

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

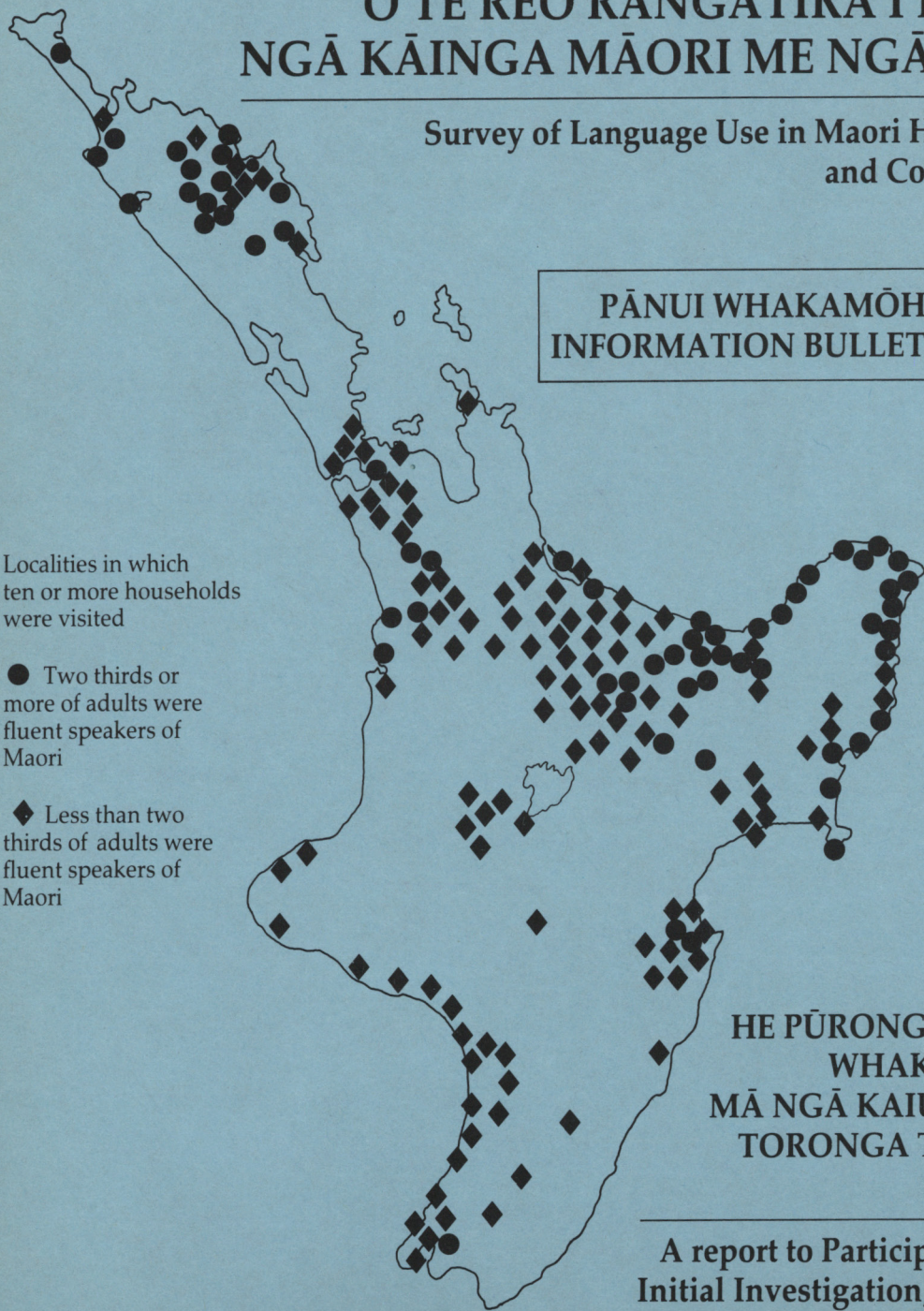
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

78

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 NGONGOTAHA

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 28 households in Ngongotaha in February 1978. The interviewers were Aroha Yates (Te Arawa/Rongowhakaata) and Judith Brown Hawera (Waikato). Twenty-seven interviews were carried out in English; one was in Maori.

The households surveyed had a total population of 159, and 156 of them were of Maori descent. This was about one-fifth of the total Maori population of Ngongotaha at the time.

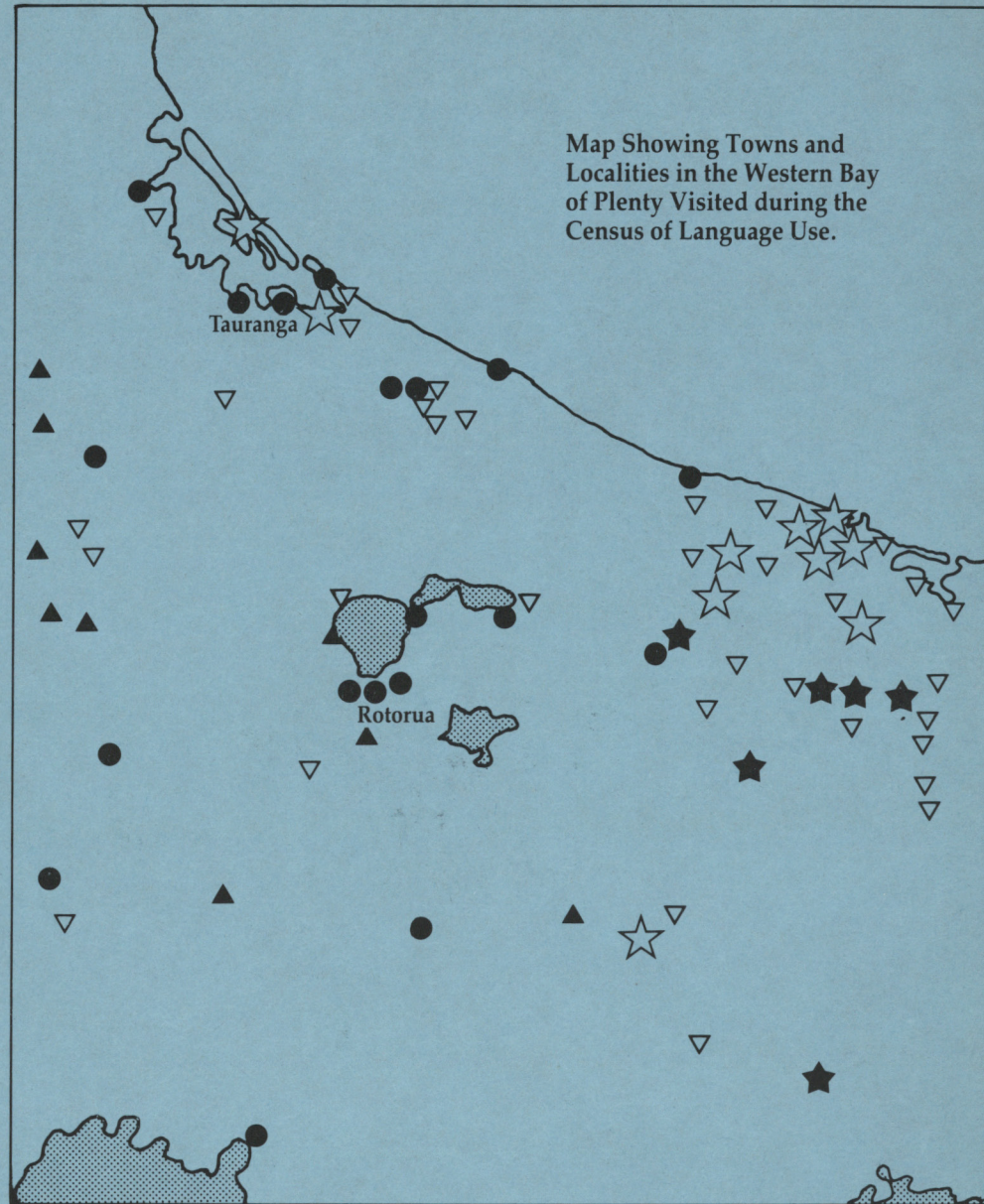
RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned ten main iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. The largest iwi in the survey was Te Arawa with 99 members, or nearly two-thirds of the total.

Ability to Speak and Understand Maori

The table on the next page shows that less than a fifth of the people spoke Maori well, while nearly a third of them understood the language well. All these good speakers were adults over 25. Two-thirds of the people over 45 spoke Maori well, but most of those between 25 and 44 did not speak the language well. Just under half the people surveyed knew hardly any spoken Maori at the time — they included over two-thirds of the children under 15.



Percentage of Fluent Speakers of Maori among Persons Aged 25 and over in Households Visited.

★ 90% or more

☆ 66% to 89%

● 46% to 65%

▲ 45% or less

▽ Fewer than 10 households visited

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN NGONGOTAHA (1978)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	20	67	25	83	5	17	0	
25-44	5	19	16	59	7	26	4	15
15-24	0		2	7	9	32	17	61
2-14	0		2	3	19	28	48	70
Overall	25	16	45	29	40	26	69	45

(Numbers and percentages refer to those people included in the survey; percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number).

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The Use of Maori Language in the Household

English was the main language for everyday use in most households visited. There were 25 homes with dependent children, and in all of them people spoke only or mostly in English. There were three childless households and in two of them English was the main language spoken. In the other household, Maori and English were used equally often.

The Maori Language in the Community

As we found in other areas within the Rotorua District, only kaumatua over 45 used Maori as their everyday language in the community. They talked in Maori with friends and neighbours of the same age, who could speak the language. However, they, too, had to use English more and more as most people in Ngongotaha, both Maori and Pakeha, spoke only English. Maori was still

regarded as the proper language for ceremonies on the marae and in certain religious services. But when these were over, most people went on talking in English. Some grandparents often spoke Maori to their mokopuna, although replies were always in English. People under 25 always spoke with each other in English.

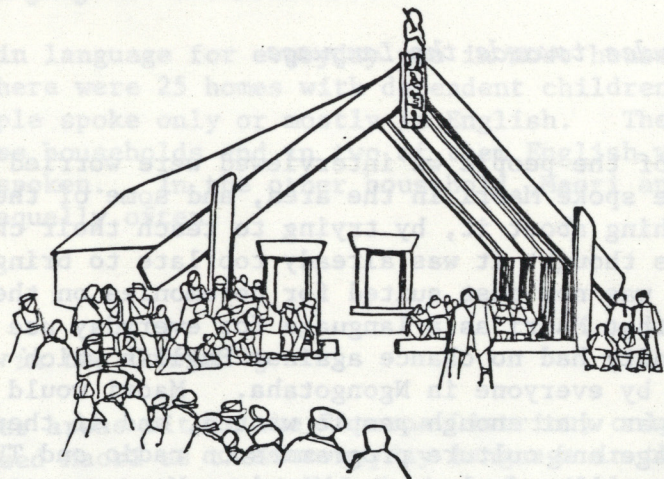
If any two members of the community were to meet unexpectedly, the chances were about one in twenty that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over 25 the chances were much greater, about one in three. It was unlikely that people under 25 would be able to speak in Maori with each other.

Attitudes towards the Language

Many of the people we interviewed were worried that fewer and fewer people spoke Maori in the area, and some of them were doing something about it, by trying to teach their children in the home. Others thought it was already too late to bring back a language which was now best suited for ceremonies on the marae. Some people said that Maori as a language for everyday use in the household and community had no chance against English which was spoken and understood by everyone in Ngongotaha. Maori would stay alive only if that was what enough people wanted, and if there were more Maori language and culture programmes on radio and TV to help students of all ages already learning Maori. Many parents were brought up in households where only English had been spoken, and could not teach their own children Maori. This added up to a lot of people who wanted Maori taught in schools, especially at the primary level.

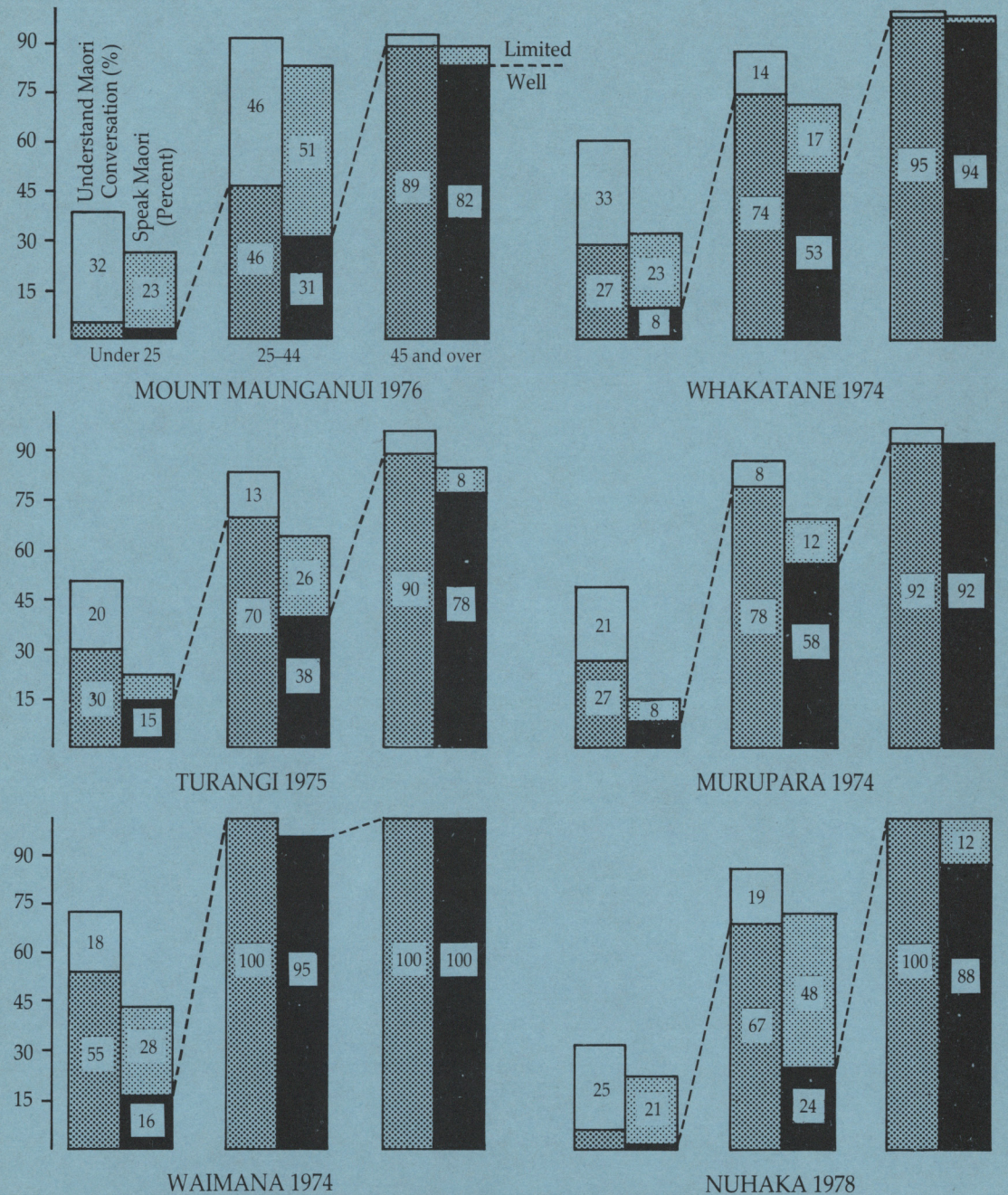
CONCLUSION

At the time of the survey, all good speakers of Maori were adults over 25. But hardly anyone between 25 and 44 could speak the language well, and the people most likely to use Maori regularly in the home and in the community were kaumatua over the age of 45. English was the main language for everyday use in most households visited. In fact, English was so strong in the Rotorua area generally, on TV and radio, that it was difficult for parents to keep a hold on the Maori language and to teach it to their children. While it was still the proper language for marae ceremonies, many of the people we interviewed were worried that Maori would be lost as a language for everyday use. More recently, parents themselves have been organizing Maori language and culture courses in the area for students of all ages, but especially for pre-school age children. (More than two-thirds of the children under 15 understood no Maori at the time of the survey.) People interested in taking part in these programmes should get in touch with the Department of Maori Affairs in Rotorua.



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.