

# TE TIROHANGA I TE KŌREŪROTANGA O TE REO RANGATIRA I ROTO I NGĀ KĀINGA MĀORI ME NGĀ ROHE

Survey of Language Use in Maori Households  
and Communities

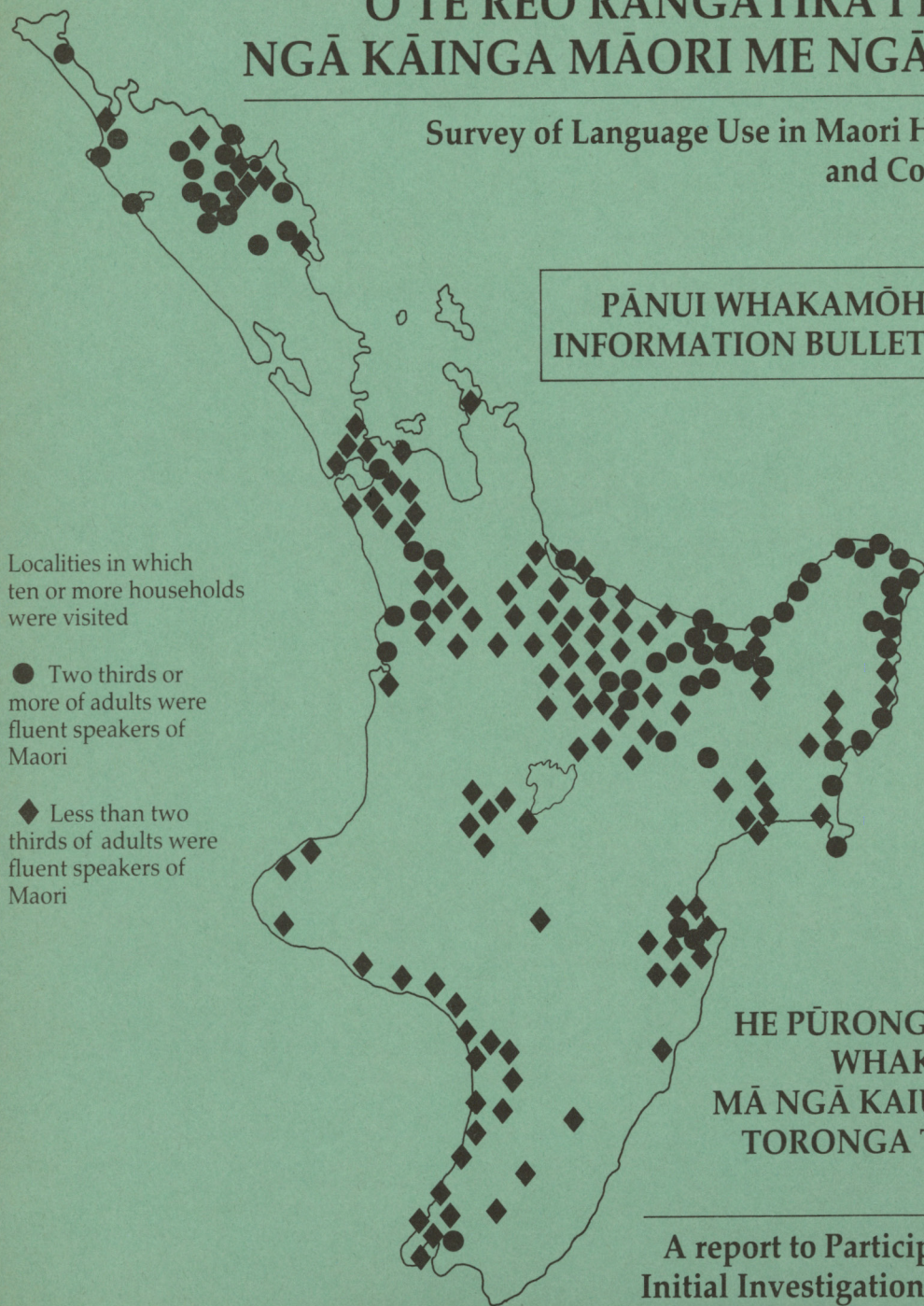
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO  
INFORMATION BULLETIN

75

Localities in which  
ten or more households  
were visited

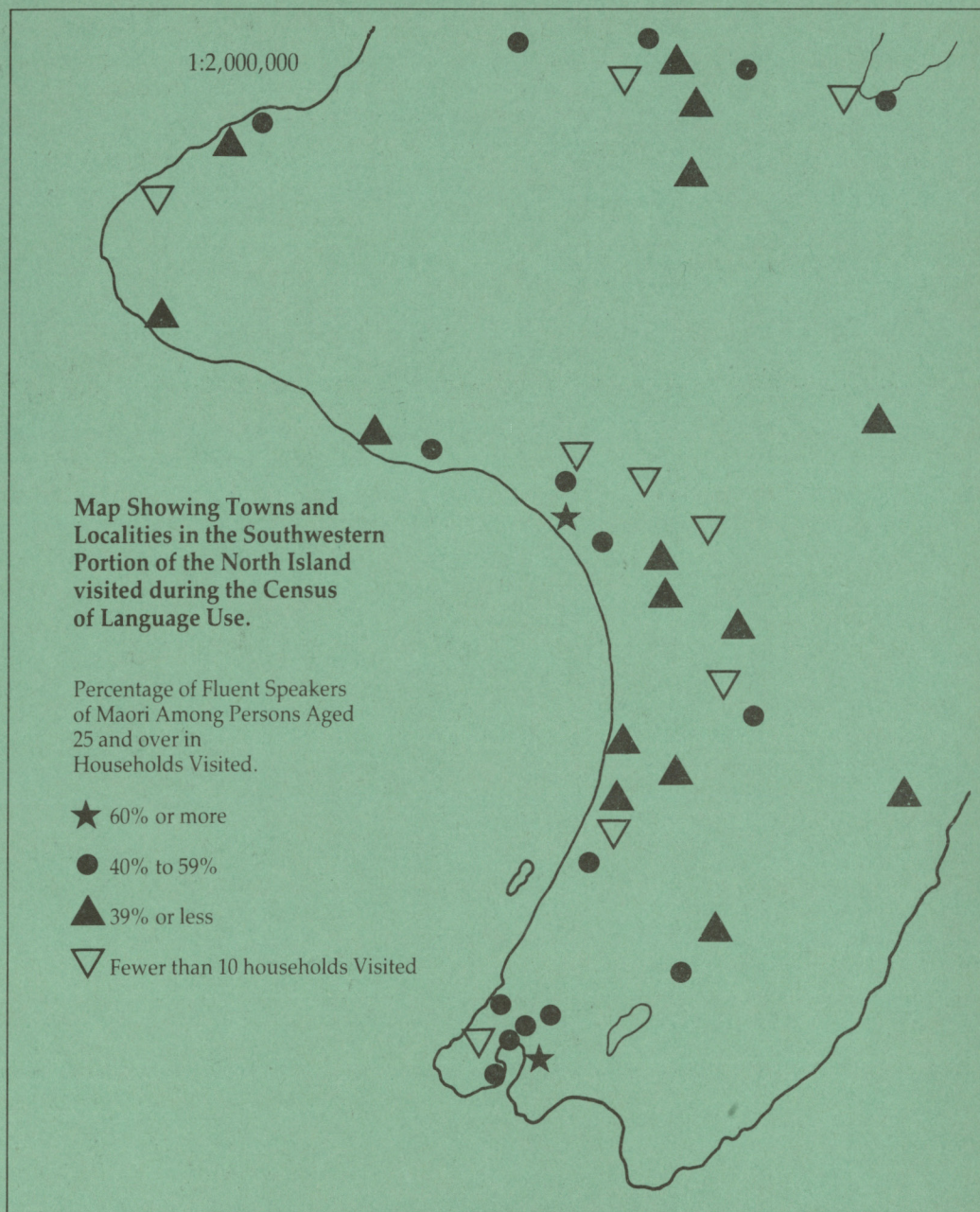
● Two thirds or  
more of adults were  
fluent speakers of  
Maori

◆ 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 WAITARA

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 30 households in Waitara in January 1977. The interviewers were Judith Brown Hawera (Waikato), Phillip Hawera (Tuhoe/Ngai Terangi), Raiha Smith (Ngati Kahungunu), Kahu Waititi (Te Whanau-a-Apanui/Ngapuhi), Joe Rua (Te Whanau-a-Apanui), Evelyn Te Uira (Waikato), Tawini Rangihau (Tuhoe), Allan Hawea (Ngati Awa) and Candy Scrimshaw (Ngati Kahungunu). Twenty-six interviews were carried out in English; the rest were partly or entirely in Maori.

The households surveyed had a total population of 142 and 133 of these people were of Maori descent. This was about 10 percent of the Maori population of Waitara at the time.

## RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

### *Iwi Affiliation*

The people interviewed mentioned 10 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. The largest iwi was Te Ati Awa with 72 members or half the total number. Taranaki with 14 members or one tenth of the total was the next largest tribal group.

### *Ability To Speak And Understand Maori*

The table on the next page shows that all those who spoke Maori fluently, and easily the most people who understood Maori well, were adults over 25. Only a few people under 25 knew more than the usual Maori greetings, some simple phrases or words; more than half of them did not understand the language at all. There were also many older people who knew very little Maori.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN WAITARA (1977)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	19	73	21	81	3	12	2	8
25-44	4	14	8	28	12	41	9	31
15-24	0		2	8	6	25	16	67
2-14	0		0		29	50	29	50
Overall	23	17	31	23	50	37	56	41

(Percentages and numbers 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 20 homes with dependent children and in 16 of them people always spoke in English. In the other four homes, English was also the main language used, although the parents said that they often spoke Maori to each other, especially when they didn't want their children to understand them.

There were ten childless households visited, and English was the main language used for everyday purposes in eight of them. The people in the other two homes usually talked in Maori with friends and visitors who could speak the language.

*The Maori Language In The Community*

English was also the main language spoken in the community, and for people under 25 it was the only language used. The people

most likely to speak Maori were the kaumatua who preferred to use Maori with friends and neighbours. However, as most people in Waitara could not speak Maori well they had to use English more often. This was the language always used with shopkeepers, workmates and friends.

The Maori language was still important, however, in ceremonies on the marae, in certain religious services and in other important meetings. Many elderly people especially said their prayers in Maori, and in many homes grace was also said in Maori.

If any two members of the community in Waitara met unexpectedly, the chances were one in twenty-five that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over 25 the chances were much greater, about one in four, but there was hardly any chance that people under 25 could speak in Maori with each other.

*Attitudes Towards The Language*

Many people were worried that because so few people could speak Maori in Waitara the language could die out altogether. As English had already replaced Maori as the main language spoken in the home and community, some people gave it little chance of staying alive. Most of the adults under 45 could not speak Maori well, and so could not teach it to their children. Some parents were learning the language at night school or on local marae, and were trying to speak Maori more often in the home. Others were happy to let the schools start teaching the children Maori - in fact many people wanted Maori taught, especially at the primary level. Some people said that their children needed to understand English better to help them get a job, while others said that they had to know the Maori language and culture if they wanted to see themselves as Maori and be proud of it. This was very important nowadays as more marriages between Maori and Pakeha were taking place, and people were moving to larger towns and cities, away from their marae and family groups. Most people agreed that Maori was still needed for important ceremonies on local marae.

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.

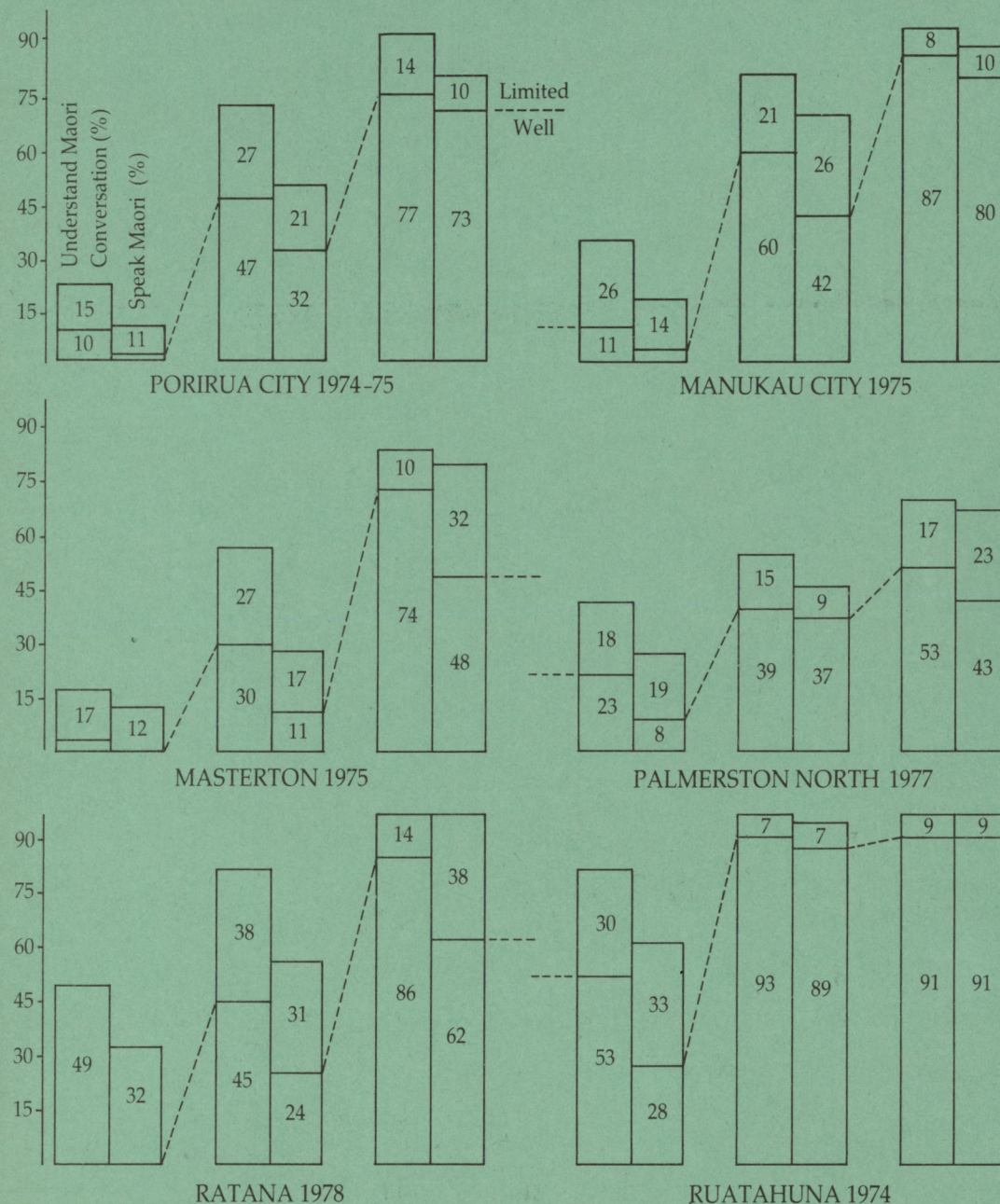
### CONCLUSION

Nearly a quarter of the Waitara people in the survey understood Maori well while a smaller number spoke the language well. By far the most of those who could speak Maori were adults over the age of 45. While most people knew a little Maori, half the school-age children and two-thirds of the people between 15 and 24 could hardly understand the language at all. English was the main language for everyday use in most households visited, while Maori was most often heard only in ceremonies on the marae. There were few chances to speak Maori elsewhere in Waitara as most people understood only English. Many parents were so worried that Maori might die out that they started to learn the language themselves and teach their children in the home. However, some people thought that teaching Maori at home or in the schools was a waste of time - the language was now best suited for the carrying out of ceremonies on the marae. The new tribal Language Boards, the Maori language and culture courses based in the community, and Te Kohanga Reo (pre-schools where Maori is spoken) have given hope to people who still feel that the language may be kept alive. People who wish to know more should get in touch with their local Department of Maori Affairs office.

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

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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.