



nellie's

# Growing With Impact

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



# Message from the Board

Looking back at the past year, the theme of *growth* feels especially fitting for our work at Nellie's. As the needs of the women and their children we support continue to deepen and become more complex, we've had to adapt in real time — not just expanding what we do, but rethinking how we do it.

We're seeing firsthand how the affordable housing crisis, rising costs, and increased rates of gender-based violence are impacting our clients both in our shelter, and in our community. To meet these challenges, our growth has to be flexible, intentional, and grounded in our mission.

That's why we've taken a proactive role in ensuring that Nellie's is not only meeting the needs of today, but also preparing for the future. Recognizing the scale and urgency of the challenges ahead, we've begun a revision of our strategic plan to ensure it remains relevant and bold. We've extended its scope from three to five years to match the scale of change we're working toward, and sharpened its focus to ensure every goal is backed by a clear, actionable path forward.

One important shift has been in how we approach our empowerment pillar. While our full-spectrum prevention approach to disrupt the cycle of systemic violence has been a focus in several program areas in the last few years, we're working toward embedding empowerment programming more fully across the organization — so that every woman who comes to Nellie's is met with the tools, supports, and opportunities to reclaim her life on her own terms.

To that end, we introduced a new role, Program and Evaluation Officer, to review all of our programs to ensure the greatest possible impact. You can read about Brianna Wilson's work, which will help inform the training and resources our staff need to meet the growing complexity of our clients' needs, on page 6.

Of course, we can't talk about the growth at Nellie's without mentioning our new leadership. As of July 1, 2025, we're very pleased to introduce Ingrid Graham as our new Executive Director. Ingrid brings a wealth of experience and a clear, forward-thinking approach to the role. With her leadership, we're well-positioned to strengthen our work, deepen our impact, and stay rooted in what matters most: the women and their children we serve.

Thank you to our staff for your incredible dedication, to our volunteers for their passion, 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 donors. It's your generosity that allows Nellie's to grow and respond to the evolving needs of the women and children we serve — now and into the future.

**Nellie's 2024-2025  
Board of Directors**



## Introducing Our New Executive Director

**Ingrid Graham** has been a vital part of the Nellie's team for over nine years as our Director of Development, and also served as our acting co-executive director starting in July 2024.

Since joining Nellie's in 2016, Ingrid has grown our fundraising to over \$1 million annually, supporting programs and services that help women and their children reclaim their strength and resilience. She built a comprehensive marketing and communications program to build awareness of the complex work Nellie's does, and led the capital redevelopment of Nellie's current location. To mark the organization's 50th anniversary, Ingrid led our rebrand project in 2024, which included new mission, vision, and values statements, alongside a refreshed visual identity.

With her thoughtful leadership, commitment to our mission, and bold vision for the future, Ingrid is exceptionally well suited to lead Nellie's into its next chapter.

## 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.

# More Than a Roof: Helping Women Build New Lives

As the housing crisis deepens, Jade Boucher, one of our enhanced transitional and housing support program (THX) workers, knows firsthand how important it is to secure a safe living space for women trying to break the cycle of violence.

**“If you don’t have enough supports in place, or things to look forward to, or different ways to earn an income, it’s unfortunately very easy to happen again,”** explains Jade.

Earlier this year, Jade met 27-year-old Jenna\*, who was referred to our community housing program after fleeing from her trafficker. Having been trafficked since the age of 16, Jenna had no income, no job, and no home, and was currently couch surfing with friends. **“Even if someone exits trafficking, it can still very easily happen again — especially if it went on for so long,”** says Jade.

Jade got to work right away to find Jenna an apartment. To increase Jenna’s chances of finding a safe home, Jade submitted applications on her behalf to the Special Priority Program (which is only available to people who have been abused or trafficked) in four different regions across Ontario. Getting accepted into a subsidized housing program can often take six to 12 months, but Jenna got lucky — within three months, she had secured a home. Jade explains that several factors contributed to how quickly she found a home: **“She’s a single woman without kids and she was open to living anywhere. No matter how far it was, she was applying.”**

But Jade’s work didn’t stop when Jenna found a home — in fact, it’s the assistance that our THX team provides *beyond* housing applications that equips their clients for greater stability and growth. Jade sent resources to Jenna for mental health and sexual assault counselling, as well as free or low-cost activities to help her explore what interests her as an adult.

**“Before she was trafficked, Jenna was really into art, so I’ve found art programming near her and online,”** explains Jade. **“I think therapeutic work isn’t just about seeing a therapist — she’s really enjoying how art is taking her mind off of other worries, and helping her find her sense of self. She told me that it’s like ‘figuring out who I am again.’”**

Even though she’s now safely set up in her apartment, Jade and Jenna still talk at least once a week. Recently, Jenna decided that she wants to go to college for social work, so Jade is helping her plan how to complete her high school degree, before she applies to colleges.

**“Even once my clients are in housing, I still try to help where I can and set them up with resources, whether that’s family doctors or dentists in their new neighbourhood, or free programming for their kids,”** says Jade. **“That’s the main thing I stress to these women — you’re not just seeing me once or twice and then you’re on your own. I’m here to explain the process and get you connected.”**

*\*Name changed to protect privacy.*



## What Our Community Housing Team Is Up Against

The Community Housing team at Nellie's doesn't work with women living in our shelter — their focus is on supporting women in the community who are living in unsafe conditions. The team is divided into two programs: the Transitional Housing Support Program and the Transitional Housing Expansion program. While both help clients access transitional housing, the latter specifically supports women who are survivors of domestic violence or human trafficking and are navigating mental health challenges.

But it now takes longer to find safe, affordable housing, and the process can be emotionally draining for our clients. Some subsidized housing applications require survivors to relive traumatic experiences, and even then, only about a third are approved — often after multiple rounds of appeals by our staff.

This is why our housing workers do so much more to provide support — from safety planning and counselling referrals, to accessing the Ontario Disability Support and Ontario Works programs, to navigating the immigration process, or even helping clients enroll their kids in school. For women coping with trauma and uncertainty, having someone in their corner who listens, advocates, and doesn't give up can make all the difference.



## Data That Makes a Difference: How Evaluation Is Powering Growth at Nellie’s

With record-high food bank usage, rising rates of gender-based violence, and a lack of affordable housing in the province, the needs of our community continue to grow and shift. It’s essential that our programs at Nellie’s respond in kind — that’s where Brianna Wilson, our Program and Evaluation Officer, comes in.

Brianna creates and implements evaluation frameworks for each of our programs to ensure that everything we do is making the greatest possible impact on the lives of the women and their children who come to Nellie’s. Each evaluation framework features different components, such as surveys or focus groups with participants, or interviews with partner agencies.

**“It’s important that we’re always asking people what they need from us, and then use their knowledge and lived experience to adapt our programming so that it continues to meet people where they are,”** explains Brianna. **“We always have new people coming through our doors and so the needs are always going to change from person to person.”**

During her first year in this newly-created position, Brianna focused on our Community Support and Outreach (CSO) department, starting with evaluations of our food bank program, our Women on the





Move program, and our senior socialization program. These evaluations will continue on an annual basis, providing us with a strategic look at how our programs are shifting, growing, and improving, year-over-year. It's this type of data that helps us ensure that we're consistently meeting the growing complexity of our clients' needs.

Brianna has now shifted her focus to in-shelter programming, and is developing pre- and post-evaluation surveys for participants in our leisure and educational programs. This will allow staff to better understand what a resident's expectations are going into a program, and if those expectations were met.

**“We don’t want to invest our time and resources into programming that only we think is best,”** Brianna explains. **“What do the people who are taking part in the programs think? What are they taking away from it? And if they’re not finding it helpful, what can we change? Their voices are the ones that matter the most.”**

## A New Approach to Gathering Resident Feedback

Next up on Brianna's to-do list is rethinking how and when to gather direct feedback from shelter residents about their stay at Nellie's. While our current process is to ask residents to complete a feedback survey at their time of departure, Brianna is working to introduce a more responsive approach — one that includes check-in surveys a few weeks into a stay, a few months in, and again when they're leaving.

**“I think this shift of having a more active evaluation will help them feel listened to and supported,”** says Brianna. **“We’re showing them that we care about their experiences while they’re here — not just after they’ve left.”**

Although these new surveys are still being developed, Brianna is planning for each one to have a different focus:

- One will centre on the intake experience.
- A second will ask questions about case management, programming, food, cleanliness, and support.
- The final one will be an overall review of their experience when they move out.



# Adapting Together: Supporting Our Community's Evolving Needs

For women navigating complex housing systems, knowing how to speak up — and be heard — can be life-changing. That's why we've rebooted one of our long-standing Community Support and Outreach (CSO) programs: Toronto Women in Action. Centred around housing advocacy, the program helps women become powerful advocates for their right to safe, affordable housing.

Jen Garvan, our CSO manager, explains that it's not about being lobbyists going to Parliament Hill and demanding new bills — it's about connecting with women in our community and teaching them how to advocate for themselves on housing issues. **“It's teaching them how they could go to City Hall and have a say in a budget vote, or how they could go to rallies to get their voices heard,”** says Jen. **“It's about learning their rights and responsibilities as tenants, especially for marginalized women or newcomers. Knowledge is power, and if you don't have that knowledge, you can't fight for yourself.”**

Our CSO programs, like Toronto Women in Action, are one of the key ways we are growing beyond crisis work to make a significant impact toward ending gender-based violence.

But we've also expanded and adapted several other CSO programs to ensure that every woman we serve feels safer and more informed. One of note is our empowerment through self-defense programs so that we can teach our workshops to groups of women with disabilities and senior women. It's crucial that our programming is inclusive and helps empower all women — not just the young and able-bodied.

**“Gender-based violence isn't decreasing, and the numbers on the femicide list aren't getting any lower,”** says Jen. **“We constantly have to be adapting to what's happening in Toronto and evolving our programs accordingly.”**



# From the Frontlines: How Our Shelter Services Are Evolving

The shelter, and all the programs and services we run there every day, remain at the heart of Nellie's. But as the average length of stay continues to increase, our programming must stay responsive to meet longer-term needs.

For the women staying at Nellie's, access to clear, reliable housing information is critical in figuring out their next steps.

**“The reality is that there isn't enough affordable housing available right now, and the best thing we can do is stay focused and deliver consistent messaging and support to the women,”** explains Jiin Yiong, our Program Director.

Regular workshops on subsidized housing programs, such as the Special Priority Program and Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing, help women better understand their options and build confidence in navigating the system. And for Jiin and her team, it's essential that they keep up-to-date on how these systems and rules are shifting.

**“We must keep abreast of new information, so that we can provide the best support,”** says Jiin. **“The goal is to be ahead of any policy changes, and not to work in isolation. We get ahead through our network, through being involved in advocacy, and in joining other organizations with similar goals.”** Jiin facilitates weekly team meetings to provide guidance for case managers, and frontline staff receive regular training to stay current on the latest systems and tools.

While navigating housing systems is a technical challenge, the emotional toll of long waits and uncertainty is just as real — making frontline support more important than ever. That's why comfort, stability, and nourishment are central to how we support our residents. Since moving into our new space in 2022, we've been able to offer three home-cooked meals a day to our residents.

**“Our menus are seasonal, and they're always changing based on the cultures of the women staying with us. One of our cooks also makes fresh, baked goods like banana bread and muffins,”** explains Jiin. **“We've really enhanced our food program to make it more comforting.”**



## Shelter

Nellie's has a mandate to help ALL women and their children, regardless of why they are homeless.

Women who stayed at Nellie's



Average length of stay



Children who stayed at Nellie's



Special Priority Program (SPP) applications filled out



## Community Housing Program

We help women access safe and affordable housing so they can leave violence, poverty, and homelessness behind for good.



Housing applications filled out



Total number of women who received housing support



We helped 24 women get into Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing (RGI).





## Community Support and Outreach Programs

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.



**Toronto Women in Action:**  
30 participants; 5 workshops



**Food Bank:** 120 participants weekly;  
4,900 total food bags distributed last year



**Women on the Move:** 15 participants;  
5 social outings; 21 support group sessions



**Senior socialization program:**  
35 participants; 22 workshops



**Empowerment Pro-Active Violence Education:**  
50 participants; 7 workshops



## 2024-2025 Board of Directors

### Executive

**Katherine Knowlton**, Co-chair  
**Lindsey Walton**, Co-chair  
**Morgana Kellythorne**, Treasurer  
**Charrissa Klander**, Secretary

### Members-At-Large

**Maria Belfon**  
**Tarini Chandak**  
**Kara Golani-Tran**  
**Shagun Malhotra**  
**Lyndsay Tchequs-Veiga**  
**Neda Zanjani**

## Senior Management Team

**Ingrid Graham**, Executive Director  
**Jiin Yiong**, Program Director  
**Marissa Eckert**, Human Resources Manager

## Administrative Staff

**Halima Abdela**, Financial Administrator  
**Yashika Anora**, Executive Assistant and Board Support  
**Adonia Liu**, Admin Assistant, HR and Finance  
**Taylor Nguyen**, Operations (on Leave)

## Shelter Supervisors

**Maureen Caines-Comrie**  
**Amanda Lisa Parke**

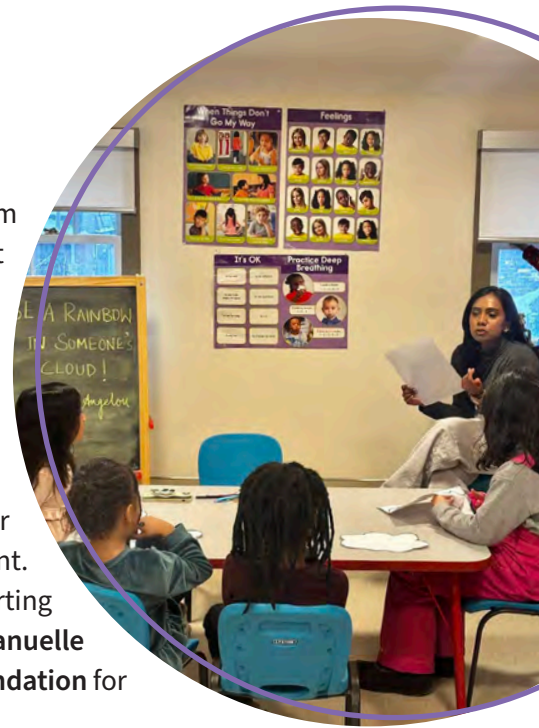
## Community Managers

**Jennifer Garvan**, Community Support & Outreach  
**Rachel Seaward**, Housing

# Thank You to Our Donors

We are forever grateful for our phenomenal community of supporters: from our individual donors who continue to support us year after year, to our direct mail donors who pivoted and donated online during the postal strike, and to our monthly donors whose partnership means that we can consistently provide our vital services for women and their children in need.

Thank you to **Evolve ETFs**, the **Greater Toronto Apartment Association**, the **McLean Foundation**, and the **C.B. Powell Foundation** for your generous financial support. Thanks to the **Royal LePage Shelter Foundation** for supporting us through your incredible Night Light Walk fundraising event. Thanks to **Nick Kennedy** and his team at **Civil Liberties** for once again supporting us with the proceeds from Miracle. And thank you to **La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso**, the **Alva Foundation**, and the **Catherine & Maxwell Meighen Foundation** for your invaluable support of our children's program.



# Thank You to Our Board

We are extremely grateful to our Board of Directors for guiding us as we grow to support the evolving demands of our community. Thank you for helping Nellie's meet the needs of today, and of the future.

In 2024-2025, we welcomed three new board members. Each brings a wealth of experience and expertise to Nellie's.

**Tarini Chandak** is a Senior Manager at Deloitte, where she collaborates with major organizations to make key strategic decisions. She is a member of our Strategic Planning Committee, where her experience enhances our current strategic plan revisions, and she's deeply committed to community improvement, with a focus on the arts, mental health, diversity, and inclusion.

**Kara Golani-Tran** is an award-winning Human Capital and Change Management leader with deep expertise supporting large-scale transformations at Fortune 500 companies. With strong experience in talent management and human resources, Kara is ensuring our strategic plan supports employee recruitment, retention, development, engagement, and well-being.

**Shagun Malhotra** is a Relationship Manager with RBC Commercial Banking, supporting non-profit clients with their daily banking, advice, and growth needs. Working closely with non-profit organizations led her to joining the Nellie's board, where she contributes to our finance and fund development committees.

We are also saying goodbye to an incredible long-standing board member, **Charrissa Klander**. With a dedicated career in government policy and consulting, Charrissa joined our board in September 2019, bringing a wealth of experience in social services funding. She was a member of our Fund Development Committee and served as board secretary. Thank you, Charrissa, for your time and service to Nellie's.

# Financial Report

Year End March 31, 2025

## REVENUE

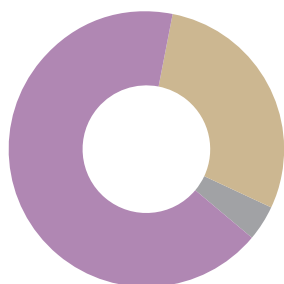
	2025	2024
Government grants	\$2,142,977	\$2,612,810
MCCSS one-time pandemic relief funding	–	6,804
City of Toronto – per diem	487,396	446,123
City of Toronto – personal needs allowance	22,785	11,425
City of Toronto – other employment supports	–	23,408
United Way Funding	208,608	208,608
Donations and Fundraising	1,155,401	1,168,049
Bequests	30,476	56,000
Rental, Interest, and other	3,543	106,726
	<b>\$4,051,186</b>	<b>\$4,639,953</b>

## EXPENSES (Schedule A of Audited Financial Report)

Property	\$301,927	\$416,075
Administration	433,463	495,378
Staffing	2,587,030	2,485,167
Clients	394,941	539,950
One-time expenses including accommodation	–	19,552
	<b>\$3,717,361</b>	<b>\$3,956,122</b>
Excess of revenue over expenses from operations	<b>\$333,825</b>	<b>\$683,831</b>
Income from amortization of deferred capital contributions	\$379,355	\$379,355
Amortization of capital assets	(\$394,651)	(\$394,730)
Deficiency of revenue over expenses from capital assets	(\$15,296)	(\$15,375)
<b>Excess of revenue over expenses for the year</b>	<b>\$318,529</b>	<b>\$668,456</b>

### REVENUE

Government Grants & Subsidies  
**66%**

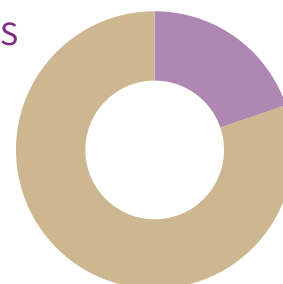


Donations, Fundraising & Other  
**29%**

United Way Funding  
**5%**

### EXPENSES

Programs & Services  
**80%**



Administration  
**20%**

See full Audited Financial Statements, including notes at [www.nellies.org](http://www.nellies.org).



## Vision for Tomorrow

We're thrilled to move into the next chapter of Nellie's with Ingrid Graham as our new Executive Director. Ingrid brings both stability and a clear sense of direction, aiming to strengthen our reputation in the sector while delivering on our mission and advancing our strategic plan.

Ingrid is focusing on building new relationships, and deepening existing ones, with staff, partners, and community members. These connections are vital as we grow with impact, strengthening our core services and fostering a culture of collaboration and care — one that can keep evolving to meet rising and increasingly complex needs.

**“We need to make sure that our programs aren’t stagnant, and that we take some chances,”** explains Ingrid. **“I want us to be an organization that is willing to learn and grow as needs change — to be very nimble and flexible in how we work.”**

Another key part of Ingrid's vision for the year ahead is long-term financial planning. This includes exploring new partnerships to sustain essential programs, and launching a community volunteer fundraising committee to identify revenue opportunities and host third-party events.

Alongside this, Ingrid is prioritizing stronger internal connection and cohesion. Staff engagement surveys and feedback sessions will help align the team around shared goals. With different parts of our organization often working independently — and some, like our Community Housing team, in a separate office — we don't always immediately see how our efforts connect across the organization.

**“We want to always be focused on our mission and vision — together,”** says Ingrid.

# nellie's

SAFETY. STRENGTH. SUPPORT.

## CRISIS

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## ADMINISTRATION

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11930 2727 RR0001

