



# 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

Feb 2006 , Issue #18

Many thanks to all our friends for their support of Nellie's programs this past year. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to mark all the festive celebrations with wonderful food, special programming and gifts for all the women and children who rely on our services.

This year on January 29th 2006 we marked Chinese New Year. This year is the Year of the Dog. Best wishes to all for a safe happy and healthy New Year!

The New Year at Nellie's always begins with a critical review of the past year. We are a small, grassroots women's organization but we do a lot. I am proud to briefly highlight some of the great work both in our programs and in the community.

This year we provided support and services to over 700 women and children in our community. We sheltered 200 women and children and assisted many more in finding and maintaining permanent housing. We provided community programs that ease social isolation, and promote health and wellness. We helped women and their families through weekly food programs. We worked in partnership with Moorelands Community Services to provide afterschool anti-violence programs to 386 children in the Thorncliffe and Flemington neighbourhoods.

In keeping with Nellie's mission and vision, we participate in a number of community initiatives where we work to end poverty, violence, homelessness and oppression in the lives of all women. In 2005, we participated in 38 community research initiatives and in 28 social justice actions. Nellie's also participated in 23 community forums, 27 community coalitions and 18 community events.

This month, Nellies celebrates *African Heritage/Black History Month* with special programming that highlights the contributions of the community. We will also mark Valentine's Day with messages on our website that honour equitable and healthy relationships. For too many women, violence is a factor in their lives and in their relationships



with intimate partners. This V- Day, we affirm that "LOVE DOES NOT HURT".

On March 8 we will celebrate *International Women's Day*. This year, the United Nations theme is Women in Decision-making. Please join us on Friday March 10th for "Awakenings," our 3rd Annual International Women's Day Dance in partnership with the Assaulted Women's Helpline. So come party and celebrate with us. For more information call us or visit our website.

This issue of Nellie's newsletter is dedicated to understanding global feminism and how struggles are both similar and different across the globe. It looks at how the experiences of colonization, war, racism and poverty shape the lives of communities and the effects on women and children in particular. During the month of March as we mark Women's History Month, International Women's Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, we commit to continue to learn and unlearn so that we can all truly be sisters in the global struggle for justice.

*"When a woman from Mexico, Jamaica or the Philippines decides to emigrate in order to make money as a domestic servant, she is designing her own international debt politics. She is trying to cope with the loss of earning power and the rise in the cost of living at home by cleaning bathrooms in the countries of the bankers."*  
Cynthia Enloe, 1989

Justice and Peace,

Cindy Cowan

# Global Feminism

By Wendy Sung-Aad, Manager of Development

*"...the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields." \**

**E**nsuring the welfare of women is to ensure the future of humanity. For decades, international policies protecting the rights of women have been in place. So why then, are women around the world still trapped in lives filled with suffering and pain? To answer this question, we need to address the global conditions of women's lives. This article looks at poverty, war and violence as primary barriers to the advancement of global women's rights.

Poverty decimates the lives of women and children around the world. The roots of poverty are deep-seeded, far-reaching and complex. On a large scale, institutions such as the World Bank continue to drain the economic life-blood from developing nations through unfair policies that create debt and abject poverty. Colonization, now under the guise of "liberation," is another vampirical practice that allows states with might, to take with force the natural and human resources of meeker states in the name of morality, progress and democracy, leaving havoc and poverty in its wake.

These forces help create the conditions where women and children are left in complete and utter destitution. At their most vulnerable, they lack access to credit and rights to ownership, property and inheritance. This is a particular concern in nations where fathers and husbands are dying in implausible numbers from HIV/AIDS. The increase in voluntary trafficking of women and children for sex or labour also stems from desperate attempts to escape poverty. The health consequences for communities in poor nations are unacceptable, yet while we have the capacity to save the life of someone dying of starvation or HIV/AIDS in Africa for literally the change in our pockets, we allow ourselves and our governments to remain indifferent to their suffering because there are no strategic advantages to alleviate it.

The impact of armed-conflicts and global warfare, perpetuated by the arms trade industry, has a particularly brutal impact on women and children. History has taught us that women and girls have always suffered disproportionately as gender-based and sexual violence are common weapons of warfare and genocide. War is the reason for the mass exodus of women and children from their once safe homes and shelters, communities and livelihoods. War is the reason why women and children form the majority of citizens among refugee populations, forced to scrounge for food and water to survive; fend off rape, mass rape and forced pregnancy; and endure sexual slavery, forced labour, enforced prostitution and the trafficking of humans, drugs and arms.



amnesty international

When women and children make it to a refugee camp, rape, domestic violence, restrictive and regressive emigration policies and services, along with dismal living conditions, await them. Even when wars end, the aftermath of armed conflicts leave women and children a legacy of destruction and poverty. Generations of males killed in battle leave generations of widows and orphans fighting for survival, tending to the maimed. Land mines left behind lurk menacingly below the earth silently threatening violence, awaiting their next victims' limb or life. Landmines also perpetuate poverty as they render surrounding lands useless, as they cannot be cultivated.

The most ghastly violation against women lies in the pervasiveness of violence against women. Patriarchal legal systems and decision makers protect the status quo and permit and promote violence against women. Such as the case of Amina Lawal, a woman who was raped and whose resulting pregnancy was deemed sufficient evidence for a death sentence conviction by a Nigerian Court for the crime of having intercourse out of wedlock. Although her case has since been dismissed on a technicality, many more women still fear the same fate.

Or the ongoing atrocity of over 400 missing, abducted, and violently raped and murdered women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. For over a decade now, officials have not stopped the murders and abductions, or given any peace of mind to the missing women's families. Women who are mostly poor or working class who travel long distances by bus from their homes to work in Juárez are forced to live under the constant threat of violence. In Canada, many Aboriginal women have gone missing and been murdered. In 2004, Amnesty International's report entitled: "Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada" concludes: "In every instance, Canadian authorities could and should have done more to ensure the safety of these women and girls." This is a national shame and is the result of racism and sexism.

To discuss global feminism, we need to address society's perpetuation of global racism, classism and sexism, and how they foster environments of war, poverty and violence in the lives of women around the world. We need to understand the interdependent nature of these issues that conspire to keep countries, communities, women and children occupied in a constant fight for survival. We need to recognize how these issues prevent the social, political and economic rights and inclusion of women all over the world.

\*Excerpt from the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ratified by 180 nation/states around the world

# One woman's struggle

By Thi-Phuong Huynh, Counselor

**L**ife is a long journey, filled with surprise, challenges and on-going struggle. The life of a woman growing up in this society, or any other, is ten times the struggle.

I was born in the late '60s in Vietnam, a country well known to the world for war. I am a bi-racial child: they call me Amerasian. I am a war baby, a product (or a reminder) of the Vietnam War. Growing up in Vietnam was very hard. To the Vietnamese I am Black, and yet to Black people I am Asian. I'm not dark enough to be black, but not fair enough to be Vietnamese. I remember growing up confused, not knowing where I belong. I had no solid roots, no home, no country, and so, no life. I remember the name-calling and the fistfights, all because I was different. I remember back in high school I got into so many fights that I stopped one day and asked the person fighting with me why she hated me. She simply replied: "I don't know!" I think the question I raised got her thinking, and we didn't fight anymore.



Courtesy of World March  
of Women

As for myself, I've stopped the fistfights and learned to walk away. I remember going to the school guidance counselor to seek his advice about my future education. I told him of my dream of becoming a lawyer one day. He said to me: "You being a lawyer is like running a marathon with a broken leg!" He shattered my dreams and hopes. I left and never returned to see him, but I refused to believe him and give up.

I am the woman that I am today because I refused to accept the place that society held for me. I choose to live my own life as I see fit. It's taken me a long time to get here and at times, I've felt like giving up, but I found the strength to keep going. As women, we learn to fight what feels sometimes like a losing battle, and hope for strength to keep us moving forward. We seek to speak the truth and be heard, to work towards positive changes and progress. I truly believe that there is hope for this world and wish that we could all share this belief that we can make a difference.

## Organizing the Somali Women's Movement

By Madeleine Mariano, Community Support & Outreach Worker

**I** was born in Somalia, a country then known as "The Jewel of the Indian Ocean." I was raised by a respected family and enjoyed the freedoms and joys of childhood.

My awareness of how women were treated differently from men began in my early 20s, when some friends and I began to share our experiences. We talked about how girls were expected to prepare to be good wives. Many of my friends faced having no choices about marriage, education or career. At that time, if a woman was divorced by her husband she was forced to return to her relatives and her children were taken away from her. It was this collective knowledge that got us mad enough to do something about it, and so began the Somali Women's Movement.

In early 1968, five women and I started the Movement. Our first action was to create a Constitution. We then created

three branches, they were Social Justice, Literacy and Microskills. Social Justice dealt with divorce and property and trying to change family laws. Literacy program volunteers helped women with basic reading and writing. Microskills helped women individually and collectively gain financial independence by starting their own small, home-based business. We worked on helping women secure financial assistance. By mid 1968, we had over 20 women members from various backgrounds and fields of expertise supporting our Movement. In 1969, the revolution began and within a year, new laws were passed to restrict public gatherings and activism. The Movement had to work underground until civil war broke out and the group was dispersed.

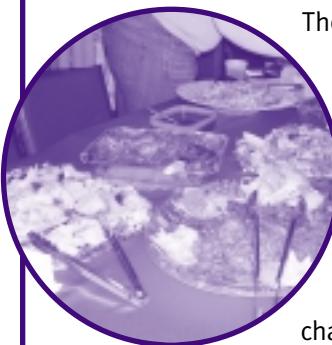
I came to Canada in 1991 and I have continued to fight for women's equality. At Nellie's, I work to end oppression, poverty, violence and homelessness for all women.

# *Shelter/Program Update - By Irene Jaakson, Program Manager*

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

*There have been lots happening since our last newsletter.*

*I*n December we joined in solidarity with other women to help end violence against women, and participated again in the National Day of Action and Remembrance on December 6th. We helped raise funds by selling buttons at Broadview subway, then all women at the shelter painted a banner to express their feelings, thoughts and hopes for a future free of violence, poverty, homelessness and oppression for all women and children. Tayna from the Fred Victor Mission came by to speak about housing options at a Residents' Meeting.



*Yummy turkey dinner!!*

The winter season was a vibrant collection of holiday celebrations marked by decorations, feasts, treats, education and celebrations. We had parties to mark Eid, Diwali, Solstice and Christmas. Thanks to our generous donors, all women and children received gifts, including gift certificates and bags of presents. This year at our annual holiday feast we had the privilege of being joined by Suzette and Anthony, our friends in a steel pan band, who kept everyone dancing. Children were invited to try out the steel drums, which was fantastic to watch. Our annual New Year's Eve party topped off the season with (non-alcoholic) champagne and treats for all. Even some of the children managed a sleepy-eyed "Happy New Year!" at midnight.



*A thank you to "Toronto Star Santa Clause Fund" for all these gift boxes*

We kicked off 2006 with the Lunar New Year celebrations, and participated in community festivities including the Lion Dance. February's Black History Month activities will include a speaker, watching videos followed by vibrant discussions, and participation in

community events. For International Women's Day in March we will have a celebration and party for the women in the shelter. On March 21st for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, we will have a speaker and discussion.

At the shelter, we welcome Shan Marcus and Darlene Issac-Downey, two new students. Both Shan and Darlene are studying in the Assaulted Women and Children Counseling and Advocacy AWCCA Program at George Brown College. At our Community Support program, Jennifer Ajandi and Judy Leung are both on placement. Jennifer is studying social work at Ryerson University, and Judy is in the AWCCA Program at George Brown. We are delighted to have Darlene, Shan, Judy and Jenn with us.

*Irene Jaakson couldn't resist the attraction of the super size snowman dessert made by Gail*

*Yoga lesson by Tracy Adair*



*All the best for 2006!*

*Great appreciation to our friends from United Way, Days of Caring, who spent a day painting our CSO program area at Nellie's*



*CPR/First Aid training given by Mailie Harris from Heart Start Emergency Training Centre*

# CSO Update - By Sandy Greer-Wootten, Outreach Worker



A sincere thanks to Gail Prosser, for her ongoing holiday support for the women & kids at Nellie's

Women and children from the CSO Program celebrated both Eid ul-Fitr and Diwali in November 2005 with African music and a colourful array of sweets such as Bur and Hallowa. This festive occasion gave way to reflection on Dec. 6, the National Day for Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

Her Share has featured yoga, Tai Chi, festival cooking and guest speakers from O.D.S.P and the office of the Ombudsman. Upcoming plans will include workshops on preparing a will and taking your citizenship test.

Stay tuned to hear about Nellie's cookbook prepared by women in our program!



Anthony's drum music attracted all kids' attention



Suzette teaching kids how to play the Steel Pan



"May I have a balloon?"

The CSO held our annual Festival of Lights celebration Dec. 15 at the Ralph Thornton Community Centre. This event wouldn't have been possible without support from Gail Prosser, who, for the third year, has helped provide a wonderful holiday to over 80 children who attend our programs. This event was a great success. Women and children were able to enjoy a delicious meal and steel pan music within an atmosphere of excitement and celebration. Gail helped to create an excellent meal of turkey, sweet potato, mashed potatoes, salmon, yummy cakes and cookies. A big thank-you also goes to Siobhan Demsey and Sharon Diner for preparing over 30 presents for the kids.

In January, we had election fever. The women of Nellie's are politically active, and have not missed opportunities to have their say in the last two federal elections. Cindy Cowan, Nellie's Executive Director, spoke with women at the CSO's Her Share program about the party platforms. In addition, women attended a

South Riverdale Community Meeting to discuss issues that were important to them and their children in the election. Childcare was a key concern, with particular focus on the provincial claw back of the federal Child Tax Benefit.

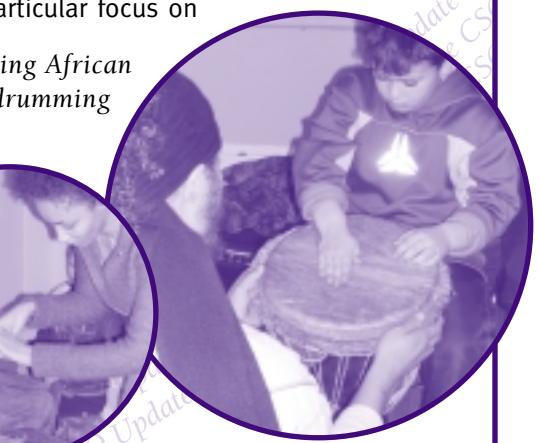
Anthony teaching African drumming



In the spring and summer we look forward to celebrating the Riverdale Art Walk, National Aboriginal Day and Pride. We also have a bike program planned for youths aged 9 to 13 where they will receive a new bike as well as bike safety and education.

We look forward to a year filled with exciting activities for both women and children.

Asha Harris demonstrated how to make buttons



# Message from the Board

By Safia Ahmed, Co-Chair of Board of Directors

Please join me in introducing the newest members of Nellie's Board of Directors and bidding a fond farewell to Nellie's past Co-chair Nadine Sookermany. The five new Directors are:

**Carol Allain** a case manager who works with persons living with disabilities. She has worked in women's services for over 10 years and is a strong advocate for women and children. Carol has skills and experience in the area of policy analysis and development.

**Marcia Beck** is a Social Worker with the Hospital for Sick Children. Marcia has been on the Board Fundraising Committee and has been a Nellie's volunteer since 1999. Marcia has a strong commitment to the women and children at Nellie's.

**Susan Hamilton** works as an outreach coordinator with the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention. She volunteers with Healthy Babies Healthy Beginnings and is Co-chair of Metro Parent Daycare Committee.

**Erica Opoku** is currently working at the Distress Centre of Peel as a volunteer services coordinator. She is a recent graduate of York University's Health and Society Program. Erica's work has centred around women's health, global women's issues and women and the world.

**Lynda Roy** is currently a peer facilitator with the Anne Johnston Health Station Sexability program and is working with Education Wife Assault on their Access to Shelter Project. She recently completed her social work degree and has extensive experience in the areas of disability and poverty.



New Board members from left, Marcia Beck, Carol Allain and Susan Hamilton

development to work towards the elimination of violence and oppression against women and children. I welcome you on behalf of every one at Nellie's.

These five, diverse women bring with them exceptional personal and professional experiences that will have a positive impact on Nellie's program and services. As volunteer Board members, they will use their experiences in marketing, finance, fundraising, social justice, anti-racism/anti-oppression and community

# Nellie's Community Events



Nellie's participated in "Take Back the Night" in October



From left: Cindy, Jenny, Valeska & Janna at 2005 United Way Stair Climb. They successfully climbed 1760 stairs at the CN Tower in October 2005



Jin Yiong doing community education at Volunteer Fair



Pre-election rally



Nellie's participated in Holiday Craft Fair called "Angel Wings over Toronto"



Cindy presented a floral boutique to Nadine, thanking her for 4 years of volunteer services on Nellie's Board of Directors

I would also like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Nadine Sookermany for all her hard work in the past four years. I would like to thank her for her dedication and the endless hours that she spent attending meetings, representing Nellie's at different functions and always advocating on behalf of the women and children at Nellie's. We will miss you Nadine and we wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

# Invitation to all Nellie's friends



## "Awakenings 2006" International Women's Day Dance

Friday March 10th, 2006 at the St. Lawrence Hall  
9:00pm

Come celebrate International Women's Day with Nellie's and the Assaulted Women's Helpline at the Awakenings Dance! Party the night away with a hip mix of fabulous women DJs and GoGo Dancers, fantastic food and drinks, and a fun raffle and wonderful door prizes. This is a licensed event, restricted to 19 years of age or over.

Tickets \$10 advance, \$12 at the door.

## Daisy of Hope Campaign 2006

May 2006



May is Daisy of Hope Campaign Month. In time for Mother's Day, we will be selling daisy lapel pins for a donation of \$2 each. Drop by the Broadview, Eglinton or Yonge/Bloor subway stations during morning and afternoon rush hours on May 3, 4 and 5 to buy a pin. Help us raise awareness of violence against women and valuable funds to help support our shelter. Better yet, rally family, friends, colleagues and community members to purchase daisies in bulk!

For further information or to book tickets for any events listed, please call Wendy at 416-461-0769.

## Special Thanks...

We appreciate every donation we receive. Due to limited space, the list below represents major financial donors who have donated over \$500 from July to December 2005.

Absolute Location Support Services  
Anonymous  
Asian Gourmet Development Inc  
Ballard, Marion R  
Bell Canada  
Bennett Family Foundation  
Bentham, Christie  
BMO Fountain of Hope  
Canadian Press/Broadcast News  
Employees Charitable Fund  
Canadian Women's Foundation  
CHUM Charitable Foundation  
Croxford, Ruth  
Donner Canadian Foundation  
Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg LLP  
Elle Canada  
Estate of Shirley Yuzusukawa  
Estate of William A May  
First Church of Christ, Scientist  
Goodlife Fitness  
Great Atlantic & Pacific Co of Can Ltd  
Guillen, Ann  
Gurney, Katherine  
Heather Mitchell, Lawyer-Avocate  
Hoare, Andrea & John  
Hutchison, Janet

Hydro One Employee's and Pensioner's Charity Trust Fund  
IBM Employees' Charitable Fund  
Indigo Books & Music  
Insurance Solutions Plus  
Ivanhoe Cambridge  
Landry, Katherine  
LCBO, Summerhill Store  
MAC Cosmetics  
Mackenzie Financial Charitable Foundation  
Manchee, D Jeanne  
Marion Ethel & Frederick John Kamm Foundation  
MAZON Canada  
Mercator Investments Ltd  
Miller, Ron & Linda  
North Metro Chorus Sweet Adelines Int'l  
Ontario Nurses' Association  
OPG Employees' and Pensioners' Charity Trust  
Osler, Elizabeth  
Panther Plastics Canada Inc  
Pham, Huong  
Powerflow Products Ltd  
Reed, David  
Richardson, Edward & Elizabeth  
Schlichtig & Associates Inc  
Sears Employee Charitable Fund  
Senang Investments Ltd.  
Speight, Christopher

Starcana Entertainment Inc  
Stemp, William  
Strachan, Shane  
The Banyan Society of Toronto  
The Brumara Foundation  
The Counselling Foundation of Canada  
The Hon Frank Iacobucci  
The Hylcan Foundation  
The Manchee Foundation  
Toronto Fire Fighters  
Toronto Hydro Employee Fund  
The Toronto Star  
The Toskan Foundation  
The United Way of Greater Toronto  
The United Way of Oakville  
The United Way of Peel Region  
Universal Music Canada Inc  
University of Toronto, Office of HR and Equity  
Warsame, Yasmin  
Whelpdale, Linda  
Wright, Lana  
WSIB, Staff Association Charity Trust  
Young, Nancy  
Zakharov, Alex



*Thank you William Brown for his ongoing support of our Transitional Programs and a life-long commitment to help disabled women leave violence*



*Thank you to Bank of Montreal for their ongoing support of Nellie's*



*Staff team from Toronto Star Accounting Department gave a generous donation to Nellie's, thank you so much for choosing us as their 50/50 draw recipient*



*Best wishes to John Begley and the team at Summerhill LCBO for their unwavering annual support that contributes significantly to women and children programs at Nellie's*

## Nellie's Calendar of Events

February	Black History Month
March	National Women's History Month
Mar 8	International Women's Day Theme: "Women in Decision Making"
Mar 10	<b>Awakenings 2006 – Nellie's Annual Fundraising Women's Dance</b>
Mar 21	International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination – UN
Apr 7	World Health Day – UN
May	<b>Daisy of Hope Campaign</b>
May 1	International Labour Day
May 3, 4, 5	<b>Daisy of Hope Subway Campaign</b> see details on page 7
May 14	Mother's Day
May 23	African Liberation Day
June 10	<b>Jazz it up with Nellie's – Our Annual Signature Fundraiser</b>

*Note: Please visit our website at [www.nellies.org](http://www.nellies.org) for all community and cultural celebrations for 2006*

## Nellie's Contact Information

*Mailing Address:*  
970 Queen Street East, PO Box 98118  
Toronto, ON M4M 1J0



<i>Shelter</i>	<i>Community Support</i>
Tel: 416-461-1084	Tel: 416-461-3404, 416-461-2052
TTY: 416-461-7561	Fax: 416-461-0970
Fax: 416-461-0976	E-mail: outreach@nellies.org
E-mail: programs@nellies.org	

## Transitional Housing & Support

Tel: 416-461-0980  
TTY: 416-461-0625  
Fax: 416-461-0970  
E-mail: tsw@nellies.org

## Administration

Tel: 416-461-8903      Fax: 416-461-0970  
E-mail: community@nellies.org  
Website: [www.nellies.org](http://www.nellies.org)  
Program, Volunteers, Students: 416-461-0739  
Financial Donations: 416-461-0769  
In Kind Donations: 416-461-0521  
Charitable No.: 11930-2727-RR0001



*Thank you to Nellie's volunteer Editor, Julie Allin, for her help.*