

# 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

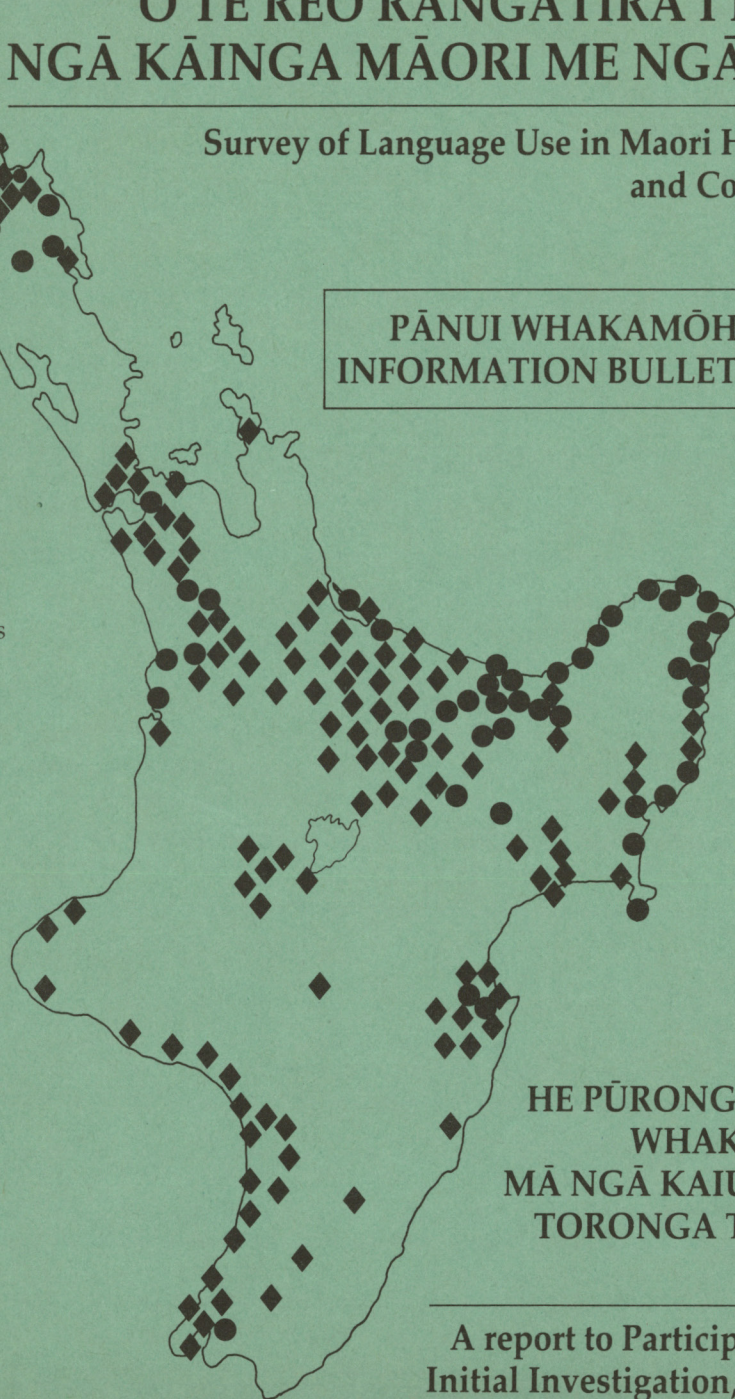
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO  
INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Localities in which  
ten or more households  
were visited

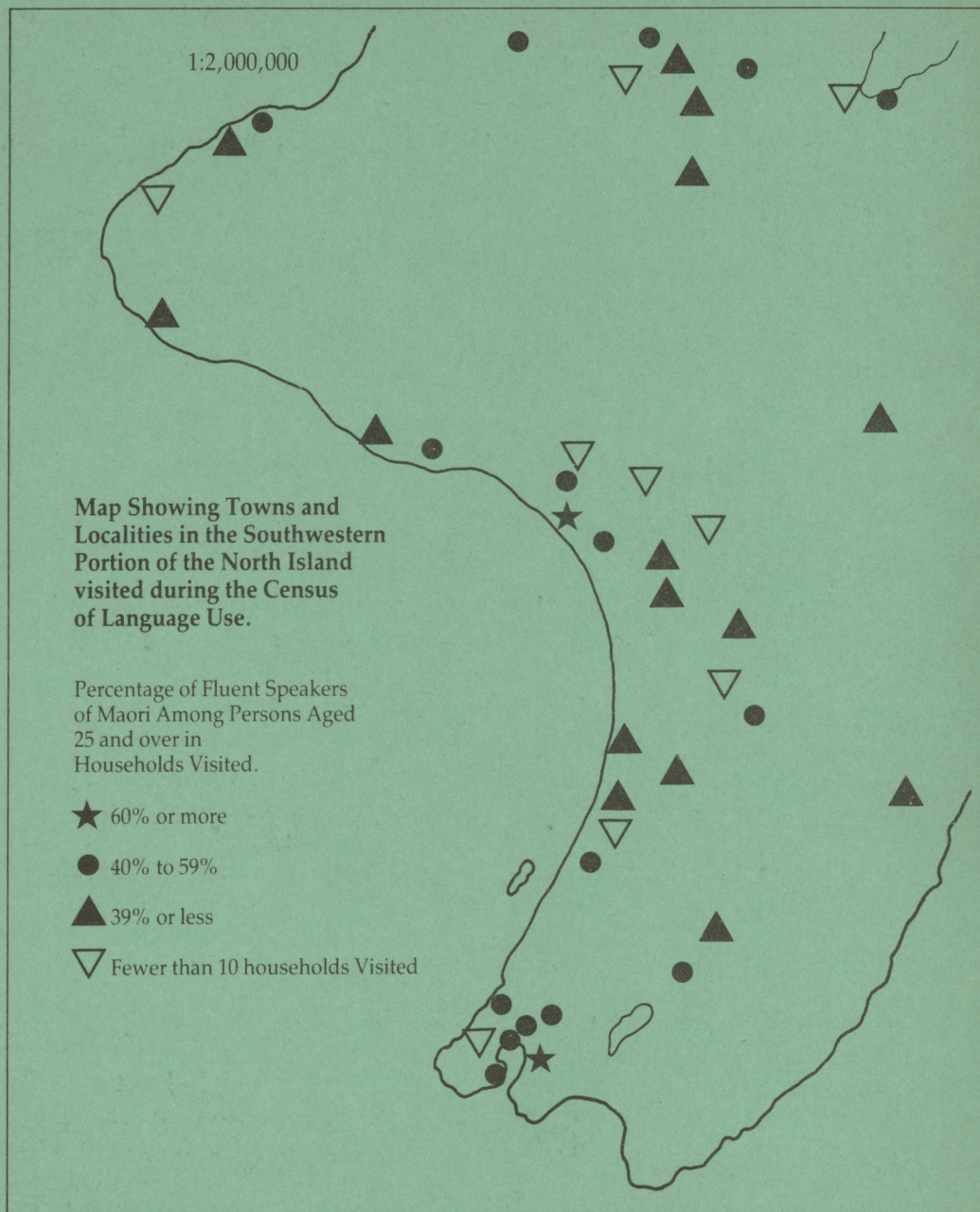
● Two thirds or  
more of adults were  
fluent speakers of  
Maori

◆ 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 OPUNAKE

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 12 households in Opunake in January 1977. The interviewers were Kahu Waititi (Te Whanau-a-Apanui/Ngapuhi), Raiha Smith (Ngati Kahungunu), Candy Scrimshaw (Ngati Kahungunu) and Evelyn Te Uira (Waikato). Eleven interviews were carried out in English; one was partly in English and partly in Maori.

The households surveyed had a total population of 55 and 53 of these people were of Maori descent. This was about a fifth of the total Maori population of Opunake at the time.

## RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

### *Iwi Affiliation*

The people interviewed mentioned six major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. The largest iwi in the survey was Taranaki with 25 members, or 45 percent of the total. Te Ati Awa with ten members and Te Whanau-a-Apanui with eight were the next largest tribal groups mentioned.

### *Ability To Speak And Understand Maori*

The table on the next page tells us that all the good speakers of Maori were over 45, while there was only one person under this age who understood the language well. Most school-age children knew a few simple Maori words and phrases, but a third of the people surveyed knew no Maori at the time; most of these were under 15.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN OPUNAKE (1977)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	8	73	8	73	3	27	0	
25-44	0		1	9	5	46	5	46
15-24	0		0		1	25	3	75
2-14	0		0		16	57	12	43
Overall	8	15	9	17	25	46	20	37

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

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*Use Of Maori Language In The Household*

English was the main language for everyday use in most households visited. There were eight homes with dependent children and in six of them people spoke mostly or only English. In the other two some Maori was used, but still not as much as English.

There were four childless households and in three of them people spoke mainly in English. The person who lived in the other childless household usually spoke Maori to visitors.

*The Maori Language In The Community*

English was also in the main language spoken in the community. Good speakers of Maori among the kaumatua age group preferred to use

their mother tongue with friends and neighbours who spoke Maori. However, as by far the most people in Opunake spoke only English, even these kaumatua had to use English more often than Maori.

The Maori language was still important, however in ceremonies on the marae, although most people spoke English among themselves afterwards. Certain religious services in the area, in the home or in public, were also in Maori.

If any two members of the community met unexpectedly, the chances were about one in 30 that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over 25 the chances were about one in seven, but it was very unlikely that people under this age could speak in Maori with each other.

*Attitudes Towards The Language*

Most people we spoke to in Opunake, especially the kaumatua, were worried that fewer and fewer people knew or spoke Maori. Many adults said they were sorry that they could not speak or understand Maori. It was only now as parents that they were beginning to see the cultural importance of the language for themselves and their children. Many people therefore, wanted Maori taught in schools, and some adults were already taking part in language courses in private homes and elsewhere in the community. Others thought it was too late for them to learn Maori, as the only people who spoke the language in Opunake were the very old, and even they spoke Maori mostly at hui on the marae.

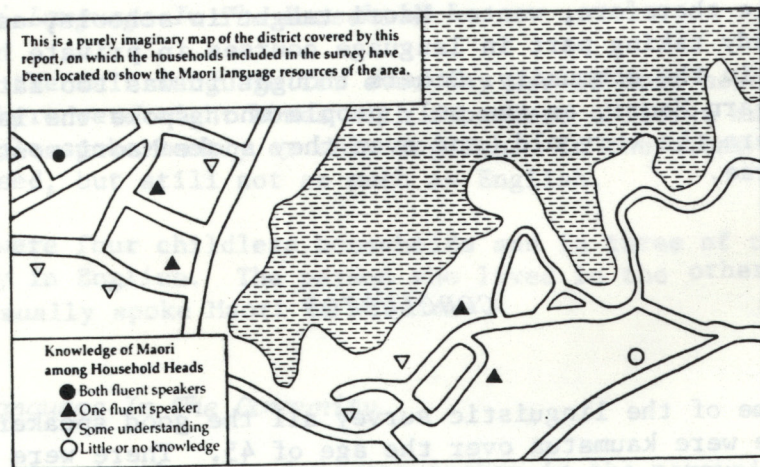
CONCLUSION

At the time of the linguistic survey all the good speakers of Maori in Opunake were kaumatua over the age of 45. There were few people under this age who understood the language well. Nearly half the people under 25 knew practically no Maori at all, and many people

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. →

were worried that Maori would die out altogether if something was not done now. English was spoken almost entirely in homes with dependent children, and the only time most of these children heard Maori spoken was in Maori language classes at school or at hui on local marae. English was also the main language for everyday use in the community between neighbours, friends and workmates. More recently the Department of Maori Affairs has been organising Maori language courses in different communities, as well as Kohanga Reo (Maori-speaking pre-schools), throughout the country help to stop the language from dying out altogether.

If people are interested they should get in touch with their local Maori Affairs Office, or their Maori language Board, for more information about these programmes. They should do this before it is too late and the language really does die out.



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

### 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.