

# 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

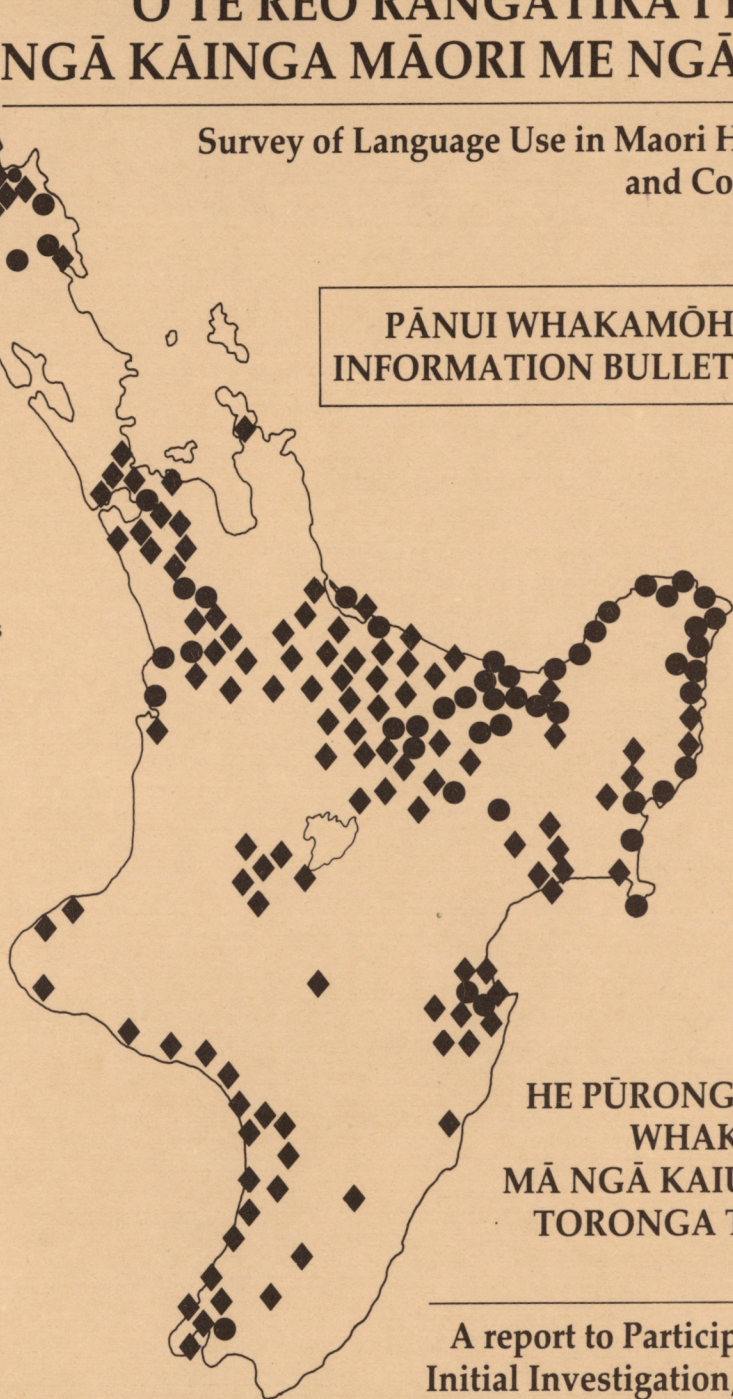
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO  
INFORMATION BULLETIN

15

Localities in which  
ten or more households  
were visited

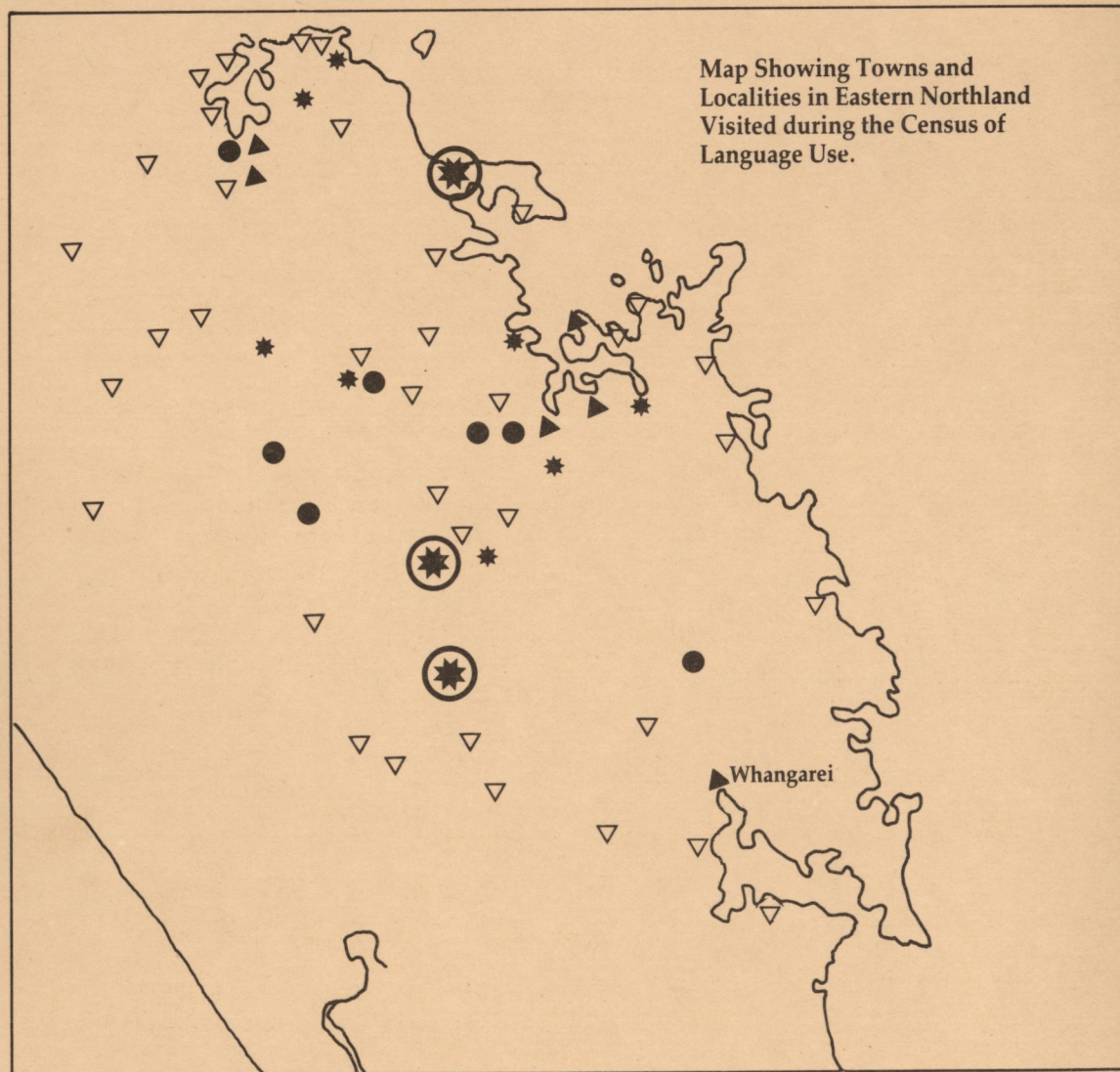
● Two thirds or  
more of adults were  
fluent speakers of  
Maori

◆ 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 Households Visited.

- ☼ 90% or more
- ★ 75% to 89%
- 60% to 74%
- ▲ 50% to 59%
- ▽ Fewer than 8 households visited

### THE MAORI LANGUAGE IN WHANGAREI CITY AND DISTRICT

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place from November 1975 to January 1976 in 100 households in Whangarei City, 4 in Otaika Valley, 4 in Takahiwai, 6 in Maungatapere and 6 in Ngararatunua. The interviewers were Tawini Rangihau (Tuhoe), Susan Rikihana (Tuhoe), William Martin (Te Aupouri), Kahu Waititi (Ngapuhi), Rena Tito (Ngati Whatua), Peter and Iriaka Wensor (Ngapuhi), Robyn Wilcox (Ngapuhi) and Charis Rata Wells (Te Whanau-a-Apanui). Twenty interviews were carried out partly or entirely in Maori; the rest were in English.

The 100 households visited in Whangarei City itself had a total population of 517. In Otaika Valley the 4 households surveyed had 15 people; in Takahiwai, 4 households had 19 people; in Maungatapere 6 households had 32 people; in Ngararatunua, 6 households had 29 people. This made a total for the whole district of 120 households with 612 people, and 592 of these were of Maori descent. This was about one-tenth of the total Maori population of the Whangarei area (but we were able to visit from one-fifth to one-half of the Maori population in the country places surveyed).

#### RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

##### *Iwi Affiliation*

The people interviewed mentioned 16 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. In all areas visited, Ngapuhi with 439 members or 77 percent of the total, was the iwi with the most members. The next largest iwi were Ngati Whatua with 29 members and Ngati Tuwharetoa with 28, each with about 5 percent of the total.

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

The table on page 2 shows us that three-quarters of the kaumatua and a little less than half the adults spoke Maori well, but that

most of the younger people could not speak the language at all. However, the numbers of people who had a good understanding of Maori were quite high, especially among school children and young adults. An interesting finding was that all four school children who spoke Maori well came from the Otangarei area, which also had the highest proportion of people who could speak Maori in Whangarei City.

#### KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN WHANGAREI AND DISTRICT

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	61	75	75	93	5	6	1	1
25-44	57	44	81	63	30	23	18	14
15-24	18	15	43	36	30	25	47	39
2-14	4	2	28	11	44	17	192	73
Overall	140	24	227	38	109	18	258	43

(Numbers and percentages refer to those interviewed; percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.)

#### Use of Maori Language in the Household

English was the main language spoken in most households visited. There were 106 homes with dependent children, and in 37 of them English was the only language spoken. In only one household, in Kamo, was Maori the main language spoken. In 11 households both Maori and English were used equally, and, while some Maori was used in the remaining 57 homes, English was the main language spoken for everyday purposes.

There were 14 childless households included in the survey. In 2 of them Maori was entirely or mostly spoken, and in 1 only English was spoken. The members of 2 households spoke Maori to

visitors who knew Maori, while in the remaining households more English than Maori was spoken.

The survey also showed that Maori was more likely to be spoken in households in Onerahi and Otangarei than in any other area in Whangarei.

#### Attitudes Towards the Language

Many people were sorry or even ashamed that they could not speak Maori better. Some of them had spoken the language as children in country areas, but in the city English had become their everyday language. Many people, therefore, wanted Maori taught not only in the schools but also in 'a Maori environment', such as on local marae. Some parents said that the learning of Maori must begin in the homes, and this was being done by some of the families we spoke to.

However, a few people felt it was too late to bring Maori back as a language for everyday use, and really believed that it was more important for their children to have a good grasp of English. Many felt this way because they had been punished for speaking Maori as children, but another reason was that little was done for Maori language and culture in New Zealand generally, so they could not see much point in handing the language on to their children.

The situation in the country districts was much the same as that in the city. Some people felt that their communities had drifted too far away from the older Maori way of life for the language to do well there again. A few thought that life was too easy for younger people, and that people had to return to the marae and old Maori ways of doing things before the language could be revived.

#### The Maori Language in the Community

English was also the main language spoken in the community. In Whangarei City, less than a quarter of those surveyed spoke Maori well. Most of these people preferred to speak Maori, but had little chance to do so, because most of the people in the community were either Pakeha or people who couldn't speak Maori. It was the same in other towns and cities, where the Maori

language was not highly thought of, and where the language of most people, English, had become the language for the whole community.

Although neighbours and friends who spoke Maori would often talk in Maori, it was in ceremonies on the marae that the language regained its full dignity and mana. In certain religious services, also, the Maori language had an important part to play.

In Whangarei City the chances of any two Maori people being able to talk together in Maori, if they met unexpectedly, were 1 in 10. In the outlying districts of the city, the chances were much higher, about 1 in 5.

The chances of adults talking in Maori were highest in Otangarei, being 1 in 2. Just over a quarter of the adults we spoke to in Otangarei spoke Maori well. This was more than a third of the total number of people we met in the city, who spoke Maori.

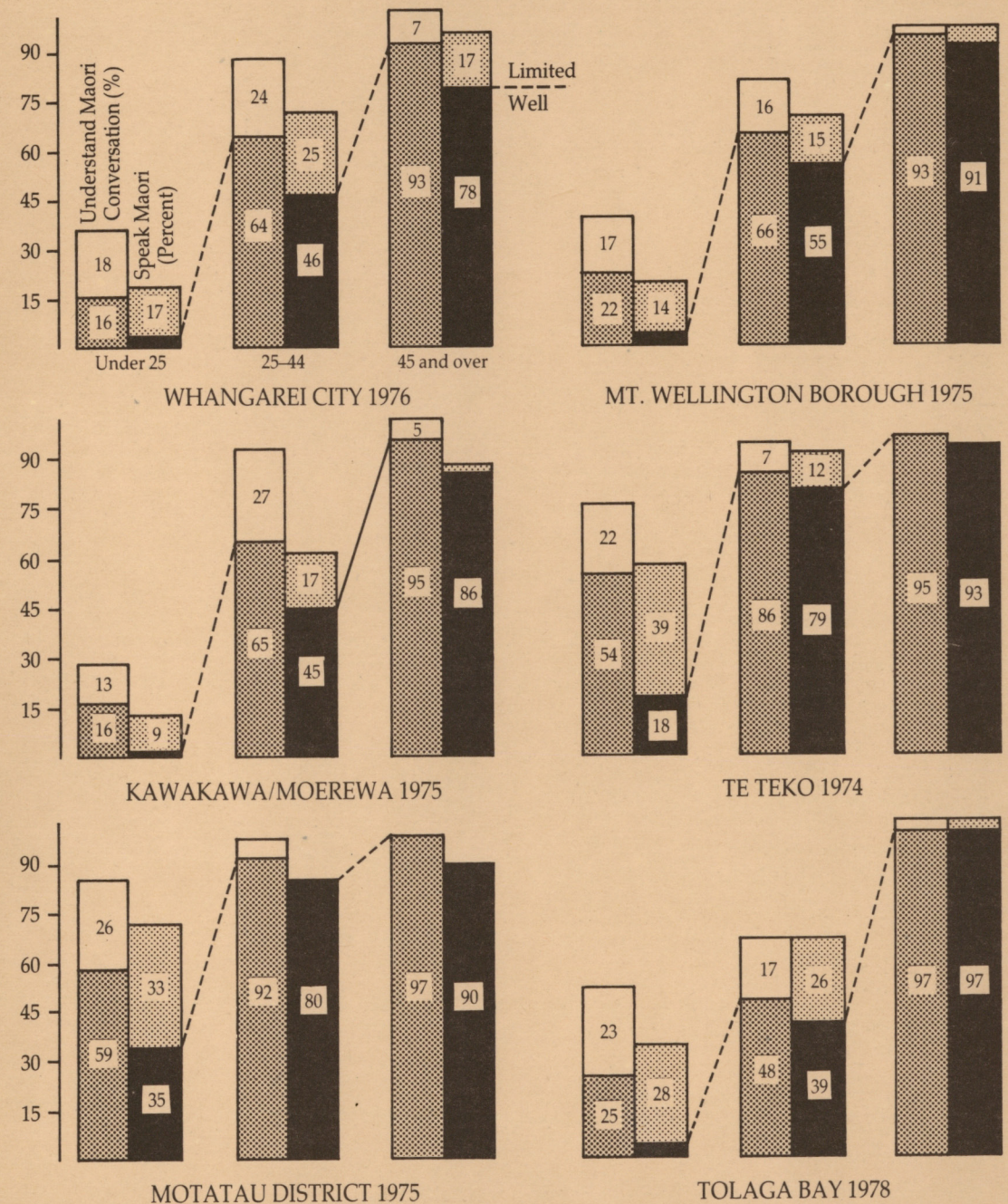
### CONCLUSION

In Whangarei City and District, a quarter of the people surveyed spoke Maori well, and nearly 40 percent of them understood the language well. While more than three-quarters of the good speakers were adults and kaumatua, nearly a third of those who understood Maori well were under 24 years old. Residents of Otangarei and Onerahi had the highest levels of knowledge of Maori in Whangarei City.

While English was the main language spoken in most households and in the community, many people were doing their best to keep a hold on the Maori language, so it would not be completely lost. This was a difficult task, as people living in and near other towns and cities are also finding.

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

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.