Who are we?

We are Sarah, Jonas, and Yani. Sarah is a sociologist. Jonas is an industrial designer. Yani is a graphic designer. We are partners of InWithForward, a social enterprise that works with people to turn our social safety nets into trampolines.

We've created a network of families helping families thrive in Australia. We've designed a text-messaging social networking service with homeless young people in the Netherlands. We've prototyped a new kind of in-community youth service in the UK.

Here in Vancouver, we're working alongside PosAbilities, Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion, Simon Fraser Society for Community Living, and Community Living BC. Want to join?
hello@inwithforward.com

Invitation!

What's the difference between living in a community versus great living as part of community?

We'd like to start <u>in</u> the Edmonds/ Kingsway area, <u>with</u> you. Looking forward!

Joseph would also say he has a hard life. He gets up at 4am for his 5am shift re-stocking shelves at the local grocery store. By 10am, he's at his second job: washing cars. He tries to be home for 5pm to see his two boys. Evenings are spent fixing things around the house. And trying to get to bed early. Joseph lives across the street from Margot.

Margot lives in a one-bedroom unit on the edge of town. Two Calico cats keep her company. Until 3pm. When the mailman knocks on her door. She can't read the letters he delivers, but in the 3 minutes of conversation, she doesn't feel so lonely. Mondays are OK too. Her worker drops by to read the mail and re-stock her pantry. "It's a hard life," Margot says.

Why?

Joseph and Margot could be two of the 57% of Canadians who live down the street from each other, but have never met. They live separate lives in the same community. The separateness is even greater for folks like Margot, who lives with autism. And for seniors. And for immigrants and refugees. And on it goes...

So what? Research tells us we live longer, and healthier, and happier when we're connected to others. When we are not alone. When we feel like we belong.

But, what's it look like to belong? What kind of connections enable people to lead the kind of lives they imagine? And what gets in the way?

We want to start with Margot, Joseph, and their neighbours' every day experiences. How can we support people to not just live in a community, but to thrive as part of community? Especially for people with disabilities, and others, too often left out and disconnected?

How?

We like to call our approach Working In-Between. Because we work to close the gaps between what people say, do, and want. And between formal and informal systems.

We spend loads of time with people in their homes, at night, and on weekends to hear what they are saying, and see what they are doing. We get to know people who are far away from where they want to be, as well as people moving towards their versions of great living.

We go deeper. We use photos, film, drawings, and simulations to explore what people want for themselves, and introduce them to alternative realities. Because words alone have too many limitations. And people don't know what they don't know.

We explore different versions of good outcomes. And we identify the things that enable change, and the things that stand in the way. We come up with practical ideas for getting rid of the barriers. These ideas are at an individual, family, neighborhood, service, system, and policy level.
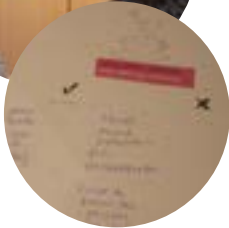
We return to people's homes to get feedback on the ideas. And we look for champions & funders to help actually make & test them. At a small scale to find out what works.

All along the way, we create opportunities for local people, professionals, and policymakers to learn with us. How would you like to be involved?

Starter Project

Starter Projects are all about exploring these questions with people, professionals, and policymakers. We begin in one neighborhood. Just one. In about 8 - 10 weeks we will develop super concrete ideas. For enabling connected lives.

But - this isn't just a research project.
We call it a starter project for a reason.

Our ambition is to build momentum and funding for longer-term change. We want to form local teams to prototype, apply, and embed multiple solutions. Because no one solution is enough. This might mean testing new kinds of neighbourhood roles, incentives, interactions, service types, commissioning processes, measurement systems, risk & safety policies, etc.

What we don't want is for this to become "Community initiative #101". We're after systemic change: shifting how families, neighbours, service providers, and government agencies interact over time.

Got examples of what's prompted systemic change in the past? We'd love to know more.

How different?

We're often asked what makes our process different from community development? And similar to design thinking?

We draw on lots of community development practices. Like street outreach & capability-building.
We also draw on lots of design thinking tools. Like visualization and prototyping.

We think what's different is our focus on both behaviour and systems change. And the fact we're making multiple solutions with different user groups - from families to social workers to bureaucrats. Plus, we don't shy away from measuring whether our solutions help or hinder. Indeed, we don't confuse new and innovative for good.