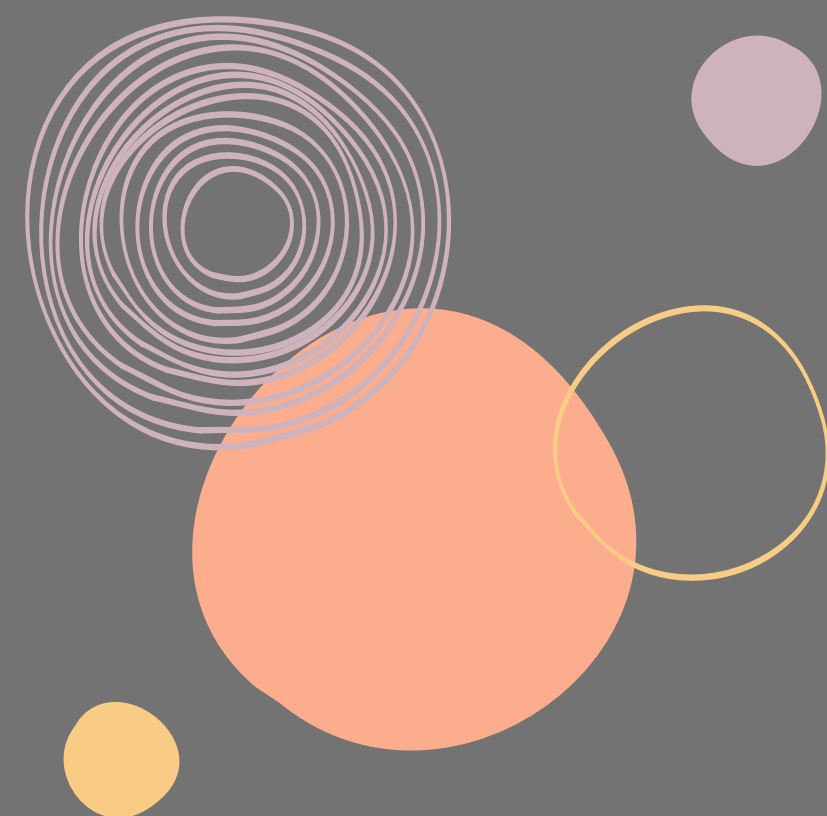




Racialized Immigrant Women's Experience of Workplace Health and Safety

City in Colour Urban Consultancy Cooperative
Migrant Workers Centre BC
Pathways to Prosperity- Nov 2025



Overview of the session

- Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
- Introduction
- Safer WorkPlaces Project Overview
- A Story of Resistance: Roads of Dirt, Wings of Steel
- Findings & Recommendations
- Migrant Workers Centre Advocacy
- Audience Q&A and Roundtable

— Land acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded lands of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations

As we discuss workplace justice, we recognize the ongoing struggles of Indigenous communities and commit to learning, unlearning, and building solidarity.



— Partners & Supporters



Funded by



Barriers faced by racialized immigrant women in BC workplaces

- Highly educated and skilled, yet often limited to low-wage, precarious jobs
- Experience workplace discrimination and unsafe conditions
- Limited awareness of legal rights and protections
- Barriers to seeking help include:
 - Language and cultural differences
 - Precarious immigration status
 - Lack of trust in and connection with the legal system
- Systemic racism and deskilling increase vulnerability to exploitation

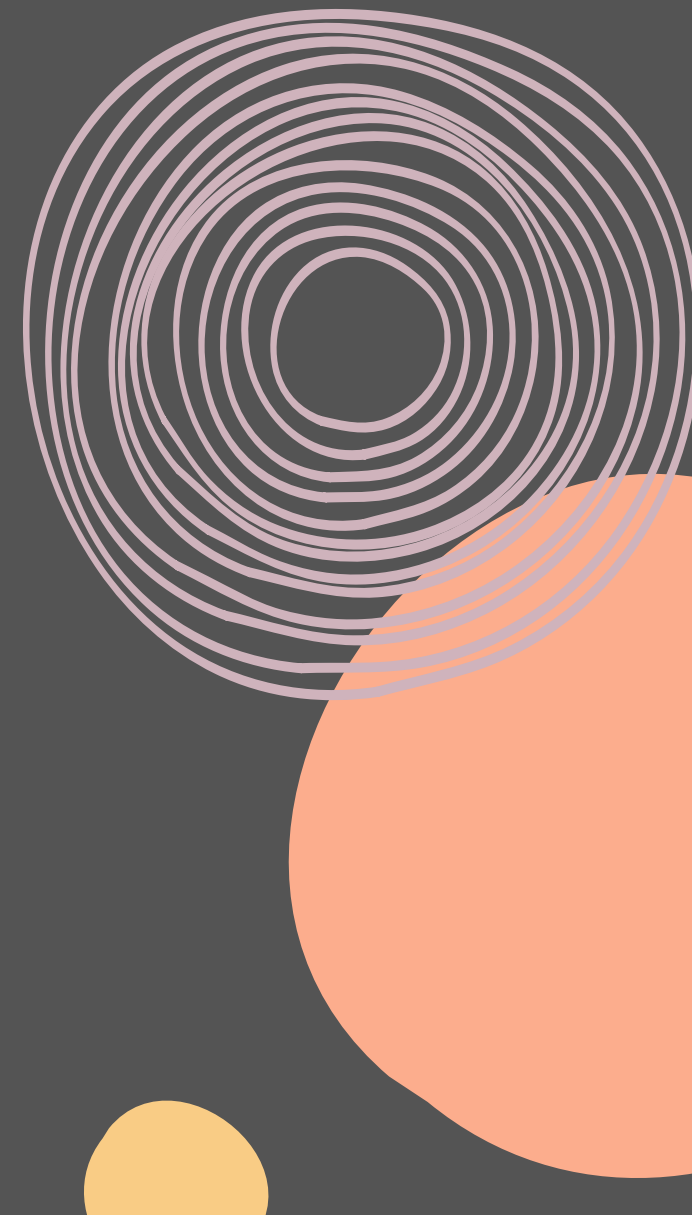
About the Safer Workplaces Project

- Builds on earlier Short-Changed phase
- Focus (2024–2025): Workplace health and safety issues
- Engaged 12 immigrant women + legal, service, and union stakeholders
- Explored barriers to accessing rights—particularly via WorkSafeBC
- Goals:
 - Raise public and policymaker awareness
 - Empower women with legal knowledge
 - Recommend policy and practice changes for safer, more inclusive workplaces



Project Methodology

- Support Group
 - 12 racialized immigrant women over 8 months
 - Shared stories, built community
 - Legal education, storytelling, reflection
 - Created written and visual art to raise awareness
- Key Informant Interviews
 - With legal advocates, union reps, and community workers
 - Identified systemic barriers to legal protection and safety reporting
- Community Engagement & Knowledge Sharing
 - Partnered with legal clinics, grassroots, and immigrant-serving orgs
 - Worked with a photographer and a visual artist on visual storytelling
 - Shared through community event and social media campaign



— Storytelling

Participants took part in writing workshops led by journalist and human rights activist **Shanga Karim**, and collaborated with visual artist and curator **Natalia Botero** and graphic designer **Alejandra Villanueva** to co-create original artworks.



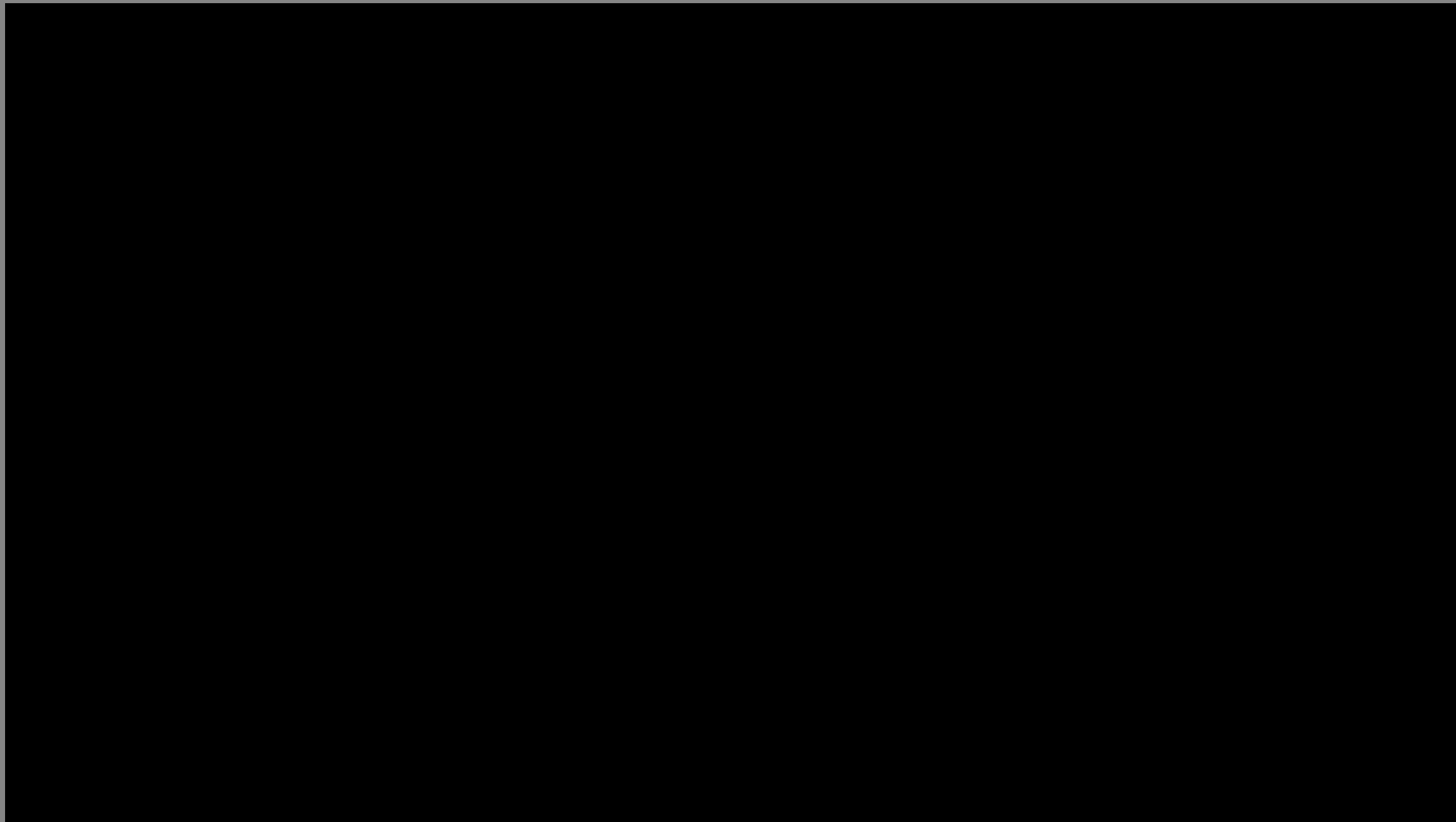
— Storytelling



— Lived experienced expert's talk



Alejandra Villanueva



Video Link: Roads of Dirts, Wings of Steel

Findings from interviews with key informants

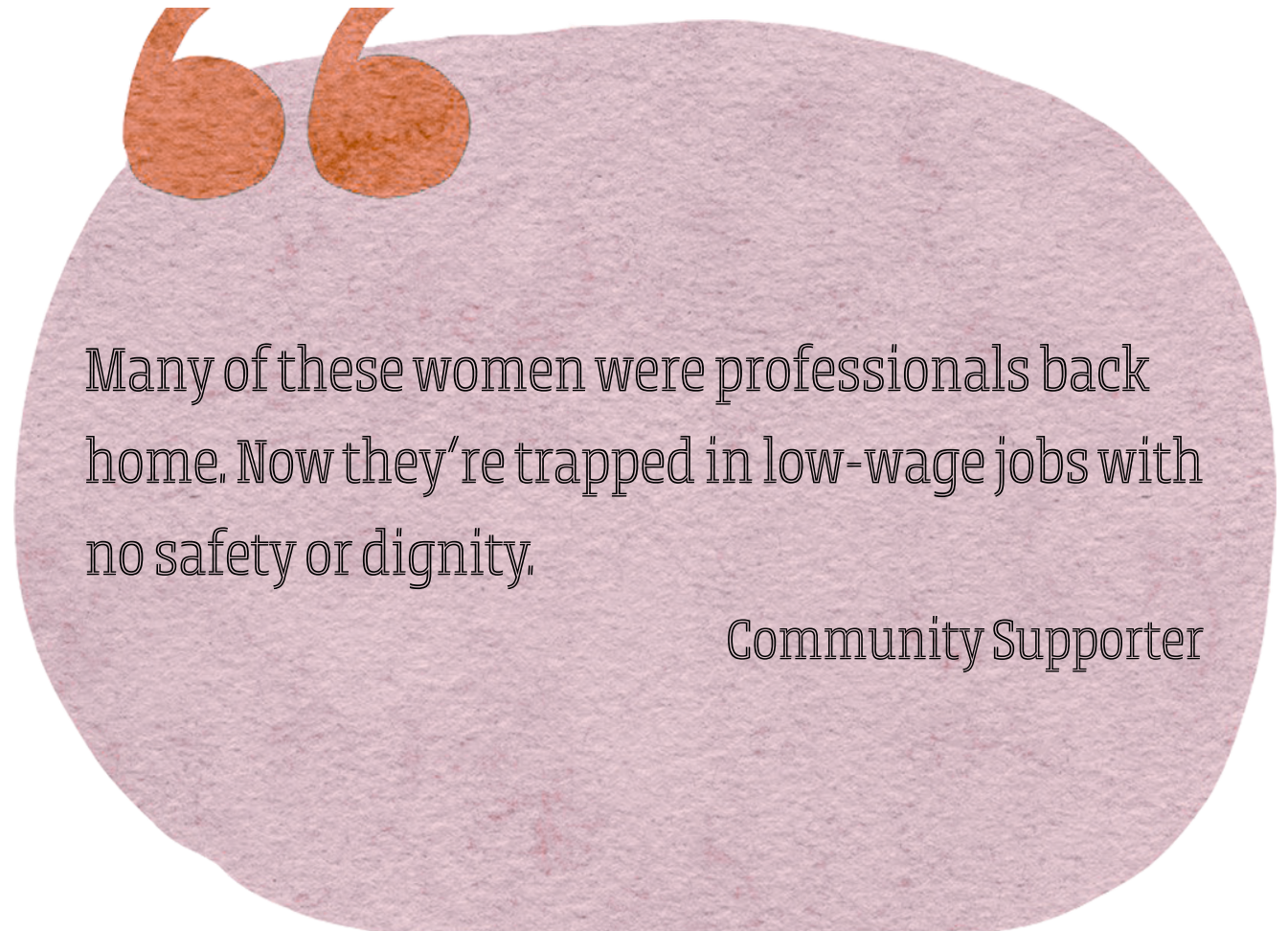
- Compounded barriers to workplace safety
- Language barriers, lack of digital literacy and self-advocacy skills
- Systemic barriers in WorkSafeBC processes
- The role of the union
- Recommendations: System change for improved health and safety for racialized women



— Finding 1: Racialized Immigrant Women Face Compounded Barriers to Workplace Safety

Intersection of Gender, Race, Immigration Status, and
Economic Precarity

- Low-wage, unsafe jobs despite skills
- Gender, race, and immigration status intersect
- Fear of retaliation or loss of status
- Harassment in male-dominated fields
- Rights hard to assert, risk of exploitation



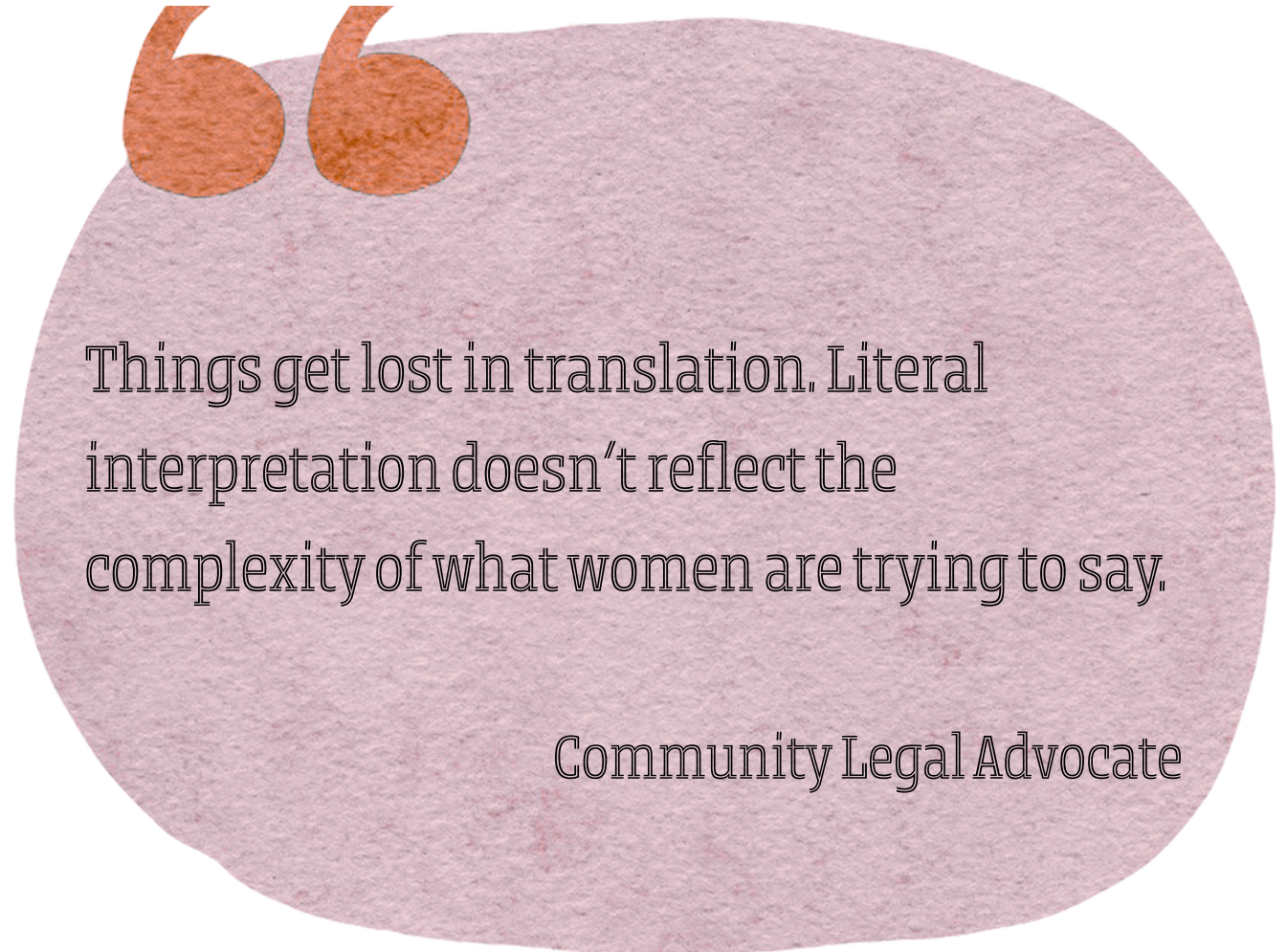
Many of these women were professionals back home. Now they're trapped in low-wage jobs with no safety or dignity.

Community Supporter

— Finding 2:

Language and System Barriers Limit Access to Workplace Safety

- Language and digital barriers limit access to safety info
- Training often rushed or inadequate
- Fear of job loss prevents reporting
- Support often not culturally or linguistically appropriate
- System not built for racialized immigrant women



Things get lost in translation. Literal interpretation doesn't reflect the complexity of what women are trying to say.

Community Legal Advocate

— Finding 3:

Systemic barriers in WorkSafeBC processes

- Complex and hard to navigate
- Doesn't reflect lived experiences
- Harassment and trauma often dismissed
- Lack of trust and support
- System misses cultural and language needs



When it comes to bullying and harassment, or when it comes to sexual harassment, it can be brushed under the rug.

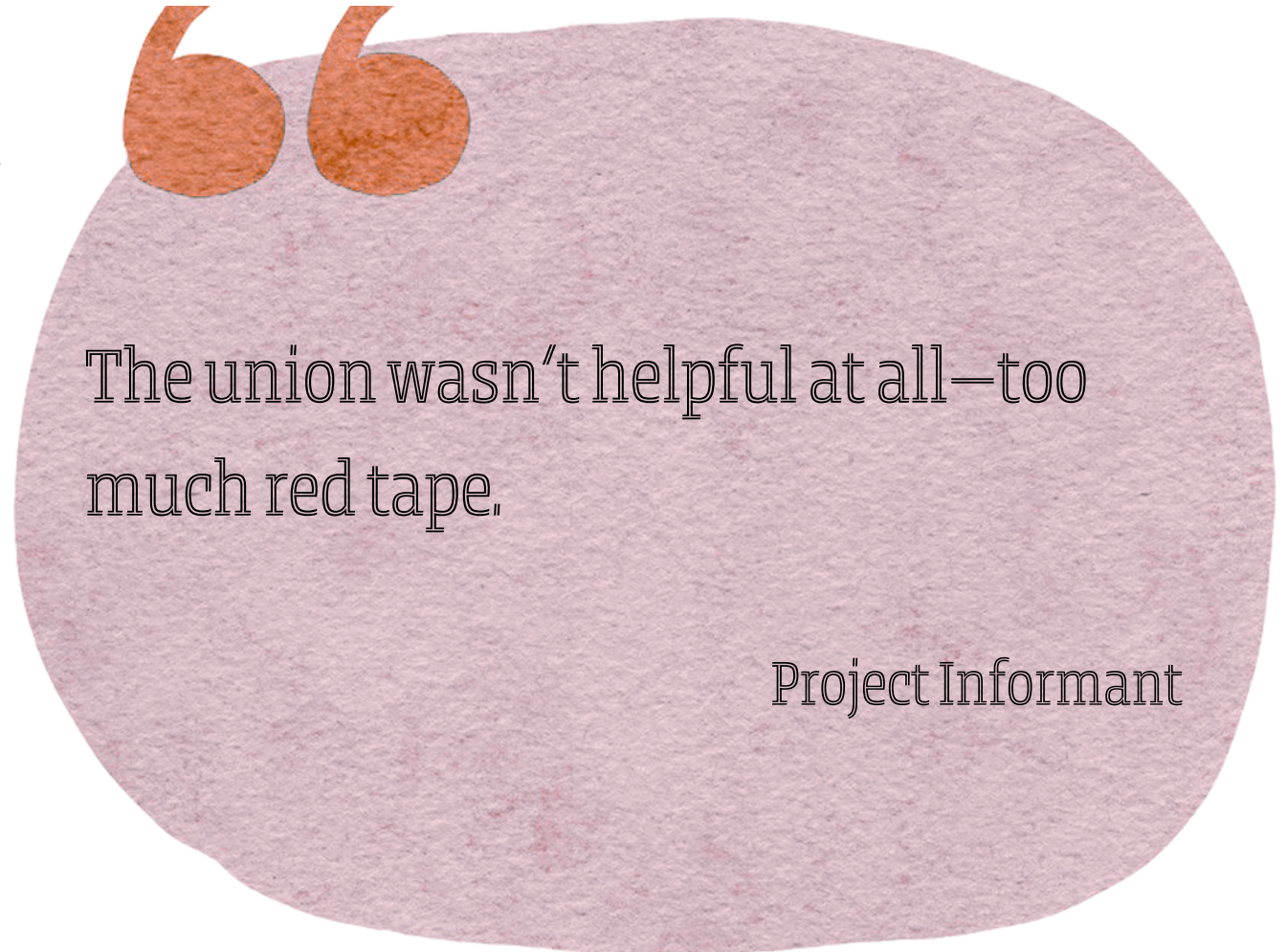
When it comes to racism, a lot of times things can get swept under the rug.

Project Informant

— Finding 4:

Unions often fall short in supporting racialized immigrant women

- Many women don't understand or trust unions
- Little support in bullying & harassment cases
- Union reps frustrated by lack of help during WSBC claims
- Intersectional issues like racial trauma often ignored
- Policies exist, but aren't effectively enforced



The union wasn't helpful at all—too much red tape.

Project Informant

— Recommendations

1: Education & Awareness

Support self-advocacy through culturally sensitive training on rights, communication, and digital skills—delivered with community partners.

4: Support for TFWs

Create a WSBC team trained to support Temporary Foreign Workers with culturally safe, trauma-informed care.

2: Navigators & Advocates

Cultural navigators can guide and support racialized women through complex WSBC processes.

5: Build Community Capacity

Fund legal rights education & training through trusted community groups.

3: Language & Cultural Support

Offer language help and trauma-informed, culturally aware services.

6: Proactive Investigations

WSBC should actively investigate injuries and support vulnerable workers through the claims process.

— Recommendations

7: Employer Education

Train employers in safety laws and hold them accountable.

8: Building Trust

WSBC builds trust with racialized communities through partnerships with settlement groups.

9: Sensitivity in Inspections

WSBC inspectors need to be thorough and sensitive, especially with racialized workers.

10: Flexibility in Medical Evaluations

Let workers choose familiar trusted doctors who understand their culture.

11: Integrated Case Management

Connect physical and psychological claims to reduce delays and better support workers.

— Migrant Workers Centre BC

About MWC:

Established in 1986, Migrant Workers Centre is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to legal advocacy for migrant workers in BC.

MWC facilitates access to justice for migrant workers by providing free legal education, advice and full representation. We help with many kinds of issues, including:

- Work permit applications
- Permanent residence applications
- Employment law violations

MWC also works to advance fair immigration policy and improved labour standards through law and policy reform and test case litigation.

— Migrant Workers Centre BC

Additional services, advocacy & public education strategies:

- **Walk-in Legal Clinic (in-person):** The Migrant Workers Center offers regular legal clinics to implement low-barrier access to legal advice and legal information.
- **Health and Resource Fairs:** In collaboration with other organisations and community members, we help organize and participate in fairs where workers can learn about resources related to employment rights, health services and community support. Some of these communities take place in rural communities such as Grand Forks, Keremeos, Cache Creek, and others.
- **Advocacy efforts:** We collaborate with other organisations, community members and stakeholders to advance and strengthen advocacy efforts that bring real change
- **Public education & resources:** We strive to provide an accessible and low-barrier learning space for migrant workers by creating useful resources and worker-centered workshops. compensating workers for their time when they participate in our workshops is a priority. An example of this is our Legal Education for Outreach Program (LEO) & our health and resource fairs.

Migrant Workers Centre BC



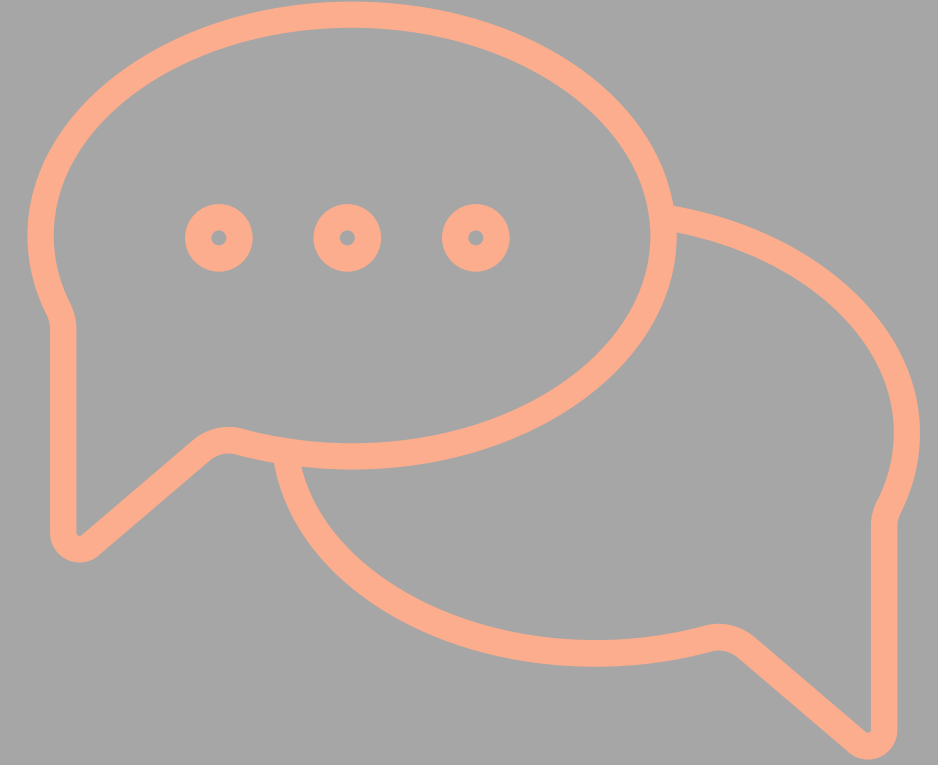
LEO workshop



Health and Resource Fairs.



— Roundtable discussion



- What do you think about the problems and barriers revealed by the Safer Workplaces project and MWC's experience? Have you had or heard of similar experiences?
- What are your thoughts on the recommendations?
- What solutions can you envision or support in your own work or community?
- How can we collaborate to put these ideas into action?
- Are there other actions, strategies, or policy interventions we should consider?

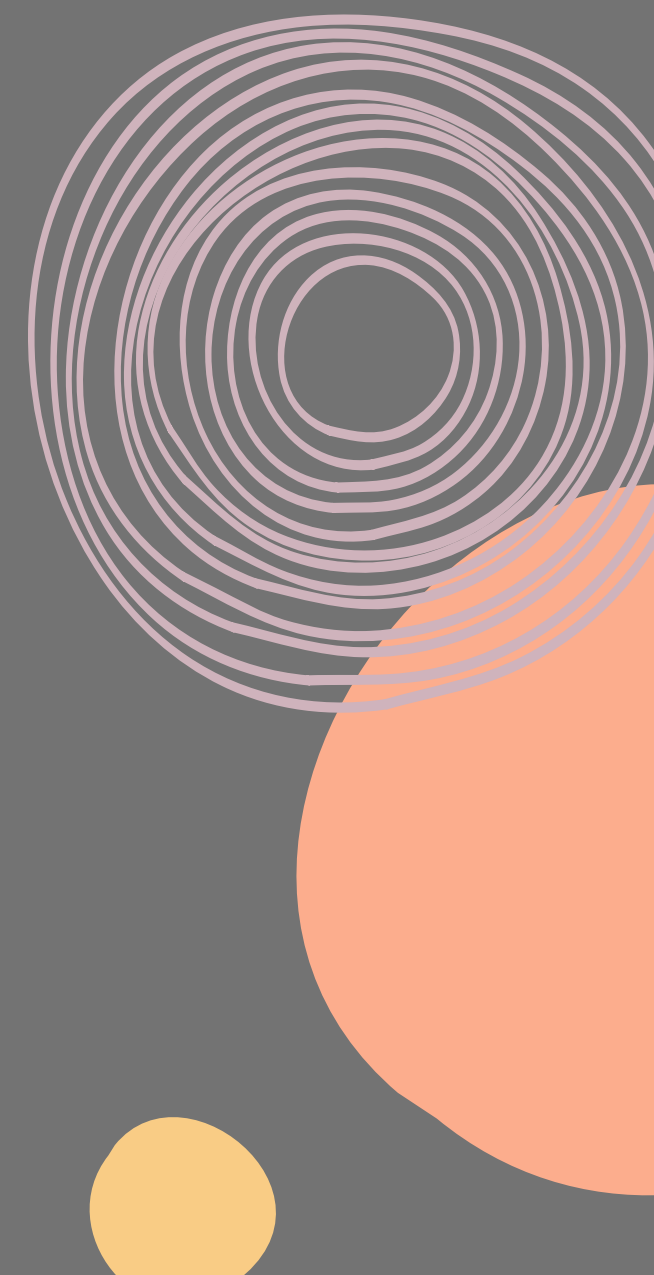
— Safer WorkPlaces Project Materials

- [Graphic Report](#)
- [Video Gallery](#)
- [Photo Gallery](#)
- [Podcast: Making Work Safer for Racialized Immigrant Women](#)
- [12 Health and Safety Tips for Workplace Health and Safety](#)
- [Project Webpage](#)

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Migrant Workers Centre Resources

Resources, Advocacy Strategies and Campaigns:

- **Walk-in Legal Clinic (in-person):** We host walk-in clinics twice a month on Saturdays at our Vancouver office at 302-119 West Pender; all migrant workers who meet our eligibility criteria are welcome to attend: <https://mwcbc.ca/legal-help/>
- **Reports made in collaboration with MWC Staff:** <https://mwcbc.ca/reports/>
- **MWC's eligibility criteria (who we can help):** <https://mwcbc.ca/elegibility/>

To learn more about MWC's campaigns and upcoming legal clinics:

- FB Page: <https://www.facebook.com/MWCBC/>
- IG Page: <https://www.instagram.com/mwc.bc/#>
- Linked In: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/mwcbc/posts/?feedView=all>





Thank You!

GET IN TOUCH!

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