

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

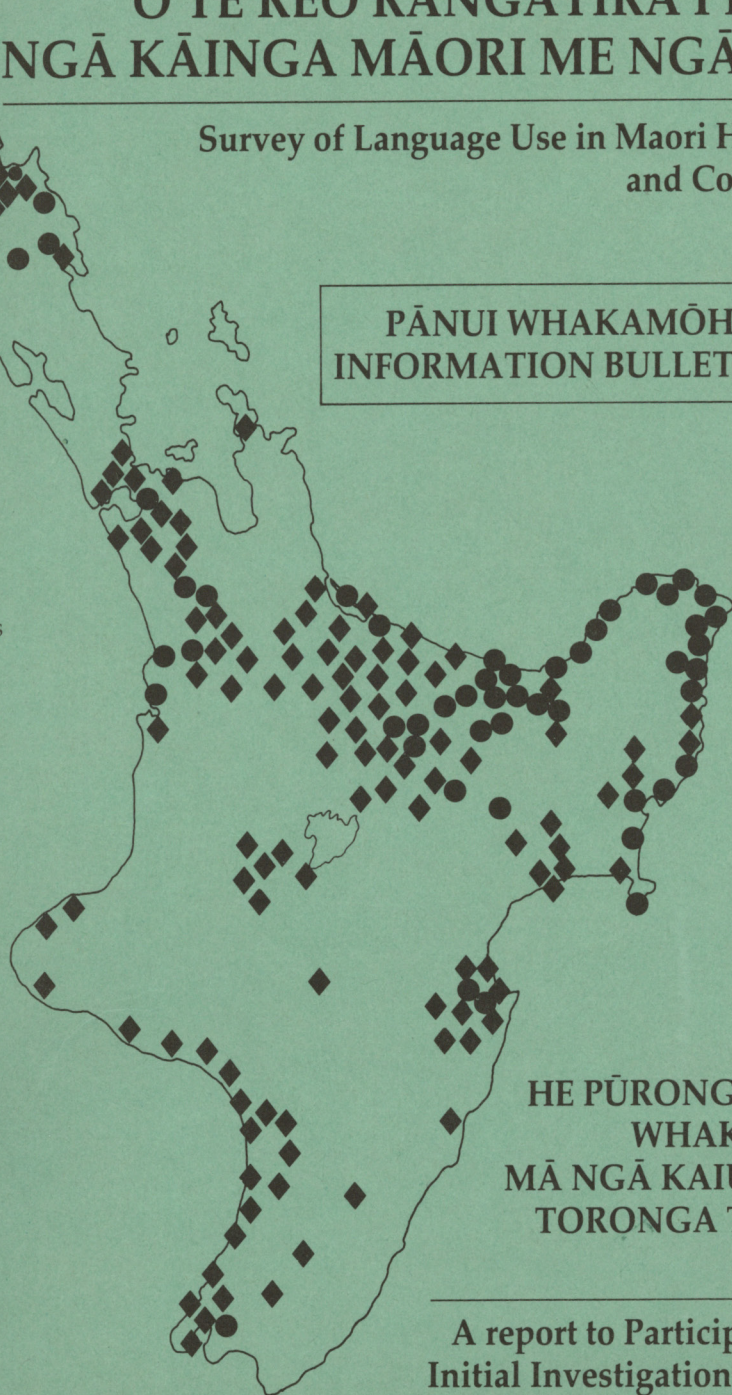
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

80

Localities in which
ten or more households
were visited

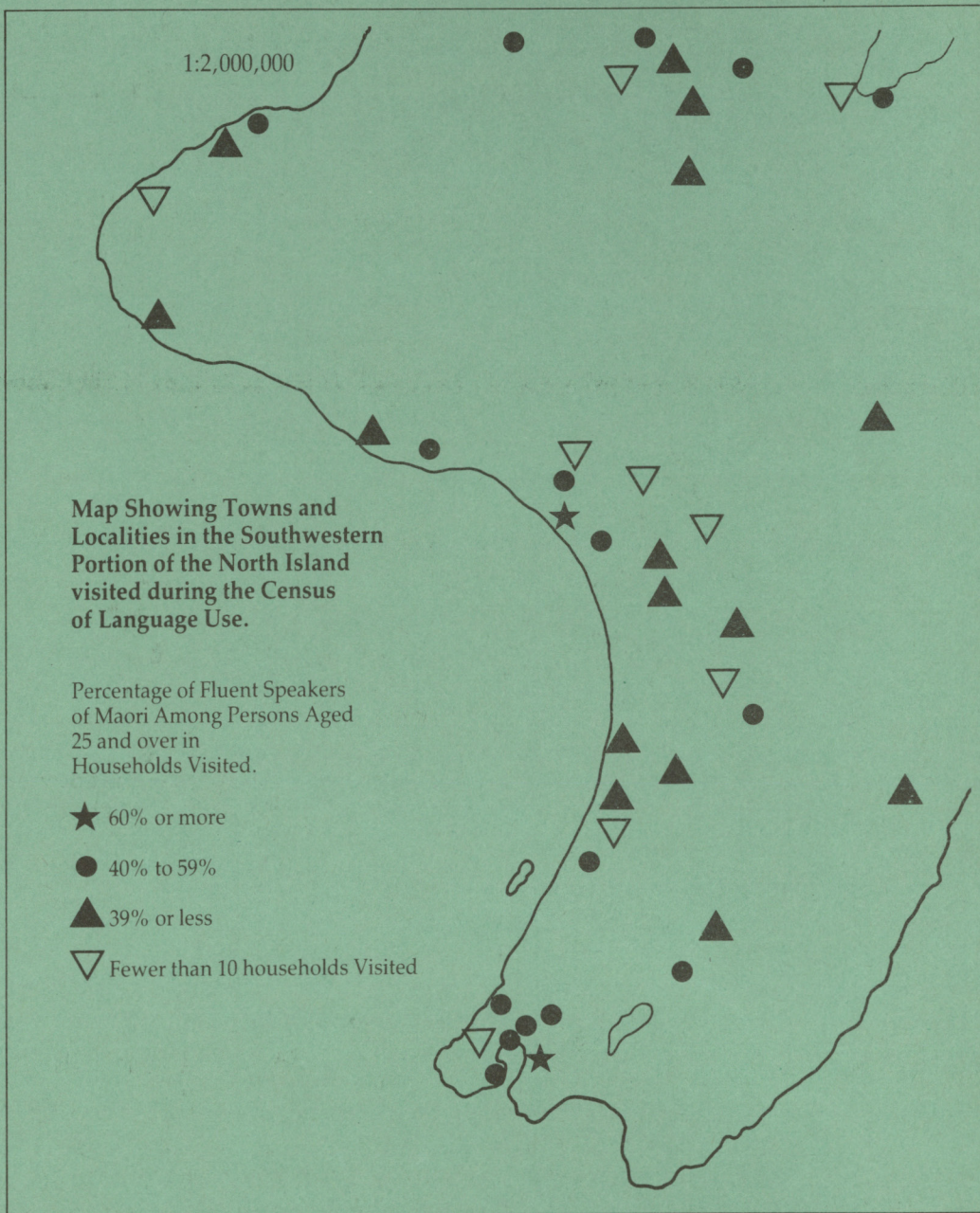
● Two thirds or
more of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori

◆ 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 FOXTON

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 26 households in Foxton in March 1978. The interviewers were Hiria Tumoana (Tuhoe) and Sharon Moerkerk (Maniapoto). Twenty-three interviews were carried out in English; the rest were partly or entirely in Maori.

The households surveyed had a total population of 136, and 129 of them were of Maori descent. This was about one-fifth of the Maori population of Foxton at the time.

RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned nine major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. However, by far the most, 84 people or two-thirds of the total, belonged to Ngati Raukawa.

Ability to Speak and Understand Maori

The table on the next page shows that by far the most of the people who spoke and understood Maori well were kaumatua over 45. Over half of the people surveyed knew almost no spoken Maori at the time. They included two-thirds of the people under 25, and a little more than half of the people between 25 and 44. There was, therefore, a large number of adults in Foxton who couldn't speak Maori, and this was to play an important part in whether the language was to be used or not used in the home and in the community, now and in the future.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN FOXTON (1978)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	13	59	14	64	4	18	4	18
25-44	5	17	6	21	7	24	16	55
15-24	1	4	2	8	11	46	11	46
2-14	0		0		13	24	41	76
Overall	19	15	22	17	25	27	72	56

(Numbers and percentages refer to members of households visited; 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 nearly all households visited. There were 19 homes with dependent children and in all of them the people always spoke about everyday things in English. There were seven childless households visited, and members of five of them always spoke in English among themselves or with visitors. In the other two households, although some Maori was used now and then, English was still the main language used.

The Maori Language in the Community

English was also the main language spoken in the community between adult neighbours, friends and workmates, and it was the only language used by people under 25. The people most likely to

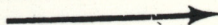
Speak Maori regularly outside of the household were the very elderly who always used their mother tongue with friends and family of the same age, who spoke Maori.

The Maori language was still important, however, in ceremonies on the marae such as karanga, whaikorero and waiata. Many people were worried that this important part of Maori culture may also be lost in the future, as few people under 25 spoke Maori well, and most people at hui spoke English when the official part was over. Many people spoke Maori only for religious services in the community, and silent prayer and grace in their homes.

If any two members of the Maori community in Foxton were to meet unexpectedly, the chances were about one in forty that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over 25 the chances were much greater, one in seven. But school-age children would probably not be able to speak in Maori with each other.

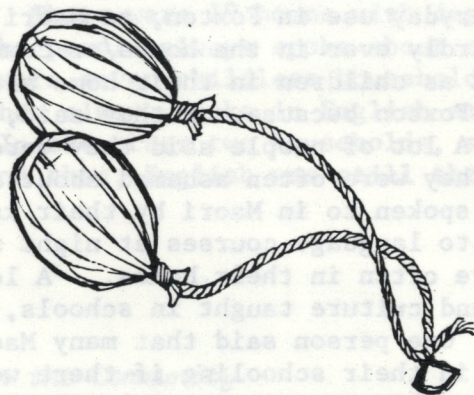
Attitudes towards the Language

Many people were worried that Maori might die out altogether as a language for everyday use in Foxton, as Maori was heard mostly on the marae and hardly ever in the homes/or community. Some people had spoken Maori as children in their home areas but never used the language in Foxton because, as they said, 'no one speaks Maori around here'. A lot of people said they were sorry they couldn't speak Maori. They were often ashamed about always having to reply in English when spoken to in Maori by their kaumatua. Some of them were going to language courses at night school and were trying to use Maori more often in their homes. A lot of people wanted Maori language and culture taught in schools, especially at the primary level. One person said that many Maori children might be more interested in their schooling if there were courses or a Maori Club they could go to. She felt that most schools in the area were not doing enough to teach the language or to get people interested in it, and that most Maori children left fed up with the whole education system.

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. 

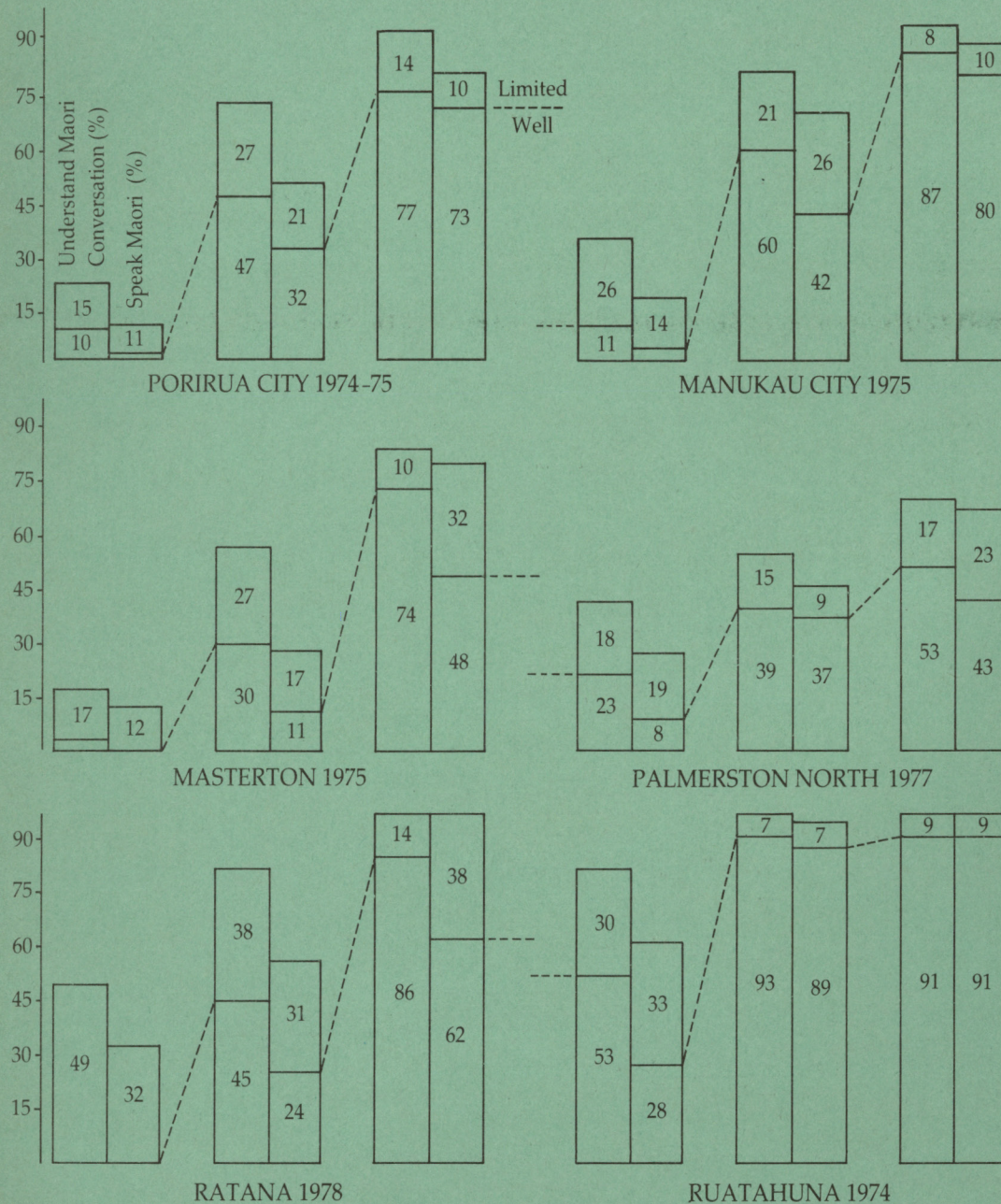
CONCLUSION

The results of the survey show that English may have taken over from Maori as the language for everyday use in the home and community in Foxton, perhaps two generations ago. (Several people over 60 understood hardly any Maori.) Just the same, the language was still very important in the lives of the people we spoke with, and many wanted it taught in schools. Some people thought that there were too many people in society generally who ran down Maori culture, and were against other languages besides English being spoken in the community. In fact, English was used so much on TV, radio, and in newspapers and magazines that it hurt the chances of Maori to survive into the future. Tribal wananga were being held on local marae to teach the language and oral traditions of the people before kaumatua passed away. Since the time of this survey, other wananga have been held, and many people of all ages have gone to them. The Maori Affairs Department is also helping young children to learn Maori by setting up kohanga reo (language nests) throughout the country. So there is much hope that the language will survive, if the people want it to.



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.