

Language Losing and Language Keeping in Spanish-speaking Families in Ontario:
The Mothers' Perspectives

By

Helen Baergen

A Thesis Submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education

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“Thus the women have always kept the stories in clay or reeds, in wool or cotton, in grass or paint or words to songs. Somewhere they began to keep them in ink and paper.”

-Green, R. (Ed.), 1984, p. 3.

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Preamble:***textere-textile-text-******textere meaning to weave***

Follow the path down a steep Guatemalan mountainside, between rows of 12 foot tall corn, down into a narrow valley and there beside a small adobe brick house you will find a woman weaving. Anchored to her loom by a heavy band of cloth around her waist, she kneels on a woven mat while she works, rhythmically leaning forward, then pulling back to regulate tension, insert threads, and tighten the design. A piece of cloth more colourful than anything you've ever laid eyes on is being created while chickens scratch in the dirt around her and a barefoot child peers shyly from the corner of the house. On a clothesline strung between two trees hang other multi-coloured, intricately-patterned tablecloths, *servilletas* to hold warm tortillas, *huipiles* for women to wear. Weaving is an act of storytelling for women in this community; it is healing from torture; it is keeping alive their own culture; it is resisting the military that seeks to quash indigenous practices and languages (Weaving the Heavens).

Those of us who can only watch, fascinated, as the weavers work their magic and a piece of extraordinary beauty unfolds, use the metaphor of weaving to describe processes of bringing together dissimilar elements, bringing meaning [beauty] out of disparate parts, understanding out of crosscurrent tensions. Weaving, backstrap weaving in particular, is also an apt metaphor for the complex process of creating a new life and a new identity in a new country: adapting, giving in, resisting, holding back, working the threads to

