

**NINA MOINI:** From the first Hmong businesses to homes that became museums and a regenerative Hmong farm, a new map seeks to document important historical and cultural sites for the Hmong community in Minnesota. Led by the Hmong Museum, the Hmong Story Map Project shares the stories behind more than 20 places across the state. It covers some 50 years of history since the first Hmong family arrived in Minnesota.

And after a year-long effort, the digital map will finally be unveiled on Saturday. Our next two guests joining me both played a part in this project. Bee Vang-Moua is a writer and researcher for the story map. Thanks for being here, Bee.

**BEE VANG-MOUA:** Thank you for having me.

**NINA MOINI:** And Pheng Her is the founder of Guerilla Pastures, which is one of the places on the map. Thanks for being here as well, Pheng.

**PHENG HER:** Hey, thanks for having me. I'm just super honored to be here.

**NINA MOINI:** I'm super honored to have you both talking about this project. What an amazing service to the community, to put all of this together, Bee. How did this project come about? Why did you-- what made you decide something like this really needs to happen, and why now?

**BEE VANG-MOUA:** Absolutely. This is first and foremost from the brainchild of Mai at Hmong Museum, and they were able to get a grant to work on this story map. And it's so important, especially vital right now, because Hmong are displaced-- Hmong-Americans especially are a displaced people, and the US being one of the countries where we've settled. And with our histories being passed down just orally through all the places of displacement in our journey of diaspora, we've only been able to pass down our stories connected to the land through oral stories.

But in today's Hmong-American children and generation, we're losing our language, as we speak. And so it's very important now to be able to create a platform where stories can be recorded, and stories could be connected to land, place, and space, because Hmong heritage is connected to stories of land, place, and space.

**NINA MOINI:** Yeah, and Bee, 50 years is a lot of history to cover. So how did you identify the places? And did you find yourself learning about new places?

**BEE VANG-MOUA:** Yeah, so I mean, I hopped on to this project right away. I reached out to Mai. I said, how can I be a part of this? Because I've been working in my own community for forever, it seems. I'm the director of the Hmong Program at the University of Minnesota, so I'm very well-connected to many of the stories, just through my own work.

And I just thought this would be a great opportunity to use all of these collective stories that I knew about already, and then to be able to expand and research for more stories-- like, Guerilla Pastures was one that I knew that was new to me-- and to really bring it together for this story map project. So it's going to be an ongoing project. The unveiling is the beginning piece of it, but it will become an ongoing project. So it's impossible to record all the many great stories. So I'm excited about what's to come as well.

**NINA MOINI:** Yeah, building on it. Pheng, I'm curious to know what you thought when you were approached to be part of this project. And I want to know about Guerrilla Pastures, too.

**PHENG HER:** Yeah, I was just so honored to even be a part of this historical project. I was just saying how when we started Guerrilla Pastures, I was just burnt out with my career, and I just really wanted a place as a new father for a place for my children to be able to run around outside. So every day, we'd go and pick eggs.

I have three young daughters, a seven-year-old, a four-year-old, and a seven-month-old. And the two oldest have been in the bee suit with me. They've worked in the bee yard with me. And I've actually taken them into classrooms where we do pollinator education. So yeah, I'm just very blessed and honored to be a part of this pro-  
- to be a part of this story map.

I think this is so important for the community. I think 50 years here, we're just now getting our footing in this country. And so we're just really establishing, and we're really just starting to branch out into different avenues. And so this is a great thing for our community as far as representation. It's showing young children about all the different avenues that they can kind of get their foot in.

Growing up in the '90s, there was only one route, essentially, for a young Hmong-American navigating the school system, and that was go to school and become a doctor or make-- you know. And but with this, we're learning about business owners. We're learning about politicians, chefs, farmers like myself. And so I'm just very grateful to be a part of this.

**NINA MOINI:** Yeah, amazing work at the farm. And I wonder, too, Pheng, what is it like to share it with younger generations and kids?

**PHENG HER:** I've been in youth work all of my life, from a participant to a volunteer to a paraprofessional, and then to even running a program-- to running various programs. So to be able to go back into my community and teach other young people that there truly is a space for us outside of the Twin Cities-- growing up in the cities for my whole life, I didn't know what was beyond the Twin Cities, and I've always had this idea of what was out there. And coming out here, I've learned that there is a space for us out here, I always say, beyond or north of 610.

And here I am. We're thriving. And we're trying to figure it out. And yeah, to be able to let other young children within my community know that there's a space for us, and there's an opportunity. And this is fun, and farming is kind of cool in its own sense. You gotta kind of nerd out a little bit about soil health and microbiology. But if that's what you're into, absolutely, there's a pathway for you.

**NINA MOINI:** And it's just one of many different places on the map, which is so cool from different facets of life, just showcasing just how far people have come and just the different places and the different spaces, Bee. I want to make sure we talk a little bit about this unveiling event, though, on Saturday. How can people be a part of that? And then how can they interact with this map?

**BEE VANG-MOUA:** Yeah, absolutely. The unveiling will be at the HAFA Farm, which is the Hmong-American Farmers' Association Farm. And if they come to-- Hmong Museum has a social media page. They can just look up Hmong Museum. And we have flyers that talk about it. We have lots of fun activities, hay rides to take a look at what HAFA Farm has. Right now, it's spring, so we don't have everything-- all the farmers are not out doing their full-fledged farming quite yet. But it'll be a lot of fun to just--

**PHENG HER:** Oh, we're out there.

**BEE VANG-MOUA:** --see all the many-- oh.

[LAUGHTER]

Yes, you're out there, but--

**NINA MOINI:** To be clear.

**BEE VANG-MOUA:** Yeah.

**NINA MOINI:** OK, but so how can people see the map, though? Because it's digital, right? So when and how can people take advantage of this great resource?

**BEE VANG-MOUA:** We will have some actual unveiling there, posters and printed things. And we will have a sample of the virtual thing, too. But they can also go online, go through Hmong Museum's web page, and take a look at the information about the unveiling as well, and have links. We'll have future links on the web page. We will have a web page. And we will also have ArcGIS story mapping page as well. And the key is for students and teachers and the general public to be able to navigate these maps and to see how important Hmong heritage and Hmong identity has been as a part of Minnesota in the last 50 years.

**NINA MOINI:** Very exciting. All right, Bee and Pheng, thank you both so much for your time. I really appreciate it. And all the best with the unveiling this weekend.

**BEE VANG-MOUA:** Thank you.

**PHENG HER:** Thank you so much for having us.

**NINA MOINI:** Take care. Bee Vang-Moua is a writer and researcher for the Hmong Story Map Project by the Hmong Museum. And Pheng Her is founder of Guerrilla Pastures and contributed to the project.