

TE TIROHANGA I TE KŌREROTANĀ O TE REO RANGATIRA I ROTO I NGĀ KĀINGA MĀORI ME NGĀ ROHE

Survey of Language Use in Maori Households
and Communities

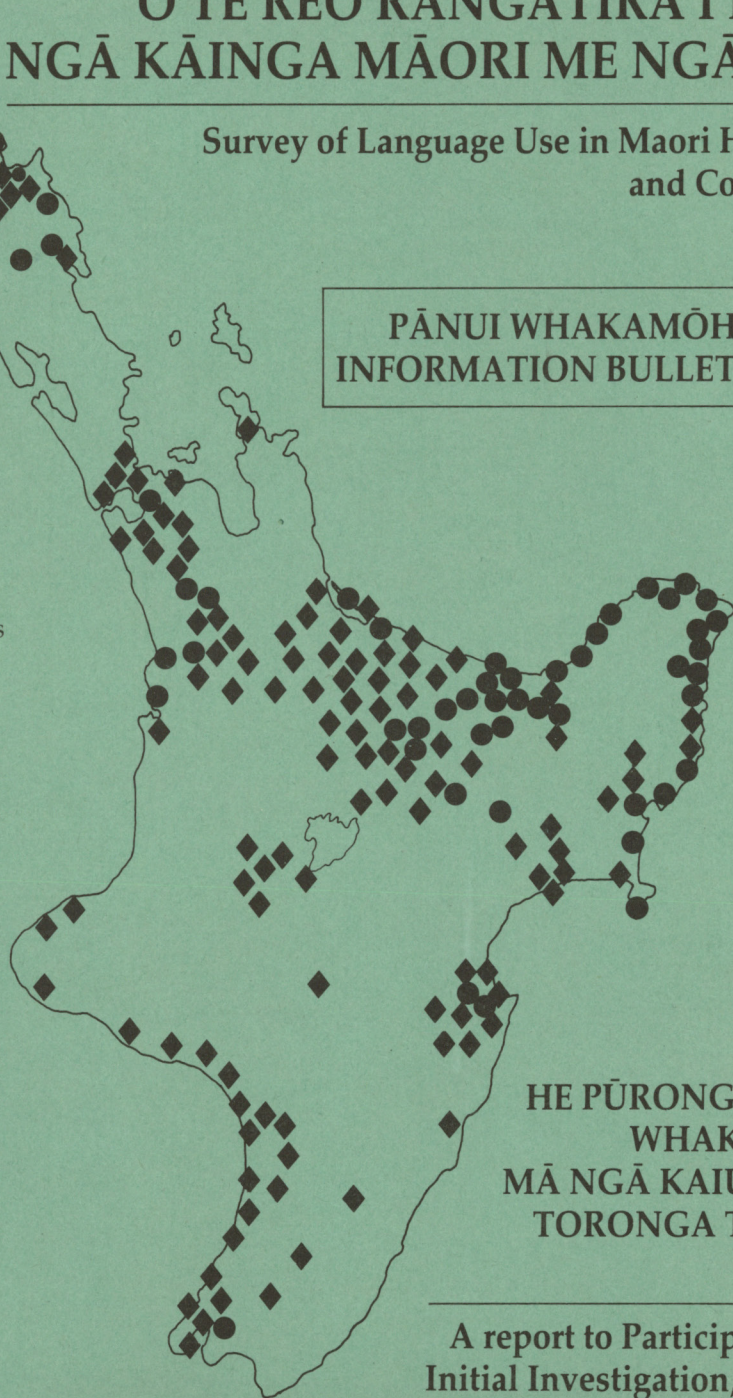
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

72

Localities in which
ten or more households
were visited

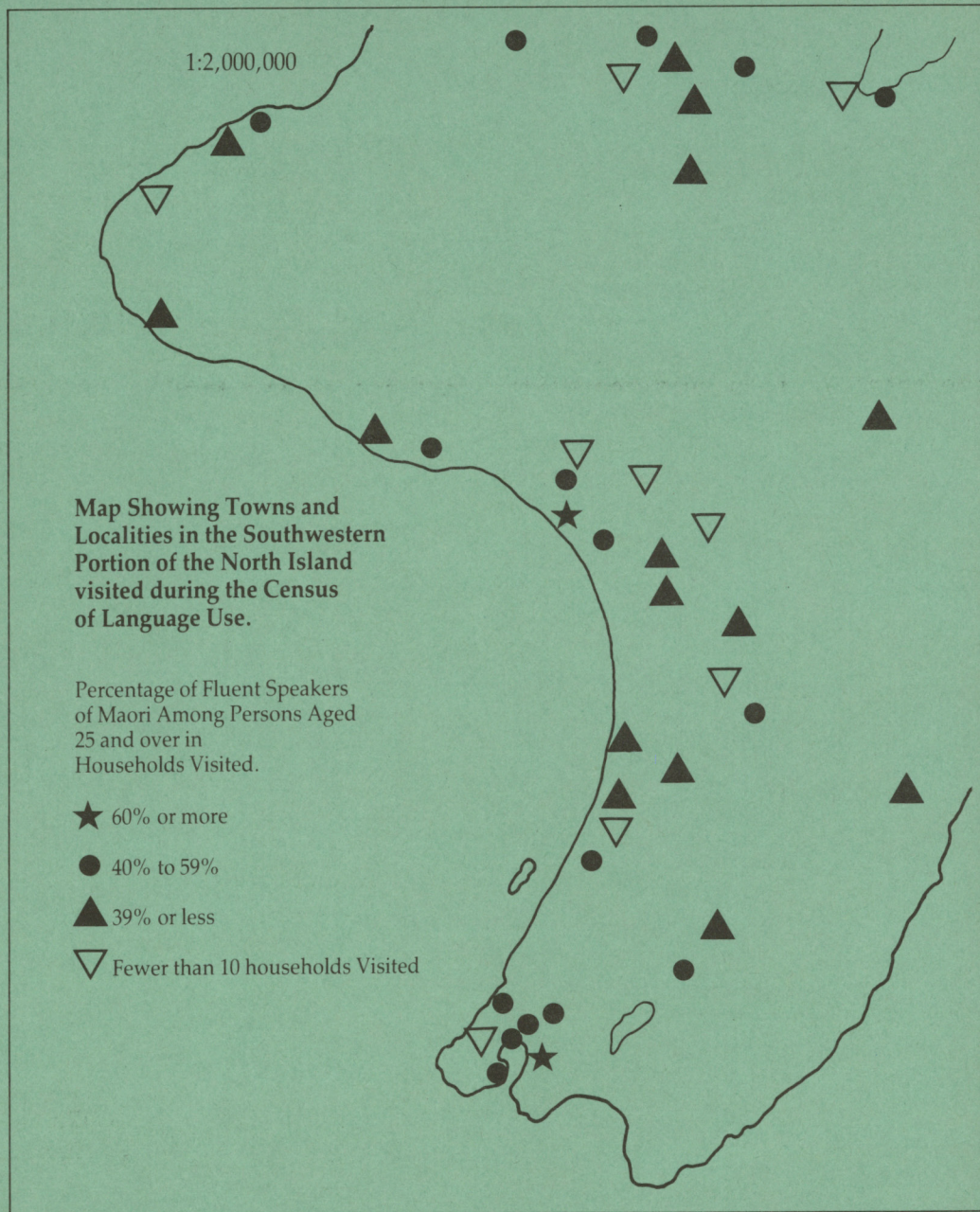
● Two thirds or
more of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori

◆ 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 PAPAWAI AND GREYTOWN

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 10 households in Papawai and Greytown in May 1975. The interviewers were Shannon Weterere (Waikato) and Rena Tito (Ngati Whatua). Eight interviews were carried out in English; the other two were in Maori.

The households surveyed had a total population of 39, and 36 of these people were of Maori descent. This was about a fifth of the total Maori population of the district at the time.

RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned four major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. Ngati Kahungunu had 29 members, or three-quarters of the total, and was the largest iwi in the survey. The next largest was Ngati Porou with 6 members.

Ability To Speak And Understand Maori

The table on page 2 shows that a fifth of the people surveyed spoke Maori fluently while a third of them understood the language well. The kaumatua over 45 spoke Maori well, but between them and the rest of the community there was a big gap. Only one person under 45 spoke Maori well at the time, and nearly two-thirds of this age group hardly understood the language at all. They included all the school-age children and quite a lot of people between the ages of 15 and 44. Some of the reasons for this are examined in the following pages.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN PAPA WAI AND GREYTOWN (1975)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	7	88	7	88	0		1	13
25-44	1	10	3	30	3	30	4	40
15-24	0		3	43	2	29	2	29
2-14	0		0		0		14	100
Overall	8	22	13	33	5	13	21	54

(Numbers and percentages refer to those people included in the survey; 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 nine homes with dependent children, and in seven of them people spoke mostly or only in English. In the other two, more English than Maori was used - Maori was used mostly by parents when they were talking with each other.

There was one childless household visited, and the people there always used English as their everyday language.

The Maori Language In The Community

Very little Maori was spoken in Papawai and Greytown between friends, family and workmates. The people most likely to use Maori were older members of the community. They used it with others of the same age, as few people under 45 spoke or understood

the language well. As English was the only language most people in the area could understand, good speakers of Maori were forced to use English more and more. Some people said they were losing their mother tongue because they had few chances to speak Maori in the community.

The Maori language was still important for ceremonies on the marae, although, afterwards, English was the language most people spoke. Maori was also used in certain religious services in the area, and many kaumatua said their prayers also in Maori. Few young people could take part in the more important ceremonies, but they could try their hand at Maori by saying grace in that language.

If any two members of the Maori community in the district met unexpectedly, the chances were about 1 in 13 that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over 25 the chances were 1 in 4, while it was very unlikely that people under 25 could speak in Maori with each other.

Attitudes Towards The Language

Many people were worried that fewer people in the area could speak Maori. They felt that the language could be lost completely unless something was done to bring it back as a language for everyday use in the home and community. Most of the people in the survey had been brought up in households where mainly English was spoken. Their parents had been told that knowing English well was better than knowing Maori. Many of these people were now sorry they had never learned Maori and, that because of this they could not teach it to their own children. Some people were angry because English was almost the only language used in the community, in all government departments, in schools, and on radio and television. They thought that plans were still about to wipe out the Maori language completely, or to see that it was used only in ceremonies on the marae. Many people wanted to bring back Maori as a language for everyday use, but they knew it could not be done unless it was taught in schools. They believed it could survive only if most people in the community, Maori and Pakeha, wanted it to survive.

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.

CONCLUSION

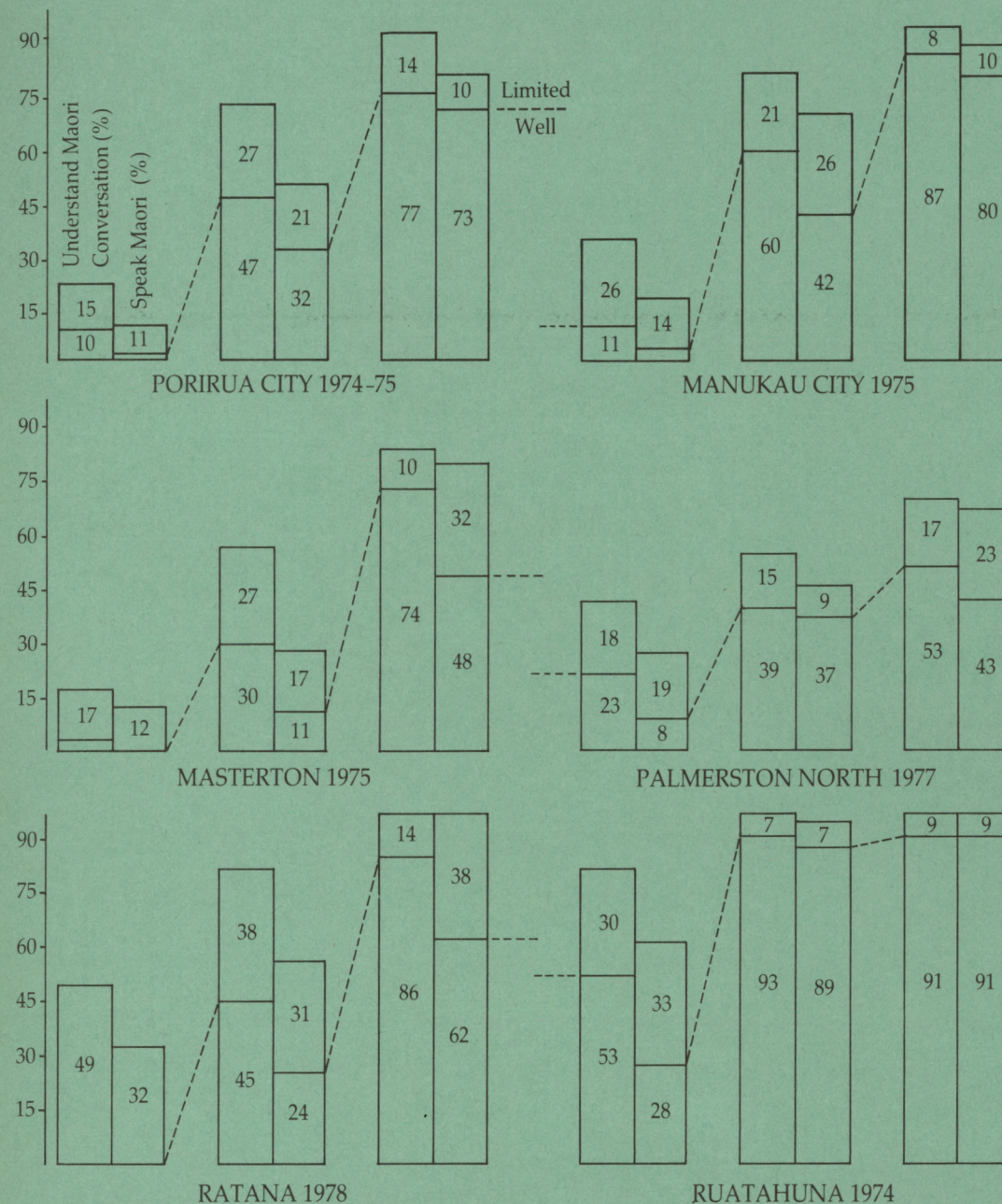
At the time of the survey over half the people in the families we visited in Papawai and Greytown understood hardly any Maori. Three-quarters of the people under 25 were among them. Many people thought that Maori could never again become a language for everyday use in the area. Maori was hardly ever spoken in the households visited, and it was used in the community mainly in ceremonies on the marae, or now and then in religious services. However, the language was still important in the lives and Maoritanga of most people interviewed, and many of them hoped that their children would learn from the language classes that were held in schools, on local marae and elsewhere that their parents had been denied.

The Takitmu Maori Language Board has recently tried to stop the language from dying out altogether by running Maori language and culture courses in the community. Te Kohanga Reo (Maori language pre-schools) have been successfully set up in a number of areas of Ngati Kahungunu. People who want to bring back Maori as their everyday language should get in touch with the Department of Maori Affairs in Masterton. It would be even better if they could run their own courses now before tutors and kaumatua, who know the language, pass on.

This report was prepared by Lee Smith (Ngati Kahungunu).

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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.