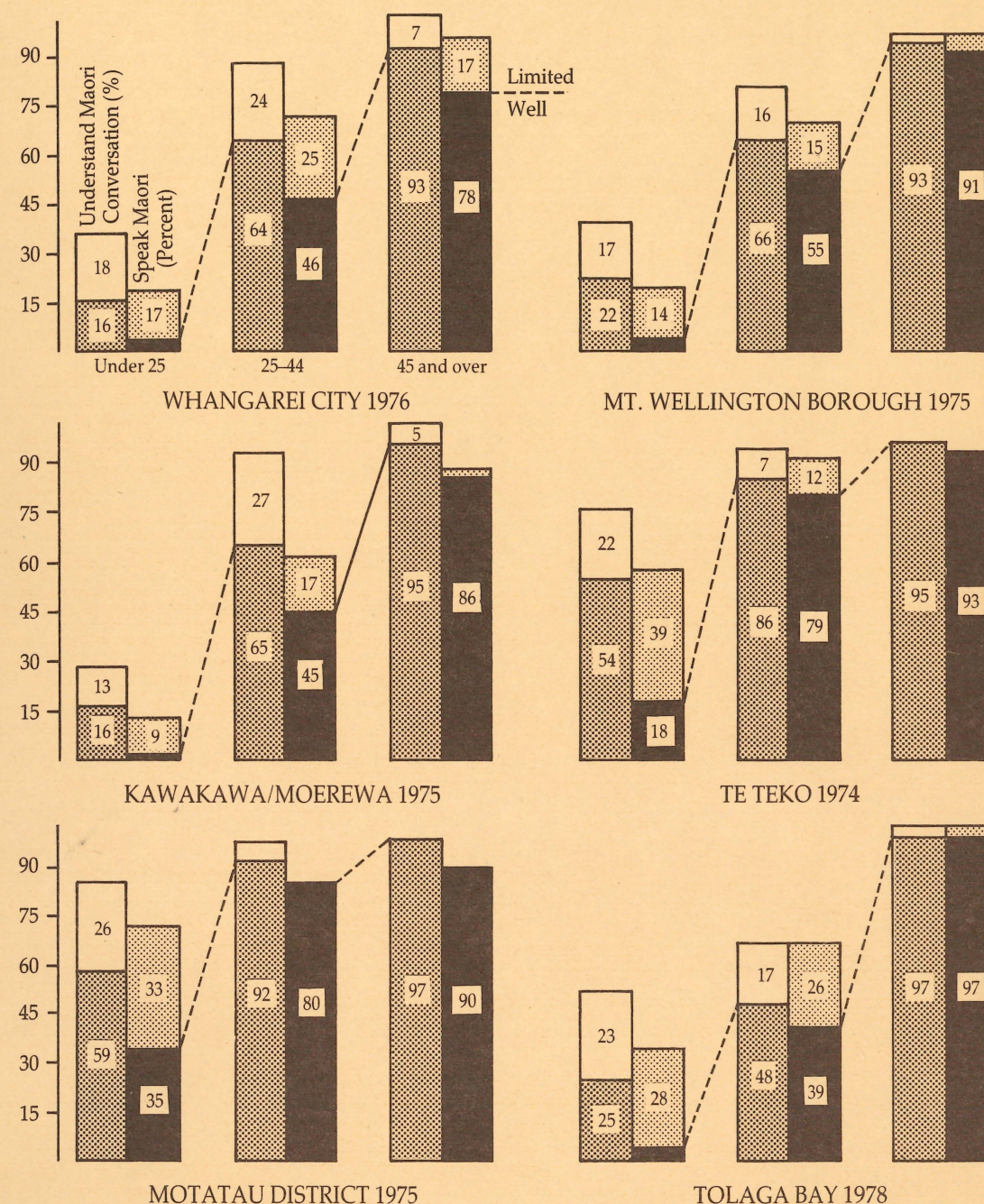
whole in the nineteen-seventies to give bilingual education a chance of success, if parents in any of these places had asked for a bilingual school. The chance is still there, and also possibly in Rawhiti if the Maori population were to increase sufficiently to justify the re-opening of the school, but it is fading fast with the passage of time. The kohanga reo movement could also make a difference to the prospects for the Maori language in any of these communities, if it took root there. Meanwhile, however, in this part of the Bay of Islands, as in many other parts of New Zealand, English seems to be crowding out Maori in most situations, in the country settlements just as much as in the town.



This report was prepared by Richard Benton

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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.