

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

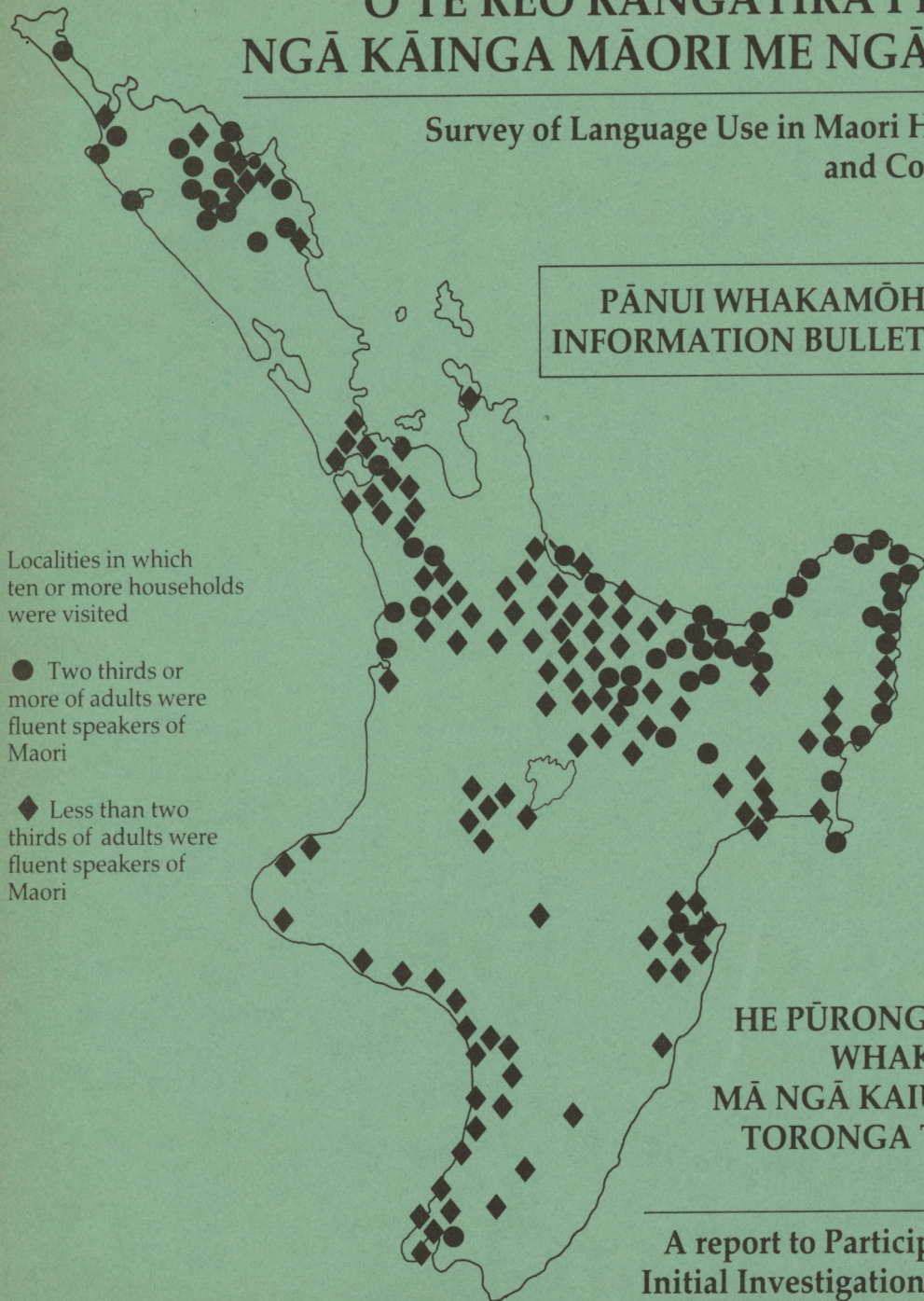
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

79

Localities in which
ten or more households
were visited

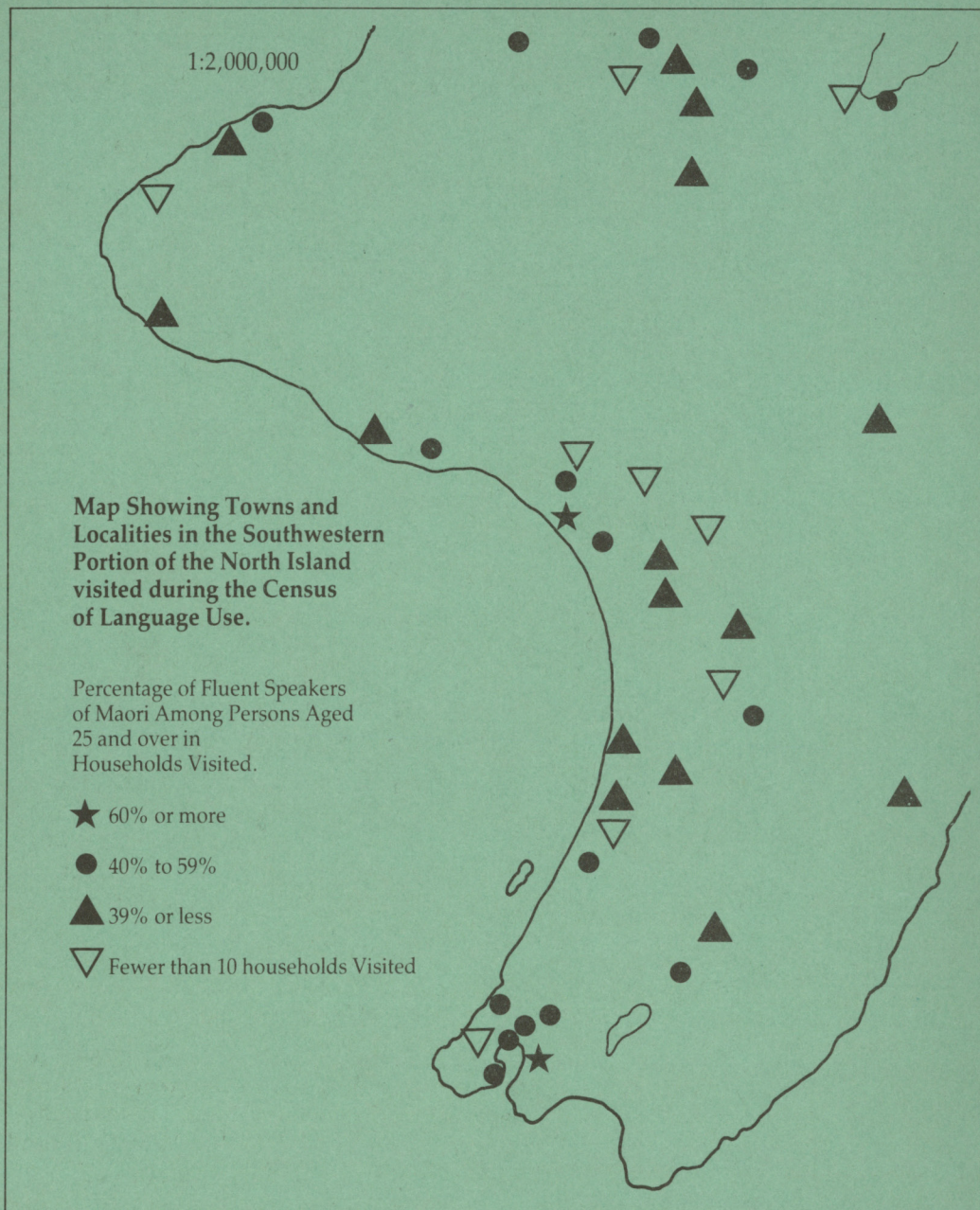
● Two thirds or
more of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori

◆ 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 RATANA PA

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 28 households in Ratana Pa in February 1978. The interviewers were Allan Hawea (Ngati Awa), Taari Nicholas (Ngati Ranginui/Nga Terangi), Hiria Tumoana (Tuhoe), Tawini Rangihau (Tuhoe) and Kahu Waititi (Te Whanau-a-Apanui/Ngapuhi). Nineteen interviews were carried out in English; the rest were partly or only in Maori.

The households surveyed had a total population of 129, and 125 of them were of Maori descent. This was about a third of the Maori population of Ratana Pa at the time.

RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned 13 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. Ngati Tuwharetoa, with 27 members or a fifth of the total, was the largest iwi in the survey. Twenty-six people named Morehu-Ratana as their main iwi. The third largest tribal group mentioned was Ngapuhi with 18 members.

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 a quarter of them understood the language well. All these good speakers were adults over 25 and two-thirds of them were kaumatua over 45. Nobody under 25 spoke or understood Maori well, and half of this age group knew very little of the language at the time.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN RATANA PA (1978)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	13	62	18	86	3	14		0
25-44	7	24	13	45	11	38	5	17
15-24	0		0		14	50	14	50
2-14	0		0		23	49	24	51
Overall	20	16	31	25	51	41	43	34

(Numbers and percentages refer to members of households 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 all the households visited. There were 20 homes with dependent children, and in 14 of them people spoke about daily matters always in English. In the rest, Maori was often used by the parents with each other or with visitors who spoke Maori, but most of the talk between household members was in English.

There were five childless households visited and in all of them people talked about everyday things with each other or with visitors mostly or only in English.

A third of the households visited had three generations living in them. However, even if there were a grandparent present who spoke Maori, that did not mean that Maori was more likely to be used in these homes.

The Maori Language in the Community

English was also the main language spoken in the community between neighbours, friends and workmates. Although a little less than half the adults over 25 spoke Maori well, the people who regularly used the language for everyday things were the older members of the community. However, as most of the people in Ratana Pa spoke only English, even the old people had to use English most of the time. Most people under the age of 30 always spoke English with their friends and relations.

The Maori language was still an important part of ceremonies on the marae, such as karanga, whaikorero and waiata, which were normally performed by the elders. Younger people used Maori regularly only when they took part in the different religious services in the Temple or on the marae. Family prayer and hymn practices in Maori also played an important part in the lives of nearly all members of the community.

If any two people in Ratana Pa were to meet 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, one in four. However, it would be 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, especially the kaumatua, were worried that fewer and fewer people spoke Maori in Ratana Pa. Over a third said they had been beaten as children for speaking Maori at school. This was one of the main reasons why many of them did not teach their own children the language. Three-quarters of those between 25 and 44 could not speak Maori well, and were unable to teach it to their children, so they wanted Maori taught in the schools. Many of the parents praised the Maori language courses being taught at their local primary school.

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. →

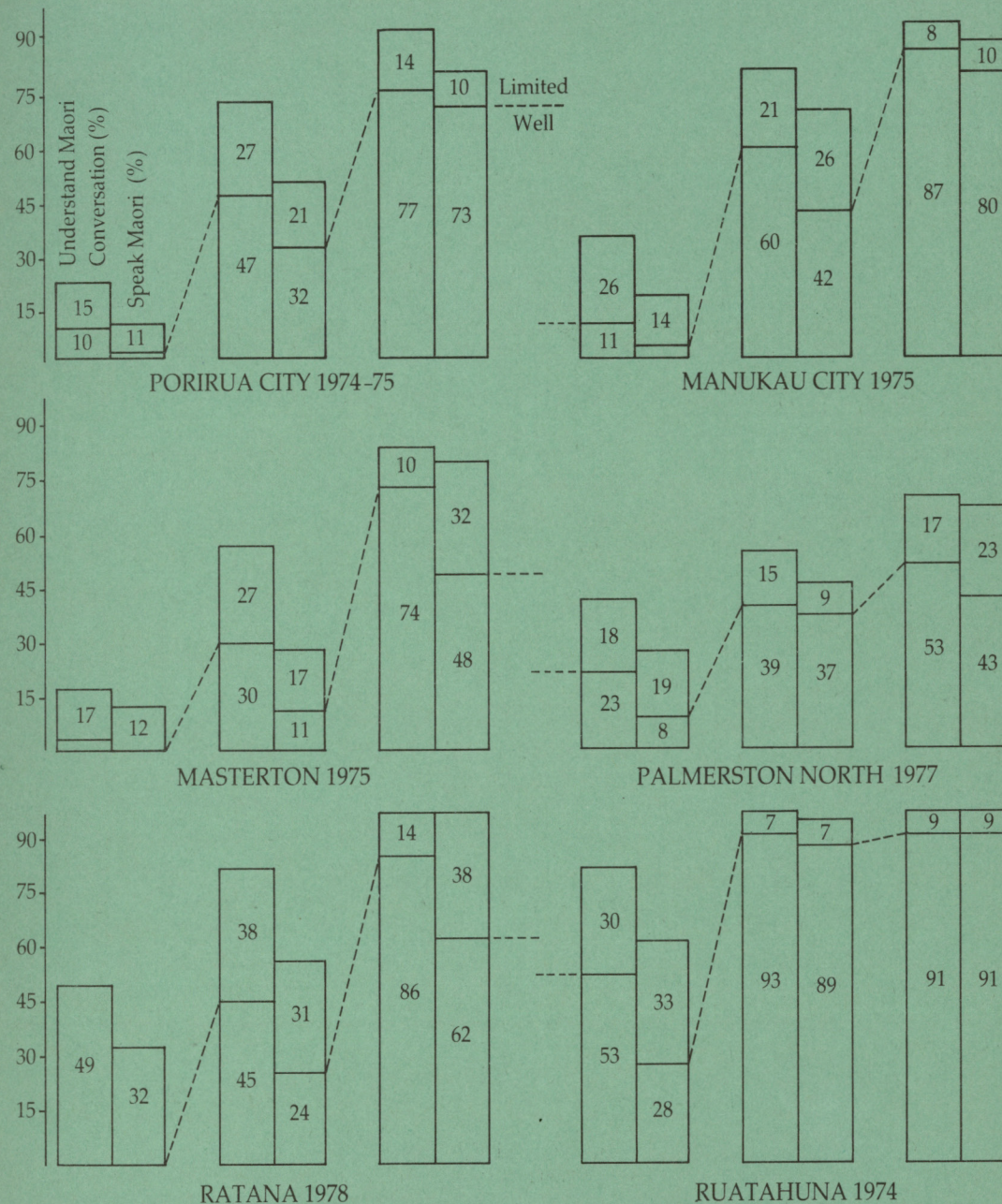
Some kaumatua blamed the poor state of the Maori language in Ratana Pa on people coming into the region, speaking many different dialects, which they had to replace by a language all could understand - English. Many people were sorry they had not been taught how to speak Maori. Although they took part in marae ceremonies and religious services, which were in Maori, they could not talk in a normal way in the language.

CONCLUSION

The results of the survey show that by far the most of the people in Ratana Pa who spoke and understood Maori well were kaumatua over the age of 45. Although nearly half the people between 25-44 understood the language well, nobody under 25 could talk easily in Maori. English was the main language for everyday use in most households and also in the community. The poor state of Maori worried many people we talked to, especially kaumatua. They hadn't taught their children the language because they thought that New Zealanders as a whole had little time for the Maori language and culture. Many of this group, who were now parents themselves, were sorry they could not pass the language on to their own children. Maori language in the district was nowadays mainly used in ceremonies on the marae and in the certain religious services held in homes and in the community. Many people were sorry about the loss of Maori as a language for everyday use, and saw the courses provided in schools as their children's only chance of learning the language. Some people mentioned that it was important to learn to speak Maori in the home, and some local elders were helping parents to teach Maori to their families. Ratana would probably be an excellent place for the setting up of several of the Kohanga re (language nests) now being organized by the Department of Maori Affairs. These would be followed by bilingual schools when the time was right.

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.