

# Breastfeeding knowledge flows like MILK

## Parents and expectant women gather at library for informative film and workshop on feeding babies

By Kaicheng Xin  
Northern News Services

Motherhood and breastfeeding were central to a workshop at the Yellowknife Public Library as the film MILK was screened on Saturday.

"MILK is a documentary that was launched in 2015 and it touches on sort of universal themes around birth and breastfeeding and early parenting and motherhood. The film has a lot of emotive themes that kind of draw out the experience of parents around the world," said Michelle Pensa Branco, co-founder and clinical lead at SafelyFed Canada, one of the organizers of the workshop.

The film has spurred an educational program, used as the starting point for training healthcare workers in some countries.

Saturday's workshops covered preparedness as a family and as individuals, as well as explaining some of the commercial influences on infant feeding decisions. The workshop aims to help participants understand and interpret their experiences and messages directed at them.

"One of the key topics discussed in the workshops is stress. When babies are stressed, they either become very whiny and clingy, always wanting to be in their parent's arms and nursing, or they shut down and don't ask to be fed. Parents often misinterpret these behaviours as hunger, which can lead to unnecessary bottle feeding," said Pensa Branco.

SafelyFed Canada is a national not-for-profit organization focusing on pregnant parents and their families, with emphasis on feeding and care of young children from birth to about age three. The program covers the same themes with the public and healthcare workers, but for different audiences.

"The midwives association along with the naturopathic doctors association decided to join together to co-host this workshop, knowing that our communities are really interested in planning for emergencies right now and knowing that we can always do better when it comes to planning for families and for taking care of babies and making sure that those needs are met in the best way possible," said Heather Heinrichs, president of the Midwives Association of the Northwest Territories.

As a midwife who has worked with expecting families in various places across Canada, Heinrichs understands the challenges families face when feeding their babies. She believes that providing families with more information can help them safely feed their babies, especially during emergencies, such as the wildfire evacuation that affected Yellowknife in late summer.

Kyla Wright, president of the Northwest Territories Association of Naturopathic Doctors and a mother herself, said she understands the challenges families face during emergencies. She highlighted the need for systems that are prepared to meet the needs of families who may have to travel long distances to find safety. With the ongoing threat of climate change, she emphasized the importance of long-term planning that recognizes



Michelle Pensa Branco, co-founder and clinical lead at SafelyFed Canada, was in Yellowknife over the weekend for a screening of the documentary film MILK and to discuss its related educational programming on breastfeeding. Kaicheng Xin/NNSL photo



Kyla Wright, a mother and president of the Northwest Territories Association of Naturopathic Doctors, highlighted the need for systems prepared to meet the needs of families who may have to travel long distances to find safety during crises. Kaicheng Xin/NNSL photo

the nuances of family needs.

"I think there's like a lot of anxiety around that for all parents, and we definitely experience that. And then just having to find

your way and the supports and resources you might need in a new location," said Wright. "Thankfully, I did have family that evacuated with me.

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