

# Hmong Women DO Breastfeed!

Changing the narrative on Hmong breastfeeding

Hmong women have always breastfed

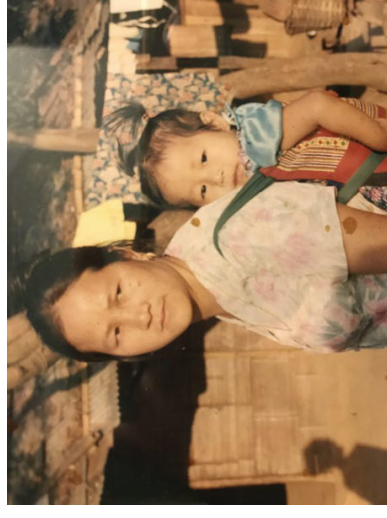
## The Motherland



Courtesy of Yang family

- Hmong are a collective society
- Agriculture
- Babies were taken with mothers to the fields or stayed home with caregivers
- Babies breastfed or wet-nursed
- "Yog tsis muaj mis niam me nyuam tsis loj hlob" ( *without breastmilk babies can't grow* )

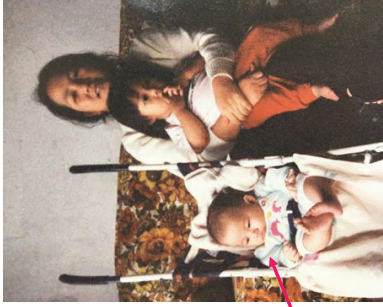
## Refugees in Northern Thailand



Courtesy of Yang family

- Many Hmong escaped to Thailand
- Lived in refugee camps (how many were there and who they lived with)
- Babies breastfed and wet-nursed
- Babies stayed with mothers

## Life in Asmesliskas (America)



Courtesy of Yang family

- Many Hmong immigrated to US
- “Americans don’t breastfeed”
- “Breastfeeding is ‘backwards’”
- Reported nurses or doctors did not ask if wanted to breastfeed
- Work or school - formula is more convenient
- Decline in breastfeeding

(me)

## Breastmilk and breastfeeding are IMPORTANT to the Hmong.

## Many Hmong believe breastmilk

- “Powerful”
  - Healing ceremonies
  - Lightning belief
- Nourishes - “giving your child life”
- “The children I breastfed are more obedient and patient with me compared to the children I didn’t breastfeed.”



Courtesy of MDH WIC Program

## Hmong women’s comments on Hmong Breastfeeding Photo/Art Contest

A lot of people think I’m crazy for breastfeeding all my children. But when they see how much and how well they’ve grown, they see that it was the best choice. I’m proud to be Hmong American and breastfeed, making it norm again for my fellow sisters.

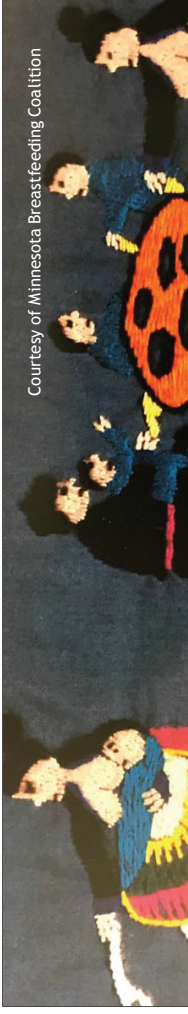
you’re making the right choice by breastfeeding. Wish I did.

Loving this! I understand it’s not always easy for everyone to achieve this, but raising awareness on the benefits of nursing in the Hmong community will help normalize the breast and encourage our sisters to pursue this beautiful journey.

I love this that they are promoting it more...I used to just want to bottle feed my kids because it was the norm...not until I saw all my sister in laws did it and remind me how healthy it is then I decided to breastfeed...it was one of the great decisions I’m proud that I made

How does supporting Hmong breastfeeding  
look?

1. **Change** the narrative on Hmong breastfeeding
2. **Include** Hmong pregnant women, mothers, fathers, and elders in breastfeeding outreach and education
3. **Amplify** Hmong breastfeeding stories
4. **Support** Hmong lactation consultant education



Courtesy of Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition

Thank you!