

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

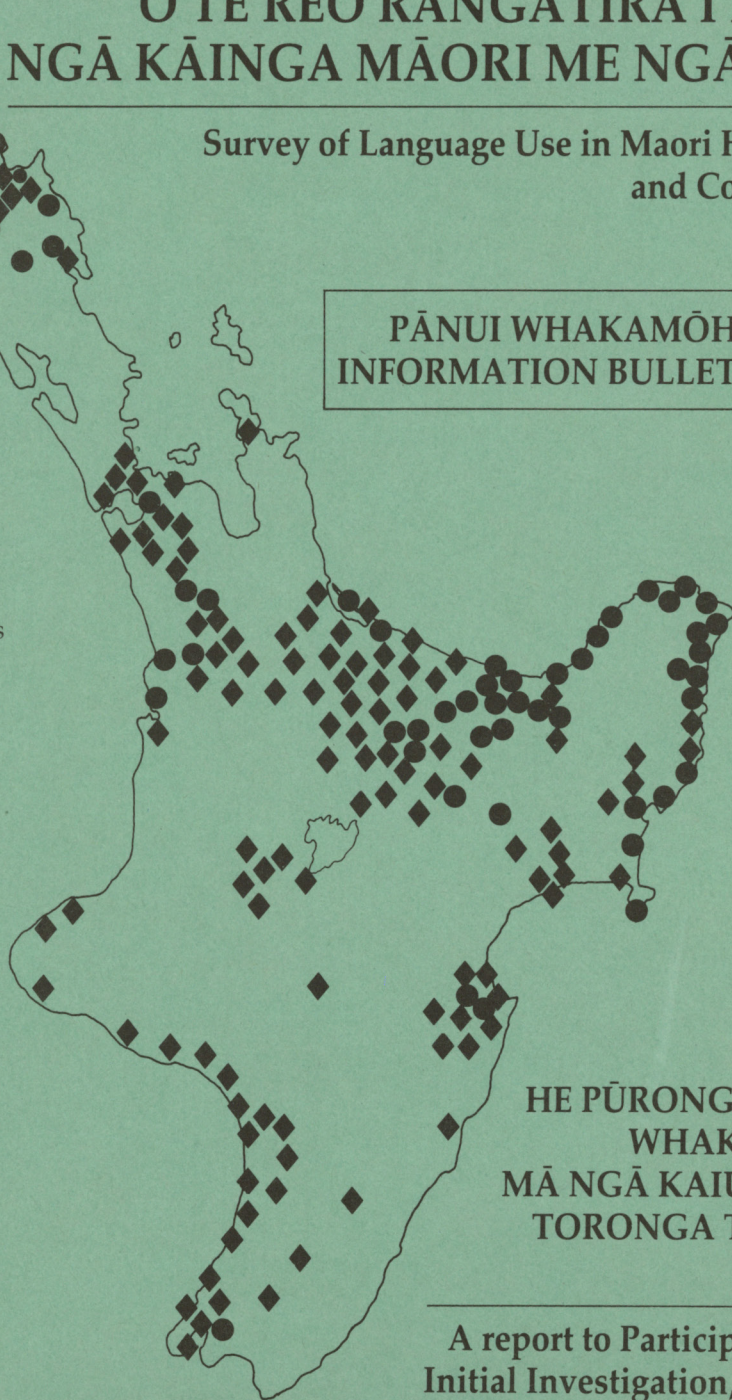
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

74

Localities in which
ten or more households
were visited

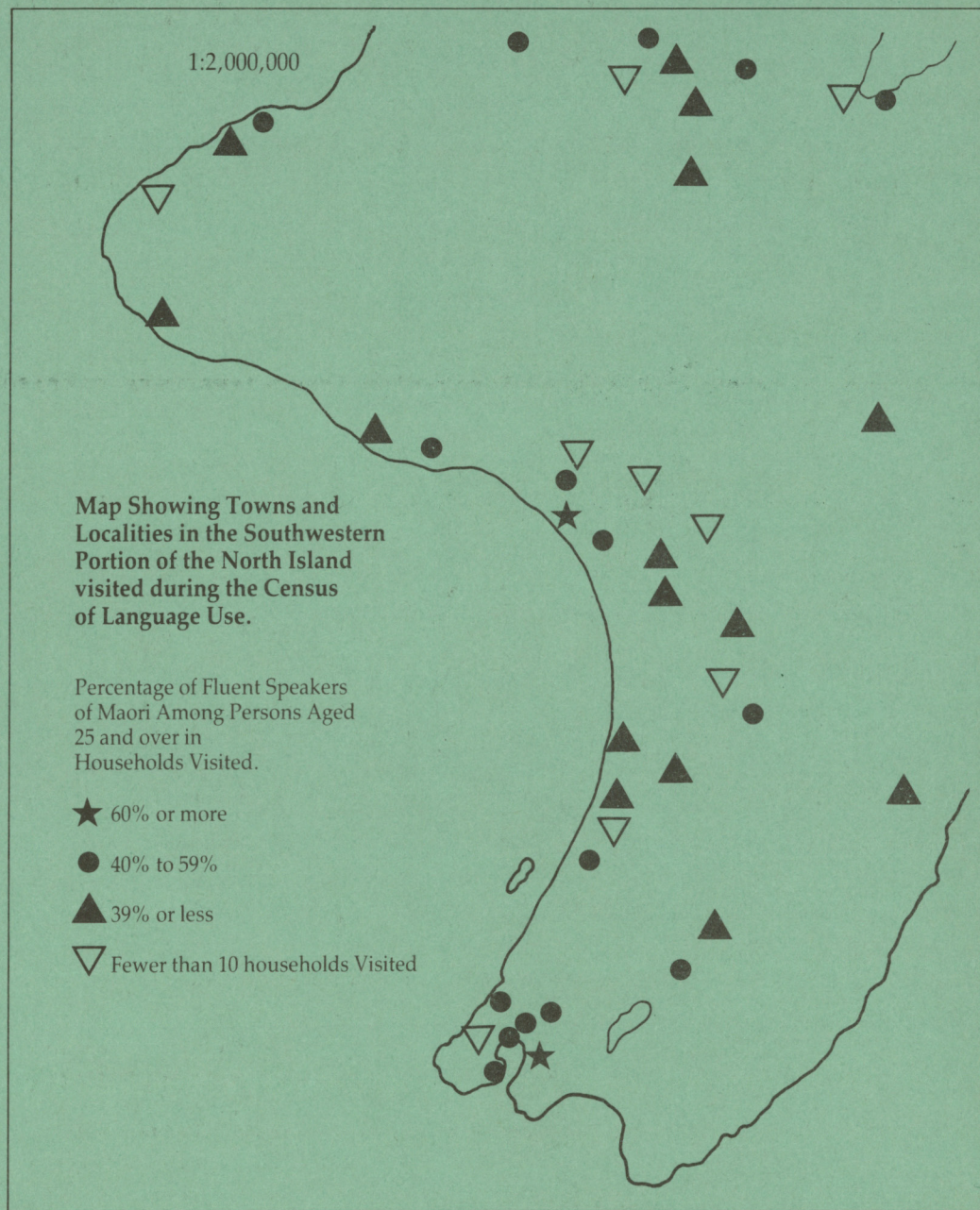
● Two thirds or
more of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori

◆ 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 MASTERTON

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 51 households in Masterton in May 1975. The interviewers were Candy Scrimshaw (Ngati Kahungunu), Ripeka Koopu Martin (Te Whanau-a-Apanui), Phillip Hawera (Tuhoe/Ngai Terangi), Judith Brown Hawera (Waikato), Raiha Smith (Ngati Kahungunu), Kahu Waititi (Te Whanau-a-Apanui/Ngapuhi), Evelyn Te Uira (Waikato), Willie Martin (Ngati Manawa/Te Aupouri), Tawini Rangihau (Tuhoe), Rena Tito (Ngati Whatua), Alan Hawea (Ngati Awa) and Shannon Wetere (Waikato). Forty-nine interviews were carried out in English; 2 were partly or entirely in Maori.

The households surveyed had a total population of 287, and 275 of them were of Maori descent. This was about one-eighth of the total Maori population of Masterton at the time.

RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned 12 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. One hundred and eighty-five people or two-thirds of the total, however, belonged to Ngati Kahungunu — tangata whenua of much of the region.

Ability To Speak And Understand Maori

The information in the table on the next page shows that less than a tenth of the people in the families we visited in Masterton could speak Maori fluently while a little more understood the language well. All the good speakers were adults over 25, and by far the most of them were kaumatua over the age of 45. Two-thirds of the people in the survey knew hardly any Maori at the time. These included more than three-quarters of the people under 25, as well as a third of the people over 25. Some of the reasons why fewer and fewer people use the Maori language in Masterton are examined in the following pages.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN MASTERTON (1975)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	15	48	23	74	3	10	5	16
25-44	7	11	19	30	17	27	28	44
15-24	0		2	4	12	25	34	71
2-14	0		1	1	20	14	121	85
Overall	22	8	45	16	52	18	188	66

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

The Use Of Maori Language In The Household

English was the main language for everyday use in most households visited. There were 44 homes with dependent children, and in 40 of them people spoke only or mostly in English. In the rest, although Maori was often spoken among the parents, English was still the main everyday language.

There were seven childless homes visited and English was the main language used everyday by people in five of them. In one household the couple spoke both Maori and English equally often, while the person in the remaining household would speak Maori with Maori-speaking friends and visitors.

The Maori Language In The Community

You hardly ever hear Maori spoken in the neighbourhood or streets of Masterton. Most of the people we interviewed had Pakeha or

non-Maori speaking neighbours, and so they would always chat in English. At work and elsewhere, English was the language that was always spoken. If you heard people speaking Maori, they would almost certainly be elderly kaumatua. Most of this age group said they liked to speak Maori with Maori-speaking friends and family, but as most people in the community spoke only English that was the language they had to use most of the time.

Although very few people could talk with each other in Maori, the language was still very important in ceremonies on the marae, in other important Maori meetings, and in certain religious services. Many kaumatua said their prayers in Maori. School-age children had few chances of using the language outside of the classroom. They were, for example, too young to speak at important hui.

If any two members of the Maori community of Masterton were to meet unexpectedly, the chances were about 1 in 75 that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over 25, the chances were much greater, about 1 in 10. But if they were under 25, the chances that they would be able to talk together in Maori were almost nil.

Attitudes Towards The Language

Most people were worried that so few people could speak Maori in the area it could die out altogether. Some people thought there was little hope that Maori would ever again become a language for everyday use in the home and community. Maori was best suited for ceremonies on the marae. Many of them were brought up in homes where parents spoke only Maori to each other, and mainly English to the children. Now that they were parents, they were very sorry and even ashamed at not being able to speak Maori and teach it to their own children. Many of them wanted Maori language and culture taught in schools, especially at the primary level. Some people had an idea that the teaching was poor, because their children had learnt only a few words of greeting. Some parents could sing action songs but without understanding the words, and because they continued to pronounce local place names wrongly. A few people believed that Maori had to be learned

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.

and spoken in the home first, and they were going to courses at night school, on local marae, or in private homes to get to know the language better. Several people said that most New Zealanders were not interested in Maori, and that there were few times in the city where it could be spoken freely. They compared that with English which was almost the only language used on television, radio, at work, and elsewhere in the community. These people gave Maori hardly any chance of staying alive against such odds.

CONCLUSION

At the time of the linguistic survey most people in Masterton who spoke and understood Maori well were kaumatua over 45, and there were few people under 25 who could follow people talking in Maori. A third of the adults over 25 knew hardly any Maori and were unable to teach their children. So English was the main and almost the only language spoken in most households visited, as well as in the community. Many people felt they could not themselves do anything to stop the Maori language and culture in Masterton from dying out. Most people wanted the language taught in schools and elsewhere, but they gave Maori little chance of staying alive in a country which was not interested in any language apart from English.

Since the survey, many different groups and individuals have been teaching and learning the language, local oral traditions, waiata and whaikorero. They wanted to hold on to what other people thought had been already lost. School children, young people, and grown adults now have far more opportunities to learn more about their taha Maori, not only in the classroom but also in new Maori cultural groups and on local marae. There are now undoubtedly more people in the Masterton district with a better understanding of the language, than there were several years ago.

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.