

# 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

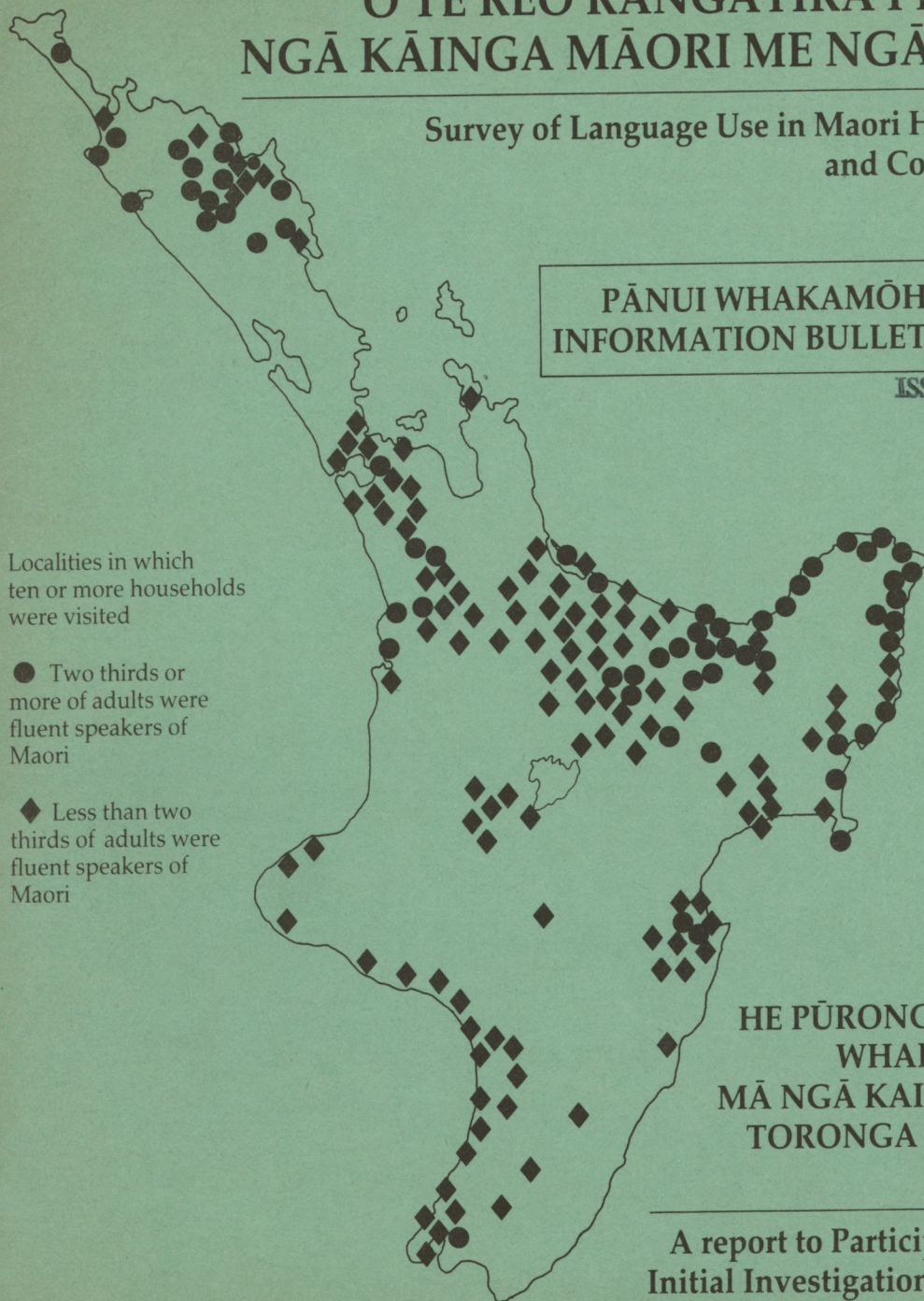
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Localities in which  
ten or more households  
were visited

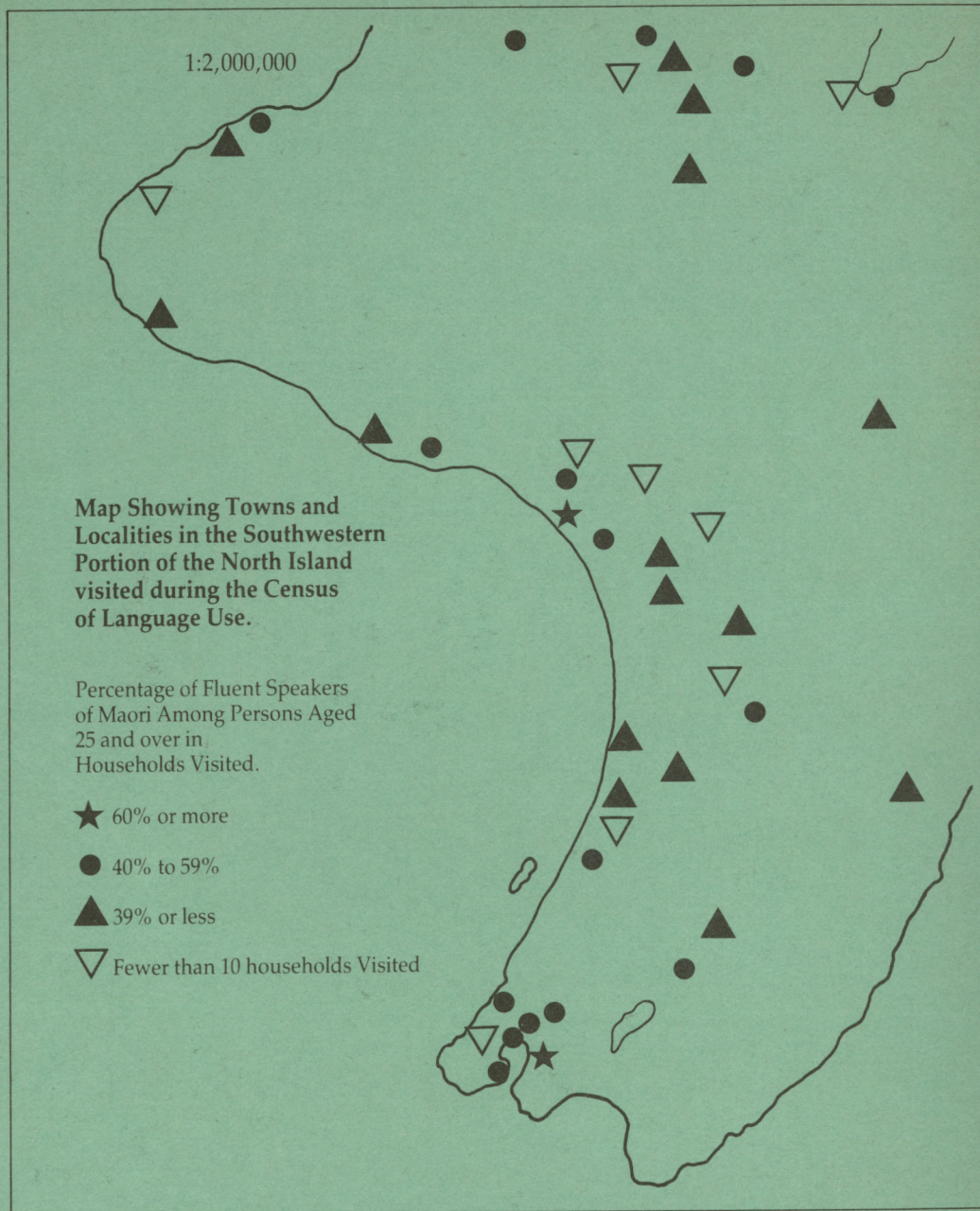
● Two thirds or  
more of adults were  
fluent speakers of  
Maori

◆ 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 RANGITIKEI COUNTY

This report contains a summary of the results of the NZCER Maori language survey in six districts in Rangitikei County and adjoining townships: Bulls, Marton, Taihape, Moawhango, Rata and Kauangaroa. The survey findings for one other area in the region, Ratana, are the subject of a separate report (no. 79 in this series).

Between January and June 1978 a total of 78 households were visited in the six districts, with 360 people altogether, 345 of Maori descent (16 households in Bulls, 28 in Marton, 25 in Taihape, six in Rata, and three in Kauangaroa). Almost half the Maori people then living in Bulls, Rata and Kauangaroa were included in the survey, and about one in six in the other districts. One family was interviewed in Moawhango; this information has been included in the results for Taihape in the report.

The interviewers were Sharon Moerkerk (Ngati Maniapoto), Hiria Tumoana (Tuhoe), Allan Hawea (Ngati Awa), Tari Nicholas (Ngaiterangi & Ngapuhi), Tawini Rangihau (Tuhoe) and Kuini Wano (Tuhoe). Five interviews (two each in Marton and Taihape, and one in Kauangaroa) were in Maori, two (in Marton) in Maori and English, and the rest mostly in English.

Although, in the towns at least, a large number of iwi were mentioned as the main ones of the people we visited (13 in Marton, and 8 each in Bulls and Taihape), the traditional tangata whenua were the only ones with more than a few members in each district. Tuwharetoa was the main iwi in Taihape (48 percent of the people in the families surveyed), Marton (47 percent), and Rata (71 percent); Ngati Raukawa in Bulls (72 percent), and Nga Wairiki in Kauangaroa (everyone).

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KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN RANGITIKEI COUNTY (1978)

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	Bulls		Marton		Taihape		Rata & Kauangaroa	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<i>Fluent Speakers</i>								
45 yrs & over	7	44	13	57	9	43	7	54
25 to 44 yrs	1	7	2	7	6	21	0	..
15 to 24 yrs	0	..	0	..	0	..	0	..
2 to 14 yrs	0	..	0	..	0	..	0	..
Overall	8	12	15	10	15	14	7	22
<i>Understand Easily</i>								
45 yrs & over	10	63	18	78	12	57	10	77
25 to 44 yrs	4	27	6	21	9	32	0	..
15 to 24 yrs	0	..	0	..	1	5	2	40
2 to 14 yrs	0	..	0	..	0	..	2	17
Overall	14	21	24	17	22	20	14	44
<i>Limited Understanding</i>								
45 yrs & over	5	31	5	22	3	14	2	15
25 to 44 yrs	7	47	5	17	9	32	2	100
15 to 24 yrs	4	20	11	42	7	35	2	40
2 to 14 yrs	4	24	9	14	9	23	0	..
Overall	20	29	30	21	28	26	6	19
<i>No Knowledge</i>								
45 yrs & over	1	6	0	..	6	29	1	8
25 to 44 yrs	4	27	18	62	10	36	0	..
15 to 24 yrs	16	80	15	58	12	60	1	20
2 to 14 yrs	13	76	57	86	31	77	10	83
Overall	34	50	90	62	59	54	12	37

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(Numbers and percentages refer to members of households visited; percentages have been rounded to nearest whole number).

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In the townships most of the heads of the households we visited had been brought up somewhere else; only a quarter of those in Taihape, and two-fifths in Marton and Bulls, had spent most of their lives in Rangitikei. However, about three-quarters of the heads of the Rata and Kauangaroa households were from these or neighbouring districts.

Results of the Linguistic Survey

Ability to Speak and Understand Maori

As the table on the opposite page shows, fluent Maori-speakers in all these districts were mostly people in their fifties or older, although a few younger adults and one or two teenagers had a good understanding of the language. The majority of children of primary school age and younger were reported to have had no understanding of Maori at the time of the survey.

Just the same, quite a few of the household heads we interviewed had Maori as their first language (although some of these told us they were no longer fluent speakers). Altogether, 30 of these people said they had first learned to speak Maori, three had learned Maori and English about the same time, and 48 had first understood and spoken English (the patterns were much the same in each locality). English was the first language most people had learned to use for reading and writing, however: only four people (three in Taihape and one in Marton) had first learned to read and write in Maori, and one person in Rata had become literate in both languages at about the same time.

### Use of the Maori Language in the Household

English was also the main language in most homes. Only one family with young children (in Bulls) occasionally used Maori in conversations when all the family were together, for example at mealtimes; in the other 52 English was the only language used on such occasions. In families without dependent children Maori was used more often; most of the time in three homes (one each in Marton, Rata and Kauangaroa), and occasionally in four others (three in Marton and one in Bulls). However, even these were solidly outnumbered by the 18 such households which used only English.

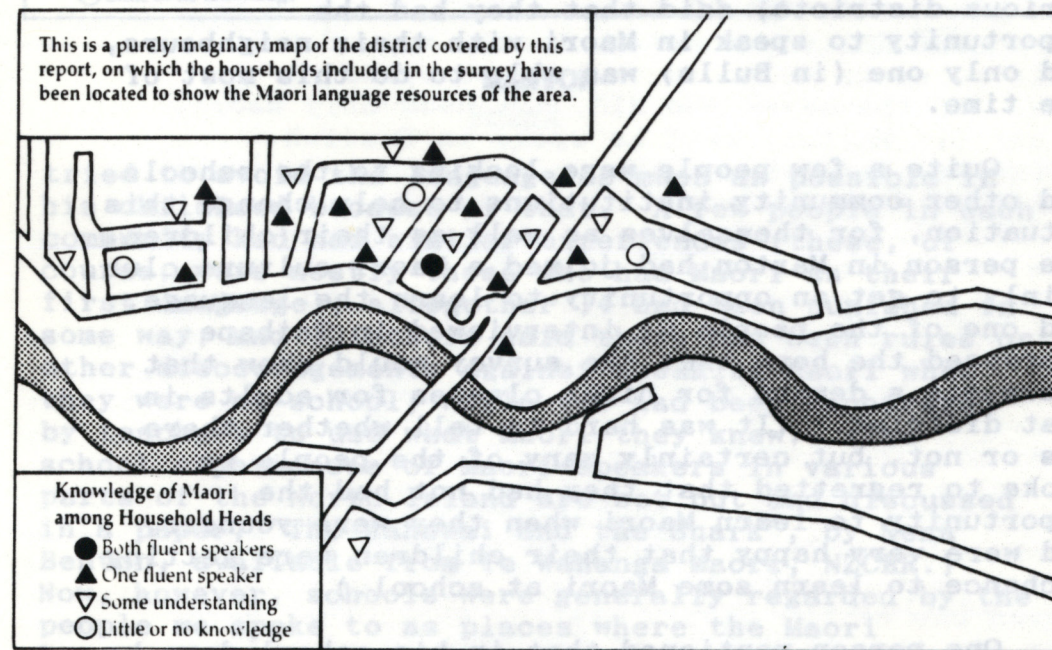
In five families, one each in Bulls and Marton, and three in Taihape, Maori was occasionally used by parents to individual children, but the children were likely to reply in Maori in only two of these (one in Taihape and the other in Bulls). One Taihape family had "Maori-only days", in an effort to revive the language. One Marton parent, who was also keen that the children should learn Maori, said one of the problems was that few other children spoke Maori; the only way to get around this, she thought, was to encourage parents to learn at the same time. (Steps to do just that have since been taken through the Atarangi and Kohanga Reo movements.)

Otherwise, English was the family language almost everywhere. Part of the reason for this was that only a few households had two Maori-speaking household heads, and more than half the families in most districts had no senior member who could speak Maori fluently: this is illustrated in the diagrams on the next few pages. Other reasons are mentioned in the next section of this report. When there were Maori speakers in the family, the language was likely to be used at home when visitors who could speak Maori appeared; there were 26 homes where

Maori was sometimes spoken to visitors, ten in Taihape, nine in Marton, four in Bulls, two in Kauangaroa and one in Rata.

### Maori Language in the Community

Several people told us that they had been fluent speakers of Maori as children, but had "lost" the language after leaving their home districts for town. One or two had regained their proficiency; one lady, for example, had re-learned the language after she married because her mother-in-law was a fluent speaker. More often than not, however, the strength of English in the community had lessened the chances that adults or children would pick up or retain a good command of Maori.

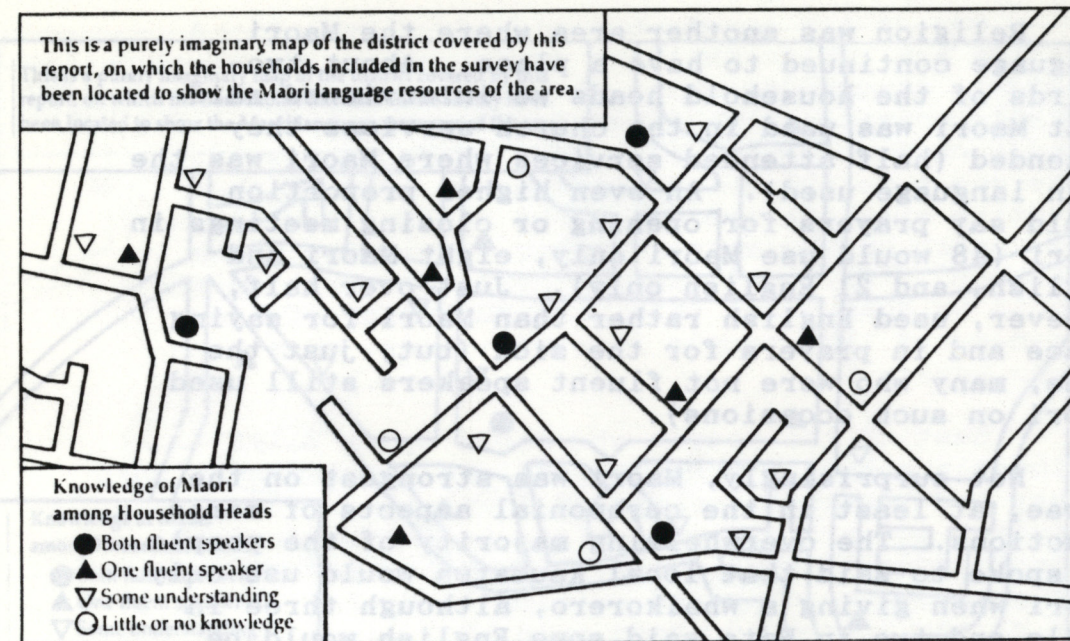


TAIHAPE

Maori people were a minority in all these districts. In Bulls, for example, despite the importance of its marae, the Maori community formed only eight percent of the town's population; even if all had been Maori-speakers, they would have had to speak English most of the time in most situations, unless the non-Maori population was also willing to become bilingual. In Taihape and Kauangaroa Maori people made up a quarter of the population, which meant they were still outnumbered by three to one. (Marton was 17 percent Maori and Rata 15 percent at the time of the survey). One person in Taihape told us that when she had tried speaking Maori there "people acted as if I was crazy". Another, in Bulls, said that even those who could speak Maori there seemed to prefer English now, and people in these and the other districts commented on the lack of opportunities to speak the language naturally. Only seven people, for example, spread through the various districts, said that they had the opportunity to speak in Maori with their neighbours, and only one (in Bulls) was able to do this most of the time.

Quite a few people were looking to the schools and other community institutions to help change this situation, for themselves as well as their children. One person in Marton had joined a Maori culture club mainly to get an opportunity to learn the language, and one of the people we interviewed in Taihape expressed the hope that the survey would show that there was a demand for night classes for adults in that district. (It was hard to tell whether there was or not, but certainly many of the people we spoke to regretted that they had not had the opportunity to learn Maori when they were younger, and were very happy that their children were getting a chance to learn some Maori at school.)

One person mentioned that in his school days he had been punished for speaking Maori, and he had



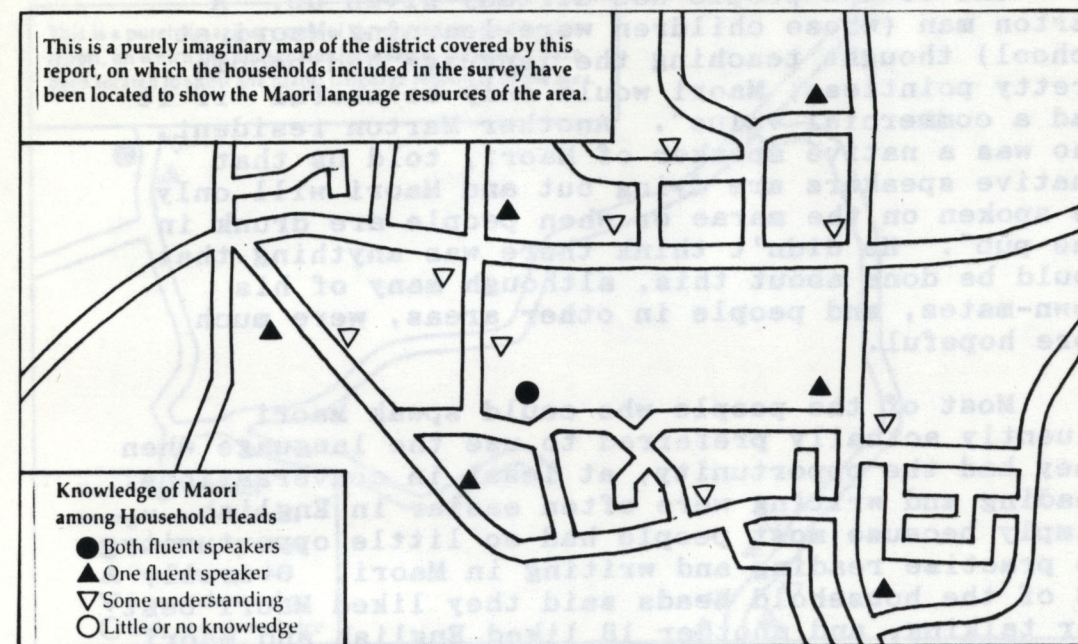
MARTON

tried to avoid the language as much as possible in his childhood because of that. A few people in each community had had similar experiences (these, of course, were mostly those who had Maori as their first language); altogether 14 had been punished in some way, and 10 others said there had been rules or other discouragements against speaking Maori when they were at school, while two had been encouraged by teachers to use what Maori they knew. (The school experiences of Maori-speakers in various parts of the North Island are set out and discussed in a paper, "The Kahawai and the Shark", by Nena Benton, available from Te Wahanga Maori, NZCER.) Now, however, schools were generally regarded by the people we spoke to as places where the Maori language was respected, and there was hope that the local schools would assist in its revival.

Religion was another area where the Maori language continued to have a place. About two-thirds of the household heads we interviewed said that Maori was used in the church services they attended (half attended services where Maori was the main language used). An even higher proportion would say prayers for opening or closing meetings in Maori (48 would use Maori only, eight Maori and English, and 21 English only). Just over half, however, used English rather than Maori for saying grace and in prayers for the sick (but, just the same, many who were not fluent speakers still used Maori on such occasions).

Not surprisingly, Maori was strongest on the marae, at least in the ceremonial aspects of marae functions. The overwhelming majority of the people we spoke to said that local kaumatua would use only Maori when giving a whaikorero, although three in Bulls and two in Rata said some English would be used occasionally. However, hardly any of the people we spoke to would themselves speak on the marae. Of the seven who did, six used only Maori, and one (in Marton) said he spoke in English. Informally, English was the main language in marae situations for a majority of the people we interviewed, although for the fluent speakers the marae was a place where they, and the people they regarded as "kaumatua", were very likely to speak Maori quite often.

Among the members of the families we interviewed, there was a fifty-fifty chance that two adults meeting accidentally would be able to talk to each other in Maori in Kauangaroa, one chance in five in Rata, and about one in eight elsewhere (which shows why most people had come to regard English as the "normal" language, even among Maori). If even one of the people meeting each other were under 25, the chances of a successful conversation in Maori would have been extremely remote.



## BULLS

### *Attitudes Towards the Maori Language*

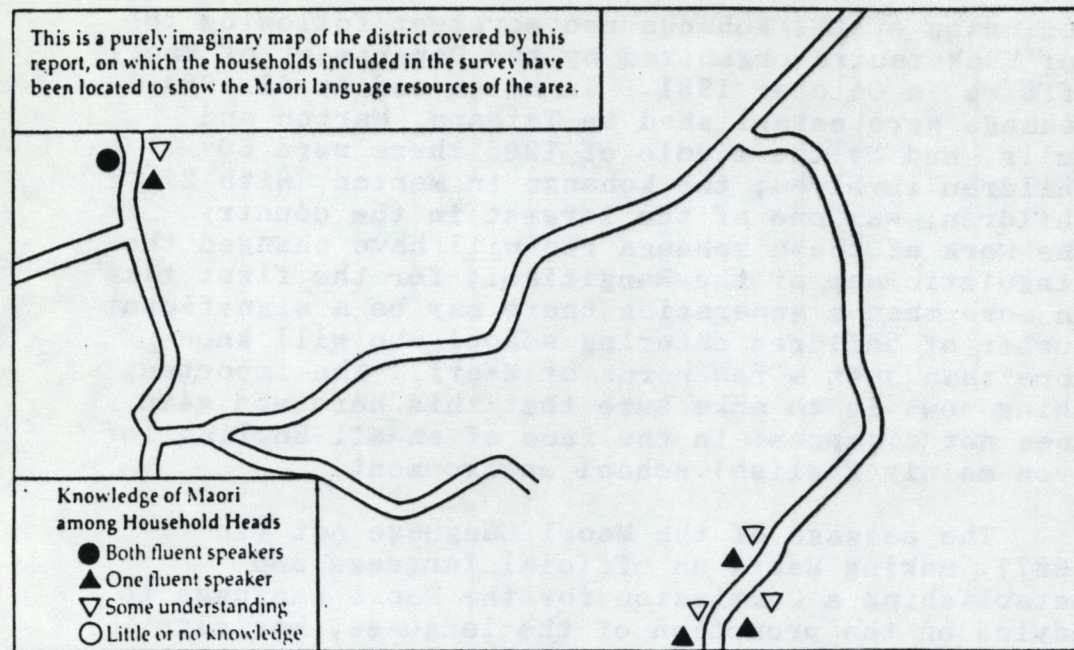
There was a widespread feeling in all districts among the people we interviewed that the Maori language was important, that its use in schools should be supported and extended, and a desire that the next generation should know more Maori than many of their parents. People generally were very pleased with the school programmes in which their children were participating. However, there was also a feeling of isolation; fluent speakers especially were apprehensive about the implications for the future of the language of lack of opportunities for using Maori in everyday situations in these districts.

One or two people had already given up. A Marton man (whose children were learning Maori at school) thought teaching the language had become pretty pointless; Maori would only be useful "if it had a commercial value". Another Marton resident, who was a native speaker of Maori, told us that "native speakers are dying out and Maori will only be spoken on the marae or when people are drunk in the pub". He didn't think there was anything that could be done about this, although many of his town-mates, and people in other areas, were much more hopeful.

Most of the people who could speak Maori fluently actually preferred to use the language when they had the opportunity, at least in conversations; reading and writing were often easier in English, simply because most people had so little opportunity to practise reading and writing in Maori. Overall, 28 of the household heads said they liked Maori best for talking, and another 18 liked English and Maori equally, compared with 34 who preferred English (although eight of these said they would choose Maori if only they could speak it well enough). For reading and writing, English was chosen by 45 people, as against 21 who liked Maori best, and 14 who were equally comfortable in either language.

### Conclusion

In all these districts, Maori was overwhelmingly an adult language at the time of the survey, and even then there were many adults in each district whose own knowledge of the language was slight. There were some small differences between the various communities in the degree to which some knowledge of Maori was spread around. Rata and Kauangaroa were the only places where we encountered children under the age of 15 who could understand



### KAUANGAROA AND RATA

conversational Maori relatively easily (although they were not typical of their age group in either district). In Bulls and Marton, fewer than half the families we visited had even one Maori-speaking household head. Taihape (like Ratana, the other Rangitikei township visited but discussed in another report) was slightly better off, in that about half the families had at least one fluent speaker, although there were no Maori-speaking children in the Taihape households, and even among adults Maori-speakers were a minority.

The people in these districts were very aware of the situation at that time, and many were wanting to do something about it, although they did not know what steps to take. One effective response to this need came a few years after the survey, with the

beginning of the kohanga reo movement following the Hui Whakatauirā organized by the Department of Maori Affairs in October 1981. In March and April 1984, kohanga were established in Taihape, Marton and Bulls, and by the middle of 1985 there were 60 children involved; the kohanga in Marton, with 27 children, was one of the largest in the country. The work of these kohanga reo will have changed the linguistic map of the Rangitikei; for the first time in more than a generation there may be a significant number of children entering school who will know more than just a few words of Maori. The important thing now is to make sure that this hard won gain does not disappear in the face of an all-English (or even mainly English) school environment.

The passage of the Maori Language Act (in 1987), making Maori an official language and establishing a Commission for the Maori Language to advise on the promotion of the language, has also given much hope for the future, even for those who argue that Maori must have commercial value for it to be worth learning and speaking. Certainly, the people in Rangitikei have an uphill battle to fight and win if the language is to flourish once again in their region, but at least they are no longer alone in their struggle.

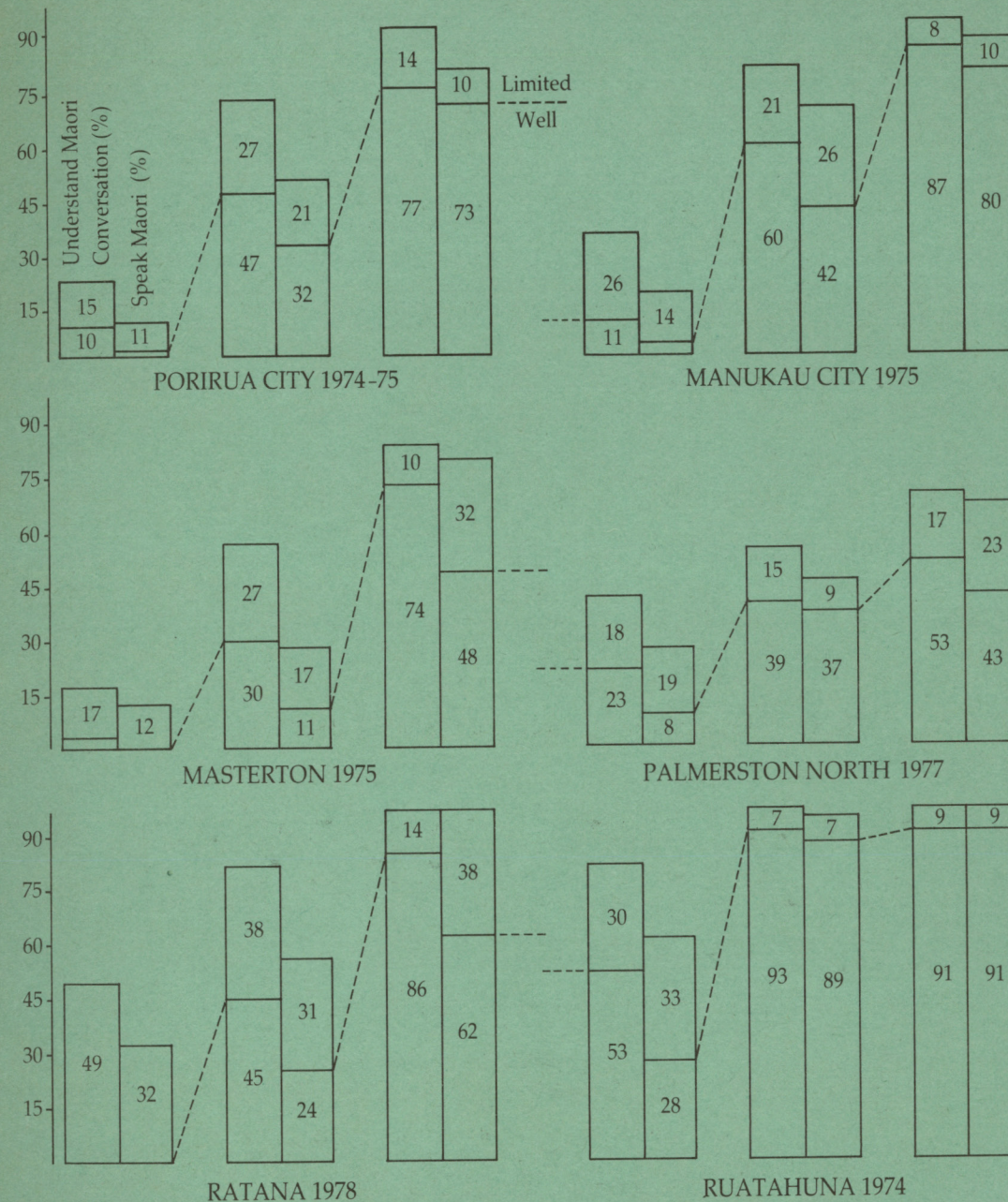
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This report was prepared by Richard Benton

Field Records abstracted by Paula Martin (Rangitane)  
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 April 1988 [141]

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.