

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

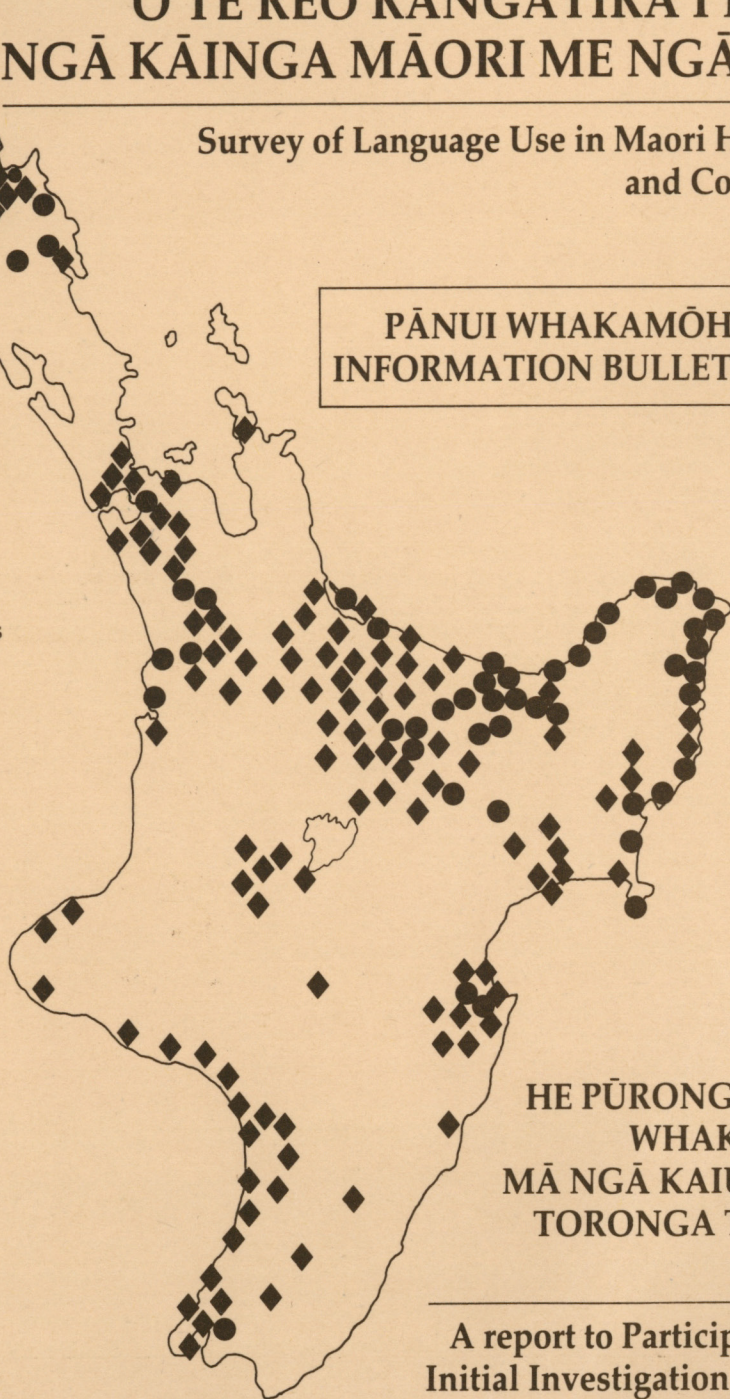
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

56

Localities in which
ten or more households
were visited

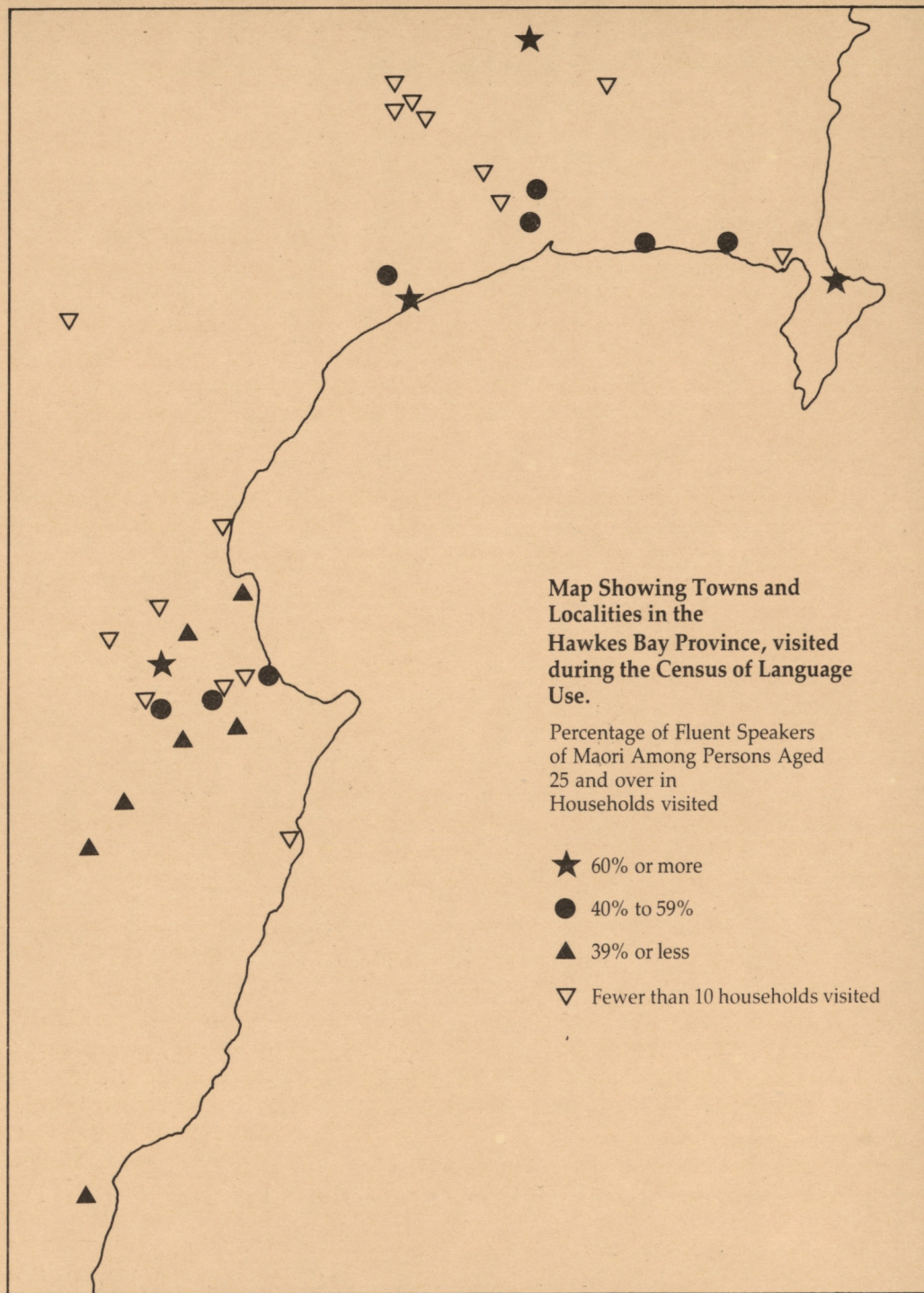
● Two thirds or
more of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori

◆ 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 MOHAKA

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in ten households in Mohaka in January 1978. The interviewers were Patricia Parata (Ngati Porou), Himiona Henry (Waikato), Keri Tawhiwhirangi (Ngati Porou) and Kahu Waititi (Te Whanau-a-Apanui). One interview was carried out partly in English and partly in Maori; the remainder (nine), were in English.

The households surveyed had a total population of 49, and 47 of them were of Maori descent. This was about half of the Maori population of Mohaka at the time.

RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned two main iwi to which they, or members of their households, belonged. Nearly all of them (46 people) belonged to Ngati Kahungunu.

Ability to Speak and Understand Maori

The table on page two shows that nearly a third of the people involved in the survey could speak Maori well; most of them were kaumatua or adults over the age of 25, and none of the school children could speak Maori at that time. More than half of the people understood the language well or slightly, but more than three-quarters of the children under 15 did not know Maori at all.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN MOHAKA (1978)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	7	58	8	66	2	17	2	17
25-44	4	57	5	71	2	29	0	
15-24	4	44	4	44	4	44	1	12
2-14	0		1	5	3	14	17	81
Overall	15	31	18	37	11	22	20	41

Numbers and percentages refer to members of households visited; percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

The Use of Maori Language in the Household

Both Maori and English were spoken in most households visited. There were six homes with dependent children, and in three of them people spoke only in English. In the rest both languages were used equally.

There were four childless households visited, and in one English was the main everyday language. The people in the three other homes spoke mainly Maori amongst themselves or with visitors who spoke Maori.

The Maori Language in the Community

The people in the survey spoke Maori and English with friends, neighbours and workmates. Although good speakers of Maori would rather speak in their mother tongue, most people in Mohaka, especially those under 25, spoke and understood only English. The people most likely to speak Maori regularly were over the age of 45.

The language still remained important, however, in ceremonies on the marae and in certain religious services. Some people were worried that there may not be any able young people to take over as leaders on the marae when the kaumatua have passed away.

If any two members of the community met unexpectedly there was one chance in ten, that they could understand each other in Maori. As two-thirds of the adults understood the language with ease, the chances were one in two that they could talk in Maori with each other.

Attitudes towards the Language

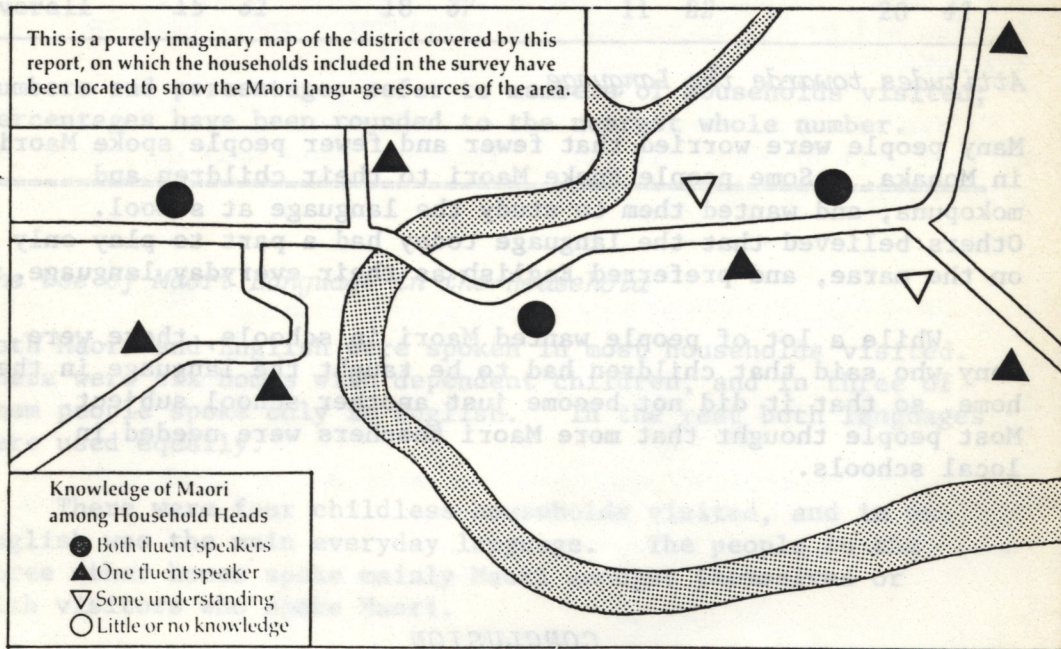
Many people were worried that fewer and fewer people spoke Maori in Mohaka. Some people spoke Maori to their children and mokopuna, and wanted them to study the language at school. Others believed that the language today had a part to play only on the marae, and preferred English as their everyday language.

While a lot of people wanted Maori in schools, there were many who said that children had to be taught the language in the home, so that it did not become just another school subject. Most people thought that more Maori teachers were needed in local schools.

CONCLUSION

At the time of the survey, Maori was spoken mainly by adults and kaumatua. While some grandparents spoke Maori to young mokopuna, very few school children in Mohaka knew the language at all well. Some parents were teaching their children the first steps in Maori, but they had a difficult job, because English was not only the main language spoken in the community, but it was also the language of television, radio and newspapers.

Many people were worried about the future of Maori in the area and were attending courses to learn to speak the language better. There is now a lot of interest in Maori, and this because people do not want the language to die out altogether or to be used only for special meetings on the marae. People who want to find out more about language courses, from pre-school age to adults, should get in touch with the Department of Maori Affairs in Wairoa.



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

© NZCER, Wellington, March 1983.

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.