

nellie's

Moving Forward

ANNUAL REPORT ²³/₂₄





About Us

Nellie's is a place of respite and rejuvenation for women* and their children navigating a variety of challenges. Through community outreach, skill-building programs, and space for the unhoused to find shelter, clients are empowered to take steps to change their lives. We welcome people who seek guidance as they reclaim their strength and tap into their resilience to find a new path for their life.

The individuals who come through the shelter or access our community outreach programs come to us with unique experiences and needs. Nellie's mandate to help ALL women and their children, regardless of circumstances, is what makes the organization's work essential.

**Nellie's affirms the inclusion of trans women and non-binary people in our vision of who we serve and support.*

Land Acknowledgement

Nellie's acknowledges our organization is situated in Tkarón:to (Ta-kar-on-toe) which is located on the traditional lands of the Mississauga (Missi-sog-a), the Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-nah-bay), the Haudenosaunee (Ho-deh-no-show-nee), the Chippewa (Chi-puh-waa), the Huron (Hur-on), and many other Indigenous Peoples.

Nellie's acknowledges all Treaty Peoples, including those who came here as settlers, as migrants either in this generation or in generations past, and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

Colonialism is an ongoing process, and members of Indigenous communities and of African origin and descent all over Canada have been carrying the burden of this trauma for generations. Reconciliation cannot be achieved if we don't first prioritize understanding the truth. Moving forward requires determining what place we occupy in the history and future of this land. How do we participate in colonialism, and what can we do to ensure reconciliation? While many of us are settlers, it is important to recognize that not all those who live here chose to settle here. For that reason, we respect that some people may not be comfortable adhering to this term.

Tkarón:to (Ta-kar-on-toe) is a Mohawk word meaning "the place in the water where the trees are standing." We now stand where, for thousands of years, many languages were spoken, and alliances and decisions were made. Our fight for diversity and equity must include Indigenous Peoples. We must reimagine the narrative of Turtle Island together.

Message from the Board

In 2023, we marked 50 years since Nellie's first opened its doors. And while we've long been known as a crisis organization for women and their children escaping violence, today we're also focusing on how we can work to move the needle forward in breaking the cycle of gender-based violence. The Nellie's we are today is simultaneously strengthening our core services, while also taking concrete action to change the environment. It's no longer enough for us to simply measure the number of people we support — we have to also focus on how we are truly changing our world.

To better reflect all of the facets of our organization and how we are **“more than a shelter,”** we're excited to unveil our new branding — including a revised mission statement, vision, and values, as well as a more modern logo that speaks to the Nellie's of today, and of the future. As we move into our second half-century, these transformative changes in our language and visual identity feel essential in both refining our goals and setting new priorities as an organization focused on creating a world free of gender-based violence.

Moving toward not just providing crisis services, but also to disrupting the environment, isn't a sudden change of thinking for Nellie's. We've been working to break the cycles of violence at a systems level for years. And, a few years ago, we began acting preventatively in order to support women and their children fighting for a better future by running empowerment self-defense programs in our shelter and in

the community. By aligning our language and visual identity, they more accurately reflect not only who we are but also who we're working to become.

At Nellie's, our goal has always been to **“move forward.”** And we do so in many ways: by empowering our residents as they find a new path for their life (as in Christeen's powerful story on page 4); by supporting more families than ever by moving our food program to a new, bigger location; and by meeting with other leaders to discuss strategies for ending gender-based violence in the city, the country, and even around the globe.

Thank you to our staff for continuing to dedicate yourself to the women and their children who need us, to our volunteers for passionately devoting your time and energy, to our neighbours and community partners for always welcoming and supporting us, and to the women and their children who continue to put their trust in us every single day.

Finally, thank you to our community funding partners and to every one of our donors for standing with us. It's thanks to your generosity that we will continue to provide safety, strength, and support for women and their children as we work toward a world free of gender-based violence.



**Nellie's 2023-2024
Board of Directors**



“I can never forget Nellie’s, and I can never forget what you all did for me”



In 2005, when Christeen first came to Nellie’s, she had her 9-year-old son in tow and was pregnant with her second child. She had only been in Canada for a few short months, having arrived from Jamaica after leaving a bad relationship there. Unfortunately, not long after arriving in Canada, she found herself in another unhealthy relationship, which led her to seeking help and ending up at Nellie’s.

“I didn’t know how these people would react to me,” explains Christeen. **“Would they treat me differently because I didn’t have papers? But I learned that I could talk to these people, and then I started opening up to them, and I realized that they will help me to get started.”**

While living in the shelter for five months, Christeen remembers receiving an incredible amount of emotional support from staff, as well as her fellow residents. **“Being pregnant, it was just so hard. I couldn’t imagine that I had a child, plus another one on the way — it was just heartwrenching,”** says Christeen. Soon after moving into the shelter, our housing staff began working with Christeen to help her secure permanent housing — a key step in helping her move forward.

“The people at
Nellie’s were my family.
To this day, I look up to
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“I can never forget that place, and I can never forget what you all did for me.”

“The people at Nellie’s were my family,” she explains. **“To this day, I look up to the staff there — we’re still like sisters.”** After helping her find a safe and stable place for her family to live, Christeen recalls how they supported her through the legal process of receiving permanent resident status, and how a compassionate staff member spent the entire day with her at the hospital when she gave birth to her second child.

Today, Christeen is a proud employee of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), working as a bus driver. She now has three sons: her eldest is 28 and a graduate of Durham College’s electrical engineering program with a career in the industry; her middle child is 18 and started civil engineering at Durham College this fall; and her youngest is 12. In the spirit of giving back, Christeen now also provides financial support to a family in Scarborough, who live in an apartment building she previously lived in.

“I talk about Nellie’s all the time. I drive the bus past there, and sometimes I get out on my breaks and come into the shelter,” she explains. **“I can never forget that place, and I can never forget what you all did for me.”**

“I learned that I could talk to these people, and then I started opening up to them, and I realized that they will help me to get started.”



A Year in Pictures

With our 50th anniversary year now behind us, we have recommitted our efforts on moving our organization forward, as well as the lives of the women we support. Through our supportive community outreach efforts, innovative skill-building programs, and space for the unhoused to find shelter, we are empowering and supporting women and their children to build a new path for their lives.

Building kids' confidence with biking

At Nellie's, we know that children don't choose to come to Nellie's — their mothers do. These children were torn away from their life, their schools, their friends, and their belongings, and thrust into new surroundings. Our job is to support every one of them in their unique healing process, making them feel safe, cared for, and at home. And through the Bike Club, we also give them the opportunity to just focus on being kids.

Last year, a true highlight of the summer was having 11 of the children living at Nellie's participate in a learn-to-bike program in partnership with 24 children living at The Redwood, another Toronto-area shelter for women and children. Through this program, the kids each received a new bike and helmet (which they got to keep when they left the shelter), learned about bike safety, and how to ride.

While the primary focus during these sessions was teaching children core biking skills and safety, the program had an immense lasting impact; it equipped them with a new skill they will carry throughout life, encouraged an active lifestyle, and increased their confidence.



In March, Nellie's celebrated International Women's Day with a special evening honouring inspirational women. Guest speaker Samra Zafar shared her incredible journey from child bride to soon-to-be med school graduate, and singer Domanique Grant's electrifying performance had us all on our feet! Hosting this event reminded us of the resilience and strength of women, and renewed our dedication to working toward a world free of oppression and violence for all women and their children.



At the end of January, our weekly food program moved to a bigger location inside the Kimbourne Park United Church in the East Danforth neighbourhood. Every week, up to 120 families rely on our food program to access a basic human need.





In September, we celebrated 50 years of Nellie’s at our first in-person annual general meeting since 2019. Our anniversary was truly a celebration of the strength and resilience of the women and their children who come to Nellie’s every year, and it’s thanks to your support that we will continue to empower and support them as we work toward a world without gender-based violence.



For the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation we held a special event for all of the women and their children at the shelter. Nellie’s counsellor Joanna Shawana opened the event with beautiful drumming and singing, and guest speaker Wanda Whitebird talked about the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, colonization, and residential schools. Learning from an elder like Wanda reaffirmed our commitment to support and be inclusive of the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.



In February, Nellie’s was invited to join the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses’ (OAITH) meeting with Jarmila Lajacakova, Advisor for Human and Minority Rights from the Office of the President of the Slovak Republic. The meeting was an opportunity to collaborate and share knowledge on our work to end gender-based violence, and we hope that it helped lay the foundation for future international cooperation.

More than a shelter:

Reimagining the Nellie's Brand

After more than 50 years, we wish we could say that Nellie's wasn't needed as much as ever. But it is.

Gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and violence against women is endemic in our society.

Nellie's is answering the call to provide the crisis services we've become known and trusted for, while simultaneously focusing on empowerment and prevention. The Nellie's of today is strengthening our core services while taking concrete action to change the environment. We are shifting the tide from measuring how many people are coming through our doors, to how we are truly changing our world.

Our new mission, vision, values, and logo are a reflection of this repositioning. They are a guide for the Nellie's of today, and the Nellie's of the future. They are about empowerment, hope, and renewal; safety, strength, and support. Because we're more than a shelter.

Our intention is that by the time Nellie's celebrates 100 years, there will be less of a need for us as a crisis organization.

The story behind our new logo

The Nellie's logo design is inspired by the versatile nature of the apostrophe, drawing on its symbolic significance in language and communication. The use of abstract patterns and multiple apostrophes aims to convey a multi-faceted representation.

The apostrophe represents ownership, underlining the client's distinctive presence and agency of their own being.

The punctuation may also be seen as an end quote, which signifies expression and having a voice.

Additionally, the shape may also resemble a pause or comma, and signifies a moment of reflection and rejuvenation — highlighting our commitment to balance, acknowledgement, and support.

Finally, the logo itself is a graphic comprised of the wordmark with the 2 Ls creating a roof-like shape that pays tribute to Nellie's historical past as (solely) a shelter.

Overall, this design captures the essence of empowerment, individuality, and the shared journey toward progress in a visually compelling and meaningful way.



nellie's
SAFETY. STRENGTH. SUPPORT.





Our Mission

Nellie's breaks the cycle of gender-based oppression through our unwavering commitment to offering a safe refuge for women and their children fleeing violence, poverty, and homelessness. Beyond safe housing, we empower women with advocacy, strength, and support-based programming, enabling them to create a new path for life, free from the barriers of violence and oppression.

Our Vision

Nellie's vision is to be a place where every woman and her child(ren) who step through our doors finds a pathway to a violence-free life and to advocate to ensure gender-based violence and oppression is a relic of the past.

Our Values

Empowerment: We believe in the inherent strength and resilience of every woman we serve. Empowerment is at the core of our values, as we work with survivors and their children to regain their power and autonomy.

Anti-Racist/Anti-Oppression: We are resolute in our stance against racism, oppression, and discrimination. We actively work to dismantle systemic prejudices and injustices that perpetuate gender-based violence, promoting a just and fair society for all.

Compassion: Compassion is the driving force behind our work. We approach every individual with empathy, sensitivity, and a commitment to healing, understanding the unique experiences and needs of each survivor.

Equity: We are committed to giving every woman equitable access to resources, support, and opportunities.

Inclusion: All women and their children are welcomed and respected. We actively work to ensure all voices are heard and valued.

2023-2024 Board of Directors Executive

Katherine Knowlton, Co-Chair

Lindsey Walton, Co-Chair

Charrissa Klander, Secretary

Nancy Mrazek, Treasurer

Members-At-Large

Maria Belfon

Maryam Ebrahimpour

Anna Marina Elias

Morgana Kellythorne

Jeboah Miranda

Marang Sebape

Lyndsay Tchegus-Veiga

Neda Zanjani

Senior Management Team

Jyoti Singh, Executive Director

Ingrid Graham, Director of Development

Jiin Yiong, Program Director

Administrative Staff

Halima Abdela, Financial Administrator

Marissa Eckert, Human Resources Coordinator

Taylor Nguyen, Administrative Coordinator

Supervisors

Maureen Caines-Comrie, Shelter Supervisor

Rachel Seaward, Community Support &
Outreach Housing Supervisor

Thank You to Donors

We are forever grateful for our incredible community of generous donors. It's because of your support that we are able to continue to provide our vital crisis service, while simultaneously focusing our efforts on empowerment and violence prevention.

Every person that comes to Nellie's, whether through our shelter or our community outreach programs, comes to us with unique experiences and needs, and we thank every corporation, foundation, community member, and individual supporter who has helped them find a new path for their life.

Thank you to **Evolve EFTs**, the **Forest Hill Lions Club**, the **Greater Toronto Apartment Association**, the **Green Fischer Family Trust**, **La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso**, the **McLean Foundation**, **Nick Kennedy & Miracle on Bloor**, the **Naomi Fund** at the **Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto**, the **Rotary Club of Toronto**, and the **Royal LePage Shelter Foundation** for your generous financial support.



Thank You to Our Board

We are extremely grateful to our Board of Directors for guiding us through our brand relaunch and helping us update our mission, vision, values, and logo to better reflect the Nellie's of today, and the Nellie's of the future. We have been so fortunate to have their unwavering leadership to guide us through the past year.

In 2023/2024 we welcomed five new board members. Each brings a wealth of experience and expertise to Nellie's.

Maryam Ebrahimpour is a first-generation immigrant who discovered her passion for social justice and empowering women and children through living in post-revolution Iran. She is currently a certified health executive and director at a downtown community health centre.

Anna Marina Elias is a Federal Crown Attorney at the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, where she prosecutes large-scale drug and firearm cases. She is a strong advocate for women and believes in instilling self-confidence and self-worth in young women to help break the cycle of gender-based violence.

Morgana Kellythorne is a lawyer with almost 20 years of experience as an advisor and advocate, with a focus on public and administrative law. She experienced housing precarity firsthand when growing up and is eager to support our work at Nellie's.

Katherine Knowlton is an Associate Director with the Canadian Accounting Standards Board. Katherine has been passionate about supporting her community from a young age and is honoured to be a part of the board at Nellie's.

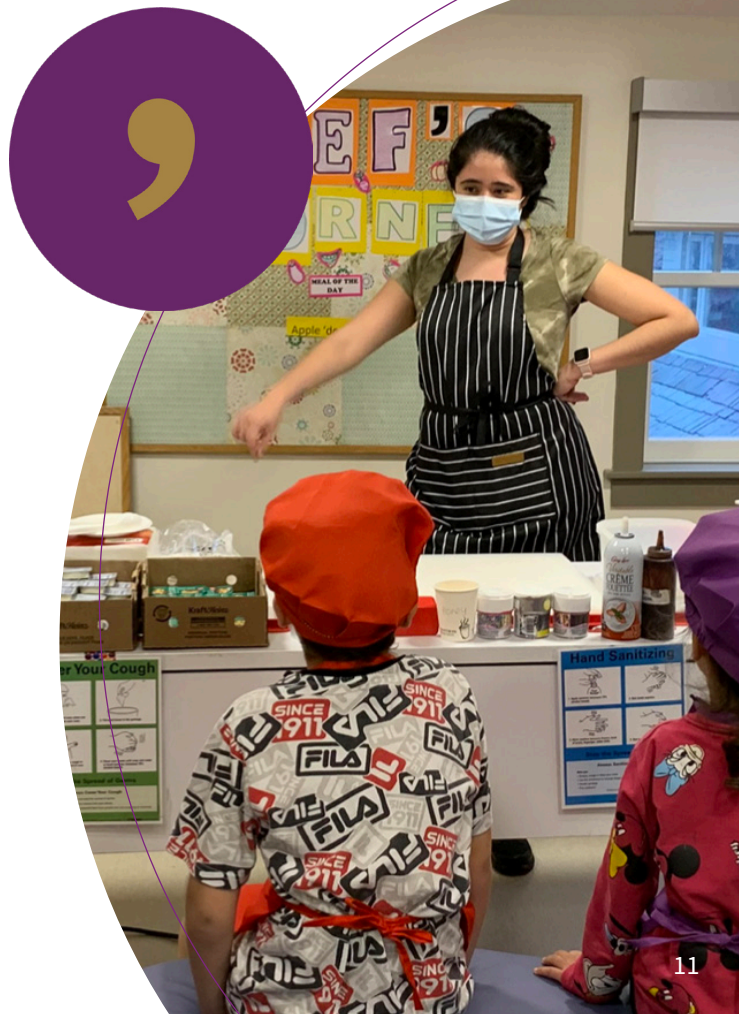
Lyndsay Tchegus-Veiga is a seasoned healthcare leader with over 15 years' experience working in the community-based primary care sector, with a particular focus on delivering programs and services that advance health equity for equity-deserving communities across Toronto. She is passionate about social justice and is honoured to have the opportunity to contribute her skills and experience to advance our mission at Nellie's.

We will also be saying goodbye to three departing board members. Thank you to these incredible women for their dedication to Nellie's.

Jeboah Miranda is a keynote speaker and founder of the Jeboah Miranda Foundation, which helps women ages 16-24 build their mental grit through programs and technology. She joined the Nellie's board in September 2022.

Nancy Mrazek joined the Nellie's board of directors in September 2021. As part of our Strategic Development Committee, she put her leadership expertise into practice by offering guidance and advice to help us navigate the final stages of our new shelter's renovations.

Marang Sebape has dedicated her career to increasing the capacity for marginalized, racialized, and at-risk communities. Marang believes everyone has a responsibility to drive change, end stigma, and eliminate barriers until all people have equal access to power and personal agency. During her time on the board, her drive helped move Nellie's forward.



In Loving Memory

It's with a heavy heart that we share the recent passing of two long-time members of the Nellie's family: Helen Stalker and Bernadette Dondo. Both women will be greatly missed by all those who worked with them, the many clients and donors they supported, and all of us who came to call them friends.



Remembering Helen Stalker

Helen worked at Nellie's for almost two decades, starting as a volunteer and then as a valued member of the fund development team. During her time at Nellie's, Helen spearheaded Nellie's online auction, managed the annual holiday sponsor-a-family program, and single-handedly kept fundraising going for several months in 2016 while the position of manager of fund development was vacant.

Helen was a talented graphic designer, having graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design. Over the years, Helen used her creative background to design newsletters, annual reports, and brochures for Nellie's.

Helen had a dry sense of humour that she often used to lighten difficult situations or to keep her colleagues laughing.

Helen passed away last summer after a short illness.



Remembering Bernadette Dondo

Bernadette (or Bernie to those who worked with her) began her career at Nellie's in 1999 as a relief counsellor, supporting women and their children with staunch dedication and compassion. Most recently she was a Transitional Housing & Support Program worker helping numerous women secure housing. Her ability to find housing in the tough Toronto housing market was just miraculous.

Bernadette will be missed for her warmth and caring by both staff and clients. We will miss her dancing to celebrate both big and small achievements, her infectious smile, and her interest in the lives of those around us.

Bernadette passed away last spring after a short illness.

Nellie's By the Numbers



Shelter

Nellie's has a mandate to help ALL women and their children, regardless of why they are homeless. Due to the critical lack of affordable housing availability in Toronto, in 2023/2024 the average length of stay at Nellie's increased to 6 months, up from 4 months last year.

36 women arrived at Nellie's fleeing violence/intimate partner abuse

34 single women arrived at Nellie's due to homelessness

39 children (0-17) lived at Nellie's

Housing support

In addition to providing temporary housing through our shelter, Nellie's provides housing support for women in our community who are facing eviction. Our Transitional Housing and Support Program helps ensure that women experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) don't return to violent situations. Our Enhanced Transitional Housing and Support Program helps women experiencing IPV who are also dealing with mental health, addiction, and/or immigration issues.

146 women received housing help, a City of Toronto-funded program supporting women facing homelessness and eviction

104 women participated in our Transitional Housing and Support Program funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), for women experiencing gender-based violence

39 women participated in our Enhanced Transitional Housing and Support Program for women with complex needs such as mental health and addiction issues

Community support

Through our Community Support & Outreach (CSO) programs, we focus on supporting both the physical and mental well-being of our community members. These core programs allow us to have an even greater impact in our community, providing vital supports that help to disrupt the cycles of violence and homelessness.

143 women participated in our Toronto Women in Action workshops

120 women received weekly bags of food from our food program

16 women took part in our Women on the Move program

80 people joined Nellie's Senior Socialization program

Financial Report

Year End March 31, 2023

REVENUE

2024

2023

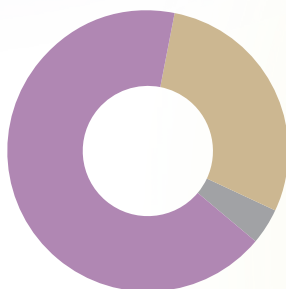
Government grants	\$2,612,810*	\$1,859,262
MCCSS one-time pandemic relief funding	6,804	94,531
City of Toronto – per diem	446,123	323,861
City of Toronto – personal needs allowance	11,425	13,311
City of Toronto – other employment supports	23,408	19,865
City of Toronto - infection protection & control	-	42,000
United Way Funding	208,608	208,608
Donations and Fundraising	1,168,049	982,149
Bequests	56,000	275,000
Rental, Interest, and other	106,726	109,341
	\$4,639,953	\$3,927,928

EXPENSES (Schedule A of Audited Financial Report)

Property	\$416,075	\$342,410
Administration	495,378	341,425
Staffing	2,485,167	2,183,731
Clients	539,950	287,142
One-time expenses including accommodation	19,552	49,748
	\$3,956,122	\$3,204,456
Excess of revenue over expenses from operations	\$683,831	\$723,472
Income from amortization of deferred capital contributions	\$379,355	\$379,355
Amortization of capital assets	(\$394,730)	(\$384,529)
Deficiency of revenue over expenses from capital assets	(\$15,375)	(\$5,174)
Excess of revenue over expenses for the year	\$668,456	\$718,298

REVENUE

Government Grants & Subsidies
67%

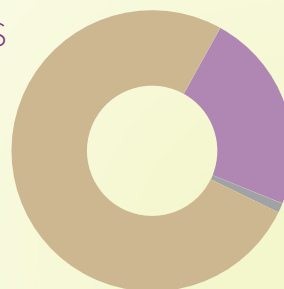


Donations, Fundraising & Other
29%

United Way Funding
4%

EXPENSES

Programs & Services
76%



Administration
23%

One-time Expenses
1%

*In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, Nellie's saw an increase in funding for the following specific programs:

- from Women's Shelter Canada for the PAVE Collaborative project
- from Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) for the Empowerment project
- and from Health Canada for the Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP) project.

See full Audited Financial Statements, including notes at www.nellies.org.



Vision for tomorrow:

Our New Strategic 3-Year Plan

Since 1973, Nellie's has been providing essential shelter and support to women and their children seeking refuge from violence, poverty, and homelessness. Our commitment to offering a safe space will never change but, with your help, we hope that the need for it will.

To help achieve these goals, our new three-year strategic plan reaffirms our commitment to be a strong, feminist organization with the experience and expertise to meet the current and future needs of women in our community with kindness, compassion, and excellence. Our plan prioritizes our need to strengthen the internal capacity of our organization, while continuing to disrupt the cycle of violence.

We are focusing our efforts and resources in four key areas:

- expanding our prevention and empowerment programs in order to disrupt cycles of violence;
- continuing our longstanding history of advocacy work on behalf of women and their children against forces of violence, oppression, discrimination, inequity, and racism;
- investing in our staff to support their health and well-being, which in turn helps them optimally support our clients; and
- modernizing our internal processes to best serve our community.

As we move into our next 50 years, we're focused on creating a society where gender-based violence and oppression are relics of the past. Our mission is an ambitious but hugely important one — thank you for joining us in working toward a world free of oppression and violence for all women and children.



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