

2024-2025



Migrant Workers Center Gratitude Report

Land Acknowledgement



The staff, directors, and members of Migrant Workers Centre (MWC) are honored to live and work on the stolen ancestral territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tseil-Waututh, and Syilx nations. As uninvited settlers, we strive to stand in solidarity with these and all other indigenous peoples of the lands we operate in and their sovereignty. We recognize that many migrant workers have been impacted by colonialism and genocide in their home countries. We work to remind ourselves and others that the same systems that oppress migrants and migrant workers are the ones that displace Indigenous peoples from their lands and deny them their rights. We recognize that while we work towards justice for migrant workers, as settlers and immigrants, we have a responsibility to put at the forefront of our work the rights of Indigenous people across Turtle Island and beyond.

“No one is free until we are all free”



Client satisfaction rate

Achieving a total revenue

Expanded our client base

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Message from the Leadership



This past year has been one of both profound challenge and renewed purpose. Across the country, we have witnessed the hardening of federal immigration policy — what many have called a “pre-emptive austerity,” marked by deep cuts to immigration targets, slower processing of permanent residence applications, and a retreat from commitments to regularization. For the migrant workers we accompany every day, these decisions are not abstractions. They translate into longer separations from family, precarious work without security, and greater vulnerability to exploitation.

Against this backdrop, Migrant Workers Centre (MWC) has continued to stand firm in solidarity with those most affected — defending rights, advancing justice, and building community power. In the face of systemic injustice, our response has been grounded in the traditions of popular education and collective care. We know that social change grows not only from court victories or policy reform, but also from every worker who learns to name their rights, from every collective voice raised to demand fairness, and from every act of mutual aid that restores dignity in daily life.

In April 2024, we welcomed Ingrid Mendez as our new Executive Director. Her experienced and compassionate leadership has guided MWC through a complex transition, strengthening our work with migrant communities. Under her guidance, we have launched initiatives that connect legal advocacy, counselling, and outreach across the Lower Mainland, Okanagan, and Kootenays.

In 2024–25, our organization achieved powerful outcomes for migrant workers through legal victories, compassionate counselling, and grassroots advocacy. The legal team recovered over \$115,000 in unpaid wages, secured rapid Open Work Permits for Vulnerable Workers and continued our advocacy work. Our Counselling Program delivered over 230 sessions and 150 follow-ups, offering after-hours support to help workers rebuild safety, trust, and self-determination. Across the Okanagan and Kootenays, our outreach efforts brought rights education, donated bicycles, and emergency support directly to farms and communities often isolated from resources and connection. Guided by solidarity, we have joined coalitions to fight for fair labour rights, open work permits, healthcare access, and safety for migrant women and workers affected by policy setbacks.

We know that the struggle for migrant justice is inseparable from the broader fight against racialized economic inequality and climate displacement. It is about the kind of country we wish to become — one where human rights are not conditional on status, and where the people who feed and care for us can do so with security and respect. We close this year grateful to our staff, volunteers, and community partners — and above all to the migrant workers who continue to teach us what courage and dignity look like. Their voices and actions remind us that transformation begins in the encounter, in the willingness to trust again, and in the conviction that another world is possible.

In solidarity,

Ingrid Méndez
Executive Director

Fernanda Novoa
Board Chair

Organization Overview



Mission

We work to promote and advance access to justice for migrant workers by providing legal and support services, advocacy, research, public education and engaging in law and policy reform initiatives.

Values

- We **center the voices of migrant workers** in the design and governance of our programs and practices.
- We apply an **intersectional, anti-racist, and feminist lens** whenever we think about problems and their solutions.
- We are committed to **legal excellence** and actively strive to **incorporate current research** and best practices into all aspects of our work.
- We **do not accept funding from any source that would interfere with our advocacy** for migrant workers.
- We **build capacity** before we take on additional work.
- We plan and manage to avoid long or repeated sprints for staff; we work to remove or **mitigate the conditions that lead to added stress** and burnout.
- We are committed to implementing **trauma-informed practices** in all aspects of our work.
- We are committed to advancing reconciliation and to **working in solidarity with Indigenous organizations** and communities.

Our team



Staff



INGRID MENDEZ



DANIEL SILVEYRA



JONATHON BRAUN



NAVID BAYAT



ANDREA RAMOS



MICHELLE MARKELL



DAVID HARO



KARINA VILLADA



AMANDA AZIZ



JAIRO GARCÍA



JAIMEE PARK



MISRAK YACOB



JUAN TREVIÑO



SEMI HERNÁNDEZ



LORENA ORDOÑEZ



ERIKA FLORES

Board

- Fernanda Novoa – **Chair**
- Isabelle Akerhielm – **Treasurer**
- David Fairey – **Secretary**
- Evelyn Encalada
- Vesminda Cara
- Susanna Quail
- Lei Zhang

Our programs



Legal services

We provide legal support at no cost to migrant workers in the areas of employment and immigration law. We focus on the most vulnerable workers – those who work with a closed work permit, without status, or/and with low income.

Education

We created a knowledge exchange program where we come together with migrant worker organizers to better understand the challenges they face and share the tools available for them.

Outreach

We have connected with agricultural migrant workers in the South Okanagan and Kootenays regions through farm visits, community events, and local partnerships, providing rights education, referrals, emergency assistance, and essential donations that promote inclusion and mobility.

Advocacy

MWC advocates for policy and legal reforms that protect migrant workers' rights, guided by its Advocacy Committee of workers and allies, and works collaboratively with community partners through lobbying, government submissions, and test case litigation.

Support Services

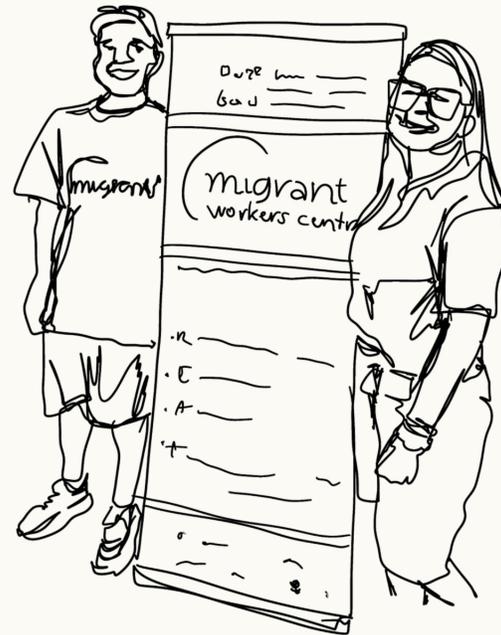
We offer a range of services to support migrant workers and their families address needs beyond legal issues, including counselling, assistance with health care and navigation of systems, access to resources, translation, and advocacy with government and other institutions.

Direct Legal Support



Overview

MWC's Direct Legal Services team provided legal information, advice, and representation to more workers than ever before. Our lawyers and advocates achieved major wins before the Employment Standards Branch and in immigration proceedings. Expanded Law Foundation funding allowed the hiring of an additional staff lawyer and legal secretary, strengthening service quality and access.



Workers supported

550

Cases represented

101

Quote

“I just want to say that I feel truly blessed to have found your organization. Because of that, I met Michelle, who has been helping me with my case and always does her best to fight for my rights. Even if the outcome turns out to be negative, I already feel like a winner because Michelle has given me the energy and positive spirit to keep going and stand up for my rights.”

Looking ahead

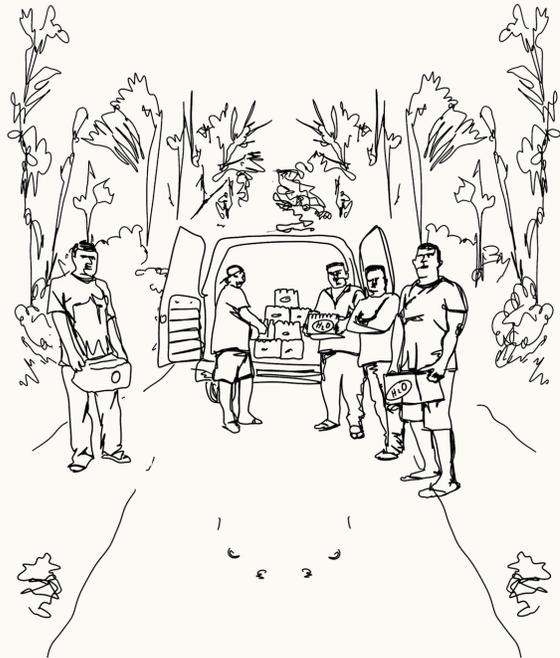
After the fiscal year ended, MWC secured new funding to expand support for undocumented migrant workers. We've since hired Juan Treviño as a Legal Advocate, extended Andrea Ramos' contract for work permit assistance, and re-hired lawyer Juliana Cliplef to reduce wait times for legal advice. Juan brings extensive experience from his years working with migrant workers at MOSAIC. MWC remains committed to finding creative and sustainable ways to better support both migrant workers and its staff.

Outreach



Overview

In January of 2025, MWC hired David Haro, our first dedicated Outreach Worker! David has since worked with agricultural migrant workers in the South Okanagan and Kootenays, with the support of MOSAIC and UNIFOR. In the first four months of operation, David has conducted site visits to farms, community hubs, and local events to connect with migrant workers, offering education on their rights, referrals, and emergency assistance. Partnerships with local groups enabled donations of food, bicycles, and household essentials, strengthening community inclusion and mobility.



Workers reached

850+

Site visits

20

Areas

- Pitt Meadows
- Abbotsford
- Ladner
- Victoria
- Kelowna
- Creston
- Grand Forks
- Keremeos

Wins

Workers were reached in remote areas.
Workers learned more about their rights and participated in Health Fairs connecting with important resources that they did not have access to before.

Looking ahead

Outreach efforts will continue in the region, and MWC will work to secure sustained funding for the work elsewhere.

Counselling



Overview

Launched in late 2024 by Jairo García, our Counselling Program has become a lifeline for migrant workers facing trauma, isolation, and crisis. Over 230 one-on-one counselling sessions and 150 follow-ups were provided, supporting 30 workers across BC — from Vancouver to Kelowna and Keremeos. Sessions addressed mental health, family relationships, labour inclusion, and emergency relocation, supporting workers in reaffirming their remarkable resilience, confidence, safety, and hope through culturally relevant, trauma-informed care.



Workers supported

30

Counselling Sessions

230 one-on-one

150 follow-ups

Wins

“It's terrible to know you're being mistreated when you've already been vulnerable due to life as a migrant. How cowardly the abuser is! I've discovered this, and it motivates me to strengthen myself from within, to be clear about who I am and never again compromise my value as a person.”

Looking ahead

Since the close of the fiscal year, we have obtained funding from Vancouver Foundation to continue the program until 2026. In addition to individual support, we're developing narrative group workshops to build community and create a space for migrant workers to share experiences.

Public Legal Education



Overview

MWC launched a pilot for its Legal Education and Outreach program in January of 2025; this is a knowledge exchange program where migrant worker organizers come together to better understand the challenges they face and the tools (legal rights, resources, information) available for them. MWC Staff also continued to deliver education workshops to partner organizations and migrant workers.

In-person workshops

14

Webinars

6

Topics: employment rights, immigration updates, permanent residence pathways for care and agricultural workers



"I was so empowered by the LEO workshop and the knowledge that I acquired with the first session, that the following day, I requested to my supervisor to be part of the Health and Safety Committee at my workplace because after learning I was able to identify hazards [...] this has given me more confidence in my workplace"

Looking ahead

We are lucky to have enlisted Karina Villada to lead the program's deployment through 2026 with additional funding from DIVERSECity and Vancouver Foundation. We plan to host a LEO training session for construction workers in November or December, followed by one last session of this year.

Advocacy



Overview

MWC advocates for policy and legal reforms that protect migrant workers' rights, guided by our Advocacy Committee of workers and allies, we work collaboratively with community partners through lobbying, government submissions, and test case litigation. This past year, we have joined coalitions to advocate for sectoral bargaining for care workers, for the end of closed work permits, and for the elimination of British Columbia's three-month wait for MSP coverage.

Wins

After years of advocacy from MWC and other care work groups, Canada announced a **new permanent residence program for Care Workers, including spaces for those without status and offering PR on Arrival for newcomers.** Although the program still has issues, it shows that regularization for undocumented workers and **direct PR pathways are achievable**, and MWC will keep pushing for broader improvements.

MWC is **actively involved in a human rights complaint against the Ministry of Labour regarding the lack of interpretation services for non-English speaking workers during ESB complaints.** While the government has agreed to provide an interpreter for the complainant, MWC continues to fight to ensure interpretation is available to all workers who need it.



Looking ahead

We will continue to fight with and for workers. We are working on a submission to the Provincial Ministry of Health to improve the housing conditions of agricultural migrant workers. We are being joined in this work by many partners, researchers and allies in BC and Ontario.

Financial Statements

April 2024-March 2025

Overview

We closed the 2024–25 fiscal year with revenues of \$1.22 million and expenses of \$1.23 million, resulting in a small \$4,800 deficit — a significant improvement over the previous year’s performance. Law Foundation funding accounted for roughly 60 percent of total revenue, reflecting strong partnership and confidence in MWC’s mission. The organization reduced liabilities, stabilized staffing, and improved financial systems, laying out the groundwork for greater resilience in a volatile funding landscape.

Revenues

\$1.22 million

Expenses

\$1.23 million

Wins

Profit

Completion of the cleanest and most timely audit in three years, with notable progress in accountability and reporting.

Looking ahead

MWC will focus on diversifying funding sources, strengthening unrestricted reserves, and building financial sustainability to ensure long-term stability for its programs and advocacy.



Thank you!



We are very grateful to our funders, sponsors, and especially the migrant workers we serve and support. Everything we do is made possible by your trust, support, and hard work.

Our funders

We thank the team at the **Law Foundation of British Columbia** for their continued support and partnership.

As well as **BC Gaming, DIVERSECity, City of Vancouver, MOSAIC, UNIFOR, CUPE BC, Hospital Employees' Union, Simon Fraser University Radius Institute, Vancouver Foundation, Community Action Initiative, BC FED Health and Safety Centre, HSABC.**



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