



Your Impact Report

2010



Nellie's

**Shelter, Education & Advocacy
For All Women and Children**

**“When we
needed our
donors the
most, you
stepped up big!
Thank you!”**

– Margarita Mendez, Executive Director



45 years ago when Nellie's opened its 16-bed shelter to homeless women in Toronto the primary client was single women.

Today the face of homelessness is changing and over the last 12 months Nellie's has seen a dramatic shift in the number of women with children seeking shelter, after experiencing abuse and trauma. Throughout 2017 on average 15 of our 36 beds each month was occupied by a child; the majority still in diapers. Having so many small children in the shelter could have been devastating to us. The impact of having to divert funds from our food or program budget to cover diapers, formula and additional children's programs could have crippled Nellie's. But this is a story of how the community rallied to help us. How you rallied to help us!

Monday to Friday throughout the summer and into the fall donors walked-in, or couriered-in diapers, baby wipes and formula to our community support and outreach office. We were overwhelmed by the generosity of the community, and beyond, who also made monetary donations to help us meet our needs.

Nellie's has always relied on our donors to bridge our funding gap. This time however, the support was much more personal; more emotional. Our plea for support touched the community in a way that I have never seen before. As one donor said to me "diapers are a necessity that no child should be without."

Undoubtedly we will face many challenges in 2018, some anticipated and some not, but with our dedicated donors, volunteers and staff, I am confident together we will rise to the challenge.

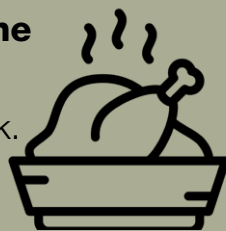
Thank you for all you do!

YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION

- Thanks to you **5,096 hours of counselling was provided to women** living at the Shelter.



- You helped **provide nourishing meals and nutritious groceries to 80 low income families** and seniors each week.



- Your support helped **provide transitional housing support for women** living in the community who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless.



Your donation has helped change lives

Abuse doesn't discriminate. It happens to women from all walks of life and spans all cultures and nationalities. This is my story.

My name is Karina and I was a yoga instructor from a small, isolated city in North Mexico. I moved to Canada in 2013 after suffering many years of physical and psychological abuse by my former husband.

I met my ex-husband at a party when I was 14. He was 21 and in medical school. For the next 2 years, we had a very abnormal relationship. He would tell me that I was his girlfriend, but we saw each other infrequently and only for a few minutes at a time. That changed one morning when he asked me to go with him to a sports club, and I agreed. Once we got to the club he gave me something to drink which made me sick. Instead of taking me home he took me to his friend's apartment where he forced me to drink some more then he raped me. He also allowed his friends to fondle me. When I eventually got home I remember going to my room and crying. The rape resulted in me getting pregnant. Under my parent's pressure I married my abuser.

From the moment we were married my husband continued to be violent towards me. He blamed the stress of his work and life on me. This was often followed by promising once he got a good job, things would be better, and he would treat me better. My father, also a physician, arranged to get him a job, but the situation at home did not improve. Things never got better. My husband was repeating a pattern of abuse he learned from his own family history.

Soon after our forced marriage, and the birth of my son, one of my husband's brothers sexually assaulted me. After a few years of marriage I was forced to get pregnant with our second child; a baby girl. These were all ways for him to control me, and keep me obedient. I was his property after all.

I know what you are thinking; why didn't I leave. I thought about running away many times, but I could never bring myself to do it. I was terrified of him and whole-heartedly believed him when he told me things would be worse if I left. On several occasions, he would tell me that he would not rest until he saw me dead. My parents suspected that something was going on, but they did not know for sure until after the divorce. Like many women I only told a few

"Telling stories like yours helps the wider public to understand the reasons why people need protection."

*– Jean-Nicolas Beuze,
UNHCR Representative
in Canada*

of my friends what was going on. Women often stay silent about marital problems, after all the success of the marriage is considered a woman's responsibility.

In 2010 the abuse escalated when my husband tried to throw me from a second story balcony in our home. The only reason I am alive today is that our children stopped him before he could manage to toss me over the edge. The next day I filed for divorce. But true to his word things got worse.

Over the next several years my now ex-husband used the courts to take custody of my children away from me; have me jailed for kidnapping my daughter after I regained custody; charges which were eventually dismissed; and alienate my kids from me.

It took me a long time after my divorce, and a great deal of psychological help, before I was able to understand how badly I had been victimized. It was hard for me to sort through the psychological trauma that I had suffered throughout my years of marriage. It was also difficult for me to accept that I could not shield my children from the abuse and trauma, or bring them with me.

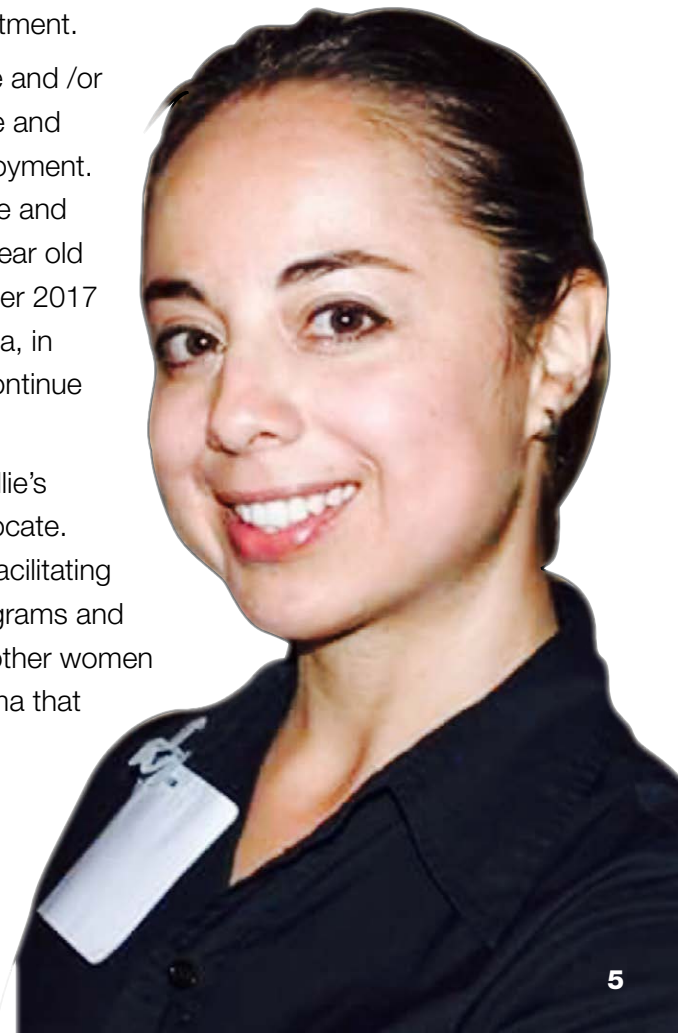
The ongoing threat to my life after my divorce resulted in me fleeing Mexico, with the support of an underground women's group. After seeking refugee status in Western Canada my ex-husband located me. In order to protect my safety the shelter out west transferred me to Nellie's.

Like many women fleeing abuse and trauma I sought safety at Nellie's shelter and assistance from Nellie's Community Support and Outreach (CSO) office to deal with a multitude of issues. The staff at CSO helped me navigate Toronto's difficult rental market including helping me with applications for subsidize housing. My support worker accompanied me on numerous appointments to court and immigration hearings. Nellie's helped source a Spanish speaking doctor, access a food bank that catered to my specific dietary needs, find winter clothing and access furniture for my new apartment.

Through Nellie's 12 week innovative Women Experiencing Abuse and /or Violence (WEAV) Program I was able work on my self-confidence and regain my voice while learning new skills to prepare me for employment. While participating in WEAV I began to write down my experience and practice public speaking. Today, I have remarried and have a 3 year old son and I'm embarking on a new career as an artist. In November 2017 I spoke at the United Nations High Commission on Refugees gala, in Ottawa, on the abuse that women in Latin America and Africa continue to face today.

With encouragement and emotional support from the staff at Nellie's I have moved from being a voiceless victim to becoming an advocate. None of this would have been possible without Nellie's support facilitating this transition. Your donation has enabled Nellie's to provide programs and services tailored to women's needs that helped me and many other women like me to live free from violence and deal with the resulting trauma that comes from abuse. **Thank you for making this possible.**

Artist, mother and survivor, Karina



Your support has enabled Nellie's the community to meet a variety

CHILD CARE PROGRAM

Abuse destroys a child's view of the world as a safe and predictable place. Children suffering from the effects of abuse and trauma might learn that you have to deal with your problems by yourself, adults don't keep their promises, bad things happen no matter how hard you try to be good, and life is not fair. In contrast, children who grow up with encouragement, fairness, and safety can approach life with enthusiasm and embrace new opportunities. With this in mind Nellie's created a child care and parenting program to address some of the issues facing children that live in our shelter. The Child Care Program provides children with valuable, age appropriate content to enable healing through art, play and reflection, with the ultimate aim of helping kids understand their feelings of fear, confusion, guilt, anger and frustration and provide them with the coping strategies to move forward.

WOMEN ON THE MOVE SUPPORT GROUP

Alarmingly, women with disabilities experience abuse at 10 times the rate of able-bodied women and the abuse lasts longer. Despite the higher rates of abuse among disabled, hard of hearing and Deaf women there are almost no existent accessible shelter space for these women. In response to this

Nellie's established the Women on the Move Support Group, a social, educational and psychological support group for women with physical disabilities who have experienced abuse and violence.

KIDS SUMMER CAMP

Each summer Nellie's runs a free day camp for kids aged 6 to 14 from low income households in the community as well as those living at our shelter. Our camp is much like other camps in that kids go on day-trips to the zoo, museum, have movie days, and enjoy arts and crafts.



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FOOD PROGRAM

Each week, fresh, pre-cooked and non-perishable food donations from Second Harvest are packed up and distributed to approximately 80 families by a group of committed volunteers. For families experiencing food insecurity the program helps with their ability to gain and maintain stable housing, and to cover basic needs and emergency expenses without going hungry.

In addition to providing food to marginalized women and children this program also provides volunteers with training to enhance their employable skills.




Because of you,
women and children
who are fleeing
violence, poverty and
homelessness are
able to access shelter,
support and the
essential programs
and services they
need to help make
changes in their lives.

Shelter, Education & Advocacy
For All Women and Children



Nellie's

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