

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

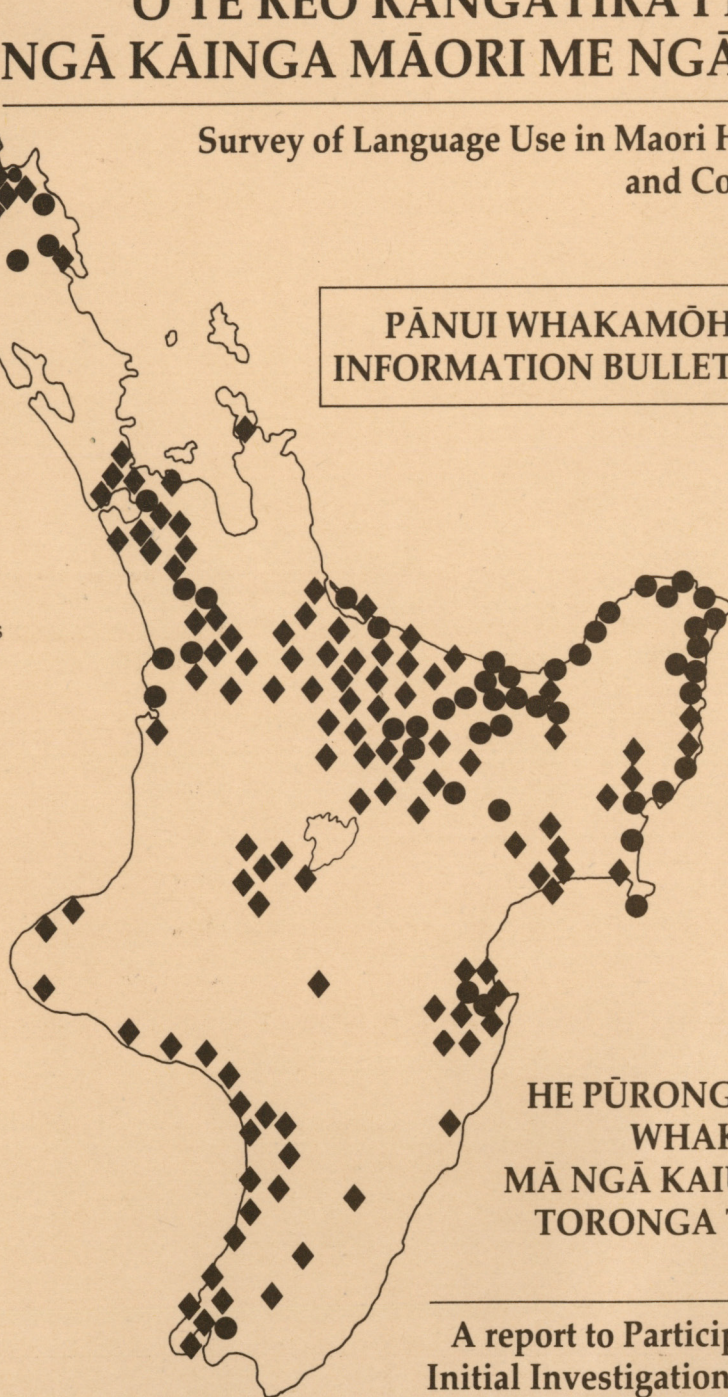
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

58

Localities in which
ten or more households
were visited

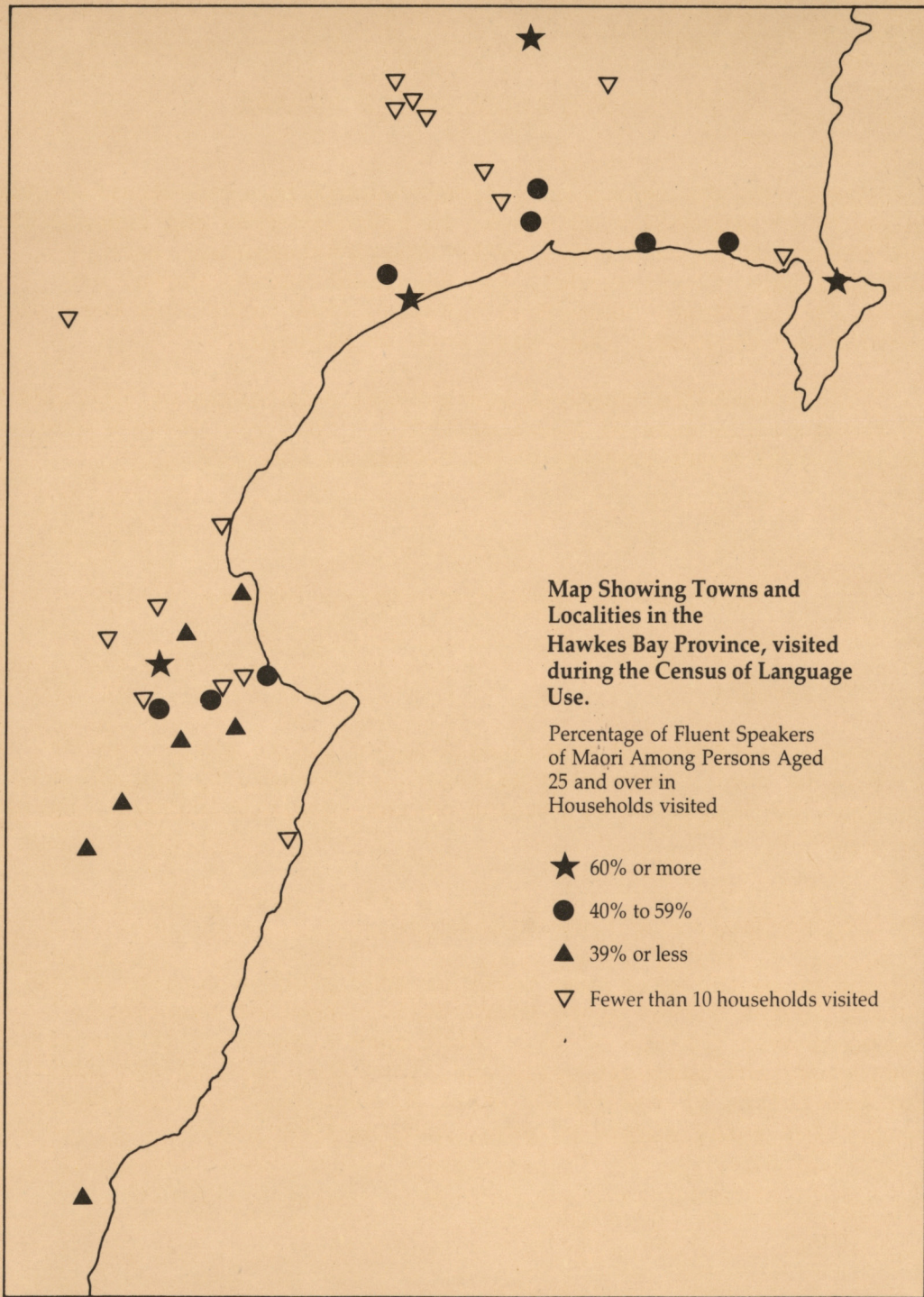
● Two thirds or
more of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori

◆ 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 NUHAKA

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 23 households in Nuhaka in February 1976 and January 1978. The interviewers were Raiha Smith (Ngati Kahungunu), Keri Tawhiwhirangi (Ngati Porou), Tom Rangihuna (Ngati Porou) and Trysh Parata (Ngati Porou/Ngai Tahu). Five interviews were carried out in Maori; the rest were in English.

The households surveyed had a total population of 105, and 94 of these people were of Maori descent. This was about a quarter of the total Maori population of Nuhaka at the time.

RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned 4 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. However, by far the most of them, 85 people or 90 percent of the total, belonged to Ngati Kahungunu.

Ability To Speak And Understand Maori

The table on the next page tells us that about a quarter of the people in the survey spoke Maori well. Most of them were kaumatua over the age of 45. More than a third of the people understood the language well, and, they too, were mainly adults. But two-thirds of the people under 25 knew little or no Maori, except for a few simple phrases, such as tena koe.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN NUHAKA (1978)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	18	90	20	100	0		0	
25-44	5	24	14	67	4	19	3	14
15-24	1	5	3	15	8	40	9	45
2-14	1	2	2	5	8	18	34	77
Overall	25	24	39	37	20	19	46	44

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

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Use Of Maori Language In The Household

There were 14 households with dependent children visited, and in 12 of them people spoke entirely or mostly in English. In the other 2, both Maori and English were spoken equally.

In 6 of the 9 childless households, Maori was the main language the people spoke among themselves, or with visitors who spoke Maori. In the rest, people spoke mostly in English.

The Maori Language In The Community

Many people, particularly kaumatua over 45, still speak Maori in Nuhaka at many of their gatherings. All members of this age group understood the language with ease; however, they had few opportunities for talking in Maori with younger people,

especially those under 25. Although a quarter of the people aged 25 to 44 could speak Maori well, they spoke in Maori only with their parents or kaumatua.

Most people in the survey would rather use English than Maori. However, Maori had an important part to play in many activities on the marae (such as whaikorero, waiata and karakia) and also in important celebrations like twenty-first birthdays, weddings and sporting functions.

If any two members of the community were to meet unexpectedly, the chances that they could speak in Maori with each other were about 1 in 10. If both people were adults the chances were much greater, 1 in 2. But there was little chance that two school children could speak in Maori.

Attitudes Towards The Language

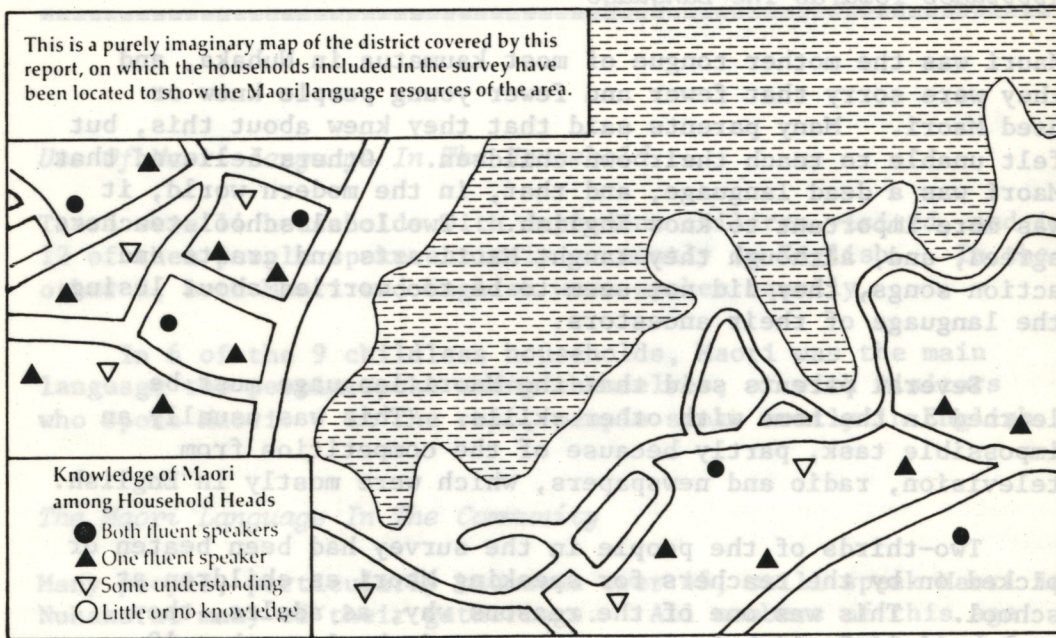
Maori was the mother tongue of most kaumatua in Nuhaka, and they were sorry that fewer and fewer young people knew or used Maori. Many parents said that they knew about this, but felt unable to teach their own children. Others believed that Maori was a dead language, and that, in the modern world, it was more important to know English. Two local school teachers agreed, and, although they taught Maori arts and crafts and action songs, they did not seem to be too worried about losing the language of their ancestors.

Several parents said that the Maori language must be learned in the home with other skills. This was usually an impossible task, partly because of the competition from television, radio and newspapers, which were mostly in English.

Two-thirds of the people in the survey had been beaten or picked on by the teachers for speaking Maori as children at school. This was one of the reasons why, as adults, they spoke mainly English in their homes, and why less than 10 percent of the people under 25 could speak Maori well.

CONCLUSION

The linguistic survey found that, in 1978, Maori was spoken in Nuhaka mainly by or with kaumatua. English was the main language spoken in most households with dependent children. Most school children knew the usual greetings and some words and phrases, but they had no real understanding of the language of their elders. The opportunities they have to study Maori at Wairoa College may help to prevent the total loss of the language in Nuhaka. The 'Rakau Method' courses in Maori, organized by the Takitimu Language Board in Wairoa, have had some success. If they were introduced into the Nuhaka community they could be as successful in bringing back to life the mana of the language among the Ngati Rakai-Paaka people.



This report was prepared 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.