



Nellie's Newsletter

Nellie's Mission

Our Mission is to operate programs and services for women and children who have and are experiencing oppressions such as violence, poverty and homelessness. Nellie's is a community based feminist organization which operates within an anti-racist, anti-oppression framework. We are committed to social change through education and advocacy, to achieve social justice for all women and children.

Message from Executive Director

May 2005 , Issue #16

Happy Mother's Day! Mark your calendars, my friends, for the 2nd Annual Glad Art Great Art Auction on Monday June 20, 2005. Plan to come out to celebrate the coming of summer, see the work of some dynamite community artists and support Nellie's programs for women and children. Admission is free.

I would like highlight some of Nellie's work in the community on the "Hands Off Campaign". This campaign was launched to address the issue of the provincial clawback of the national child tax benefit to low-income families on social assistance. The provincial government promised to return this money to people on social assistance but to date they have failed to honour their promise. On Mar. 8, there was a public launch of the campaign at Queen's Park. Postcards with notes from women across the province were delivered to the Premier. These are the words of one woman: "I need this money for my child to buy food and clothing. Please give it back." For more information visit www.incomesecurity.org/campaigns/HandsOff.

On Mar. 8, 2005 the World March of Women launched the Global Charter for Humanity to draw attention to the struggle for women's equality, freedom, solidarity, justice and peace. This action will move the Charter across the globe, link our struggles worldwide and emphasize the enormous challenges that we as women face. The Charter will be in Canada from May 1 to May 5. For more information visit www.marchmondiale.org.

During the month of March, Nellie's participated in the International Women's Day Rally & March. We also held our 2nd Annual IWD Dance, Awakenings. It was a huge success and we wish to thank all our supporters and hope to see you all next year. We also marked the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Mar. 21, with a public information table at Gerrard Square where we distributed information on how to end racism in our community.

Nellie's will be celebrating Pride and this year's theme is "25 Years and Counting". On Pride Weekend we will be participating in the Dyke March on Saturday June 25 and at the Pride Community Fair on Sunday June 26, so come out and march and visit our table.



This issue of Nellie's newsletter is dedicated to the issue of women and immigration. The lead article explores the issue of women and immigration. Currently women face enormous barriers within the immigration system due to both gender and race, despite the fact that Canada is a signatory to both the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination. This year at the International Women's Day Fair, a woman activist was arrested, detained and held for deportation. Nellie's was part of the organizing movement to try to get the Minister of Citizenship Immigration to stop her deportation until her application on humanitarian and compassionate grounds could be heard. She was deported despite widespread community support and outrage. We are still waiting for a response from the Minister, Joe Volpe, to our letters requesting answers and action on changes to the immigration system that will provide equity and justice to all women in our community.

"There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest." Elie Wiesel, 1928-

In Sisterhood,

Cindy Cowan

Women and Immigration

By Nadine Sookermany, Co-Chair of Nellie's Board of Directors

Thirty percent of Canadian women have immigrated to Canada from another country and our population is growing. In 2001, approximately 3,000 more females immigrated to Canada than males and 15,000 more women came under the family or sponsored class. This has an impact on their social and economic position in Canada.



Immigrant women are especially vulnerable to abusive relationships and barriers finding housing and paid employment. They often earn less than their male counterparts or Canadians in the same positions and face a number of other obstacles in their new country. Women

newcomers are likely to experience stress in relation to their economic circumstances, negative attitudes towards them and personal isolation.

Many newcomers come to Canada are seeking refugee status. Women refugees come to Canada for similar reasons as men, fleeing political persecution or war in their own countries. Some women may have been the victims of sexual torture and face that trauma, in addition to settling into a new country and culture. They are forced to go through intense screening and questioning by immigration and refugee boards to remain in our country. They are contained and held in immigration detention centres without legal representation or knowledge of when they may be released, sometimes without knowledge of why they are being held.

Women also enter Canada through the process of human trafficking. Trafficking of women "is the exploitation of a woman, in particular for her labour or services, with or without pay and with or without her consent, by a person or group of persons with whom she is in an unequal power relationship." Trafficking in women can involve abduction, the use of force, fraud, deception or violence. Women have been brought to Canada by criminals posing as employers, had their passports taken away, been beaten, raped and made to work as prostitutes. Other women are so desperate to leave conditions characterized by poverty, that they migrate to Canada as mail-order brides or domestic workers hoping to find a better life. They too may experience sexual and physical abuse or economic exploitation.

Women may also apply to work in Canada under the Live-in Caregiver Program as a domestic worker. These women are classified as temporary workers. They are not Canadian citizens, and even though they are covered under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, they lack the money, knowledge of the system, and access to public services in order to defend what rights they have. They're often forced into staying in abusive and exploitative work situations with no options because their status in Canada is dependant on this program.



When an immigrant woman is experiencing abuse in her relationship, she may not be able to leave because regulations placed on sponsored immigrants can make it difficult for her to receive social assistance and old age security, as well as limit her access to social housing and job training programs. Not only does this deny immigrant women the services they need, it also means they are forced to rely on men

whether they want to or not. This can result in women and children living in abusive situations.

In addition to the points I have made about the experience of immigrant women in Canada, there are so many more barriers that are related to access to employment and the lack of value placed on unpaid work or work experience from other countries. My parents came to Canada in the 1960s with the dream of a "better life." My mother came to Canada with skills and education as a British-trained nurse. My father came with a dream to enter university. My mother worked in a factory, and my father drove a taxicab. I'm struck when I think that in 2005, almost 40 years later, newcomers to our country are still having their expertise, experience and education discounted. The struggle continues for newcomers to our country. This is racism and the fact that it still exists in our policies and institutions is a shame.

Picture on the left by Helen Tam Stalker / Image on the right: courtesy of CAW

The document is based on information found on the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women: Fact Sheet on Immigrant and Refugee Women (http://www.criaw-icref.ca/factSheets/Immigrant_fact_sheet_e.htm#_edn71)

Challenging of Stereotypes of Immigrant and Refugee Women

Courtesy of Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women

Myth: Immigrant and refugee women are all women of colour, or don't speak English or French.

Fact: Immigrant and refugee women come from all parts of the world – Asia, African, South America, Middle East, the Caribbean, the United States, Europe and Oceania. Many are racialized women, some are not. The majority speak English or French, 9% do not. Some immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean, the United States and Europe speak English or French as a first language. Some refugee women have come from Eastern Europe, Rwanda, Somalia and other places ravaged by war. Immigrant and refugee women represent a very large number of cultures and personal and political circumstances.

Myth: Immigrant women are "uneducated".

Fact: On average, immigrant women have higher levels of formal education than Canadian-born women.

Myth: Immigrant women take jobs away from Canadian-born women.

Fact: Canada has a labour shortage in many occupations. If Canada did not benefit from immigrants and refugees, the Canadian population and economy would decline. Many immigrant women and men set up small businesses in Canada, which create jobs.



Rosemary Brown (1930-2003) – Feminist, social activist, politician and human rights advocate. Rosemary came to Canada from Jamaica in 1950 to study Law at McGill, and later earned a master's degree in social work. A tireless worker for social justice, she was the first Black woman elected to political office in Canada.

New experience in a new country

By Jenny, *not real name

I came to Canada with my husband in 1966 and we've been here for 22 years. I can vividly remember my feelings of sadness and loneliness. I didn't know anybody, services were non-existent to me and supports were unheard of. I didn't like the feeling being here and my perspective on Canada was not very positive.

After networking, I was able to land myself a job in a laundry department. Since I didn't speak English, I was the target of emotional abuse and severe mistreatment. I was called stupid and my feelings of incompetence grew to the point of tears. I endured the hardship for eight months because I felt there was no other choice for me. I had ambitions of going to school, though I felt very shy and did not want to go through the same experience again if it could have been avoided.

My feelings of hopelessness were growing. Fortunately after a few weeks I met a wonderful woman when I was working Sunnybrook Hospital. She invited me out to a café to share a coffee. My experiences were changing from bad to good. I felt so happy that someone would take the time out to forge a connection of solidarity with me. I felt much better and began to have a liking for Canada.

After two years of hard work, I was able to buy my own home. It was a great present for my husband and me. After these very difficult times, we were both able to feel secure and confident in our decision to come here for a better life.

For the last few years I have been coming to Nellie's Community Support and Outreach programs and I have not only made friends with many women from diverse communities, I learn many new things at Nellie's "Her Share" program.

Program Update - The Shelter, by Irene Jaakson, Program Manager

Note: For safety reasons, we can't show pictures of women and children from the Shelter Program.

As always, there's lots to tell you about!

We rang in the New Year at the shelter with champagne (non-alcoholic of course!) and treats like cookies and cakes and chocolates. We hit a true high note in January, thanks to Trey Anthony who provided tickets for some of our residents to see *Da Kink in My Hair* at the Royal Alexandra Theatre. Thank you Trey, you really helped start 2005 off right!



Lynda Scott and Scott Moore from ODSP Employment Supports delivered a speech on Income Support

Lunar New Year was another festive event, complete with a full dinner and discussion of all of our horoscopes.



Staff at the shelter participated in the Black History Month program

February continued with celebrations of Black History. The women and children enjoyed movies and discussions, and a feast prepared by staff and residents.

The Group Nga Ken Killin Fii (Let Us all be One) performing for February Black History Month, Eryn playing the flute, Fatou reading the story and Ozzi playing the drum



Tracy Mollins from Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy Project giving a speech on "Inclusive Models: Building a Learning Nation"



"Happy Mother's Day!" from Yasmin, age 4



We partied for International Women's Day at Nellie's Awakenings Dance, and had a fabulous time! The Chefs of Mardi Gras Restaurant helped us prepare by creating a traditional Cajun feast for women and children in the shelter. Thanks to our student, Danielle White, who helped make this amazing event come true.

In May we will celebrate and honor mothers, and all amazing women. Of course Pride is just around the corner in June. At the shelter, we welcome Ngalula Tshiswawa from Le Regroupement des Femmes Immigrantes Francophones, who will be helping us make the spring and summer spectacular.

CSO Update - by Madeleine Mariano, CSO Worker

Spring is finally
in the air after a
long winter.



Marie, Nancy
and Danielle
speaking on women
with disabilities



Yoga Instruction with
Rebecca Jackson



Mitra Keshmiri
provided 16 hours of
massage therapy to
the women at the "Her
Share" Program



Victoria Bay sharing a
quiet moment with
mother and child at the
weekend program



Thank you to
Bell Mobility
who gave us
Easter Eggs

We have been able to successfully provide a wonderful weekend childrens' Homework/recreation group on Saturdays. Victoria Bay has been running this new program.

At the "Her Share" program every Thursday, women have been treated to luxurious massages, as well as yoga and related therapies. In March we had Marie T. Paul, Nancy Barry and Danielle Svec from Education Wife Assault speaking about women with disabilities; and Lydia Scott and Scott Moore addressing employment and income support from Ontario Disability Support Program. In April we had G. Louise Joseph, an employment counsellor from the Ralph Thorton Community Centre talk about interview skills and barriers to employment.

We recently ended our beloved "Lavender Stew" community kitchen program to make ways for new programs for women in our community. We are very enthusiastically preparing our much-anticipated program for young women age 18-26, beginning this spring. The program will be developed with the young women.

Sadly we have to say goodbye to Tamara Aedo-Castillo, our student from George Brown College, as she has successfully completed her student placement at Nellie's. We wish her well. We welcome Leila Haddad and Fatima Sankoh from Le Regroupement des Femmes Immigrantes Francophones. Leila and Fatima will now be training with us for the next six months.



Kids doing painting
at the weekend
program

Educating Children and Youth Against Violence Project in partnership with Nellie's

By Rishika Williams, City Program Coordinator of Moorelands



When Nellie's approached Moorelands with the idea of holding workshops for our program participants on dealing with violence, no one could quite believe it. The need for workshops facilitated by experienced and sensitive staff on issues of violence affecting children and youth is great in all schools in Toronto, and our programs are no exception.

Moorelands Community Services works to improve the lives of children and youth living in high-needs Toronto neighborhoods with few resources. The City Programs, which include five After-School Programs, three Leadership Programs and a Summer Day Camp, are run in partnership with local schools and community centres in Flemingdon Park, Thorncliffe Park and in the Queen and Greenwood neighbourhood of South Riverdale. Together these programs provide over 900 spaces of children's programming for families.

A primary concern for young people in our programs is bullying. There is also a general lack of awareness of resources available to children and their families. Many of our participants frequently witness and experience violence, whether in their relationships or around them in their communities and struggle with finding effective ways of addressing and coping with these experiences.

Nellie's workshops create a safe space for our participants to talk about their experiences, explore options in dealing with them, and also provide resources and practical tips to cope

with and address issues as they come up. Some of the topics covered are bullying and conflict resolution as well as anti-racism and anti-oppression training.

The response to the training has been overwhelmingly positive. Children were comfortable sharing feelings and experiences with each other and the staff. This brought everyone closer as a result. In one program, the training helped resolve a situation of bullying as we had both the bully and the bullied children in the program. The bully identified the fact that he had a problem and disclosed this to both the staff as well as his parents. The parents then came to the staff for ideas to help their child and to make him accountable to the children he had been bullying. Children who are new to Canada and are dealing with racism on a daily basis were given the opportunity to share these experiences with their peers. The program staff has expressed their appreciation both for the opportunity offered to the children, but also for the learning that they experienced as well.

This partnership has been an incredible learning experience for everyone involved. The workshops started in February and go to the end of June, and 386 young people will benefit from this project. On behalf of the children, families and staff at Moorelands, I would like to express our heartfelt thanks for the wonderful work that was done at our programs and hope that this partnership can continue in the future.

Nellie's Invitation...

By Wendy Sung-Aad, Manager of Development

You are invited!

Mark down the following dates and come join us!

May is **Daisy of Hope** Month. Help us sell daisy pins to family, friends and colleagues. Wear a daisy and show your support for ending violence against women

Monday June 20 is our second annual **Great Art Glad Heart** Art Sale and Auction. A spectacular array of original artwork in all media donated by artists across the GTA is available. Proceeds go to Nellie's programs for women and kids. Olivia Chow is our special guest host for the evening, so come join us at Gallery 1313

Special thanks to
Olina Lin for
donating her artwork
as a raffle prize



at 1313 Queen St. West or buy a raffle at \$5 to support Nellie's.

Sunday June 26, come down to our booth and say "hi" at this year's **Pride Community Fair** at Church and Wellesley Streets. Come celebrate this year's Pride theme – 25 Years and Counting!

For more information contact Wendy at 416-461-0769 or email community@nellies.org.

Work for Social Change with Nellie's Board Committees

By Sherece Taffe, Secretary of the Board of Directors

Board members work hard and have loads of fun at Nellie's. Once one gets accepted as a board member, you participate in at least one board committee in order to better understand the work, as well as to work with staff and other volunteers. The purpose of each committee is different, but they are all geared towards ensuring the programs and services reflect the mission and vision of the agency and carry out Nellie's strategic priorities planning. Each board committee is comprised of board member(s), management staff and front line staff as well as community members. We have regular meetings and will reimburse volunteer expenses such as travel and childcare. The time commitment involved for each committee is about two hours per month.

The **Fundraising Committee's** purpose is to ensure the financial health of the organization through the development and implementation of a comprehensive annual fundraising strategy and plan. The **Social Justice Committee** develops annual social justice priorities and organizational positions on issues. The **Personnel Committee** ensures fair, anti-racist, anti-oppressive human resources policies. The **Finance Committee** ensures fiscal responsibility for the organization. The **Nominating Committee** ensures a fair nominating process for board members and an open membership base that is supportive of organizational principles. The **Strategic Planning Committee** sets the strategic direction for the organization for three-to-five year intervals.

The committee members support Nellie's goals as an organization to continue to assist women and children who are escaping violence and homelessness. Nellie's committee fulfills our mission to achieve social justice while fostering opportunities for personal growth. Currently, the board committees are in full swing working on a variety of issues, events and happenings. Check out what's new at www.nellies.org.

If you're interested in contributing to the exceptional work that Nellie's staff, board and volunteers continue to produce, and in having a good time sharing your particular expertise, please contact Gellien at 416-461-8903. The Social Justice Committee and the Fundraising Committee are currently looking for Board Committee volunteers.

Join us, we're looking for a few wonderful women!



Fundraising Committee members, front row from left are Staff Jiin, committee members Jazel and Daniëlle, back row from left are Board members Sherece and Mary

Awakenings 2005

By Wendy Sung-Aad, Manager of Development

In the spirit of International Women's Week, Nellie's, in partnership with the Assaulted Women's Helpline, held their second annual Fundraising Women's Dance on March 11th. Over 200 people arrived to celebrate the "Awakening" of women. Thanks to an array of diverse women DJs and go-go dancers, everyone had a night of dancing and good cheer. With tremendous support from the community, the event was filled to capacity and over \$5,000 was raised! Special congratulations to our 50/50 raffle draw winner Yo Hodan who won the cash prize total of \$750!

Thanks to all our hardworking and dedicated volunteers and event sponsors including Metro Credit Union, Lovecraft, Xtra, NOW and CKLN, without whom the event would not of been possible! See everyone next year at International Women's Week!



Awakening 2005 - Dance... and drink, and dance...

Thank you to our volunteer bartenders Jazel and Geraldine

Congratulations to Yo Hodan, the raffle winner of Awakening 50/50 Draw





Team from Metro Credit Union, Thank you very much for supporting our Awakenings Dance



Volunteers from the Junior League served a hot lunch to women & kids at Nellie's



A big thanks to the Panty Schmooze Committee for their wonderful in-kind donations and financial gifts to the women at Nellie's. See you next year at the Schmooze!



Special thanks to the Society of Cosmetic Chemists for hosting a Charity Casino Night for Nellie's

Nellie's Calendar of Events

June	Gay & Lesbian Pride Month
Jun 20	Nellie's Art Auction - Great Art Glad Heart 6:30 pm at Gallery 1313, 1313 Queen St. West
Jun 20-26	Toronto Pride Week
Jun 21	National Aboriginal Day - Canada
Jun 25	Pride Toronto Dyke March
Jun 26	Pride Community Fair
Jun 27	Multiculturalism Day
July 1	Canada Day
Aug 6	Caribana
Sept 5	Labour Day
Oct 10	Thanksgiving
Oct 10	World Mental Health Day - UN
Oct 17	Int'l Day for Eradication of Poverty - UN

Note: Please visit our website at www.nellies.org for more community and cultural celebrations for 2005

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