



# Bellydance with Nicola

## Bellydancing

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### **Belly dancing**

By Avery Wolaniuk

“Things are going to jiggle today, and that’s okay” are not words normally heard at 17W’s gym. But on 14 Jan 06, 11 women took advantage of a free workshop offered during Community Recreation’s Customer Appreciation Week. These women crossed cultural boundaries, rolled their hips and learned a foreign art form that embraces all your curves, softness and wobbly parts. It’s called raks sharqi, or “dance of the East.” Most people call it belly dancing.

The two-hour workshop was taught by Nicola, a performer, choreographer and instructor with 10 years experience who teaches for the city of Winnipeg’s Leisure Program, and at two local dance studios. Her passion for the dance stems from schooling in archeology and anthropology that introduced her to new cultures, combined with a desire to get comfortable in her body and lose some weight. “Belly dancing doesn’t demand that you have a particular kind of body — any build, any height, any weight and a natural inclination, and you can become good at it.”

Dana Glover, the Com Rec Program Assistant, says the workshop was in demand. “We chose to offer a free belly dancing workshop due to a number of requests that we received from our members,” she says. “Our hope was to increase awareness of this popular pastime and offer Belly Dancing as a registered program.”

Belly dancing is the most misunderstood dance on the planet, explained the instructor. It’s not a dance of seduction at all. Instead, in the East the folk versions are often danced just in the home, just among women, as a social dance that girls learn at an early age. Performers of various forms make the sinuous movements seem graceful and natural.



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But don't be mistaken — it only looks natural. "A lot of people walk in expecting it to be easy," says Nicola. "It's too hard for lots of people." The dance requires the isolation, control and strength of muscles most of us don't know we have. The level of difficulty can be compared to



beginner yoga, says Nicola, and it takes years to develop all the skills.

"Your mind knows what you have to do, but to control your body to do those things is harder than you think," says participant Kelly Wetick, a relocation consultant on 17W who came out for the morning. But it's not about becoming a professional for everyone. "You don't have to be good at something to enjoy it," says Nicola. "Lots of women take it because it's relaxing and fun.

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“Some women really blossom who walk in very shy, feeling very self-conscious about themselves. They’ve taken it in and applied themselves and really open up.”

Community Rec is taking down a list of those interested in registering for a class. “After the great response that we received for this workshop we will try to offer a registered session of Belly Dancing in the Spring,” says Glover. For details call Dana at 833-2500 ext. 2057.

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