

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

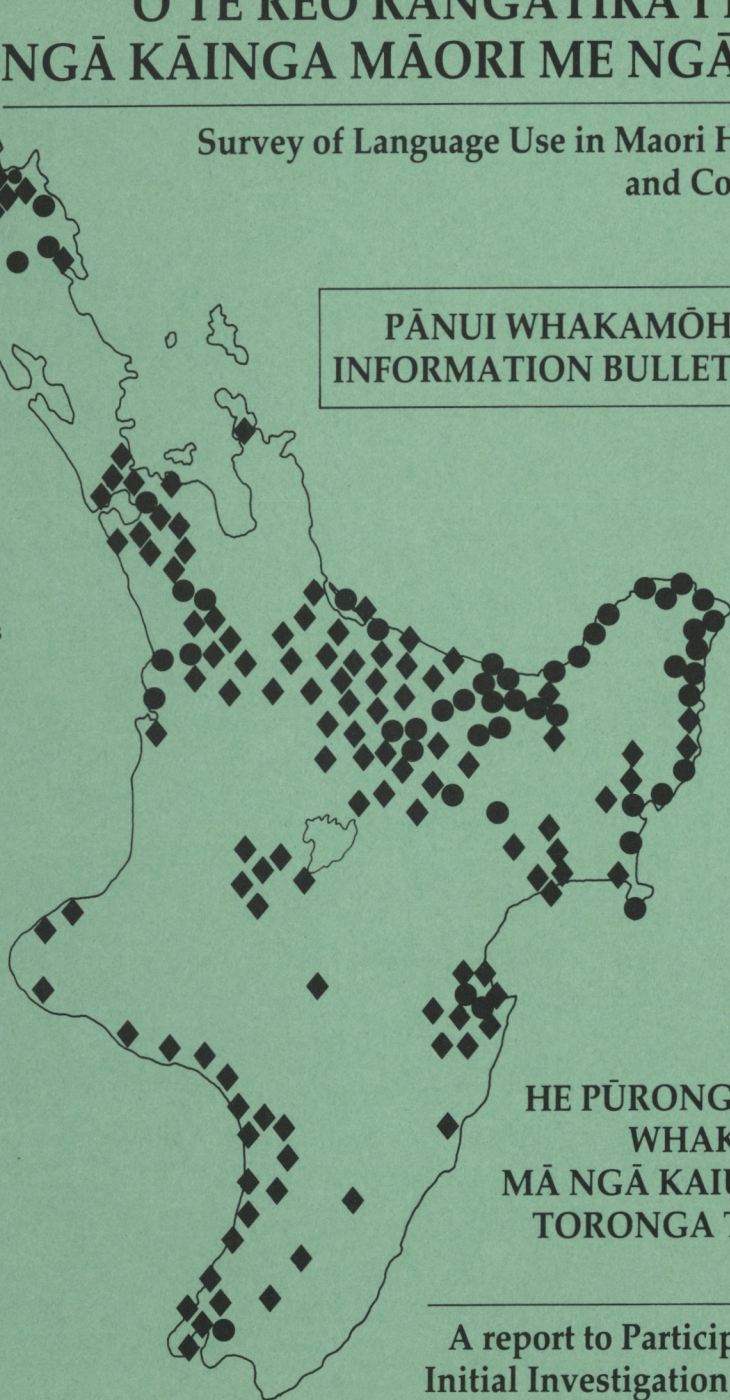
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

6

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 PORIRUA AND DISTRICT

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 116 households in Porirua City and 7 households in Tawa Borough in May 1974 and May 1975. Twenty-four interviews were carried out partly or entirely in Maori; the remainder (99) were in English.

The households surveyed had a total population of 709, of whom 674 were of Maori descent. This was about 10 percent of the Maori population of the district at the time.

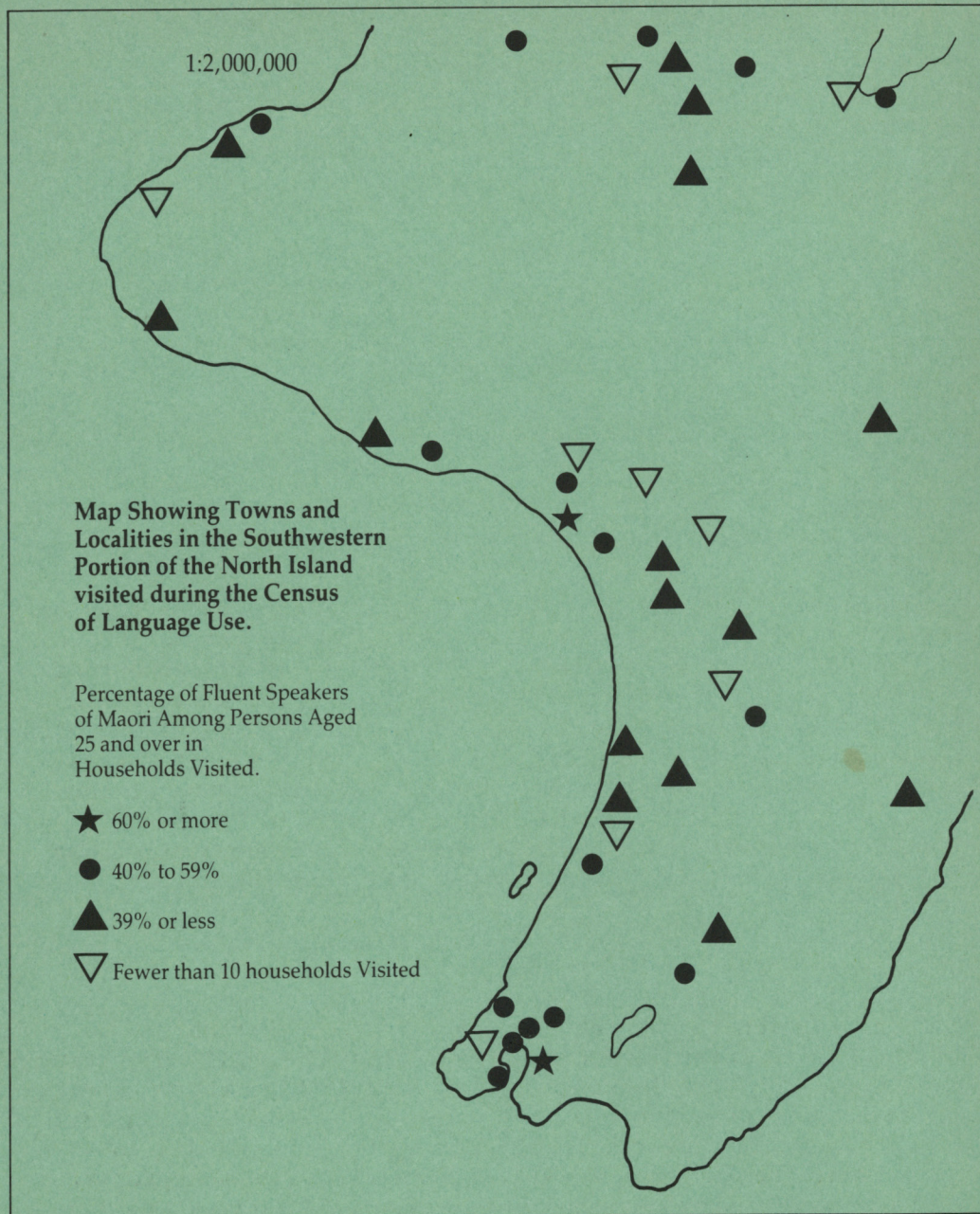
RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned 34 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. The largest iwi represented was Ngati Porou with 141 members or 21 percent of the total. (They were the largest tribal group surveyed in Waitangirua, Cannons Creek, and Porirua East.) Ngati Toa with 109 members, or 16 percent of the total, was the next largest iwi in the group. (Ngati Toa are the tangata whenua of the district.) About nine-tenths of them lived in Takapuwahia/ Elsdon and Titahi Bay. With 70 members or 10 percent of the total, Ngapuhi was the next numerous tribe in the survey.

Ability to Speak and Understand Maori

The information in the table on page 2 shows that about one-sixth of the people interviewed *spoke* Maori fluently while a quarter of them *understood* the language well. Nearly half these fluent speakers were over the age of 45, and there were few speakers of Maori under 15. Over half of the people surveyed did not understand the language at all. Some of the reasons for the decline in the knowledge and use of Maori in Porirua are discussed below.



Ability to Speak and Understand Maori

| Age Group | Fluent Speakers | | Understand Easily | | Limited Understanding | | No Knowledge | |
|-----------|-----------------|----|-------------------|----|-----------------------|----|--------------|----|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| 45 + | 55 | 73 | 58 | 76 | 11 | 15 | 7 | 9 |
| 25-44 | 52 | 32 | 76 | 47 | 44 | 27 | 43 | 26 |
| 15-24 | 6 | 5 | 28 | 23 | 27 | 22 | 66 | 55 |
| 2-14 | 3 | 1 | 20 | 6 | 44 | 14 | 262 | 80 |
| Overall | 116 | 17 | 182 | 27 | 126 | 18 | 378 | 55 |

Numbers and percentages refer to members of the households included in the survey; percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

The Use of Maori Language In The Household

English was the main language for everyday use in most households visited. There were 107 homes with dependent children, and in 98 of them people spoke entirely or mostly in English. In 4 households both Maori and English were used equally often, while in the remainder more English than Maori was spoken.

There were 16 childless households visited and the members of 3 of them spoke entirely or mostly in Maori. English was the main language spoken in the remaining households.

The Maori Language In The Community

English was also the main language spoken in the community. Although competent speakers of Maori preferred to speak in their

mother tongue with other Maori-speaking friends and neighbours, most of the people they talked with in Porirua spoke only English. Adult migrants from traditionally Maori-speaking areas, such as Ngati Porou and Ngapuhi, were most likely to be the people who spoke Maori with each other in the community.

The language still remained important, however, in marae ceremonial procedures and in certain religious services especially among members of the Ratana and Catholic Churches. For many people private and family prayer and grace were in Maori also.

If any two members of the community were to meet unexpectedly the chances were 1 in 20 that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over the age of 25 the chances were about 1 in 4, while it was unlikely that school-age children would be able to speak in Maori with each other.

Attitudes Towards The Language

Although English has taken over from Maori as the everyday language in the household and community, the Maori language has kept its cultural importance in the lives of many people we spoke to, particularly among the kaumatua age group. Many parents regretted that they couldn't speak the language better in order to teach it to their own children, and there was, therefore, much support for the teaching of Maori in schools, especially at the infant level. Elders of the original inhabitants of the area - the Ngati Toa - were particularly concerned at the loss of the language among younger generations and were trying to restore the language through tribal wananga on local marae. Some fluent speakers of Maori, from tribal areas outside of Porirua, shared these difficulties in holding on to their language in the urban area where the everyday language of business, newspapers, radio and TV was English. Many of these people, fortunately, were able to take part in Maori language and cultural activities aimed mainly at members of their tribal group now living in this new environment.

CONCLUSION

This survey has shown that most active speakers of Maori in Porirua were adults over the age of 45, and while more than a quarter of the total group understood the language well, most of the active speakers were over 25. As an increasing number of school children are experiencing a wider range of Maori language and cultural courses in schools, in the home and on local marae, there is much hope that loss of the language can still be halted. The establishment of Te Kohanga Reo (Maori speaking pre-schools) in the area is seen, by the Department of Maori Affairs, as a necessary move to make sure that Maori once again becomes a language for everyday use in the area. (Local Maori Affairs Department officers can provide interested parents with more information on this scheme.) Recent observations in the community have shown that younger people, many of whom are now parents, are becoming increasingly interested in Maori arts and crafts, marae protocol and oral traditions. Knowledge of the Maori language is also recognized as important in developing awareness of their culture and the place they have in it.

Interviewers

The interviewers were Ameria Ponika, Nehu Gage, Ripeka Koopu Martin, Willy Martin, Rena Tito, Ruka Kahaki, Peri Leef, Dora Pryor, Hiria Tumoana, Charee Ogle, Rose Ruru, Joe Rua, Shannon Wetere, Lorna Dyall, Peter Wensor, Rowena Kingi, Candice Scrimshaw, Kathleen Grace Potae, Trevor Diamond, Iriaka Wensor, Maku Potae, Rangī Nicholson and Mike Ranby.

Knowledge of Maori Language by Age Groups on 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.