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Preserving Culture in the Midst of Hegemony:  
The Colonialized Education System in Santa  
Catarina Polopó

**Abstract**

The nation of Guatemala is currently working towards recognizing its cultural diversity as a plurinational state. A section of the 1996 Peace Accords which ended the 36 year Guatemalan Civil War, addresses the right to education for all. Since then many organizations have been formed to in order to “decolonialize” the educational system making quality schooling more easily accessible for the greater population. My research is focused on the *Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta* in the *municipalidad* of Santa Catarina Polopó. There I have concluded that the decolonialization of education has not been achieved due to existing social expectations, the aspirations of the indigenous people who make up the vast majority of the community, and the many contradicting opinions of what an education system should entail in a rural Mayan community. I define decolonialization in this context as the elimination of overbearing Spanish societal norms, resulting in redefining the roles that indigenous people their cultures have within the Guatemala.

## Introduction

Recent decades in Guatemala have been dedicated to recognizing the cultural diversity of Guatemala. Beauty is being found in the varying ethnic groups, customs, and languages of the nation. Due to many centuries of colonialization, racism, and hegemonic forces, the preservation of the rich cultures of Guatemala has been an ongoing and strenuous battle. 21 different languages have survived centuries of outright discrimination of Mayan culture through Spanish domination. Although these maternal languages continue to thrive in indigenous communities, the reality is that Spanish is the national language of Guatemala. Therefore, Spanish is needed to travel throughout greater Guatemala, get a well-paying job, and in many cases, to be respected by society as a whole.

While several schools in Guatemala implement bilingual education into their curriculums, it is often not conducive for the children's learning needs – that is if they are fortunate enough to receive schooling. Many children who first enter the education system in Santa Catarina have not yet been exposed to Spanish. They speak *Kaq'chikel* in their homes, the maternal language of this region in the Western highlands, which is extremely different from Spanish. Therefore, teaching Spanish is the main objective of the school in Santa Catarina. There is a strong shared sentiment among the majority of the indigenous population in the *municipalidad* to have proceeding bilingual generations, and possibly

even trilingual including English. This is not an easy task to achieve, considering Spanish and English are generally not spoken much in the home.

I first became interested in this project because my seven year old host cousin, Andrea, started school this January. She knew very little Spanish, and did not know how to write her own name, let alone any letter in the Spanish alphabet. She is currently in the *primero* class, the equivalent to first grade in the United States, where focus is placed on learning to read, write, speak, and comprehend Spanish. She, like many others in her situation, did not attend *preprimaria* which is the equivalent to Kindergarten. Without this step many children fall behind, and may even have to repeat the grade (Maury Lopez: 24 Feb 2010). I could see the difficulties that she was experiencing grasping Spanish while I was helping her with her homework. This initially sparked my interest to learn more about the educational process for indigenous children living in a rural *Kaq'chikel*-speaking community. I was fascinated in exploring if the school system was successful in terms of making the children of Santa Catarina bilingual, and thus preparing them to achieve the goals which often include living somewhere other than Santa Catarina. I also wanted to investigate the dichotomy and the struggle behind preserving a culture while having little choice but to assimilate to the dominant language and culture derived from the Spanish.

Ultimately, I am fascinated by the marginalization of the people of Santa Catarina due to their Mayan heritage, their rural surroundings, and for most of them, the poverty that is a daily impact on their lives. More than that, I wanted to research how they cope with the reality of being a part of society that is discriminated against by outside forces, even if it is subtle nowadays. The indigenous people of Guatemala have been fighting for several centuries to keep their culture intact, and in many instances formal education is not

conducive to continuing this battle. There is a small pocket of Mayans who still believe that schooling contributes to the destruction of the indigenous ways of life because, "...Spanish is eroding the place of Mayan languages...." And also that, "In many communities, school life and the way of life of the people in the village have little in common" (Heckt 1999: 327).

My personal background also guided my interest in the topic of preserving a culture when there are many obstacles in the way of having unblemished cultural pride. I, as a mixed-race female, have been both blatantly and discretely discriminated against throughout my entire life. Although I am proud to be of Jamaican and Scandinavian descent, issues of identity certainly arise, which is true when a part of any minority group. Education has been crucial to my success, and also my tool to reject wrongful prejudices that so many people have of African-Americans. I have been fortunate enough to receive quality schooling my entire life, but I wanted to investigate to what extent the children in Santa Caterina have access to this tool. Will they be able to break the cycle of discrimination and poverty through education? If so, to what extent do they have to conform to the ways of the larger Spanish-speaking society, and thus possibly diminish some of their own cultural pride? This generation is shaping the future for all indigenous people of Guatemala. Their success in larger society could also lead to the demise of their culture for generations to come, but the ultimate question is: it is possible to sustain a marginalized culture when so much of it could be lost in attempts to thrive in a powerful civilization? There is no doubt that education is undoubtedly the key to flourishing in a competitive society. Although more Guatemalans today are recognizing the splendor in having a culturally diverse nation, it is impossible to achieve complete decolonialization of

the education system in Santa Catarina Polopó due to more dominant surrounding social forces.

### **Methodology**

I spent three weeks living with a family in Santa Catarina Polopó. I lived with my host mother and father, their two sons and niece. My host cousins were constantly in the house as well, so I was constantly surrounded by school-age children. Through my family I was able to know when the best times were to talk to the school director, and how the school system worked in general. One of my host brothers had already gone all the way through school, and the other is currently in *tercero básico*, which is the highest level one can reach in the school in Santa Catarina. They were both able to give me useful knowledge regarding their feelings about the school system in the town and how it prepared students for life after college. Through their knowledge I was able to get a better grasp at what I was looking for before I started observing the school.

Once I got in contact with the director and got his permission to enter the classrooms during school hours, I went to school every day to observe different grades, teachers, and students. I sat in the back of the classrooms to be the least disruptive as possible, in hopes of getting untainted information. At first I found this to be difficult, because I am a foreigner, and many of the children wanted to talk to me or stare at me instead of listen to the teacher. I was less of a distraction as time passed. During the recess period each day or during the work periods it was helpful to talk to the students about what they were learning, and begin to build relationships with them. Another factor which proved to be successful was that because Santa Catarina is a small *municipalidad*, or town, I saw the school children many times outside of the classroom context. They always

approached me, to have casual conversations about school, their interests, their lives at home, etc. which I would then journal about once I returned home.

During each recess period I conducted interviews with the teachers that I was observing. They were very informative, and always willing to give me an abundant amount of both facts and opinions of the school system. The teachers were my best resource in terms of understanding the school system's objectives, limitations, and even prejudices. They also showed me samples of the children's work and the books which outlined the curriculum for the grades. This was very helpful because I was able to compare what the children were supposed to be learning according to the curriculum versus what they were actually learning, or not learning, by examining their homework. Through the student's homework I was also able to infer the different levels of progress and how many grasped what was being taught.

I had interviews with many of the students at the school in order to get their points of view about the teacher, what they were learning, the education system in Santa Catarina, and what they thought about their futures. This was crucial because although there were a wide variety of answers, I was able to deduce some general trends among the school children.

I also conducted interviews with some of the parents in order to better understand what they thought about education today, and what their schooling experiences, if they had any, were like. This was a vital perspective because children are truly a reflection of their parents, so it was important to be aware of what the parents supported and why they supported it. Through these interviews, I was able to compare the educational systems in the past of Santa Catarina (because the majority of the parents had lived there their entire

lives) with the current system. It was very fascinating to see the progress that has been made and which things have remained constant.

One more aspect to my research was analyzing other papers that were similar to my topic. Through other people's research I was able to have a clearer idea of the trends that I was looking for in the school system.

### **Limitations**

Because I only had three weeks to gather information I decided it was best to go for depth versus breadth. Meaning, that although I went to both of the schools in San Antonio Polopó (the neighboring rural *municipalidad* to Santa Catarina Polopó) I did not have enough time to obtain a substantial amount of information to come to a conclusion about the school systems in that town. The schools had different teaching philosophies and expectations than the school in Santa Catarina, so I was able to use my experiences there as a method for comparison. I also did not have enough time to go to the schools in Panajachel (a larger neighboring *municipalidad*). It was much harder to make connections with any of the schools there, possibly because they were larger. Instead I was able to interview some of the students that attended or are attending schools there. Although I was not able to experience firsthand the school system in Panajachel, talking to the students did assist me in comparing education in Panajachel to education in Santa Catarina.

I also had issues getting concrete numbers and statistics. I would have liked to have found out how many children in each class speak *Kaq'chikel* in their homes, how many spoke Spanish, and how many spoke a mixture of both. Although I did ask the classes I attended these questions, I do not believe that I got accurate information especially among the younger students. Many of them were too shy to respond, and many would raise their

hands (indicating a positive response to one of the questions) to every question skewing the numbers. I would have also liked to have found how many children drop out of school each year, and how many repeat grades, especially comparing males and females, but that information was not accessible. Instead I observed as much as possible, and found general trends within the education system in the area. If I would have had more time, I would have found a way to obtain more statistics.

### **Colonialized Education as a Reality in Santa Catarina Polopó**

Education in Santa Catarina has evolved over the years, but with that being said there are definitely continuities between the schooling of the 1960s and the schooling of today. This is primarily due to the social structure and expectations of greater Guatemala. Although there have been many progressive movements in terms of making quality education more easily accessible and affordable, there still exists the reality of what it means to be indigenous in rural Guatemala. Even today it is very difficult for Mayans to make it all the way through the educational system and eventually be enrolled in a university. Because of strong competition among those who want to participate in the dominant Spanish culture, the Spanish language and the concepts of Spanish or *Ladino* (a person of mixed Spanish and Indian heritage) ways of life are heavily integrated into the *Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta de Santa Catarina Polopó*. This is seen as the only way to ensure preparation for an economically successful future.

The concept of incorporating *Ladino* culture into the rural indigenous school systems in Guatemala is not a new one. The process of *castellanización*, which is defined as, "...the conversion of indigenous culture and language to that of the Spanish" has been around since the 1940s when government funded education first existed in Guatemala

(Bryan 2006: 11). “Public education in Guatemala has, for much of its history, been a medium for transmitting Western ideas and Spanish language to the indigenous peoples of Guatemala” (Van Sistine 2008: 2). Although the methodology behind this philosophy has been altered to cater to the needs of Mayan school children, the basic principal still exists in the school in Santa Catarina.

The older generation of Santa Catarina attests to the fact that formal education was primarily focused on the *castellanización* process. Although many of the teachers were indigenous themselves, they only spoke Spanish in the classroom. All of the students were taught only in Spanish, and depending on the teacher, there were strict consequences if a maternal language was spoken in the classroom. My host mother had a teacher that would make his students run his errands and do his household chores if they spoke in *Kaq'chikel* or did not finish their homework. She informed me that this punishment was enforced on a regular basis (Andrea Lopez Nimacachi: 3 Mar 2010). In 1975 the philosophy changed so that there was minimal integration of bilingual education in the lower grades of the public schools because it helped to minimize dropout rates. This was just another method to ensure *castellanización*. “The Mayan languages were used ‘only as a transitional step to aid in the acculturative process of Indian children’” (Bryan 12: 2006).

Like many children of his generation in Santa Catarina, my host father, Eustaquio, was only able to go to school during the ages of eight and nine due to a lack of economic resources. Although public school was free, it was a constant struggle to support the family as well as get an education. He would wake up early every day before school to help his dad with the land for two hours, and then he would go to school with an empty stomach where he would spend the mornings learning Spanish. He would return home for lunch and

more work with his father, and then it was off to school once again for the afternoon.

Eustaquio always had more work waiting for him at home after the school day was over so there was neither much time nor energy left to be spent on homework. He also had to find jobs on the side in order to pay for the necessary schools supplies like a notebook and a pencil (Eustaquio Pablo Garcia Nimacachi: 2 Mar 2010). During these times indigenous families had lots of children to help with the land, and therefore getting an education was not typically supported because it was time spent away from directly contributing to the well-being of the family.

This generation has much easier access to education, and overall parents are more supportive of their children receiving schooling. Also, the Guatemalan government is doing more than past years to accommodate for education for all. Although the system has not come close to reaching perfection, there are more resources provided to the school such as some basic school supplies and a detailed curriculum for each grade.

There are also more efforts being made to ensure a greater success rate among the *Kaq'chikel*-speaking students in Santa Catarina such as implementing bilingual education for the lower levels of *preprimaria and primero*, by *segundo* (which is the following grade) the teacher is *Ladino*, and thus cannot speak Spanish. The purpose of using the maternal language in these classes is specifically geared toward learning Spanish, not to educate the students about their Mayan heritage, which is the same philosophy of the educators of their parents' generation. Bilingual education is done out of necessity. Not a single student in any of the classes I observed could read or write in *Kaq'chikel*. This is unlike the schools in San Antonio Polopó (the neighboring town) where they have bilingual education all the way through, so every student is able to read and write in *Kaq'chikel*. It is also dissimilar to

most schools in Panajachel (another neighboring town) where bilingual education is not needed as much because the vast majority of people speak Spanish in their homes.

*Kaq'chikel* was just recently added into some of the schools' curriculums (Samuel, Alberto, and Enrique Lopez: 1 Mar 2010).

The school in Santa Catarina has not evolved much from the education system forty years ago in terms of assimilating students to *Ladino* culture. When I asked the teachers what the most important thing was for their students to learn, each and every one of them told me that reading, writing, and speaking Spanish were the major priorities in their classes. This sentiment is also shared among the students and the parents in the town, every person I talked to fully supported the education system with respect to learning Spanish because they all believe Spanish is crucial in order to be successful in Guatemala.

It is not feasible to assume that one can be a part of the greater Guatemalan society without being able to speak Spanish. There has been marginalization of the Mayans since the Spaniards arrived, which caused the implementation of Mayan assimilation to the Spanish. The Guatemalan Constituent Congress of 1824 ruled for the "extinction" of indigenous languages due to the belief that they were "...so diverse, incomplete, and imperfect" (Richards and Richards 2001: 209). And in 1965 the Guatemalan Constitution called for the integration of Mayans to the national, meaning *Ladino*, culture (Van Sistine 2008: 4). Mieke Heckt, an anthropologist who studied Mayan education, makes the claim that, "...what unities all Mayan people is their past and present experience of marginalization..." (Heckt 1999: 331). This alludes to the reality of the strength in the more powerful *Ladino* population.

The general consensus among the people I have interviewed fully support the continuance of colonized education. The end result of all these years of inequity is that Spanish is essential if one desires a job away from Santa Catarina, which most people in the younger generations aspire to have. Spanish is the key to making the “suffering” stop (Eustaquio Pablo Garcia Nimacachi: 2 Mar 2010). Meaning that along with Spanish come jobs that will ensure economic stability, and thus puts an end to jobs that require working from sunup to sundown with little pay. The importance of *Kaq'chikel* has been limited to preserving it for cultural purposes, but one cannot live without “suffering” if they do not assimilate to the *Ladino* culture. The education system in Santa Catarina is a manifestation of this belief.

### **The Imperfect Education System in Santa Catarina**

The *Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta* in Santa Catarina is doing many things to prepare its students for success in a country where they are constantly working against the grain to reach their aspirations. This generation of students in Santa Catarina also faces similar realities that their parents faced when going to school. Having only two, and possibly even one year of bilingual education puts a strain on learning in the higher grade levels. The teacher of *quinto primario* (equivalent to fifth grade in the United States) informed me that a large number of students still are not fluent in Spanish (Lucia Gomez: 1 Mar 2010). This is after three years of learning from only Spanish-speaking teachers. Because of this, these students are not able to grasp some of the basic concepts that are being taught, such as basic algebra. The language barrier affects all aspects of the Mayan children's education. Teaching Spanish is the main objective of all of the teachers from *preprimario* to *sexto primario*, which are all the levels of the *primario* or elementary

school. It is not until *básico* that the teachers can place a stronger emphasis on subjects other than Spanish.

Many the students whom I observed that were struggling to comprehend Spanish did not receive special attention from the teachers. Rarely during the students' in class work times did I see the teachers going around to help those who were having difficulties. They would often sit at their desks doing their own work while only a small minority of the students would approach them for help. The trend was that the students who were most willing to participate in class were also the most willing to ask for help. Within that same trend I observed that the students who were the most involved also had the best Spanish. The quieter students that I spoke to would often know only very broken Spanish – this occurred most commonly with the female students. The teachers confirmed my observations that girls are typically far more hesitant to speak in class, and because of this they are not able to get sufficient practice speaking Spanish.

The failing and dropout rates are still a problem for the school. There are many children who are not able to grasp Spanish for several reasons making it nearly impossible to continue to the next grade. It is common for students to repeat a grade, sometimes more than once. One variable which makes learning Spanish difficult is that students often times need to work during the day, missing multiple days of school each week. The teachers also informed me that often students will not come to school if they cannot afford the necessary school supplies. They feel embarrassed, and decide to skip. There are also many parents who do not support formal education because it actually clashes with many of the inherent Mayan cultural beliefs, or simply because they cannot afford their child's education.

Females face great difficulties when trying to attain an education in Santa Catarina.

There are still many individuals in this generation that do not receive a single year of schooling. My five year old host cousin Francesca will most likely never get any education because her family is too poor and cannot support her. Lucia, another host cousin who is 22, never went to school a day in her life, and thus can speak only limited Spanish. She was expected to work in the house and help the family; education was not a priority. It is also expected that women are going to get married and move away someday, in which their loyalties will be to the husband's family. Whereas the men will one day contribute to the family and therefore it is beneficial that he receives a good education. This is precisely why there is a high dropout rate among females before reaching *básico* which is private in Santa Catarina, and requires a monthly fee of 100 *Quetzales* (approximately \$12.50). Many families, especially families with a lot of children to support, do not invest in their daughters' education.

Like many public schools in the nation, there is a sufficient lack of government funds for the school in Santa Catarina. There is not enough money for basic school supplies like notebooks, books, and pencils. The teachers often told me how it was a hassle to get enough supplies for their classrooms. They would often have the children either share materials or they would buy their students' supplies out of their own pockets. There is also no money for food in the school. Many children come to school each day with empty stomachs and are expected to learn for over five hours. This is a common problem within the school because the students who are not eating have significantly lower performance levels in the classroom. When examining the conditions of the schools it is also very apparent that there is shortage of funds. The desks are broken and written on, the school itself is dirty, and *segundo básico* does not even have a classroom – they hold class on the

balcony. The *primero* teacher explicitly told me that the government does not know the situation of the school here. The supervisors running the programs to better the educational system have never stepped into this school. There is no way they can grasp the gravity of the struggles this school endures (Maury Lopez 24 Feb 2010).

Children's willingness to go to school plummets when there are hardly enough resources around to provide a solid education. There are so many factors working against the students of Santa Catarina, and many of the issues remain untouched because the government officials have never experienced the situation firsthand. The teacher of *sexto* complained that often rural schools are not sufficiently helped by the government because it is "too much of a project" to help poverty-stricken areas that "seem to not promise much hope for the future" (Maria Rodriguez: 26 Feb 2010). This is another aspect of colonialization. The ruling class of the nation continues to fall short of the needs of the rural education system leaving a huge divide among the rural Mayans and the privileged *Ladinos*. More governmental support of the rural education system would be a major step in reversing this trend of inequalities.

The general consensus from the parents of students who attend the school in Santa Catarina is that if they had the funds they would send their children to Panajachel for schooling. The town has only one public school in addition to many private institutions. The education system in the *municipio* of Panajachel is much more developed, ultimately meaning colonialized, and therefore one can receive a better quality and more well-rounded education. They reflect more of the *Ladino* culture in Panajachel, and thus the students are more apt for success in the non-indigenous and more dominant Guatemalan society. Although there are most definitely indigenous students who attend the schools in

Panajachel, they are accustomed to a more urban atmosphere with more *Ladino* influences than the students in rural Santa Catarina. Guatemalan education is interconnected with politics. It is impossible for small towns to surpass the hegemonic forces of the Spanish that have had centuries to develop. The people of Santa Catarina are very aware of this, and that is precisely why they have committed to providing an education in which students have a greater chance in participating in greater Guatemala.

### **The Struggle for Identity**

Preserving a culture when it is not thought of as important by the more powerful society has proven to be extremely difficult for the people of Santa Catarina. This rural community feels like their culture is diminishing in little sections at a time, but they are unsure what to do because they have little choice but to conform to many of the *Ladino* ways of life if they want to have a chance to flourish or even get by in society. They struggle with contradicting thoughts of whether their culture, customs, and language are still important. Ideally the younger generations of Santa Catarina would like to “...participate in both the local, traditional, and in the wider national culture.” This is why the school is enforcing a “language shift” and thus demonstrating a priority of speaking Spanish (Van Sistine 2008: 17). This mentality may stress the notion that culture, and in some respects, identity, is less important than succeeding in greater society. The students in Santa Catarina are not only learning Spanish, but are also learning a new lifestyle from their non-indigenous teachers – a more respected lifestyle within Guatemala as a whole.

With this new found outlook on their own culture, many Mayan students actually participate in the discrimination of fellow students that do not adhere, or do not have the opportunity to adhere, to the concept that the Spanish culture is essential. My host cousin

Florentina dropped out of school in *cuarto primario* because she got taunted by fellow classmates relentlessly for not being able to speak Spanish well. They would call her names, and made her feel inferior because she could only speak *Kaq'chikel* at the time (Florentina Nimacachi: 21 Feb 2010). Maury, the *primario* teacher in the school informed me that many parents come into the school asking for more Spanish to be taught in the classroom because it is not spoken in their homes (Maury Lopez: 24 Feb 2010). More families today are trying to implement a mixture of Spanish and *Kaq'chikel* in their homes in order for the children to have an easier adjustment to the school system which would hopefully lead to a paved path for success.

This raises the question of what is of more importance: culture or having the tools to reach life's aspirations? During all of the interviews I conducted with people who grew up speaking *Kaq'chikel* I asked the question, "If you could only learn one language would you chose to learn Spanish or *Kaq'chikel*?" After only a small hesitation all of the interviewees responded that they would choose Spanish. This speaks to the fact that preserving all aspects of their culture is not the most important thing for the people of Santa Catarina, and that is yet another reason why their education system cannot be decolonialized.

It is not to say that people living in Santa Catarina lack cultural pride, but that they are more concerned with the future well-being of themselves and their families, and rightfully so. They would like to live in a world with less discrimination, and more opportunities. Spanish may help them to achieve this dream. Although Spanish may be "more important," they are going to continue to pass down their customs and language to the future generations. The people of Santa Catarina are doing their best to preserve their heritage in the face of a society that hardly allows them to keep their culture intact outside

of their small realm.

Indigenous people who speak Spanish, are of a higher socio-economic status, and who live in a larger, more developed area than Santa Catarina add an interesting dynamic to the idea of struggling to find identity in a marginalized ethnic group in Guatemala. I spoke to three brothers who were indigenous, but live in Panajachel, attended private schools their entire lives, and spoke Spanish in their homes. The conflicting opinions they had were very apparent. Because they had grown up with more privileges, they knew they had the likelihood of having many more opportunities than most of the children who grew up in Santa Catarina. They were confident in that they had received a “better” education, and thus were sure of success in their futures. The education system in Panajachel is more developed than Santa Catarina, they told me, because there is not a large focus on learning Spanish, they can concentrate on subjects like Math and Science. (Enrique, Samuel, and Alberto Lopez 1 Mar 2010).

There may be truth to these words, but it was the way in which these words were expressed that determined the manner in which these brothers thought of the people in Santa Catarina. It is possible that they share similar beliefs that the *Ladino* culture has generated because they live in a society that is heavily influenced by that culture. Although these brothers do identify with being indigenous, they do not practice many of the cultural traditions that the people of Santa Catarina, and even believe that these customs are a part of an outdated way of life.

The way that the *Kaq'chikel* culture has been perceived by the hegemonic Spanish culture sparks feelings of “self-dislike” among some indigenous people. The older generations want their children to have more than they did, which undoubtedly means more

infiltration of the *Ladino* ways of life. Within their own society, and their own ethnic group there are concerns with being unsuccessful if they continue the same lifestyle. This mentality is detrimental to the preservation of a culture because it is found within the culture.

### **Conclusion**

There are many conflicting theories when it comes to how the education system should be run in rural Guatemala. Today the outsiders of the *Kaq'chikel* culture have a romantic outlook on the preservation of the culture and want to keep the customs and traditions intact for many generations to come, but they are not aware of the cost that comes with salvaging a marginalized way of life. Although there have been many progressive movements to recognize the beauty of all the different ethnic groups of Guatemala, the reality is that the Spanish culture is more powerful. It is impossible to live successfully, and without “suffering,” within a dominant society when one does not even speak the language.

The people of Santa Catarina are well-aware of this reality, and thus fully endorse the colonialization of education. It is hoped that the culture will be continued through the means of informal education. Much of the indigenous way of life in Santa Catarina is kept in the home. There are still many small things like saying “*Matiosh*” (which means thank you) to every member of the family after a meal, most females in the town still wear the traditional *traje* (clothing), and every student that in the school is able to speak *Kaq'chikel*. Family and culture are still thriving in Santa Catarina even with an education system that teaches completely different values. The younger generations of Santa Catarina have adapted to the duality of the schooling in their town. With the diversity of the lessons

learned in both their formal and informal educations, they will hopefully have the tools to reach their aspirations as well as keep their culture intact and reverse the trend of the large divide between the *Ladino* and indigenous cultures.

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