

KEI TE TĀONE NUI

MĀORI AND THE CITY (1945–1970)

by Samuel Denny,
Caitlin Moffat-Young,
and Aroha Harris

Many people living in New Zealand enjoyed good times in the decades following the Second World War. The economy grew quickly, and there were plenty of jobs. Māori, especially young Māori, wanted to be part of the action, but the new jobs were in the city and most Māori still lived in rural areas. So thousands left their homes for what poet Hone Tuwhare called the “golden city”. While life there seemed attractive, it would also be challenging.



A worker at the Crown Lynn factory in Auckland in the 1960s

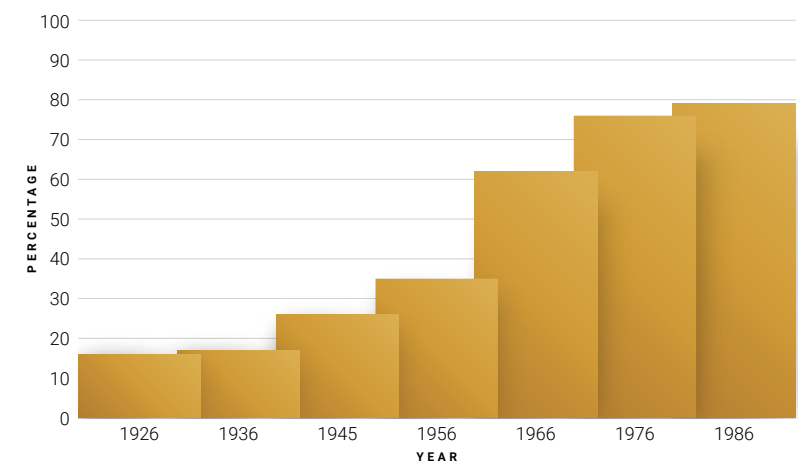


Dancers at the Ngāti Pōneke Young Māori Club in Wellington in the 1950s

The golden city

During the Second World War (1939–1945), thousands of New Zealanders from all walks of life were sent overseas to fight. Those back home were expected to work to support the war effort. Most of the essential jobs were in the cities, and many Māori men and women moved from their rural homes to help do this work.

This was not the first time Māori had experienced cities. Māori first visited Sydney in 1793 and London in 1806, and in Aotearoa, several iwi knew firsthand what it meant to have a Pākehā town grow in their rohe. What was different about urban migration in the twentieth century was the number of people who moved and how quickly it happened. Between 1939 and 1951, the percentage of Māori living in a town or city doubled. By 1956, more than a third of the Māori population (35 percent) had moved to an urban area. A decade later, that number was almost two-thirds (62 percent). A lot of Māori moved to Auckland, and the Māori populations of Wellington, the Hutt Valley, Hamilton, and Gisborne also grew quickly over these years.



Percentage of Māori living in urban areas by decade (1920s to 1980s)



Opportunity

Migration is the movement of people from one place to another, either within a country or between countries. Some people migrate by choice; others are forced to move. In the 1950s and 1960s, Māori moved for all kinds of reasons. Most wanted the opportunities that cities and large towns offered, especially the work. At the time, New Zealand goods were in high demand overseas, and this meant there were lots of jobs. Almost all of these jobs were semi-skilled or unskilled (known as “blue collar” work), which usually meant low pay and long hours. Māori men worked in factories and freezing works and on wharves and building sites. Like the men, many Māori women worked in factories. Others got jobs as cleaners, cooks, and telephone operators.

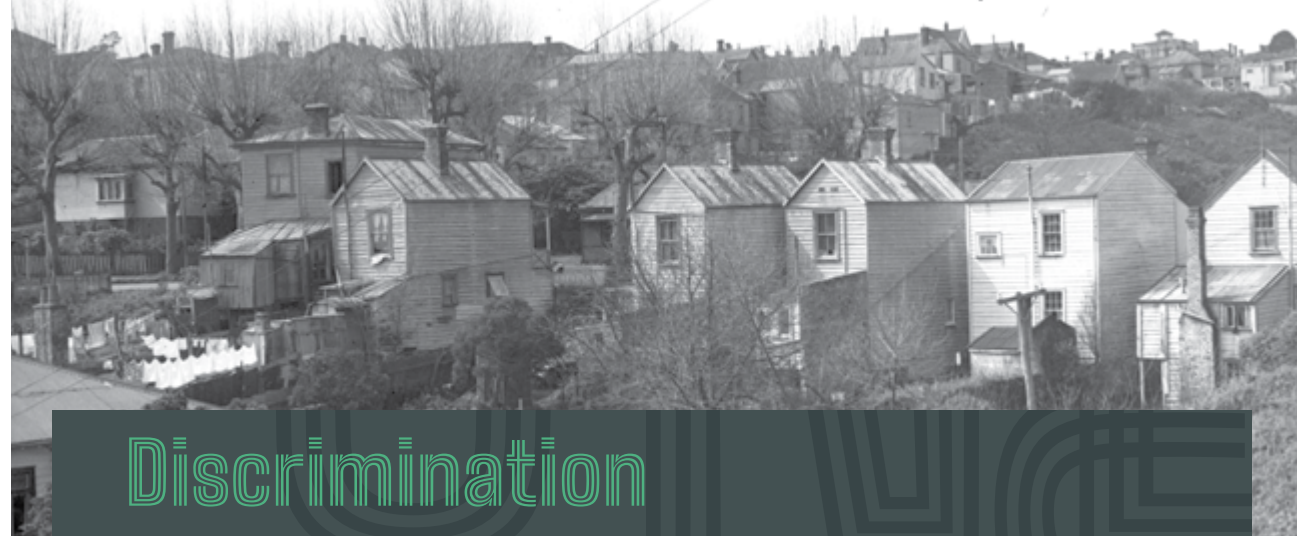
While most Māori ended up with lower-paid jobs, the government did set up training schemes so that some could qualify for skilled work, such as carpentry and mechanics for men and office work for women. However, young Māori weren’t encouraged to study for academic or professional careers. In 1966, there were still very few Māori professionals in Auckland – two dentists, one architect, one journalist, one accountant, seven university lecturers, and fourteen secondary school teachers.

TOP: Peter Papuni, who moved from Ōpōtiki to Auckland to train to be a carpenter

MIDDLE: A clothing factory in Rotorua, 1949, where three-quarters of the employees were Māori women

BOTTOM: Dancers at the Auckland Māori Community Centre, which opened in Freemans Bay in 1949

RIGHT: Young women in a Māori girls’ hostel, Wellington, 1954



Discrimination

Māori did enjoy some of the benefits of city life. Many had job security and a regular pay packet, and young Māori enjoyed dances, live music, and meeting new people. But they also faced discrimination. Some Pākehā landlords didn’t want to rent their houses to Māori, or they overcharged Māori tenants or offered poor-quality houses to families in real need. Some Māori were also turned away from bars or were made to sit in certain parts of the cinema. Others were refused jobs, especially in places such as banks and department stores, where they would be serving customers.

Although the government tried to make it easier for Māori to live in the city, it did little to address the racial discrimination they faced. In this environment, maintaining culture and identity became important goals that Māori shared.



The Hunn report

In 1961, the government released the Hunn report. It explored “the social and economic circumstances of the Māori people”, looking at such things as health, education, housing, employment, and crime. The report’s author, Jack Kent Hunn, argued strongly for **integration** and suggested ways to make it happen as quickly as possible. It was important, he said, that New Zealand’s two peoples became one. Hunn’s ideas about integration affected government policies for years to come.

Hunn had a lot of critics, including academics, church ministers, and Māori leaders. They said he didn’t really want integration; he wanted Māori to adopt Pākehā ways with Pākehā making no changes in return – and this was **assimilation**. In the end, it didn’t really matter what term was used; the critics argued that Māori were expected to put their culture and values aside to blend in with the Pākehā majority. In the meantime, Pākehā weren’t encouraged to understand Māori in any way, and their prejudices weren’t challenged.

In his report, Hunn downplayed the discrimination that Māori faced in their everyday lives. He argued that any evidence came from isolated cases and there would be less racism as Māori became more integrated. Yet the Māori Women’s Welfare League described race relations as “one of the dominant issues” of the times. Many New Zealanders seemed to agree. Thousands protested when Māori rugby players were left out of the All Blacks team that was to tour South Africa in 1960 (“No Maoris – No Tour!” was one campaign slogan). Sporting contact with South Africa wasn’t the only issue that Māori protested about. They also raised long-held and widespread concerns about Māori land rights and Treaty rights.

integration: when people from different cultures join to become one

assimilation: when a group of people and their culture are absorbed by a more dominant people and culture



Urban whānau

Despite strong opposition, the government still aimed to integrate Māori. One policy, known as “pepper-potting”, led to small numbers of Māori families living in Pākehā neighbourhoods. The theory was that if Māori lived scattered among Pākehā, they would more quickly adapt to European ways. But policies such as pepper-potting couldn’t stop Māori from seeking each other out and forming their own communities. These centred around the same values and goals as well as a shared sense of identity.

In the 1960s, Letty Brown started the Waipareira playcentre in West Auckland. Brown wanted her children to be surrounded by aunts and uncles in the same way she had been when she grew up on the East Coast. While those who gathered around the group weren’t always related to the children by blood, they did come together as whānau. The playcentre and other community groups begun by urban Māori showed they could hold on to their world view, even when they lived among Pākehā and the government’s policies encouraged integration.

Hone Tuwhare speaking at the first Māori Festival of the Arts, 1963





Māori also connected through “workplace whānau”. Nellie Williams was employed in an Auckland factory where most of the workers were Māori women. She says that they spoke to one another in te reo Māori and shared kai during breaks. The women had their own way of creating a sense of home and expressing their identity, and they formed strong bonds based on their cultural values. They made the factory floor a place where they could support one another to be Māori together.

Outside work, urban Māori came together in all kinds of ways, including through sports clubs, church, Māori committee meetings, the Māori Women’s Welfare League, and kapa haka. Often people belonged to more than one of these groups, and sometimes these groups were part of a larger development. The plan to build Hoani Waititi Marae, for example, is linked to some of the first Māori community groups in West Auckland in the 1960s.

Te Ao Hou, a magazine started in 1952 and aimed at a Māori audience, with content that reflected both rural and urban lives

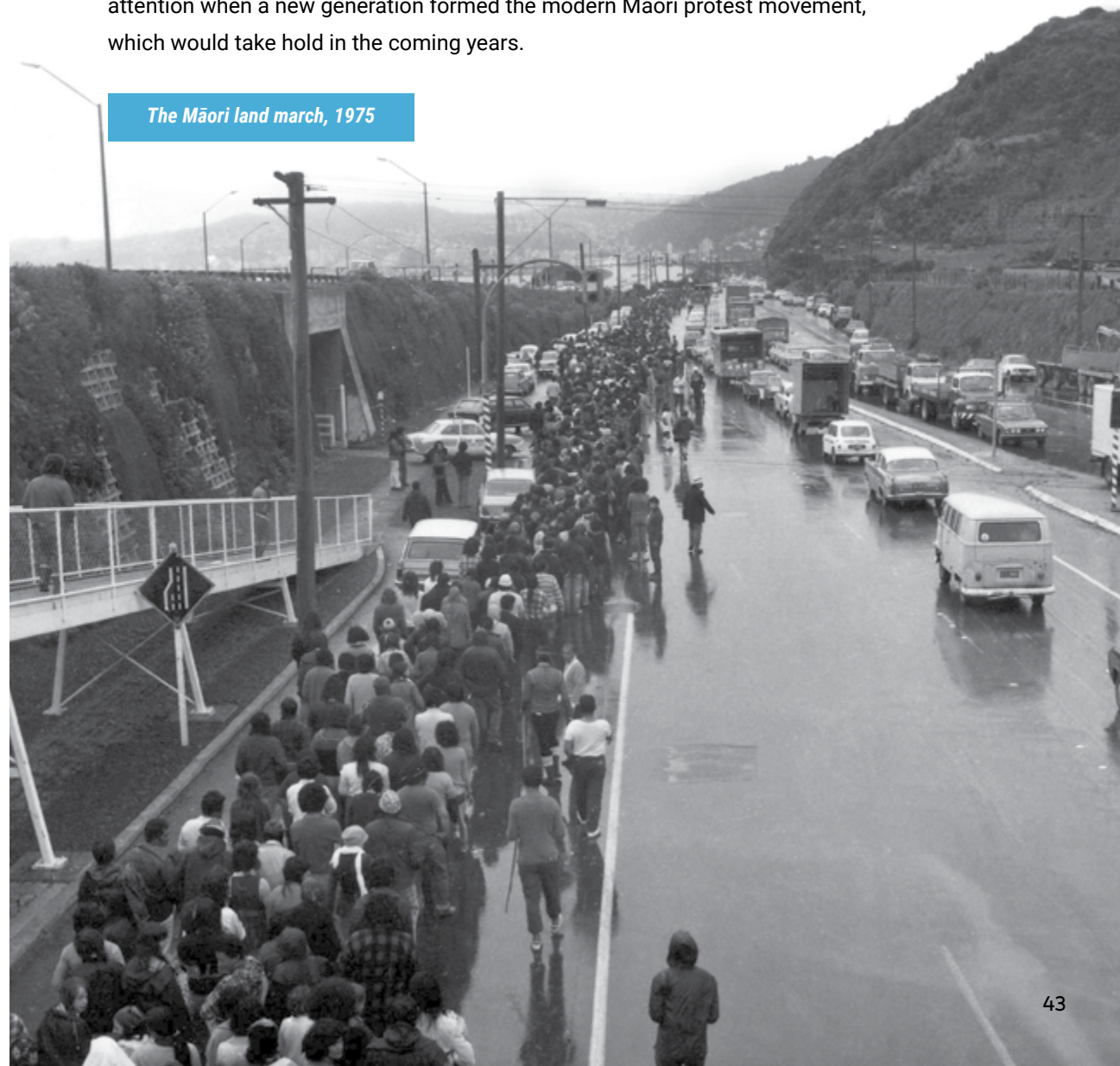
The opening of Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Hoani Waititi, 1985 – New Zealand’s first te reo Māori immersion primary school



Change

By 1971, almost three-quarters of the Māori population lived in a town or city. The stories of Letty Brown and Nellie Williams show some of the ways that Māori met the challenges of urban living by focusing on their cultural values and practices. Still, the impact of Māori urban migration was deep and long-lasting. By the end of the 1960s, Māori had begun organising themselves so they could debate and take action on key issues, including race, land rights, Treaty rights, and te reo Māori. The issues raised weren’t new, but they would receive fresh attention when a new generation formed the modern Māori protest movement, which would take hold in the coming years.

The Māori land march, 1975



Kei te Tāone Nui: Māori and the City (1945–1970)

by Samuel Denny, Caitlin Moffat-Young, and Aroha Harris

Text copyright © Crown 2021

The graph on page 37 is by Simon Waterfield copyright © Crown 2021.

The following images are used with permission from the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington: page 36, reference PAColl-6303-11; page 38 (middle), reference 1/2-033749-F, by Edward Percival Christensen; page 39 (bottom), reference 1/2-040753-F, by T. Ransfield; page 40, reference Eph-C-RACIAL-1959-01; page 41 (bottom), reference AWM-0643-F, by Ans Westra.

The following images are used with permission from Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand: page 37 (top), reference B.079568, by Gregory Riethmaier; page 38 (bottom), reference O.031172, by Ans Westra.

The graph on page 37 is based on a graph from Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand from bit.ly/3d1FbQa.

The image on page 37 (middle) is used with permission from Archives New Zealand – Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga.

The images on page 38 (top) and page 42 (top) are used with permission from the National Library of New Zealand/Te Ao Hou.

The image on page 39 (top), reference 580-1134, is used with permission from the Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection.

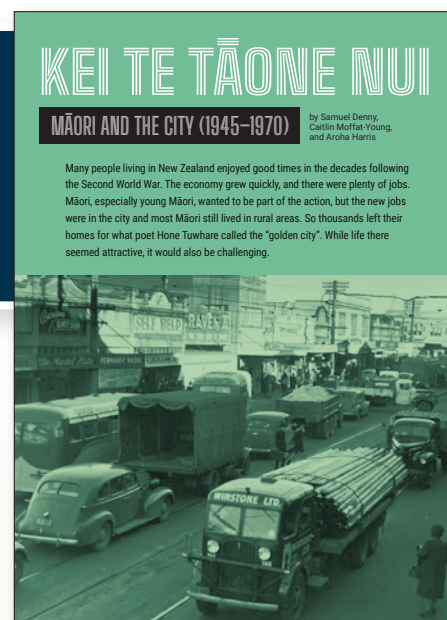
For copyright information about how you can use this material, go to tki.org.nz/Copyright-in-Schools/Terms-of-use

Published 2021 by the Ministry of Education,
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.
www.education.govt.nz

All rights reserved.
Enquiries should be made to the publisher.

ISBN 978 1 77690 068 8 (online)
ISSN 2624 3636 (online)

Publishing Services: Lift Education E Tū
Editor: Susan Paris
Designer: Simon Waterfield
Literacy Consultant: Melanie Winthrop
Consulting Editors: Hōne Apanui, Te Mako Orzecki, and Emeli Sione



SCHOOL JOURNAL LEVEL 4 MAY 2021

Curriculum learning areas	English Social Sciences (Aotearoa New Zealand's histories)
Reading year level	Year 8
Keywords	1950s, 1960s, 1970s, Aotearoa New Zealand's histories, assimilation, belonging, change, choice, city, colonialism, community, culture, economics, employment, history, Hoani Waititi Marae, Hunn report, identity, integration, kura kaupapa, land rights, Māori, Māori Women's Welfare League, migration, movement, opportunity, pepper-potting, protest, race relations, racism, social action, social change, te reo Māori, Treaty rights, urban marae, urbanisation, work