

# 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

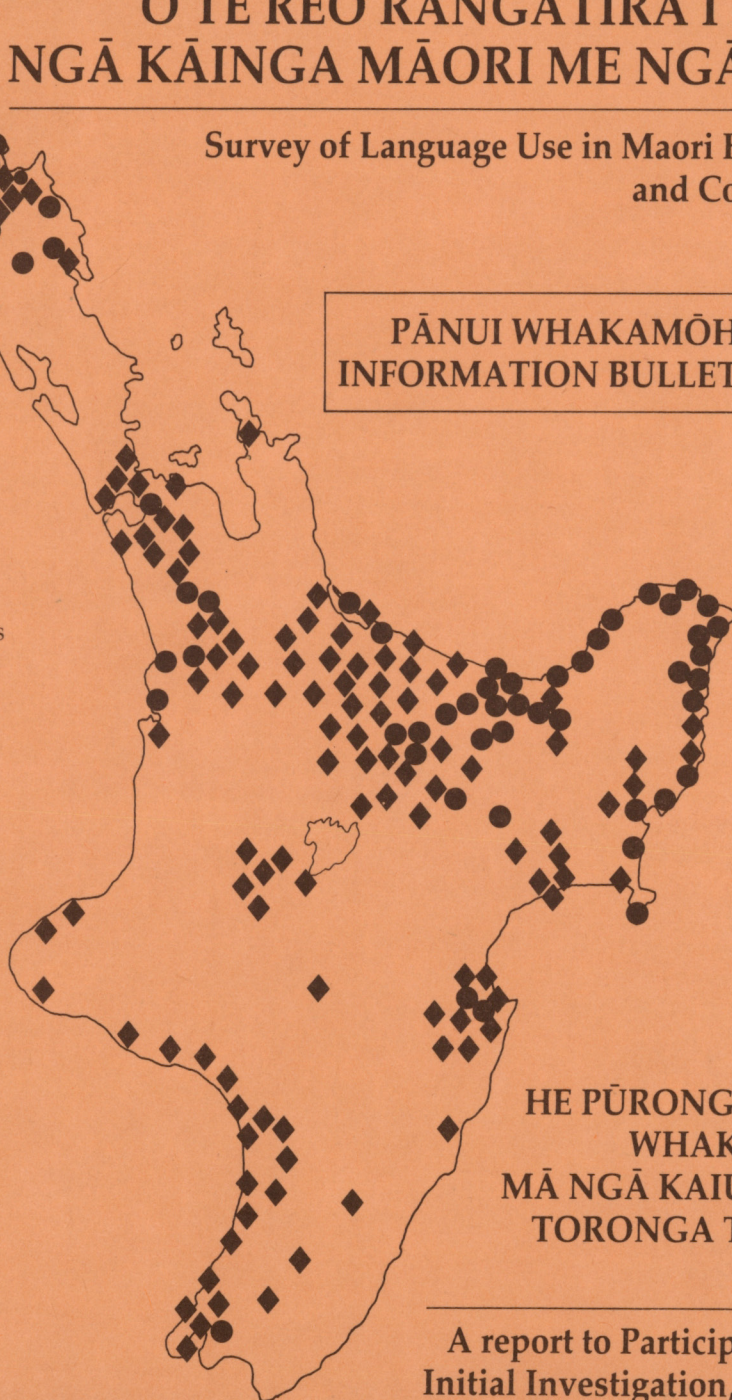
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO  
INFORMATION BULLETIN

67

Localities in which  
ten or more households  
were visited

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

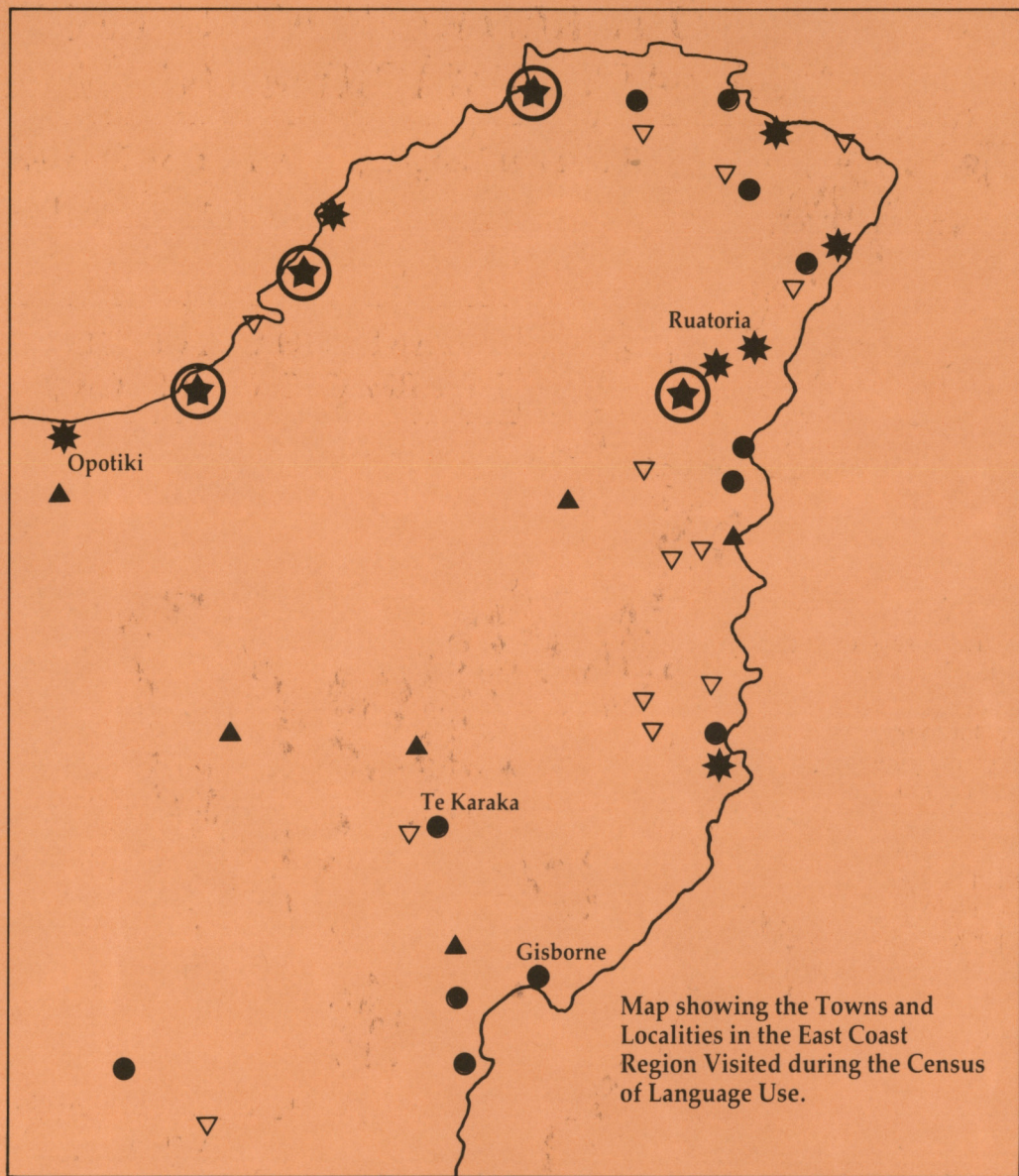
◆ Less than two  
thirds of adults were  
fluent speakers of  
Maori



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 the households visited.

- |                    |               |                       |                                 |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| ★ (star in circle) | More than 85% | ▲ (triangle)          | Less than 60%                   |
| ★ (star)           | 76 to 85%     | ▽ (inverted triangle) | Fewer than 8 households visited |
| ● (circle)         | 60% to 75%    |                       |                                 |

## THE MAORI LANGUAGE IN OPOTIKI

English was also the main language spoken in the community. More fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 35 households in Opotiki in January 1977. The interviewers were Tawini Rangihau (Tuhoe), Sue Rikihana (Tuhoe), and Kahu Waititi (Te Whanau-a-Apanui/Ngapuhi). Twenty-five interviews were carried out in English; the other ten were partly or entirely in Maori.

The households surveyed had a total population of 170, and 165 of these people were of Maori descent. This was about a tenth of the total Maori population of Opotiki at the time.

### RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

#### *Iwi Affiliation*

The people interviewed mentioned ten major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. Eighty-one people, or nearly half the total number belonged to Whakatohea, tangata whenua of the area. Te Whanau-a-Apanui with 35 members made up a fifth of the total, while Tuhoe with 29 members was the third largest tribe in the survey.

#### *Ability To Speak And Understand Maori*

The table on page 2 shows that a third of the people surveyed spoke Maori well, while just under half of them understood the language well. Easily the most of these fluent speakers were adults over 25, while few people under this age spoke Maori well. More than half of them had very little understanding of spoken Maori at the time.



KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN OPOTIKI (1977)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	35	92	37	97	0		1	3
25-44	18	69	22	85	1	4	3	12
15-24	4	11	12	32	11	30	14	38
2-14	0		8	12	13	19	47	69
Overall	57	34	79	47	25	15	65	39

(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*

English was the main language for everyday use in most households visited. There were 27 homes with dependent children and English was the main language spoken in 23 of them. In most of these homes Maori was often spoken between parents, but was not often used when talking with children. The families in three households used both Maori and English equally often, while the people in the remaining home spoke mostly or entirely in Maori.

There were eight childless homes visited, and in five of them people spoke mostly or entirely in Maori. In the rest, English was the main language for everyday use in the home.

*The Maori Language In The Community*

English was also the main language spoken in the community. More than three-quarters of the adults could speak Maori well, but the people most likely to use the language regularly with friends and family were the kaumatua. When they spoke with young people they almost always used English, as few children and young adults in Opotiki spoke Maori well.

The Maori language, however, was still important in ceremonies on the marae and in certain religious services, especially among people of the Ringatu Church. For some people, silent prayer and grace were also in Maori.

If any two people met unexpectedly, the chances were about one in five that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over 25, the chances were much greater, about four in five, but it was unlikely that school children could talk in Maori with each other.

*Attitudes Towards The Language*

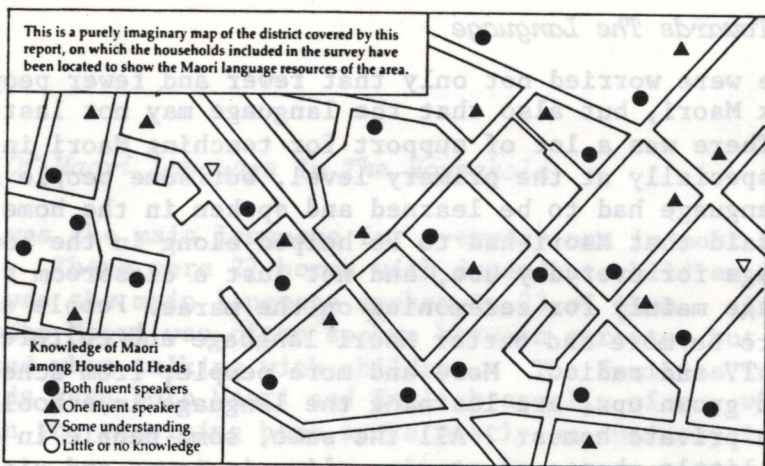
Many people were worried not only that fewer and fewer people could speak Maori, but also that the language may not last much longer. There was a lot of support for teaching Maori in schools, especially at the primary level, but some people said that the language had to be learned and spoken in the home first. They also said that Maori had to be helped along in the community as a language for everyday use, and not just a classroom subject or a language mainly for ceremonies on the marae. People said that there had to be more and better Maori language and culture programmes on TV and radio. More and more people, from school children to grown ups, are learning the language in schools, on marae or in private homes. All the same, some people in Opotiki gave Maori little chance of staying alive in towns and cities where English was always the main language for everyday use. They only spoke Maori in their country home areas, and used English with their neighbours friends or workmates in Opotiki.



CONCLUSION

At the time of the survey, most of the people in Opotiki who spoke and understood Maori well were adults over 25. Few people under this age could speak the language well, and about two-thirds of the school-age children, did not understand Maori at all. Many parents found it hard to hold on to the language in Opotiki. As most people there spoke only English, they had to use more English than Maori in the home and community. The language was still an important part of their culture, and there were more and more courses in Maori, in schools and elsewhere, that a growing number of people could go to. People still thought of Maori as the proper language for ceremonies on the marae, although much of the talk afterwards was in English.

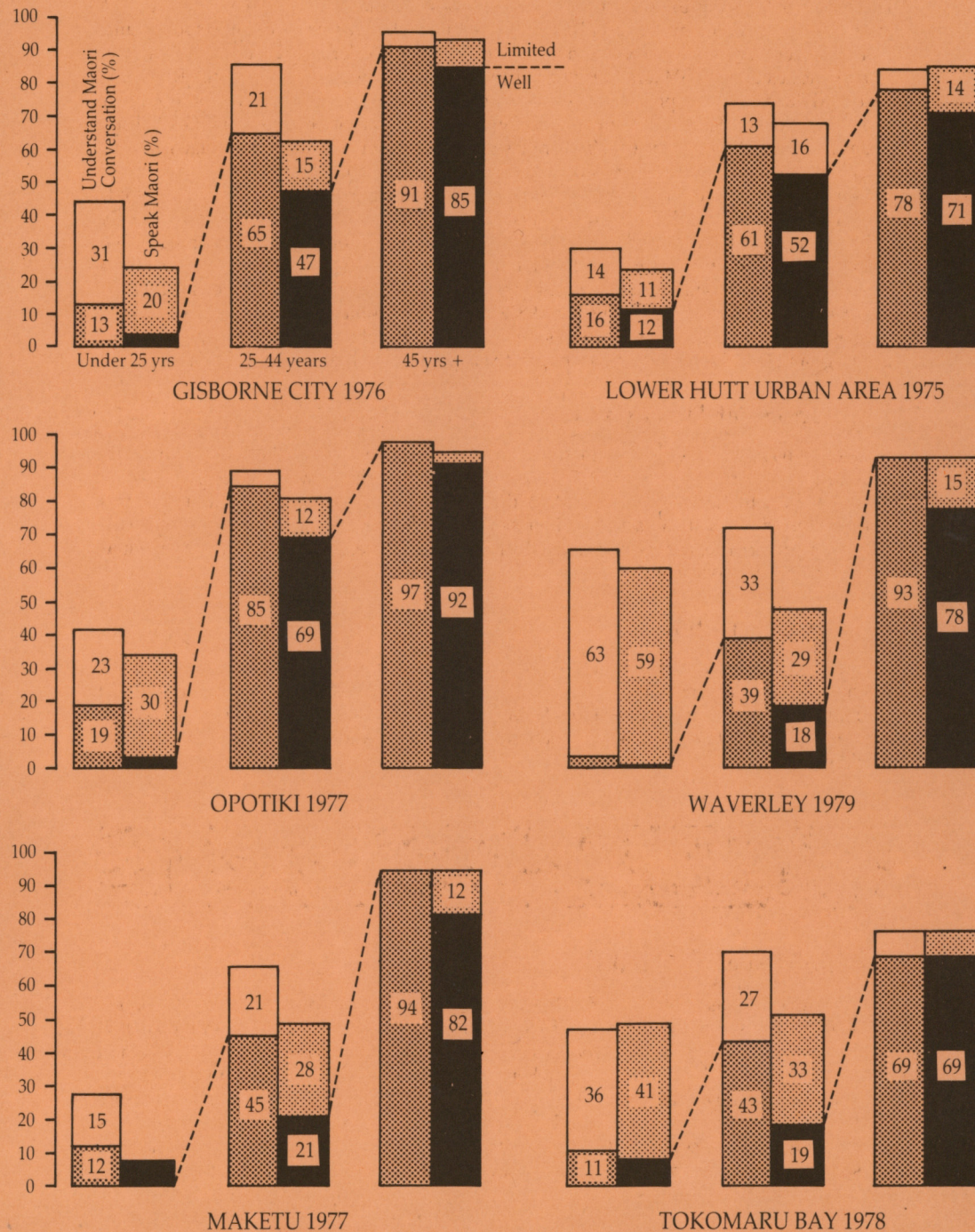
Some people felt the language must die out one day, but more people were hopeful that Maori would again become, with English, a language for ordinary conversation in Opotiki.



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.