



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.

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Message from the Executive Director

It's spring at last! A welcome sight after a very long and hard winter!

With spring comes renewal and renewal at Nellie's means re-introducing the support groups for women experiencing abuse and violence that run for 12 weeks until the end of June. There is a support group for women with mobility challenges experiencing abuse and violence in their lives; the bi-monthly workshops for HerShare programs; and a harm reduction workshop to boost staff skills on the subject.



Welcome Julia!

We are welcoming five new members to the Nellie's fold:

Julia Robinson to the staff team as the Development Manager; Sahar Zaidi and Lauren Hanna to the Board of Directors; and Heidi Klett and Tamyka Bullen to the Accessibility Committee.

On the sad side of the renewal cycle, we had to say good bye to Wendy Sung-Aad, Nellie's Development Manager of 10 years, and to Rebecca Rogers, Program Manager for over seven years. Their contributions will always be part of Nellie's. We wish them both the best in their new life paths.

Thank you to Human Resources Development Canada for their funding to hire five students for the summer employment program. We are now in the process of interviewing students that will support our children programs and to cover other summer projects. We are also initiating the selection process for the student placements and volunteer positions for the coming fall.

Please mark the following dates in your calendars: Wednesday September 24, the date for our Annual General Members meeting. Invitation will follow; and Sunday October 19, the Scotiabank Marathon. Join the race along with your

family and friends in support of Nellie's.

The main article in this issue, "The Criminalization of Women" is the first step for the year's work plan of the Social Justice Committee. The committee will be working on a position paper about women in conflict with the law in Canada. The focus of the committee's work will be researching how poverty, racism, physical and sexual abuse frame and determine women's choices. We will continue to advocate for the removal of barriers that marginalize women. The position paper will provide us with some guidance on this issue.

The oppression and victimization of women at the national and international levels is a matter of great alarm.

● the national level, the lack of concern from the government and the population in general to the ongoing disappearance and murdering of aboriginal women must be challenged. At the international level, it is really alarming how women and young girls are oppressed and victimized. The simple fact that receiving education in some countries is a privilege only accessible to men, and not women, is oppressive. The case of [Malala Yousafzai](#), in Pakistan and the disappearance of more than [200 girls in Nigeria](#) are clear examples of the extreme oppression of women and the lack of a strong, unified front to denunciate and stop the persecution and marginalization of women. For more information, please check these links:
<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24379018>;
<http://www.nwac.ca/press-release-immediate-release-2014-05-07-en>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27373287>

Justice and Equity,

Margarita Méndez

The Criminalization of Women: A Social Justice Perspective

By Kira Steiner, Nellie's Program & Housing Case Management Support Staff

Criminalization is defined as turning someone into a criminal or treating someone as a criminal through selective surveillance, over-policing and punishment. Operating from an anti-oppressive, feminist perspective, Nellie's recognizes that the criminalization of women is not gender-neutral and must be viewed through the lens of gender, race/ethnicity, class and other social locations or identities. In addition, the organization supports the view that the criminalized behaviour of women stems from structural and systemic inequality.

Many misconceptions surround the subject of women and crime. In particular, the rise in female incarceration levels over the past decade has perpetuated the idea that women are becoming increasingly violent. This is simply not true. Canadian statistics have determined that the number of "violent" offences committed by women actually remains low and yet women continue to represent the fastest growing prison population worldwide (Pate, 2001). This past fall, Nellie's social justice committee determined that this year's social justice priority and theme of our next organizational position paper would be the criminalization of women.

Studies have shown there to be a strong correlation between the feminization of poverty and crime. Over 80% of all incarcerated women in Canada are in prison for poverty-related offences (Metrac, 2008). Women have been pushed into more marginal existences as a result of economic restructuring and the breakdown of social services. As a result, they may find other ways such as sex work or shoplifting to survive and support themselves even though these behaviours are deemed illegal. Increasingly, it is women's "survival skills that are becoming criminalized" and not women themselves that are becoming more violent (Metrac, 2008). "Zero tolerance" policies in Canada have also increased the policing and prosecution of all types of violence in Canada. Girls and women are charged and countercharged as a result of these "gender neutral" policies.

Canadian statistics also highlight the fact that **Aboriginal women, racialized women**

and women with mental health issues and/or who use substances are overrepresented in institutions of state control. Poor, young racialized women and women with disabilities are among the most rapidly growing prison populations in Canada (Neve & Pate, 2005). Lisa Smith, a young Aboriginal woman with a history of undiagnosed mental illness, was designated as one of the most "dangerous women in Canada". In 1994, she was given an indeterminate prison sentence for assault, drug

use and sex work, tactics she was forced to use to survive on the street and in abusive relationships. Similarly, 17-year-old Ashley Smith, a woman diagnosed with mental illness, tragically hanged herself in prison while her guards watched. In both cases, stereotyping these women generated ideological justification for their surveillance, under-protection

and over-punishment.

Currently, the criminal justice system does not respond to the factors that lead women to crime or violence; instead, it maintains inequality. Nellie's remains committed to challenging the criminalization of women that occurs as a result of systemic oppression and to supporting marginalized women in overcoming the conditions that often lead to "criminal" behaviour. Instead of putting more money into prisons, our government needs to provide more financial support for community-based programs and resources for marginalized communities affected by systemic inequality. Without increased community supports such as housing, education, universal childcare, as well as legislative reform, it is unrealistic to expect women to stop behaviours that help them to survive in the first place. Whether through discussion and engagement with the community, attendance in public events, or activism in various forms, **Nellie's is prepared to address the needs, bring awareness to the gaps, and inform the wider community about the realities and need for change within our justice system.**



I Thought Only Cats Landed On Their Feet

By Lil Manger, Nellie's Relief Counsellor

She sat on the cold, hard concrete at the bottom of the steps, barely breathing. She opened her eyes and looked around. Yep, blood on jeans? Check. Alive? Check. She was surprised; she didn't know humans could land so carefully on their feet after such a fall, well, push. He was still standing there, at the top of the balcony. He looked at her, almost as shocked as she was that it happened. It had been physically violent before, but not like this. Her emotions ranged from rage to horror to love in milliseconds that even she could not understand. She stood back up, brushed herself off and stormed back to the top of the stairs, towards him. She had no plan.



She grabbed his shoulders, and yelled fruitlessly: "How could you do this to me?" He just stood there, motionless. She wasn't going to be a victim. She grabbed his shirt. He leaned back, it tore a little, and it started again. The next thing she remembered was the security guard from the event next door ordering them to two separate sides of the balcony. She stood there in horror. Police arrived: dual charging. They took them both to the police station, separately. "To serve and protect? To criminalize and revictimize," she thought hopelessly. And that was just the beginning.

No Safe Space: Mary's Story

By Jessica Davis, Student Placement

Mary*, a transwoman, experienced abuse as a child and continued to experience abusive relationships into her adult years. She became heavily street involved and began using drugs to cope with her past trauma and the continued violence of living in poverty on the street. She also experienced harassment and violence due to transphobia. Living on the street, she had many involvements with the police, and she was eventually criminalized for her drug use - a fate disproportionately common for those experiencing oppression, such as homelessness, as those who use and are homeless often do not have a safe, private place to do so. Even though Mary avoided jail time, her involvement with the justice system only exacerbated her experiences of poverty, homelessness, and oppression.

Being a transwoman, Mary had few safe spaces to turn for help. She eventually came to Nellie's Shelter, one of the few women's shelters that is Trans Positive and uses a harm reduction approach. Nellie's gave Mary a place to stay and supported her through the process of obtaining affordable housing, which she eventually secured. However, Mary continued to face systemic oppression and violence when the criminal justice system recriminalized her for her drug use and as a result she lost her housing. Despite these challenges, Nellie's continues to work with and support Mary through her ongoing struggle to secure affordable housing and escape the violence of living on the street. Mary's story, unfortunately, is not unique and shares elements with the stories of many women experiencing criminalization as the result of oppression. Nellie's will continue to work with and advocate for women like Mary.

*Name changed for confidentiality



Program Update – Shelter

By Tamara Nickie, Shelter Admin. Support Worker



Celebration of Black History Month

At Nellie's, we have different programs to get women to know each other and feel like home for them. We go on outings or stay in to enjoy different foods, music, movie nights or simply have conversations with each other.

In February, we celebrated black history month, where we learn about the history of black men and women on the Canadian culture through inventions, sports and so on. It was also Valentine's Day, women were given flowers and we all indulged in too much chocolate.



Staff & Volunteer at Rebecca's farewell party



Staff Cecelia & Bernadette planting on World Earth Day

In March, we celebrated International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, where women spoke about their experiences and how they dealt with it and the strength that they were able to gain from each other's stories.

On International Women's Day, we rallied with "women taking power" and demanded minimum wage increase and other rights such as affordable day care. Many of the women at Nellie's are very familiar with the above mentioned issues.

On Easter Sunday, thank you to Madison Event Centre, women and children traveled to Vaughn and had a delightful brunch and on Easter Monday, we stayed in and had a relaxing, enjoyable day of brunch. As respect to Mother Earth, on Earth Day, we had fun in the sun, cleaned around the house and planted beautiful flowers and plants.

In May, we have attended the 'Bring back our girls rally' to help free the kidnapped Nigerian girls. Women and children had a fun day out at the movies and enjoyed our first ever brinner (brunch for dinner).



Information session for the day of Elimination of Racism on March 21

We also have our house programs where women do self-care with the nurturing ourselves group and in the healing thru art, they get to learn a valuable skill and simply have fun.



Wonderful foot spa

Programming is an exciting time at our house and it is a wonderful opportunity for women to know each other, to learn from each other experiences, to provide peer support, to learn about issues impacting their lives and to participate in actions aimed to raise awareness on these issues.

CSO Update

By Adriana Pelayo, Community Support & Outreach Worker



Nellie's Holiday Party was a complete success, just as it's been every year. Our dedicated volunteers made it lots of fun! They prepared and served the food, played music, danced and made everyone happy. Thank you to Tony Roost and Peggy Chen; you are great!

The International Women's Day march and rally was full of energy in spite of the cold. Women and kids were chanting and clapping and having a good time.

Cooking is fun!

This past winter, "Her Share" program has been very busy with workshops. Topics were across the board, covering issues like cancer prevention and diabetes, to elder isolation, and legal information. We also worked on day-to-day living activities, like improving cooking skills and how to prepare healthy food. Group members considered the information they received very useful and will share it with their neighbors, friends and family.

At the beginning of April, we marched with No One is Illegal. The group's mission statement is: "We are marching for those who are the most marginalized, the most gunned down, the most kicked, beaten, spit on, treated like dirt, we who bear all of these acts of violence on our minds and bodies - we are also the most rugged, the most stubborn, the most resilient." We at Nellie's will continue to support our immigrant women.



Stretching class from Public Health

The WEAV (Women Experiencing Abuse & Violence) Group started again in April. The group helps women to gain awareness on issues of violence on their lives. The main purpose for these 12-week sessions is to identify violent situations and stages and to educate women and provide information on available community resources if they decide to get out of the abuse.



Workshop from Canadian Diabetes Association

Women on the Move also started their sessions in April for women with physical disabilities. This is a psycho-educational group providing disabled women with information and resources to escape from abuse.

"With this group I don't feel alone anymore."



Nutrition workshop by Han Hao



Women on the Move Group



Cooking workshop by Jasmine Ho and Sima Patel

Fundraising Update

By Julia Robinson, Development Manager

Scotiabank Marathon

Join us! Run/walk/wheel the 5k, Half-Marathon or Full Marathon on Sunday, Oct. 19 to raise awareness and funds for Nellie's at the Scotiabank Marathon!

If you are one of the first four half-marathoners, or one of the first 13 5k participants for Nellie's to register, you will get your registration fee waived.



REGISTER TO RUN/WALK/WHEEL FOR NELLIE'S TODAY.

Third Party Events

Have a good time for a good cause!



Women & children enjoyed a fancy Easter dinner at Madison Event Centre, thanks to Danielle Sfara, the Event Director

This summer we invite you -YES, YOU! – to host:

A party; a barbeque; a bake sale; a fashion show; a concert; a car wash; a garage sale; a casual dress day at work; or your own great idea! Please contact Julia Robinson at julia@nellies.org or 416-461-0769 for an Event Toolkit that will provide step-by-step help for hosting your event!

There is also another way to support Nellie's: donating your birthday! The idea behind this initiative is to have even more people celebrate your birthday by providing in-kind goods or financial donations to support the women at Nellie's!

In lieu of gifts for your birthday (or any life event), encourage friends and family to pledge a gift of money to support Nellie's. It works in a similar way to that of a marathon or run: you have a goal of how much you would like to raise, and you ask family and friends to help you reach it! Please visit Nellie's website or contact Julia at julia@nellies.org or 416-461-0769 to learn more.



Thank you Alysha Lockyer for organizing "Women2Women" to raise funds for Nellie's

In-Kind Donations

In-kind donations are also a great support to our programs & services. Please take a look at our new in-kind policy, which you can find on our website, to ensure that your gift is able to make the greatest impact for the women we serve here at Nellie's!

Please note that all of the following items must be new.

Our permanent needs include: shampoo and conditioner; deodorant, toothpaste; toothbrushes; body lotion; Tupperware: hair brushes and combs; Vaseline; tampons and pads; shower curtains and liners; pillows, towels, bedding (twin size); gift certificates (movie passes), TTC tokens; food vouchers; and plates and cutlery.

Some of our needs for the summer season include: sunblock; hats; flip-flops; swim suits; sunglasses and sandals. Our needs for the fall are: rain boots; umbrellas; socks; rain coats; light blankets (twin size); and housecoats or robes.



Voices of Women: One Young Woman's Empowering Experience

By Stephanie Barr, Year 3 Student at McGill University



I have been involved as a volunteer with my mom with Nellie's for a few years now, and my experience at Nellie's encouraged me to expand my knowledge about the complexities of women's lives in different parts of the world. I participated in McGill University's 2014 field study in Africa, which consisted of 19 females and seven males. We travelled through Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania studying development, environment and gender equity. To understand the complexity of poverty in East Africa is a feat in itself, but a whole new layer appears when a gendered perspective is added. Being a female travelling through a nation where women are dually disadvantaged was not only eye-opening, but allowed me to relate to the women I met more than my male counterparts on the trip. Women are affected by the general economic disparity in their countries, but are further burdened by societal gender norms that do not allow women access to the few economic and social resources available. As such, it is hard for them to trust, rely on and relate to males. The women I met are strong, independent, and creative. They are, to say the least, inspiring.

My own journey of learning and growing was made mostly due to the kindness and openness of the women I met. The trip taught me that as women we have a commonality that we may use to relate to and cooperate with one another all across the world regardless of ethnicity. I am proud that this is a possibility and it gives me hope that one day there will be true equality between men and women.

The women I met in East Africa have ideas and insight that I would never have coming from Canada and I'm sure I have knowledge to offer them, in return. As much as men need to take responsibility for the many barriers they set on the women's journey re equity, women need work together to fight for and demand these rights. As a cross cultural consciousness this goal can be recognized more readily than it could be on a smaller scale and this trip has proved to me that we can work together on a global scale.

My field of study is in international development and I have never felt more inspired than I do now after finding this confidence through my travels. I have faith that my work in the future will be enhanced by the insight I have gained on this trip and my appreciation for these women on the other side of the world.

Nellie's Community Events



Thank you to (from the left) Rhiannon, Debbie & Mona from Counterfit (South Riverdale) giving staff training on Women & Harm Reduction.



Staff & Volunteer at the IWD Fair



IWD Rally

Acknowledgements



Thank you Tony Roost and One Fire members for performing at Nellie's



Women & Children were able to get new shoes for holidays thanks to Payless Shoe Source



Peggy Chen & her team members from RBC cleaning windows at Nellie's CSO office

Nellie's Calendar of Events

Jun 28	Ramadan begins (Islam)
Jun 28	Toronto DYKE March
Jun 29	Toronto Pride Parade
Jul 1	Canada Day
Jul 28	Eid-ul-Fitr (Islam)
Sept 1	Labour Day
Sept 25-26	Rosh Hashanah (Jewish)
Oct 1	International Day for the Elderly – UN
Oct 10	World Mental Health Day – UN
Oct 13	Thanksgiving
Oct 17	Int'l Day for Eradication of Poverty - UN
Oct 23	Diwali (Hindu)
Nov 25	Int'l Day for Elimination of VAW - UN
December	Universal Human Rights Month
Dec 6	National Day for Remembrance & Action on Violence Against Women
Dec 17-24	Hanukkah (Jewish)
Dec 25	Christmas (Christian)
Dec 26-Jan 1	Kwanzaa (African-American)

Note: Please visit our website at www.nellies.org for more community & cultural celebrations for 2014.

Nellie's Contact Information

Mailing Address:

970 Queen Street East, PO Box 98118
Toronto, ON M4M 1J0



Shelter

Tel: 416-461-1084
TTY: 416-461-7561
Fax: 416-461-0976
E-mail: programs@nellies.org

Community Support

Tel: 416-461-3404, 416-461-2052
Fax: 416-461-0970
E-mail: outreach@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
Program, Volunteers, Students: 416-461-0739
Financial Donations: 416-461-0769
In Kind Donations: 416-461-0521
Charitable No.: 11930-2727-RR0001



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