

# Facebook bans photos of mothers breastfeeding

*Facebook group forms to fight against decision, after a mother was kicked off for 19 days for photos of her breastfeeding her child*

By Jillian Hamilton

New mothers are criticizing social networking website Facebook for the removal of Facebook photos featuring breastfeeding.

Emma Kwasnica had her account suspended for 19 days because of the "obscene" photos she posted of herself breastfeeding her two daughters.

In a message sent to Kwasnica, Facebook said it only suspended her account because the photos showed too much of the breast.

"These policies are designed to ensure Facebook remains a safe, secure and trusted environment for all users, including the many children who use the site," the letter stated.

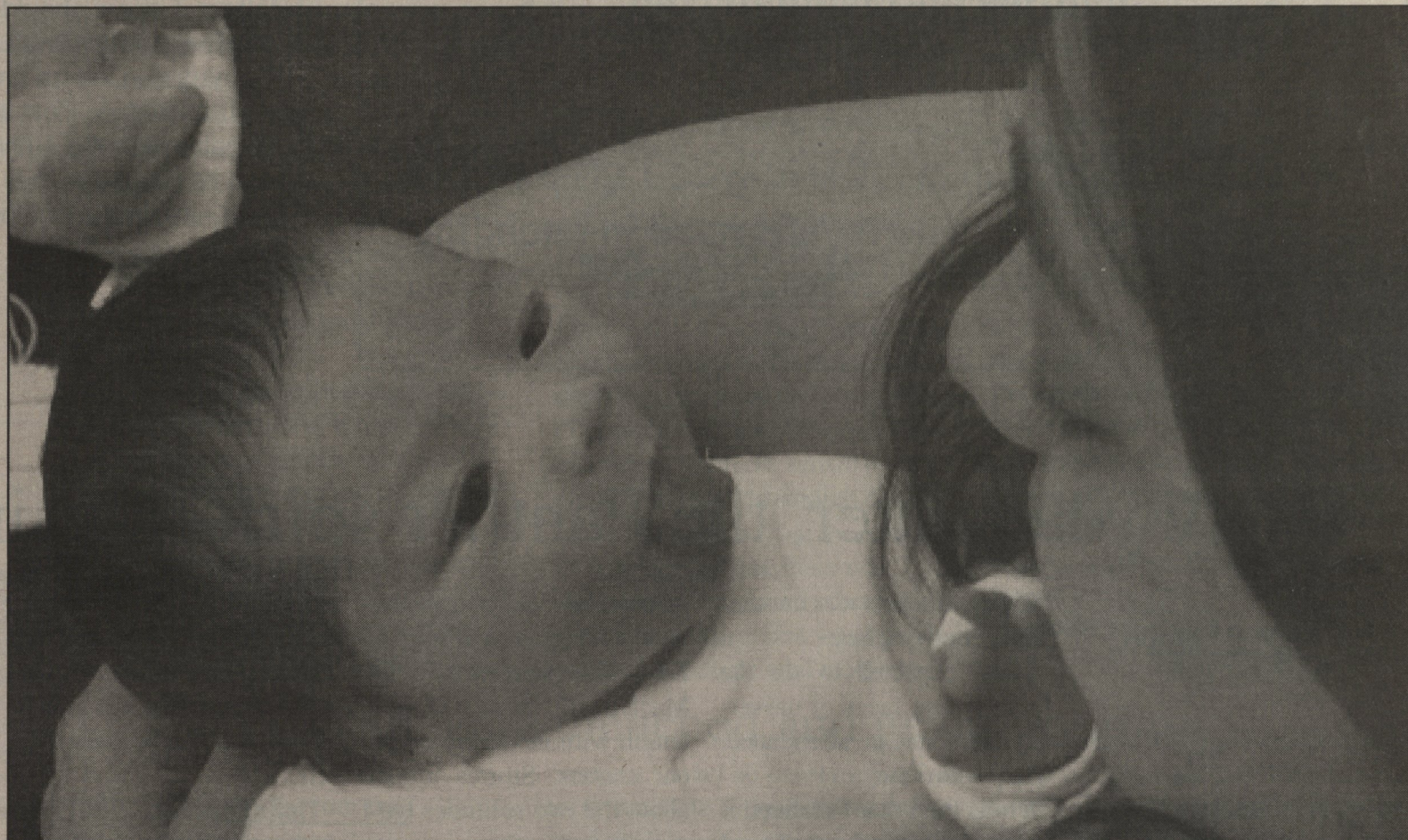
Several other members have received warnings about similar types of photos.

A Facebook group petition called "Hey, Facebook, breastfeeding is not obscene! (Official petition to Facebook)" has about 185,000 members.

Melanie Walsh-Fraser, a volunteer with the La Leche League of Charlottetown and a mother, heard about the Facebook photo ban and wasn't happy.

"It is unfortunate that a picture of a woman nursing her baby would be deemed obscene, since breastfeeding is a normal way to feed and comfort a baby," she said.

Bans of breastfeeding pho-



tos probably won't have an affect on whether or not young mothers decide to breastfeed, she said.

"One possible concern is that young women and new mothers might get the impression that breastfeeding is disapproved of and might be discouraged from breastfeeding for that reason."

More often, the media will show pictures of babies being bottle-fed.

"And that can suggest that bottles are the normal way to feed babies," she said.

Walsh-Fraser said she hopes Facebook will change its regulations to suit these types of photos.

"It is hard to say since we don't know how many peo-

ple are actually involved in making these decisions."

She does think, however, these types of groups are one way of spreading a positive message about breastfeeding.

"It is wonderful that people are communicating this message to the Facebook staff. However, it is hard to say if the petition will have any effect."

La Leche League Canada is a national organization of volunteers who provide information and encouragement to women who want to breastfeed their babies.

Jillian Tyrer, a Montreal teacher and mother to a 13-month-old, deliberately posts photos of herself

breastfeeding on the group as a way of protesting the photo regulations.

"It's like a person going on a hunger strike to protest war. He is not fighting for the right to starve himself, he is using the tactic of depriving himself of food to make a point."

Group member Helen Thomas of New York City said Facebook is within its legal right to remove pictures it finds offensive or inappropriate.

"Their terms of use still give them the right to scrutinize any content that is posted and the right to remove it as they see fit."

Facebook may change their photo policies eventually,

Thomas said.

"Especially if they feel pressured to do so through the campaigning efforts of the breastfeeding advocates."

Group member Michele Doolan of Madison, Wis. said the removal of breastfeeding photos is a little much and there is absolutely nothing obscene about it.

"Some of the photos banned are less revealing than other photos of women who are posed, revealing as much as possible for the sake of sex, and yet they remain. If you're going to ban one breast, you should ban them all."

A representative from Facebook declined to comment.

*Hamilton is a journalism student at Holland College*