

# 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

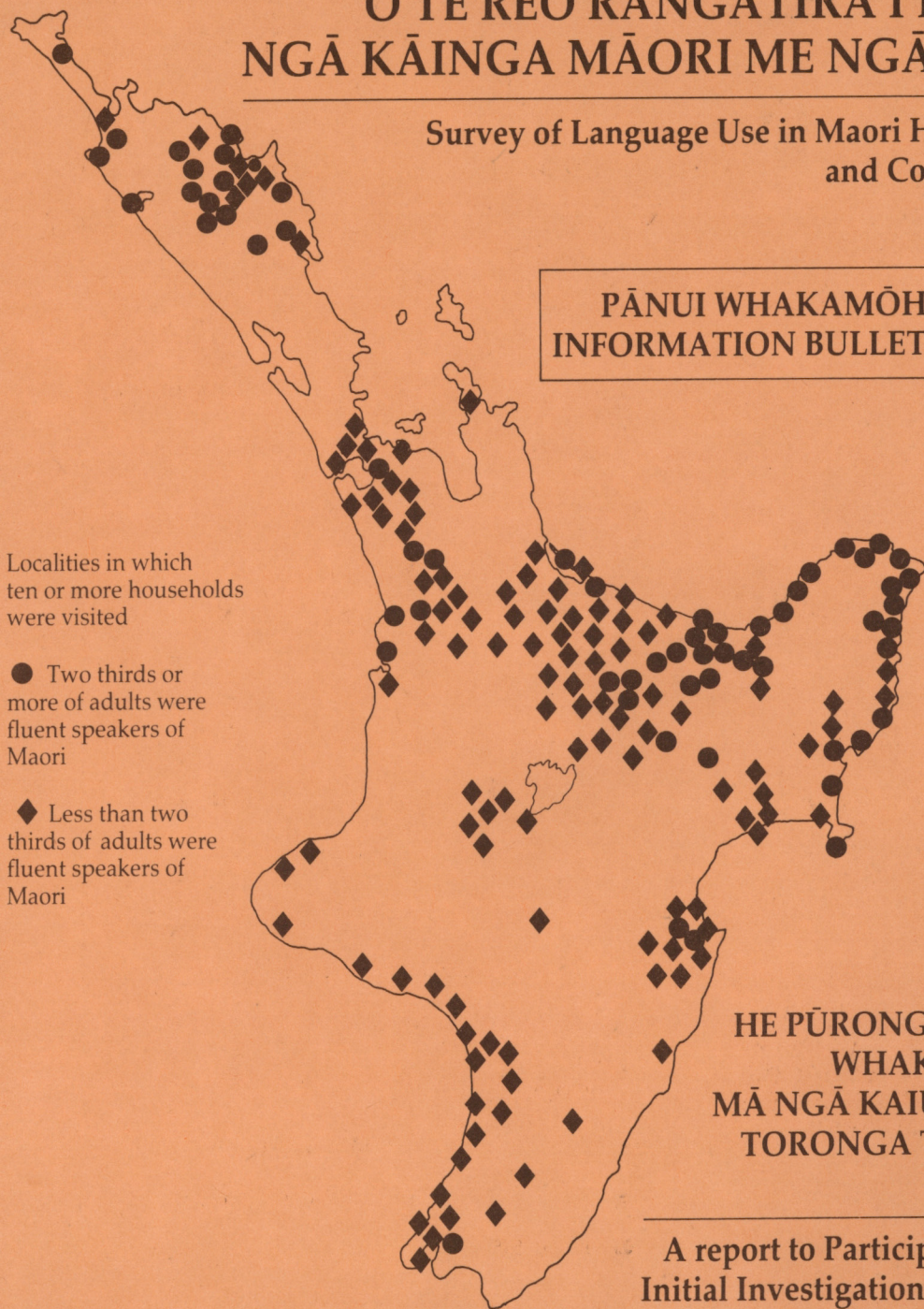
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO  
INFORMATION BULLETIN

35

Localities in which  
ten or more households  
were visited

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

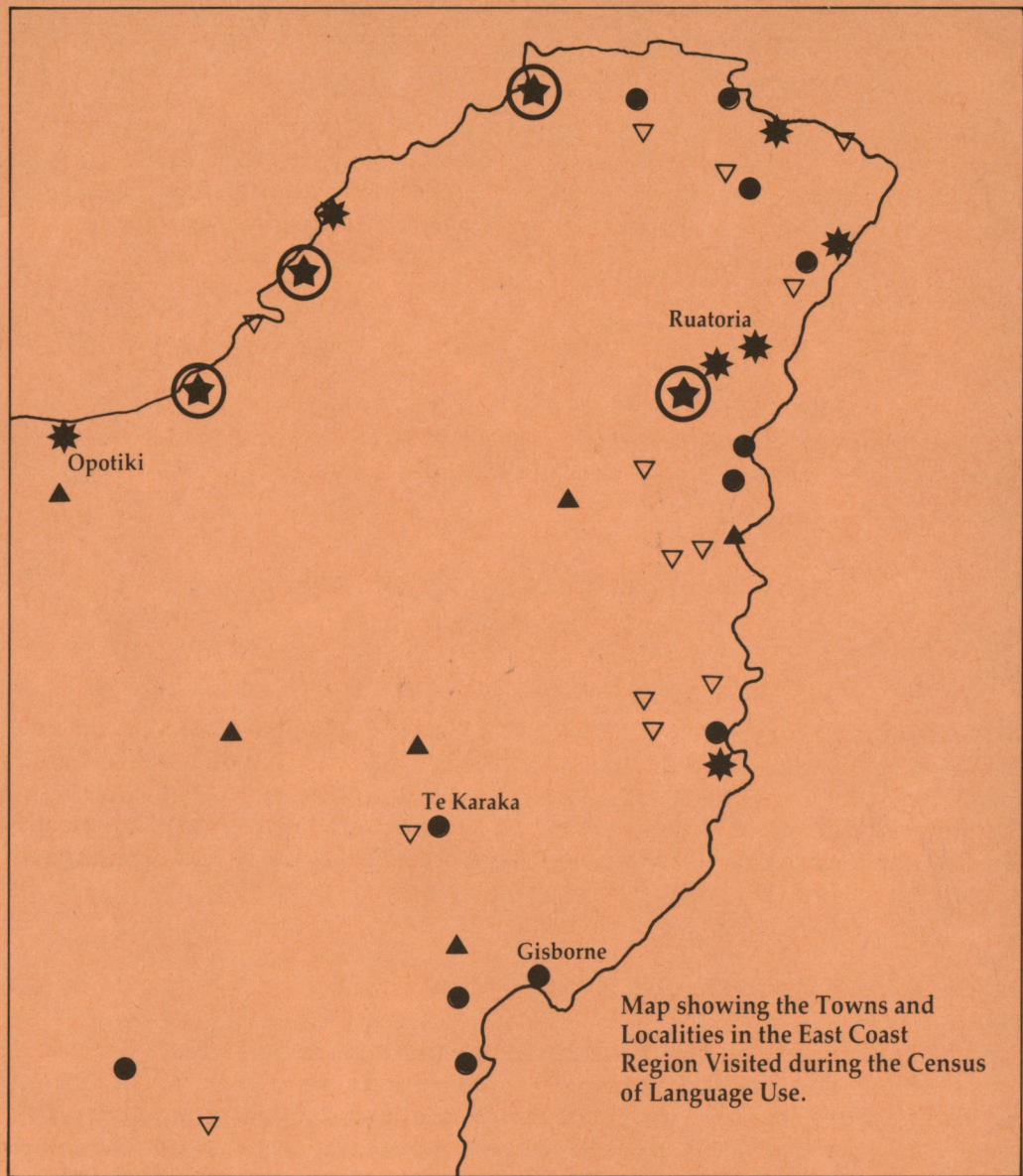
◆ Less than two  
thirds of adults were  
fluent speakers of  
Maori



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 GISBORNE CITY

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities was conducted in 147 households in Gisborne City in May 1976. Thirty five interviews were carried out partly or entirely in Maori; the remainder were in English. The interviewers were Tawini Rangihau (Tuhoe), Candy Scrimshaw (Ngati Kahungunu), Raiha Smith (Ngati Kahungunu), Phillip Hawera (Tuhoe/Ngai Terangi), Joe Rua (Te Whanau-a-Apanui), Susan Rikihana (Tuhoe), Judith Brown Hawera (Waikato) and Kahu Waititi (Te Whanau-a-Apanui/Ngapuhi).

The households surveyed had a total population of 790, and 773 of these were of Maori descent. This was a little over one-tenth of the total Maori population of Gisborne at the time.

### RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

#### *Iwi Affiliation*

The people interviewed mentioned 15 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. Ngati Porou, with 449 members (or 58 percent of the total), was the main iwi in the survey. The next largest tribal group was Tuhoe with 81 people or 10 percent of the total, while 69 members of Ngati Kahungunu were the third largest iwi in the survey.

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

The information in the table on the next page tells us that a quarter of the people surveyed were fluent speakers of Maori and a little more than a third of them understood the language with ease. Sixty percent of the fluent speakers were over the age of 45; these and adults over 25 made up three-quarters of those people who understood the language well. Over half the people under 25 did not know the language at all.



KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN GISBORNE CITY (1976)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	117	85	125	91	7	5	5	4
25-44	58	47	82	65	26	21	18	14
15-24	11	7	31	21	55	37	62	42
2-14	8	2	39	11	104	28	229	62
Overall	194	25	277	35	192	25	314	40

(Numbers and percentages refer to members of households visited; percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number).

*Use Of Maori Language In The Household*

There were 127 homes with dependent children visited and in 72 of them the everyday language was English alone. While some Maori was spoken in 48 households - usually by the parents or with Maori-speaking visitors - English was still the main language spoken. In the other 7 homes, people spoke mostly in Maori or spoke an equal amount of Maori and English.

There were 20 childless households visited, and, in 10 of them, people spoke mainly Maori among themselves, and with visitors. People spoke entirely in English in 4 homes, and mainly English in the other 6 households.

*The Maori Language In The Community*

The results of the survey have shown that adults over the age of 25 are the best speakers of Maori in Gisborne. (Two-thirds of this age group spoke the language well.) However, there were few chances to speak Maori in the city, because nearly everybody spoke only English. Most kaumatua preferred to speak Maori - and did so - with Maori people of their own age and other adults who could speak the language.

On the other hand, many adults who spoke Maori well were unwilling to speak the language in the city with friends or neighbours, but were happy to speak it when they returned to their childhood homes in the country. At the same time, because their neighbours, workmates, shopkeepers and friends were Pakeha who spoke no Maori, they were often forced to speak English to be understood.

It was in ceremonies on the marae that the Maori language played an important part for most informants, although, when these were over, people spoke mostly in English. Maori prayer, including the saying of grace before meals, was also for many an important part of their lives.

If any two members of the Maori community in Gisborne were to meet unexpectedly, there was 1 chance in 10 that they could talk with each other in Maori. If both people were adults over 25, the chances were very much higher - about 1 in 2.

*Attitudes Towards The Language*

There was a lot of support for the teaching of Maori in local schools, especially at the primary level, although many people stated that the best place to learn Maori was in the home or on the marae. Those people believed that teaching the language in the school for an hour a day was a shallow attempt to teach Maoritanga. This could be learned and lived only in a Maori environment. Many people were teaching their children (and especially mokopuna) the language in the home to strengthen the work going on in schools.

However, there were others who believed that it was too late to encourage the learning of the language. In today's world, where Pakeha qualifications were needed to get a job, knowledge of Maori was thought to be of no use. These people wanted Maori culture - such as arts and crafts and action songs - to be taught instead. They thought that these skills, which could be picked up with less trouble, would give Maori traditions a better chance of surviving in towns and cities.

Nearly half the people interviewed said that they had been



strapped for speaking Maori as children at school, and some of them said this is why they did not teach the language to their own children - they didn't want them to be punished for it at school. Many of these children, now parents themselves, were sorry they knew so little Maori, and were making up for it by learning the language at night school.

### CONCLUSION

The state of the Maori language in Gisborne City, in 1976, can be compared with that in many other large towns and cities throughout the North Island. The survey has shown that most fluent speakers were over the age of 45, and those who understood the language well were adults over 25. However, many of these parents were unwilling to pass on their knowledge of Maori to their children, because they did not want them to be punished or abused as they had been. This is one reason why, in Gisborne, over half the people under 25 knew no Maori, except a few words of greeting and some simple commands and phrases.

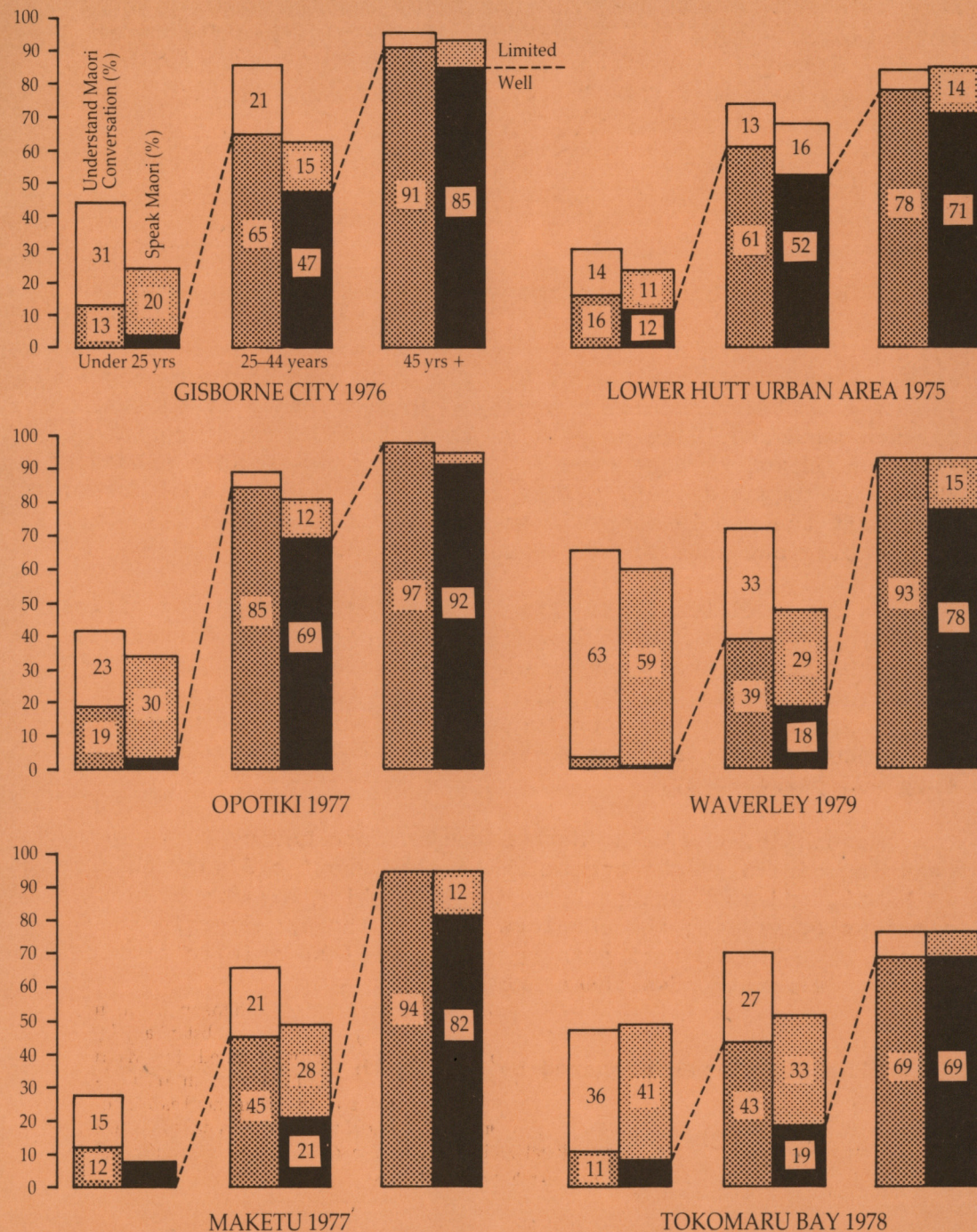
It is so difficult to keep Maori alive in towns and cities, where English is the main language, that parents in Gisborne are right behind the teaching of Maori in local schools and on the marae. It was on the marae that the language was still being used in important ceremonies and services, and where many young people were learning to take over from their elders when they had passed away.

Meanwhile, the Rakau Method courses are having success in teaching adults in the community to talk about ordinary things in Maori, and the Kohanga Reo (Maori-speaking nursery groups) are aimed at preventing the complete loss of the language in the area. The local Maori Affairs office will be able to provide further information on these schemes.

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.