

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

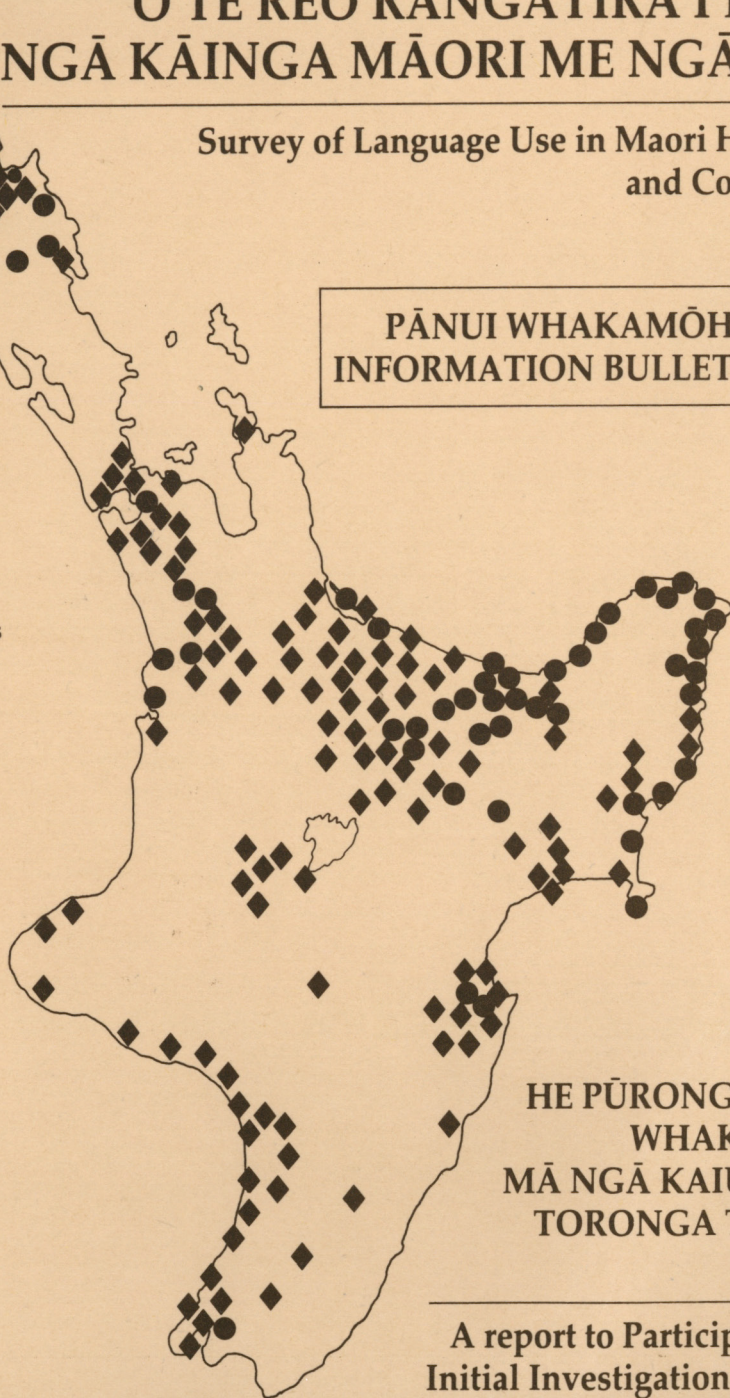
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

51

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 OPOUTAMA AND MAHIA

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in seven households in Opoutama in February 1976 and in ten households in Mahia in January 1978. The interviewers were Raiha Smith (Ngati Kahungunu), Tom Rangihuna (Ngati Porou), Keri Tawhiwhirangi (Ngati Porou), Kahu Waititi (Te Whanau-a-Apanui) and Himiona Henry (Waikato). Eight interviews were carried out partly or entirely in Maori; the rest were in English.

The households surveyed had a total population of 57, and 56 of these people were of Maori descent. This was about a third of the Maori population of Opoutama and Mahia at the time.

Attitudes Towards The Language

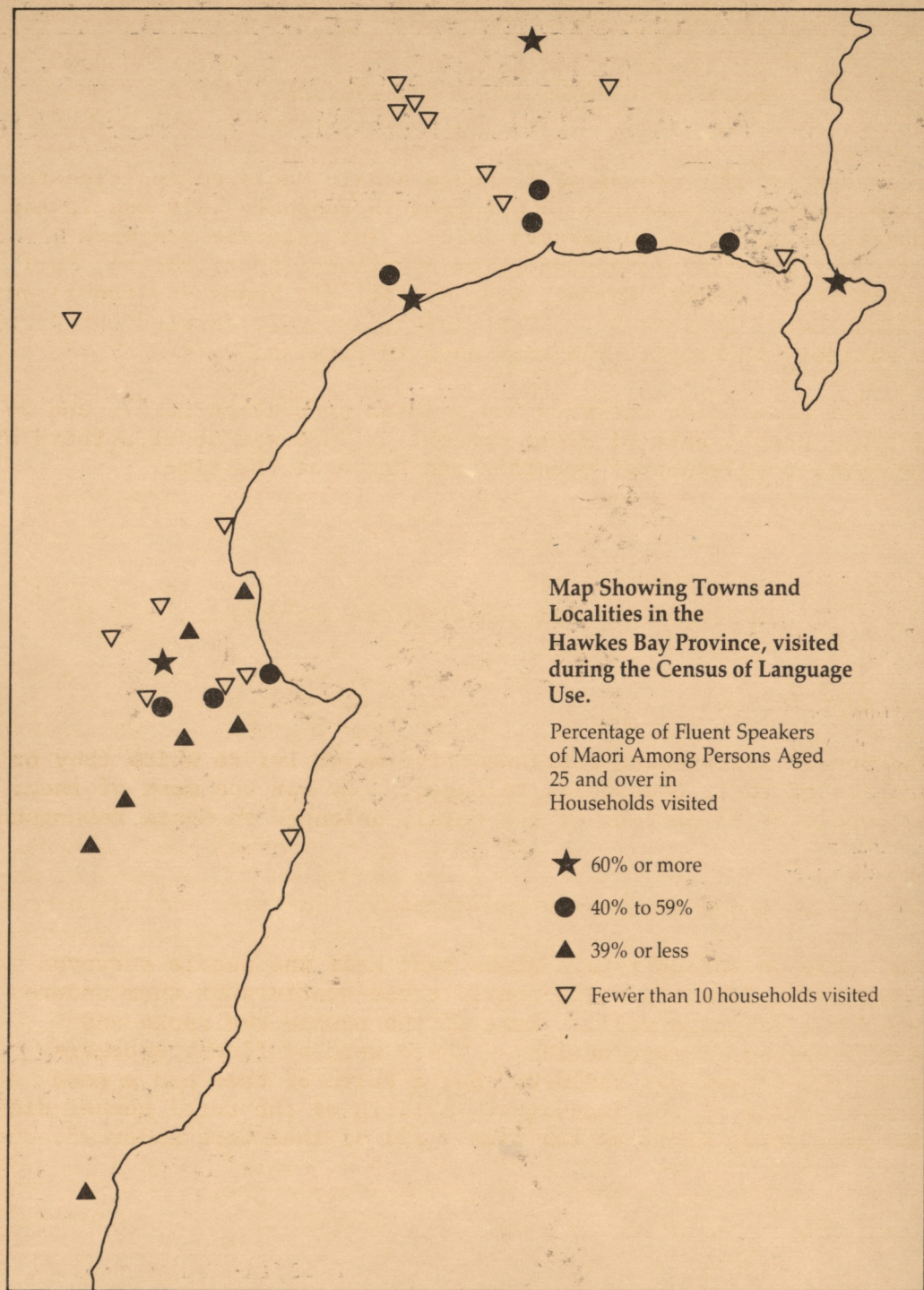
RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned five major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. By far the most of them, 52 people or 93 percent of the total, belonged to Ngati Kahungunu.

Ability To Speak And Understand Maori

The table on the next page shows that half the people surveyed spoke Maori fluently while nearly three-quarters of them understood the language well. Most of the people who spoke and understood Maori were adults. There were no fluent speakers among the school-age children, but a third of them had a good understanding of the language. A fifth of the total number did not understand Maori at the time - all of them were under 25.



KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN OPOUTAMA (1976) AND IN MAHIA (1978)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	21	100	21	100	0		0	
25-44	5	50	9	90	1	10	0	
15-24	1	11	4	44	1	11	4	44
2-14	0		5	36	2	14	7	50
Overall	27	50	39	72	4	7	11	21

(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

Both Maori and English were spoken in most households visited although English was the main language for everyday use in households with dependent children. There were eight homes of this type and in five of them people spoke mostly or entirely in English. In the rest, Maori was used some of the time, but English was still the main language. There were nine childless households visited, and in six of them people spoke mostly or entirely in Maori with each other or with Maori-speaking visitors. In two homes, both languages were used equally often, while the people in the remaining household spoke more English than Maori.

The Maori Language In The Community

Both languages were also spoken in the community, although those who used Maori regularly were usually kaumatua over the age of 45. All this age group spoke Maori fluently, and would rather talk in Maori with other Maori speakers. However, they were

forced to use English when speaking with people under 25 (and with some adults over this age), who spoke only English.

Maori was regarded as being the proper language for ceremonies on the marae and in other social gatherings in the community. The Maori language was also important in certain religious services, and it was regularly used in family prayer, and in the saying of grace, in many homes visited.

If any two members of the community were to meet unexpectedly, the chances were about 1 in 3 that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over the age of 25 the chances were about 4 in 5, but it was unlikely that school-age children would be able to speak in Maori with each other.

Attitudes Towards The Language

Most of the people we interviewed were worried because fewer and fewer people, especially among the younger members of the community, knew or could speak Maori. Although they believed that Maori should be taught and spoken in the home from an early age, it was not easy to keep their mind on it when English was the language of television and radio, as well as newspapers, school books, and even comics.

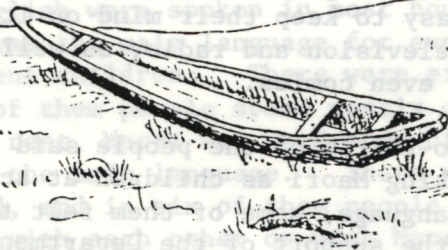
More than two-thirds of the people said they had been punished for speaking Maori as children at school. While they still spoke the language, some of them felt that, if the Maori language now has the support of the Department of Education, then the school should teach it and not the parents. Many older people still felt bitter towards their own teachers, and school-day memories were often unpleasant ones for them.

CONCLUSION

At the time of the survey, people who spoke Maori in Mahia and Oputama were mainly kaumatua over the age of 45. However,

nearly two-thirds of all the people surveyed understood the language well. English had taken over from Maori as the main language for everyday use in most homes with young children, and, while some parents were trying to teach their children Maori, this was often more difficult than they had thought. Grandparents often spoke to their mokopuna in Maori, but replies were always in English. Maori was still an important part of the culture of most people in Opoutama and Mahia, as well as being the proper language for running important meetings on the marae. However, there were not enough fluent speakers of Maori among the younger members of the community for the language to be used for everyday conversation. This was the main worry of many of the people we interviewed. However, new schemes such as Kohanga Reo - nurseries where only Maori is spoken - and language classes organized in the community held out hope that Maori would not die out altogether in these areas.

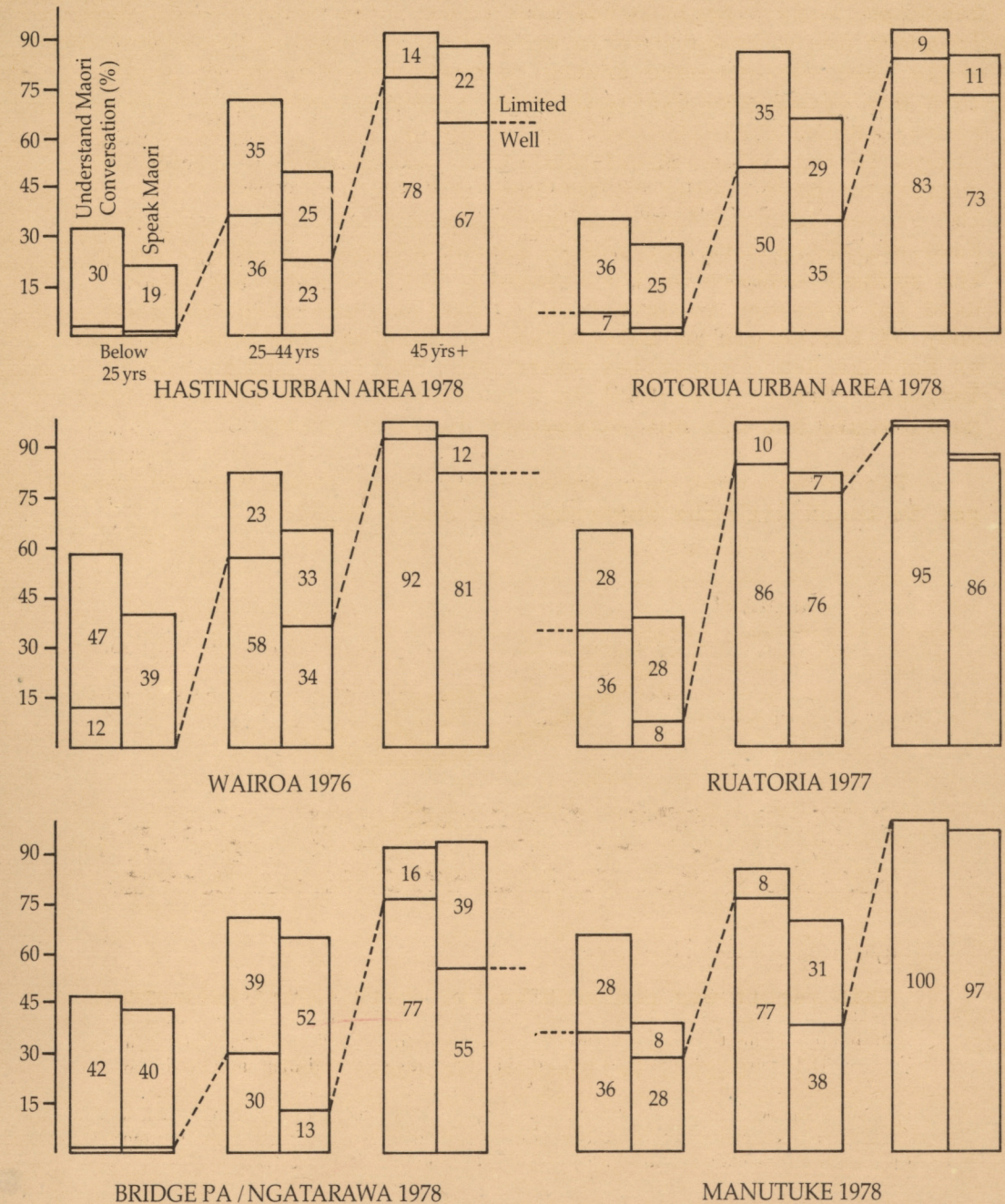
People who want more information about these schemes should get in touch with the Department of Maori Affairs.



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.