

# 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

7

Localities in which  
ten or more households  
were visited

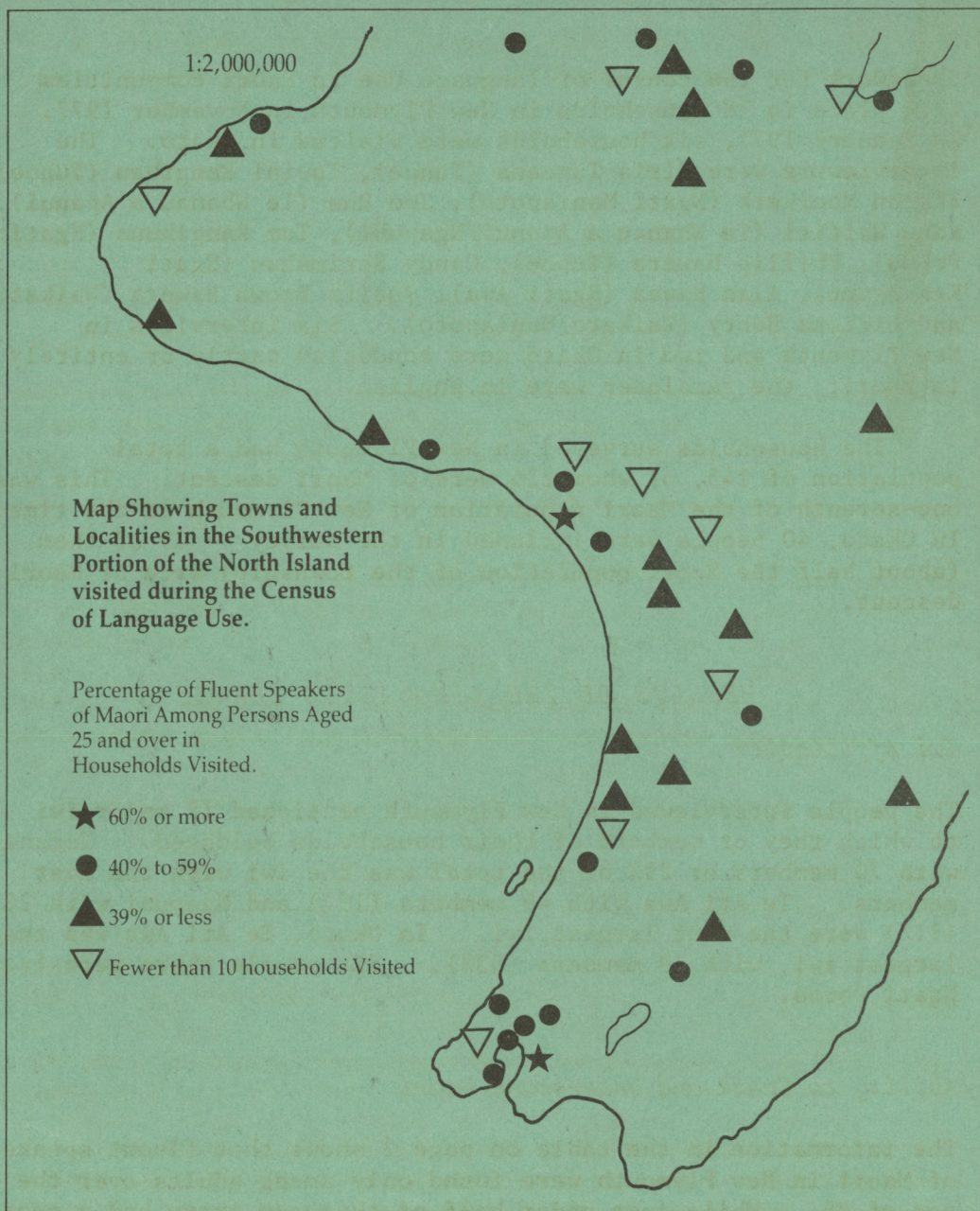
● Two thirds or  
more of adults were  
fluent speakers of  
Maori

◆ 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 NEW PLYMOUTH AND OKATO



Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 58 households in New Plymouth in November 1977. In January 1977, six households were visited in Okato. The interviewers were Hiria Tumoana (Tuhoe), Tawini Rangihau (Tuhoe), Sharon Moerkerk (Ngati Maniapoto), Joe Rua (Te Whanau a Apanui), Kahu Waititi (Te Whanau a Apanui/Ngapuhi), Tom Rangihuna (Ngati Porou), Phillip Hawera (Tuhoe), Candy Scrimshaw (Ngati Kahungunu), Alan Hawea (Ngati Awa), Judith Brown Hawera (Waikato) and Himiona Henry (Waikato/Maniapoto). Six interviews in New Plymouth and two in Okato were conducted partly or entirely in Maori; the remainder were in English.

The households surveyed in New Plymouth had a total population of 245, of whom 226 were of Maori descent. This was one-seventh of the Maori population of New Plymouth at the time. In Okato, 40 people were included in the survey -- 39 of them (about half the Maori population of the township) were of Maori descent.

### RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

#### *Iwi Affiliation*

The people interviewed in New Plymouth mentioned 17 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. Taranaki, with 70 members or 29% of the total was the iwi with the most members. Te Ati Awa with 46 members (19%) and Ngapuhi with 28 (11%) were the next largest iwi. In Okato, Te Ati Awa was the largest iwi, with 19 members (53%). Six people there were from Ngati Porou.

#### *Ability to Speak and Understand Maori*

The information in the table on page 2 shows that fluent speakers of Maori in New Plymouth were found only among adults over the age of 25. While just under half of that age group had a good understanding of the language, nearly three-quarters of those

*Knowledge of Spoken Maori in New Plymouth (1977)*

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 and over	25	60	27	64	10	24	5	12
25-44	12	21	23	40	14	24	21	36
15-24	0	0	1	3	13	34	24	63
2-14	0	0	3	3	21	21	76	76
Overall	37	16	54	23	58	24	126	53

Numbers and percentages refer to people in those households surveyed; percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

under 25 did not understand Maori at all. Some of the reasons for the decline in use and knowledge of Maori in New Plymouth are discussed below. In Okato, two of the people in the households we visited understood Maori well and could carry on a conversation in the language. We were told that none of the people there under 25 could speak or understand Maori.

*Use of Maori Language In The Household*

English was the main language spoken in the homes. There were 49 households with children visited in New Plymouth and in 24 of them English was the only language used. In 3 households Maori and English were used equally, and while some Maori was spoken in the 16 remaining households, English was the language used most often. In Okato, all six households had resident children; in two of them Maori was spoken occasionally by the adults.

There were 15 childless households included in the survey and Maori was the main language in one of them. English was spoken all the time in 6 households and was also the language used most often in the rest.

*The Maori Language In The Community*

Most of the people we interviewed spoke English with their neighbours, friends and workmates. Fluent speakers of Maori, especially the kaumatua, spoke mostly Maori with each other in the community. However, they had to use English more than Maori, because the great majority of people in New Plymouth, both Maori and Pakeha, could not speak Maori. Maori was used in the community mainly for certain religious services and in the carrying out of formal marae ceremonies.

If two people included in our survey met by chance, and if they were both adults, the chances that they would be able to talk to each other in Maori would be 1 in 5. But if one or both of them were children, conversation in Maori would be most unlikely, as very few children could speak or understand the language.

In Okato, where the influence of the English Language on the Maori population was in some ways even greater, Maori-speakers had little opportunity to use their language for everyday purposes.

*Attitudes Towards The Language*

While there were few fluent speakers of Maori, many of the people we spoke with recognized the cultural value of the language not only for the Maori race but also for New Zealand. There was, therefore, much support for the teaching of Maori in schools, and some of the people we spoke with were attending night courses to improve their knowledge. All the same, many people felt that the Maori language was no longer relevant to life in the modern world. Some people who had spoken Maori as children in rural areas found that by moving to the city they had to use English as their main language, and this is why often they lost their mother tongue completely.

Many of the people we interviewed in Okato felt that the Maori language now played very little part in their everyday lives. Just as elsewhere in the New Plymouth area, they often had mixed feelings about Maori. For example, one said she felt no need to speak the language, but at the same time she would be ashamed to speak at any Maori gathering because she knew hardly any Maori. Another couple said that they had not encouraged

The three sets of graphs for each locality on the page opposite represent the under 25, 25 to 44, and over 45-years-old age groups, respectively.

their children to speak Maori, but they seem pleased that one of their daughters had begun to take a keen interest in the language. One person from Okato mentioned that people of her parents' generation were punished when they spoke Maori and that this was one of the reasons why the language was no longer spoken: her parents had not wanted their own children to suffer in this way. (Several other people from the Taranaki region said the same thing.)

### CONCLUSION

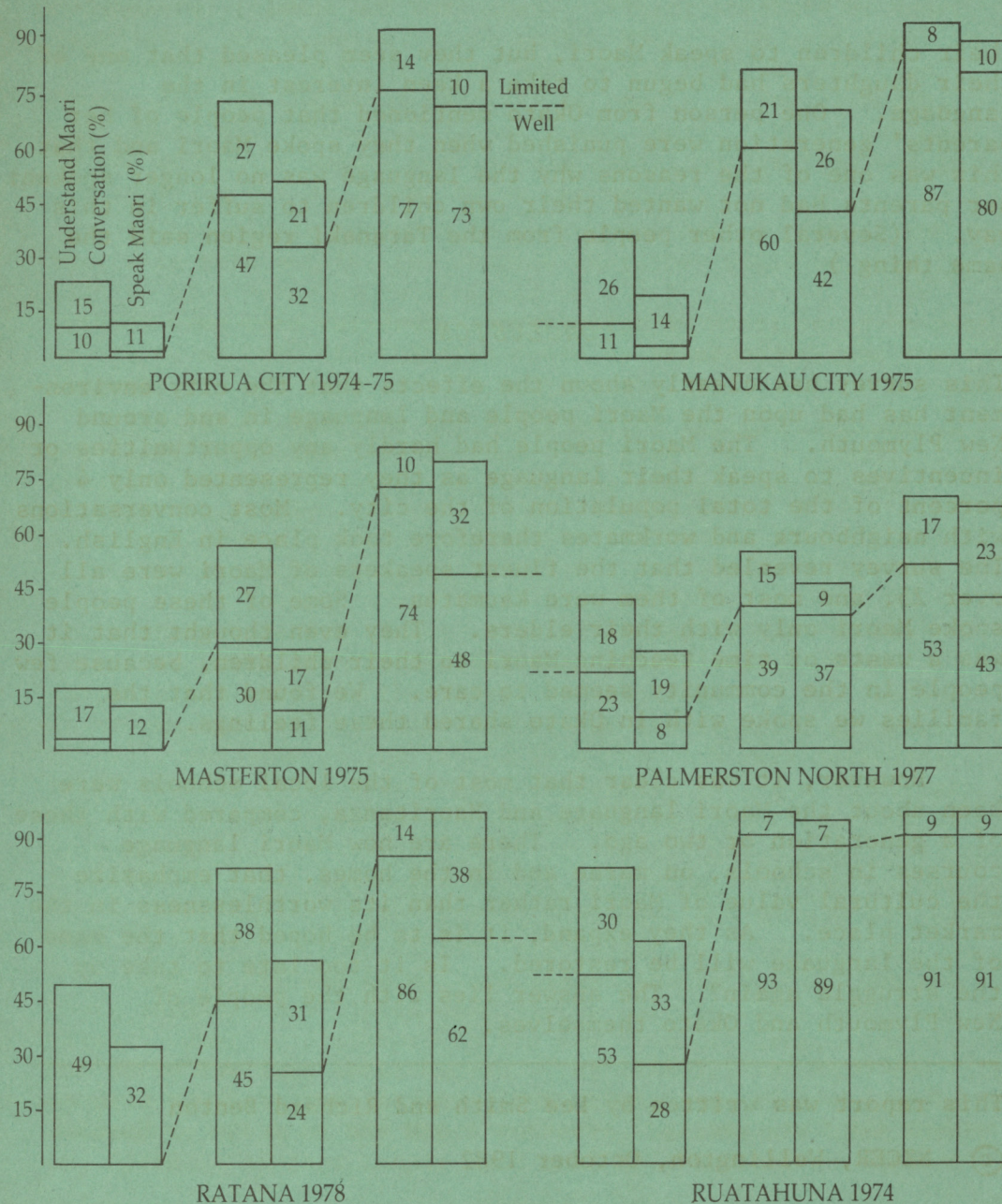
This survey has clearly shown the effects that the city environment has had upon the Maori people and language in and around New Plymouth. The Maori people had hardly any opportunities or incentives to speak their language as they represented only 4 percent of the total population of the city. Most conversations with neighbours and workmates therefore took place in English. The survey revealed that the fluent speakers of Maori were all over 25, and most of them were kaumatua. Some of these people spoke Maori only with their elders. They even thought that it was a waste of time teaching Maori to their children, because few people in the community seemed to care. We found that the families we spoke with in Okato shared these feelings.

However, it was clear that most of the local schools were keen about the Maori language and Maoritanga, compared with those of a generation or two ago. There are now Maori language courses in schools, on marae and in the homes, that emphasize the cultural value of Maori rather than its worthlessness in the market place. As they expand, it is to be hoped that the mana of the language will be restored. Is it too late to take up the struggle again? The answer lies with the people of New Plymouth and Okato themselves.

This report was written by Lee Smith and Richard Benton

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### 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.