

TE TIROHANGA I TE KŌREROTANGA 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

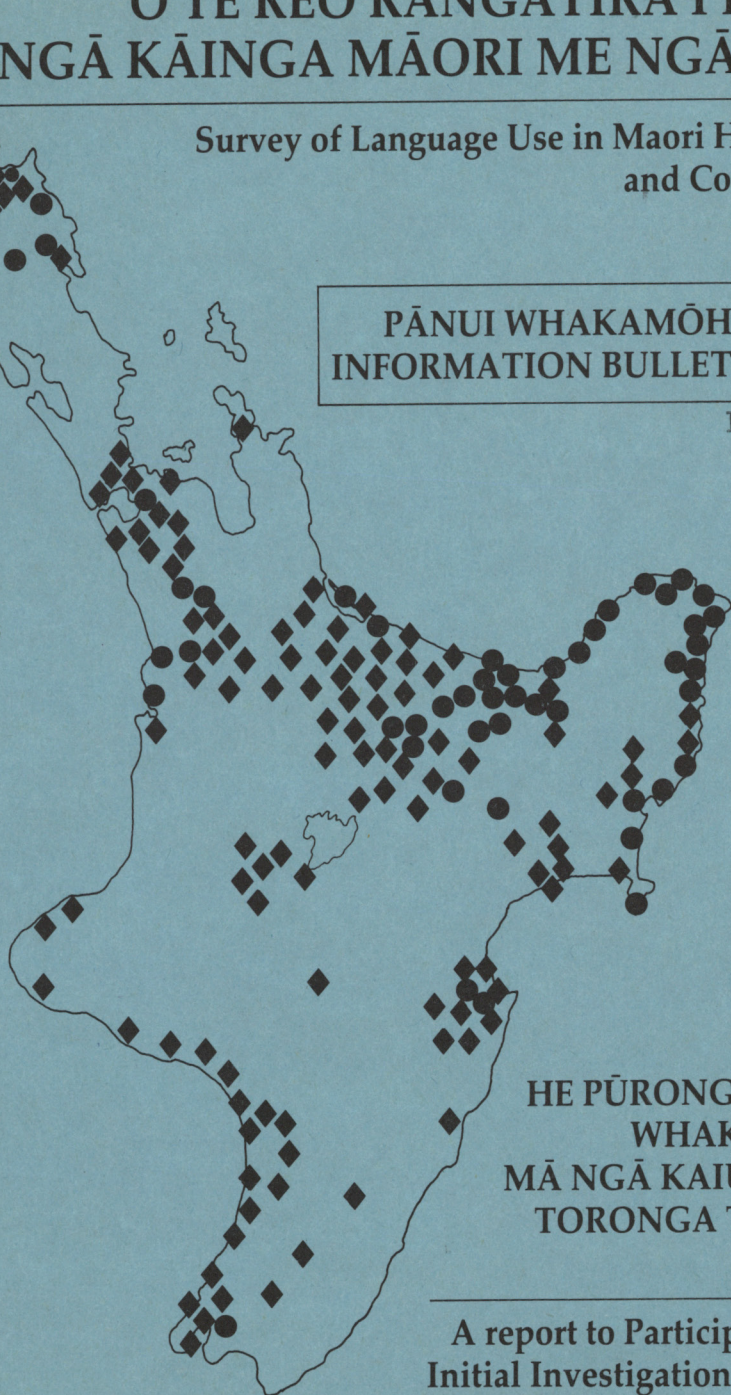
143

ISSN 0113-3063

Localities in which
ten or more households
were visited

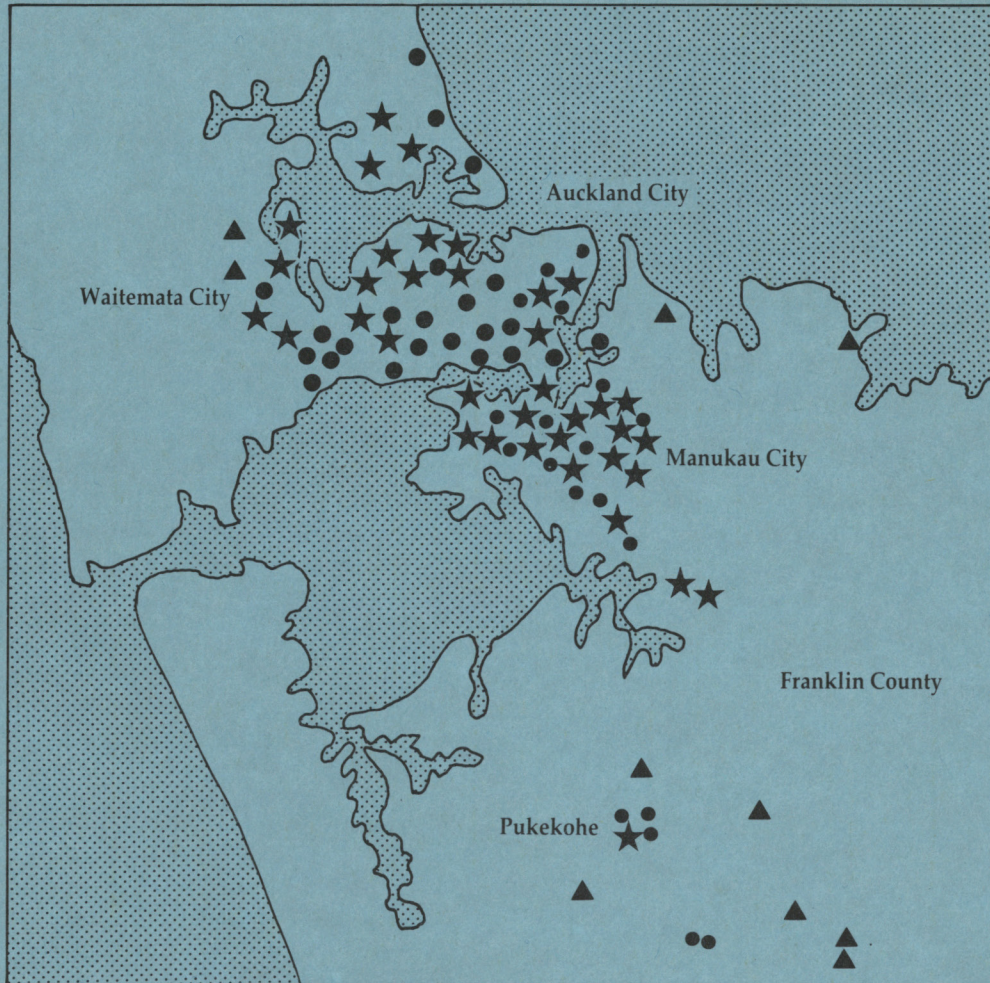
● Two thirds or
more of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori

◆ 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



Maori Speakers in the Greater Auckland Area

This map shows the approximate number of people able to understand Maori with ease in the Greater Auckland Area, based on the results of the Socio-Linguistic Survey (1974-76). Each star ★ represents 500 people, and each dot ● a further 100 people. Small towns and rural localities visited in the survey with less than 100 speakers are represented by a triangle ▲.

THE MAORI LANGUAGE FROM BOMBAY TO MERCER

In January 1976 interviewers visited 13 families in the communities of Bombay (one family), Pokeno (four), Kellyville (three) and Mercer (five), in the course of the NZCER Maori language survey. All but one of the 65 people included were of Maori descent, about ten percent of the entire Maori population of these districts at the time. Other localities in Franklin County and the nearby towns were also visited, and the Maori language situation in these places has been outlined in other reports in this series: Pukekohe, Paerata and Puni (Information Bulletin no. 63), Umupuia (no. 106), Tuakau (no. 47), and Waiuku (no. 46).

One household head was interviewed in Maori, another in Maori and English (both these people were from Mercer), and the rest were interviewed only in English, except for one question which everyone was asked in Maori. The interviewers were Evelyn Te Uira (Waikato), Audrey Cooper (Waikato), Maku Potae (Ngati Porou) and Kathleen Grace Potae (Tuwharetoa).

Altogether, six iwi were mentioned as the main ones to which members of the families we visited belonged; however most of the people in these families were affiliated with Waikato. Not many of the adults had actually grown up in the general area; only about a quarter of the household heads had spent their childhood somewhere in Franklin County or adjoining towns, although the majority of their children had been brought up in these four communities.

=====

Knowledge of Spoken Maori from Pokeno to Bombay (1976)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers	Understand Easily	Limited Understanding	No Knowledge
45 years & over	11 (100%)	11 (100%)	.. (...)	.. (...)
25-44 yrs	2 (22%)	4 (44%)	4 (44%)	1 (11%)
15-24 yrs	2 (22%)	3 (33%)	5 (56%)	1 (11%)
2-14 yrs	.. (...)	2 (6%)	15 (45%)	16 (49%)
Overall	15 (24%)	20 (32%)	24 (39%)	18 (29%)

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

=====

Results of the Linguistic Survey

Ability to Speak and Understand Maori

As the table shows quite clearly, people over 45 in the families we visited could all speak Maori fluently, but with younger age groups there was a very sharp drop in the proportions who could understand Maori, and an even sharper drop in the number of speakers. As in other communities in and around Auckland (and in many other parts of the country) at that time, about half the school age and younger children knew no Maori at all, and only a few knew enough to follow an ordinary conversation.

Maori was the first language which nine of the 13 household heads we interviewed had understood as children, but only three of them (all living in Mercer) had learned to read and write Maori before becoming literate in English.

Use of the Maori Language in the Household

Although English was the main language used in most families when everyone was together, one family with children still at home used more Maori, and another four (out of a total of 11) used both Maori and English. English was the main language which parents spoke to their children, although in three families (in Pokeno and Mercer) Maori was also used. There was only one family (in Pokeno) where the children were likely to speak Maori to their parents. Seven of the 13 families said that Maori was also spoken with some of their visitors.

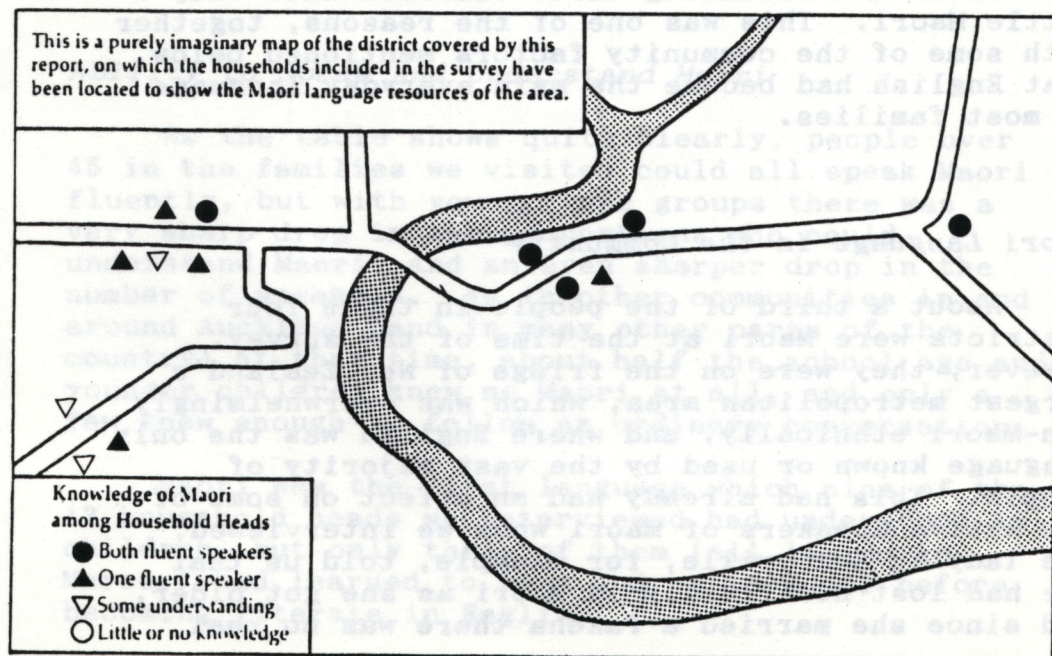
The Maori language resources were not evenly spread through the families we visited. As the diagram on the next page shows, only five of the 13 had two Maori-speaking household heads. Another five had one Maori speaker, but there were young children in only three of those families, while the parents in the remaining three families knew only a little Maori. This was one of the reasons, together with some of the community factors mentioned below, that English had become the main everyday language in most families.

Maori Language in the Community

About a third of the people in these four districts were Maori at the time of the survey. However, they were on the fringe of New Zealand's largest metropolitan area, which was overwhelmingly non-Maori ethnically, and where English was the only language known or used by the vast majority of people. This had already had an effect on some of the native speakers of Maori whom we interviewed; one lady in Kellyville, for example, told us that she had lost her fluency in Maori as she got older, and since she married a Pakeha there was no real

reason to speak Maori at home. Another mentioned that she was the last member of her family to have been brought up as a Maori speaker, and, again, her own children knew only English.

For many native speakers of Maori, the first unavoidable contact with English had been when they started school. This had been an unpleasant experience for quite a few people; seven of the 13 household heads we interviewed in these communities had either been punished themselves for speaking Maori at school (five of them), or had gone to schools where Maori was discouraged. Only one said that teachers were positive in their attitudes to the Maori language while he was at primary school. (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.)



The basically English-speaking nature of the districts was also shown by the lack of opportunities to use Maori in the community at large. Most people had to use English in their conversations outside the home whether they wanted to or not. However, members of five families spoke Maori to neighbours some of the time, but the rest used only English.

For those who attended them, church services were likely to include some Maori; five heads of families said Maori was used in the services they went to, compared with two where only English was used. It was the same with prayers for opening and closing meetings: two people would say these only in Maori, three used either language, and two used English. Those who said grace preferred Maori over English by six to two. Interestingly, most people had been involved in praying for the sick; again, six used only Maori, but five used only English, and one prayed in either language.

Maori was still most secure on the marae, especially in the formal and ceremonial aspects of marae gatherings. Although two of the adults we interviewed said that their kaumatua might use both Maori and English during whaikorero, the other eleven said that only Maori would be used. Only two of these people actually spoke on the marae themselves, and both of them used only Maori.

When people were relaxing, however, English was more likely to be heard in a marae setting, especially among younger people (as might be expected). Although seven people thought their kaumatua would chat on the marae mainly in Maori, while six thought both languages would be used, only two said they themselves spoke Maori most of the time when chatting to people at a marae function. However another seven used both Maori and English, as against four who said that they spoke only

English, which made the marae the place where Maori-speakers among these families were most likely to speak their native language.

As far as general usefulness was concerned, English and Maori were in one way about equally matched among the over-25 age group in the families we visited; there was a fifty-fifty chance that if two of these people met by accident they would be able to communicate in Maori if they wanted to. (Of course, there was a 100 percent chance that they could communicate in English, which made the position of Maori much weaker than it might otherwise have been.) It was no contest in the under-25 group, however: there was about one chance in 12 that an older person might be understood if Maori was spoken in a chance meeting with someone from the younger age group, but virtually no chance at all that two of the younger people from these communities would be able to do much more than greet each other in Maori at the time of the survey.

Attitudes Towards the Maori Language

The people we interviewed in these districts did not have much to say about what they thought about the future of the Maori language, its place in the schools, and so on. One mother in Kellyville, however, told us that she wished she had been able to learn Maori when she was a child, and she hoped that her children would get the chance, through the schools, to speak Maori and learn about the Maori language. She wished she could speak, read and write Maori.

The other 12 household heads interviewed were equally divided between those who preferred to speak Maori whenever they got the chance, those who preferred English, and those who were just as comfortable in either language. For reading and

writing, however, only one preferred Maori (and this person told us that they actually read mostly in English, as there was so little Maori reading material available); one liked both languages equally, and the other ten preferred English for these purposes.

Conclusion

Although only a few families were interviewed in these districts, their answers to our questions were similar to those given by people in similar situations elsewhere, and they were probably quite representative of the local Maori communities at that time. Maori had clearly been replaced by English as the main language in most situations. The language was still relatively strong on the marae, however, and in some other cultural and religious settings.

Some older people still felt more comfortable in Maori than in English, and it seemed to be the presence of English as the overwhelmingly dominant language in the outside world that had made it the natural language to use at home, even in families where both parents had spoken Maori as children. Although we had the impression that most of the people we spoke to regarded this state of affairs as unavoidable, one of them, at least, was very unhappy about the lack of opportunities to learn and use the language, and we had no reason to believe that she was the only person in these communities to feel that way.

The communities where the Maori language situation was most like what it seemed to be in those mentioned in this report were places like Tuakau and Taupiri, or Henderson and many other

areas in and around Auckland City (and, further afield, Kawerau, Opotiki, and even Gisborne), where a high proportion of adults were bilingual in Maori and English, but few if any young children could speak Maori fluently.

Maori people in many communities like these realized that if nothing was done soon, the predictions that Maori would die out as a living language would certainly come true. At the end of 1981, a decisive step was taken to make sure that this did not happen, with the planning of the first kohanga reo, and by 1985 there were three kohanga operating within ten kilometers of one or other of the communities covered by this report. A kohanga was opened in Pukekohe in May 1983, with one of the supervisors coming from Bombay. In 1984, two more were started, one in Paerata and another in Tuakau. This would have given new hope to many parents and grandparents who had thought that there was nothing they could do to prevent their language and culture being completely swamped. Since then, the Maori Language Act of 1987 has made Maori an official language of New Zealand, and set up a Commission for the Maori Language (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Maori) to promote the language and to advise the government on how to ensure that *Te Reo Rangatira* flourishes for the benefit of future generations.

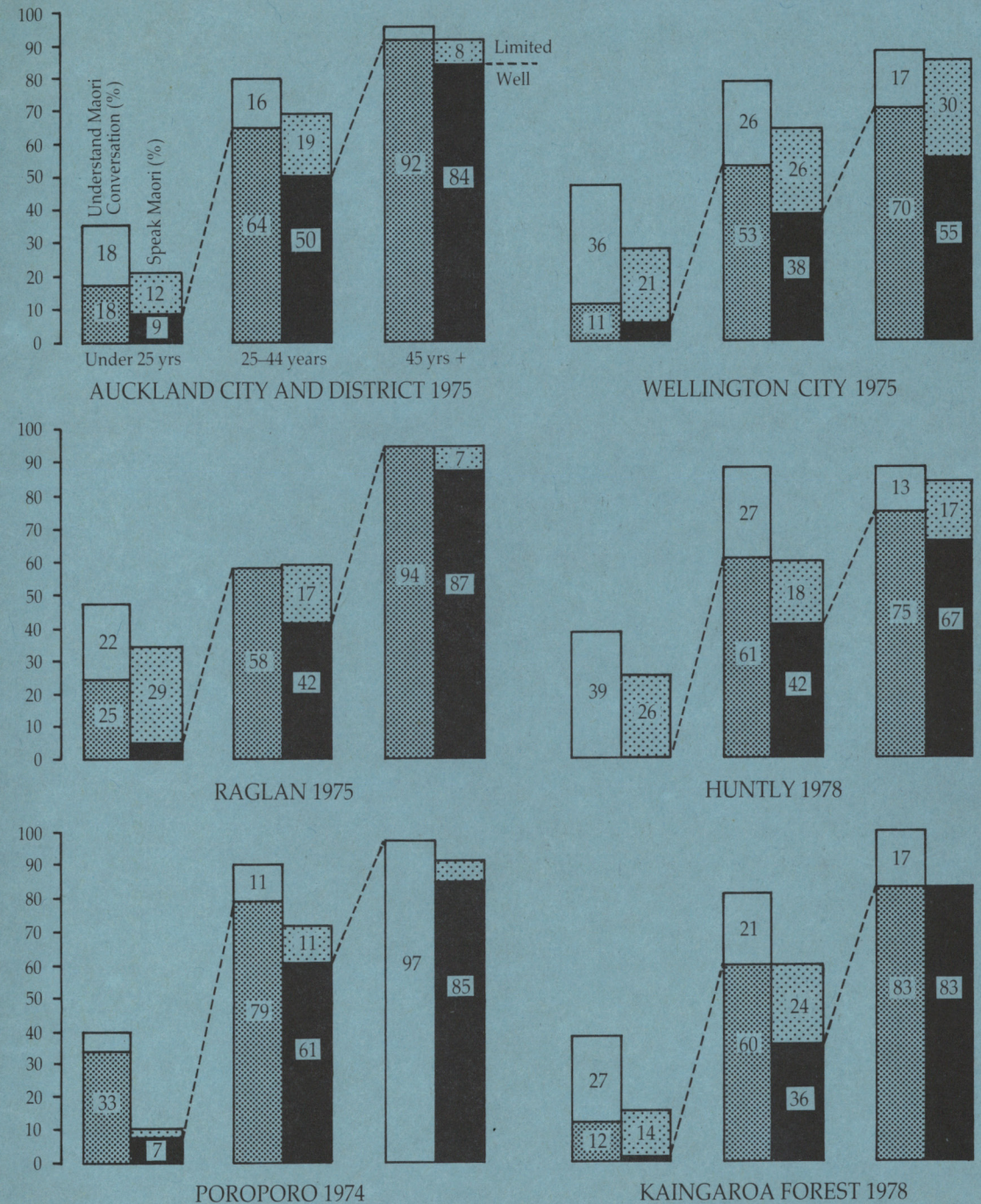
=====

This report was prepared by Richard Benton

Design & Production: Hone Whaanga (Ngati Kahungunu)

(c) Copyright, Te Wahanga Maori, NZCER, Wellington
April 1988 [143]

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.