Our History

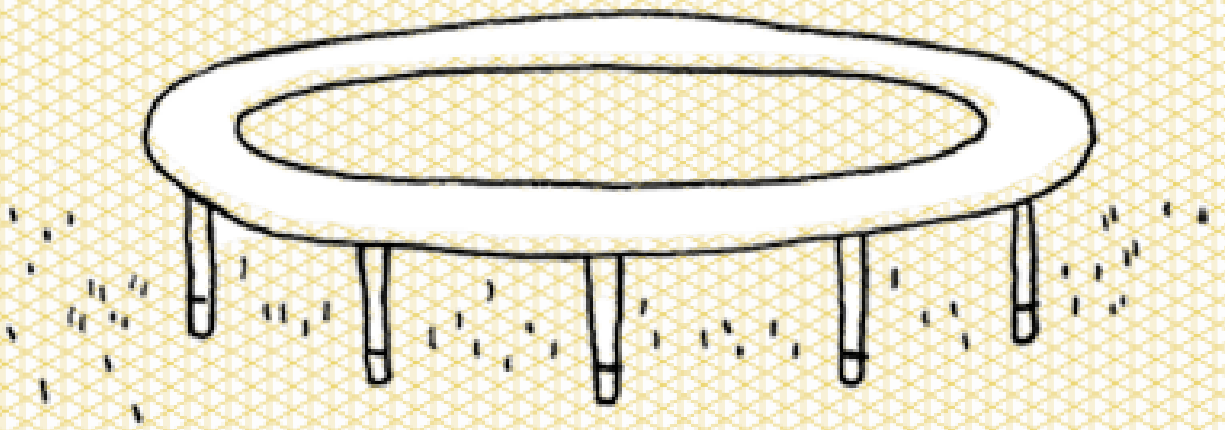**ERA ONE**   **ERA TWO**   **ERA THREE**   **ERA FOUR**

Sectors

Disability

Homelessness

Unemployment

Mental Health

Newcomers

Family services

Children & Youth

Seniors

Justice System

Partners

Greater Vancouver

The Simon Fraser Society for Community Living

pos)Abilities

The Community Living Innovation Venture

BACi

COMMUNITY LIVING BRITISH COLUMBIA

Toronto

WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE
Formerly St. Christopher House

Greater Vancouver

ATKINSON
For social and economic justice

pos)Abilities

vancouver foundation

Kinsight)

BACi

METCALF FOUNDATION

Toronto

WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE
Formerly St. Christopher House

COIN
Community Innovation Opportunity Network

Ontario Trillium Foundation
Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

United Way
Toronto & York Region

Greater Vancouver

Kinsight)   pos)Abilities

options COMMUNITY SERVICES

Massey THEATRE

BACi

Canadä

ALLIES IN aging
CONNECTING SENIORS ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES

CITY OF VANCOUVER

embers eastside works

Edmonton

THE CITY OF Edmonton

MaRS

Toronto

WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE
Formerly St. Christopher House

DIXON neighbourhood services

Population Health Solutions Lab

North York Community House

Robert L Conconi FOUNDATION

THE J.W. McCONNELL FAMILY FOUNDATION

LA FONDATION DE LA FAMILLE J.W. McCONNEL

THE VENTURE

Greater Vancouver

options COMMUNITY SERVICES

pos)Abilities

vancouver foundation

SVP VANCOUVER

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Edmonton

THE CITY OF Edmonton

Toronto

Department of Justice Canada
Ministère de la Justice Canada

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

North York Community House

Courting

ASSUMPTIONS:

Test appetite for big change; Find implementation partners

Projects | St.Chris Starter Project, Burnaby Starter Project, Podcasts

St. Chris Starter Project.

We spent our first day in Canada at the corner of Queen West and Bathurst meeting the local community: Beaker, Dwayne, and Anna told us just how much the drop-in centre on the corner meant to them. Over 12 days, we toured the neighbourhood, had beers at the local pub, hung out in back alleys, traipsed to the hospital, and had our fair share of double-doubles. We didn't know it then, but Tim Horton's would become an ethnographic mainstay. We witnessed the warmth and hospitality of drop-in centre patrons, and also wondered whether so much belonging to one place was a barrier to change. The tension between survival, belonging, and change became a core insight that would take us from a two-week taster project to a year-long exploration of drop-in centre practice.

Burnaby Starter Project.

We flew from cold Toronto to rainy Vancouver, and moved from a downtown drop-in centre to a suburban social housing complex. We called apartment 303 home. Yani and Sarah bunked together. Jonas claimed the Canucks themed bedroom. The three of us, plus our first Canadian team (Janey, Sabrina and Laura) turned the living room into a studio space. Over 10-weeks, we met 50 of our neighbours and generated 11 ideas for change. One observation – that few of our neighbours were isolated from other people, but many, especially individuals with developmental disabilities, were isolated from novelty kick-started a multi-year journey to Kudoz.
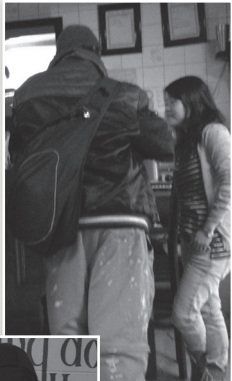
Podcasts.

With our first dates over, we returned to Amsterdam to see who might call first. While West NH, posAbilities, Kinsight, and BACI looked for cash, we translated our learning into a series of podcasts for frontline disability workers and wrote our first big paper on behaviour change.

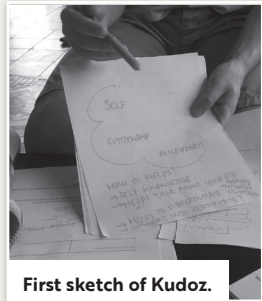---

Key moments

On-the-ground in Toronto.

First positive deviants.

First team orientation.

First ethnography with street-involved adults.

First sketch of Kudoz.

First playback event, Burnaby.

Key takeaways

1. Immersive ethnography re-frames problems, finds unusual suspects, and identifies partners willing to shake up the status quo.

2. Deep partnership with social service providers requires courage, vulnerability, humility, and grit. We have to show up as humans, not organizations. It is hard.

3. Re-focus social science & design methods on making and testing interactions that shift attitudes and behaviours.
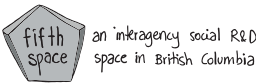
From:
Competition with service providers

To:
Collaboration with service providers

Going steady

ASSUMPTIONS:

Make solutions real; Build research and design skills

Projects | Fifth Space, Kudoz, In/Out, ReMaking a Living

Fifth Space.

There is no magic bullet solution to big social challenges – so **how to build staff capacity to create lots of solutions?** Enter Fifth Space.

Modeled after Google's 20% time policy, Fifth Space gave staff, at all levels of the hierarchy, one day a week for research & design. Staff formed mixed teams and learned how to identify pain points, conduct ethnographic research, generate ideas, and test homegrown solutions. Over six months, we coached 30 staff to develop 5 prototypes.

Kudoz.

Kudoz moved from an idea on paper to a small-scale prototype. We signed-up our first 10 community members as hosts and 20 adults with developmental disabilities as Kudoers.

The first version of the app was just a PowerPoint presentation on an Ipad and a staff member with a phone acting as the booking platform. The early results were promising: Hosts who changed their perception of and comfort with people with disabilities; Kudoers who reported more motivation and new aspirations.

In/Out.

In/Out acted on the research from the St. Chris Starter project, testing new ways to balance survival, belonging and change within drop-in centre contexts.

Prototypes included UforU: pop-up learning in surprising spaces on everything from neuroscience to philosophy; Marry Poppins Bags: podcasts and exercises to bring moments of calm and healing; and Curious Conversations: decks of cards to flip short pragmatic chats into motivational conversations.

Learning Circle.

Learning Circle brought 22 frontline staff, funders, and policy analysts together for a 6-month period to go through a social design loop: problem framing, ethnographic research, ideation, and paper prototyping. Circle members worked through their own project, with the help of InWithForward coaches. While ten prototypes emerged, the focus was on personal development over longer-term implementation.

Grounded Data.

Grounded Data was an idea that emerged from our work with street-involved adults. We had two observations: (1) shadowing and sharing stories from the streets was a cathartic experience for many adults; (2) policymakers had limited direct experience with the social issues in which they worked.

What if we could turn people's stories into searchable data for policymakers to help them reframe problems & solutions? A trip to Ottawa confirmed its potential use case!

Key moments

First ground campaign.

First prototype in disability sector, Kudoz.

First prototype in homelessness sector, UforU.

First try at capacity building: Fifth Space.

Second try at capacity building: Learning Circle.

Third try at capacity building: Practice Coaching.

Key takeaways

1. Staff can learn research & design skills, but most are unable to use those skills once they return to their everyday jobs.

2. Prototyping challenges and, at times, contradicts "good" management.

3. For prototypes to become viable solutions, they need local owners and passionate stewards.

From:
Prototyping new service models

To:
Prototyping routines and practices too

Accepting tensions

ASSUMPTIONS:

Strengthen organizational conditions for research and design

Projects | Grounded Space 1.0, Kea, Meraki, Real Talk, Kudoz

Grounded Space 1.0

Building capacity is more than staff training. We've learned capacity is less about skills and more about culture. Experimental cultures rub against hierarchy and compliance, requiring high tolerance for ambiguity and failure. Grounded Space 1.0 was a prototype to build structures, roles and routines for ongoing experimentation within organizations. We worked closely with mid-level managers and frontline staff, turning our ethnographic research gaze to organizational change. But, we got a bit stuck there, and recalibrated. Organizational change was the means to a bigger end: shifting outcomes for people in communities.

Grounded Space 1.0 Solutions

MERAKI

kea
Kinsight events & adventures

real talk

Meraki

Meraki is a subscription box service introducing niche interests and passionate pursuits to people with developmental disabilities. Each box is inspired by a community muse – a backyard enthusiast, hobbyist, artist, or entrepreneur – and brings more moments of delight, meaning and purpose to otherwise routinized days.

Kea

KEA is a collection of community 'adventures' that turn frontline staff and the people they support into co-learners. Staff and persons served choose from a menu of curated adventures in the community, positioning them as equals rather than as "carers" and "recipients."

Real Talk

Real Talk is a catalogue of videos and a format for facilitated viewing parties, which promote frank discussions of sexuality, dating and relationships amongst men with cognitive disabilities. These aren't just any videos. They are made with folks with disabilities, for folks with disabilities, using a language and approach that is very different than your typical (dry) sex education.
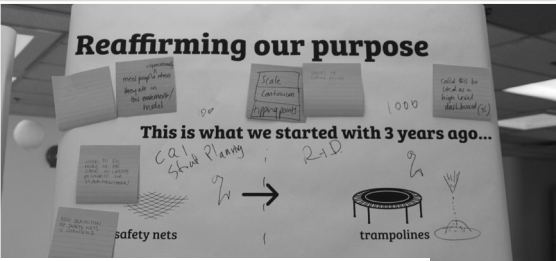
Key moments

Kudoz earns grand prize at Vancouver UX Awards.

Our first try at advocacy.

Our fifth try at capacity.

Reaffirming our purpose
This is what we started with 3 years ago...
safety nets → trampolines
Articulating the ideas behind Grounded Space

Kea was born.

Meraki was born.

Key takeaways

1. Tension is uncomfortable, but inherent to making change. In tension lies possibility.

2. Organizational change is a means to a bigger end: changing outcomes with and for people in community.

3. Neighbourhoods are full of untapped resources. We've never spent time in a community where we didn't find a surprising resource: a baker, stylist, convenience store owner, pharmacist, receptionist, someone.

From:
Focus on design process and tools

To:
Focus on roles and structures

Open relationships

ASSUMPTIONS:

Amplify community voice and capacity for change.

Projects | Grounded Space 2.0, Meraki, Kudoz

Grounded Space 2.0

Grounded Space 2.0

Service providers are important parts of our communities, but they are not "the" community. That realization led us to revise the Grounded Space model and place greater emphasis on community mobilization rather than organizational change. In partnership with two settlement providers, North York Community House and Options Community Services, we're re-imagining the future of newcomer supports. Our teams include newcomers, not just professional staff, and we're elongating the time for ethnography, co-design, relationship building and resource scouting. Next up: prototyping structures, not just new services.

M E R A K I

Meraki.

We're incubating Meraki as it moves from a paper to experience prototype, proof of concept, and (hopefully) scaled model. Right away, we're starting to test the business model: who might supply the boxes, who might buy the boxes, and how can we test a cross-subsidy revenue strategy? That's leading us to engage with community in fresh ways.
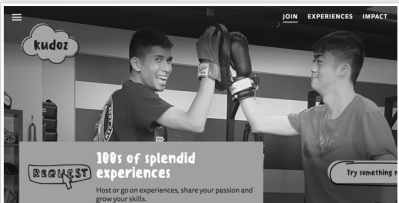
kudoz

Kudoz.

Kudoz is growing! After five years of design, development and evaluation, we're confident the platform works. Using a licensing model, we're coaching organizations in new jurisdictions to host a Kudoz site. In September 2019, Kudoz Surrey will open its doors! We're also testing how the platform could be used by other sectors and population groups – like youth struggling with mental health.

Key moments

Mobilizing and generating ideas through the game Elevate.

Kudoz launches its new website.

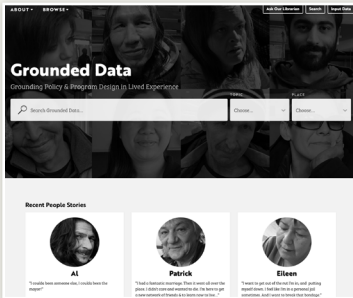Kudoz prepares to spread to Surrey!

Co-designing while picnicking.

Team members leads co-design sessions with friends & acquaintances.

Co-designing the Meraki boxes.

The Grounded Data Platform goes through another iteration.

Key takeaways

1. Organizations are an important community stakeholder – but not the only ones.

2. For all of our language of co-design, we recognize we need new ways to share and cede power.

3. Design offers alternative processes, but not structures.

From:
Organizations as the unit of change

To:
Organizations as platform for change; empowering

(but not professionalizing) the positive deviants

Top publications to read & videos to watch from the past four eras.
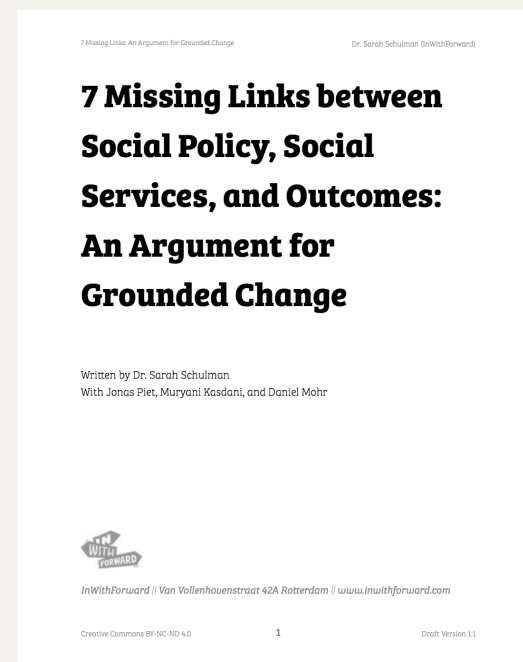
7 Missing Links between Social Policy, Social Services, and Outcomes: An Argument for Grounded Change
https://inwithforward.com/2015/03/download-grounded-change/

An essay about what we can learn from our past work in Toronto and Vancouver. Written by Sarah Schulman as an innovation fellow with the Metcalf Foundation.
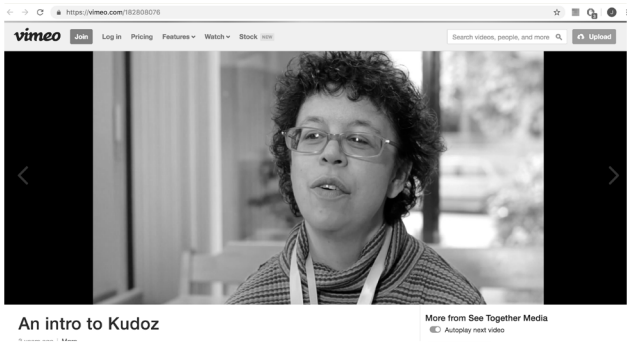https://inwithforward.com/2017/03/choreographing-new-practices-social-change/

Grounded Space 1.0 Reflection Book

Meraki portfolio

Why Grounded Space

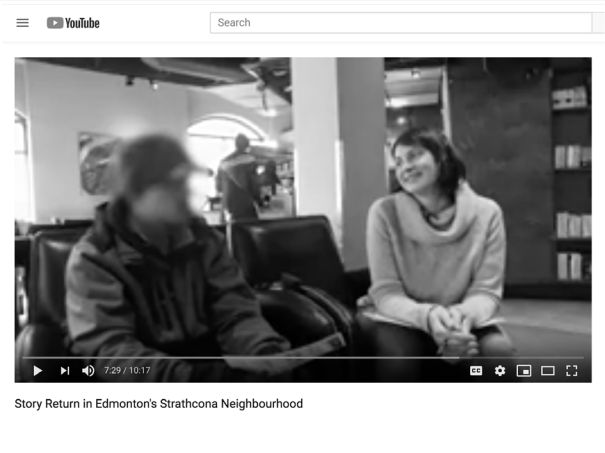**An InWithForward video capturing Fay & Greg's Stories**
https://inwithforward.com/meet-greg-fay/

Kudoz documentary
https://vimeo.com/182808076
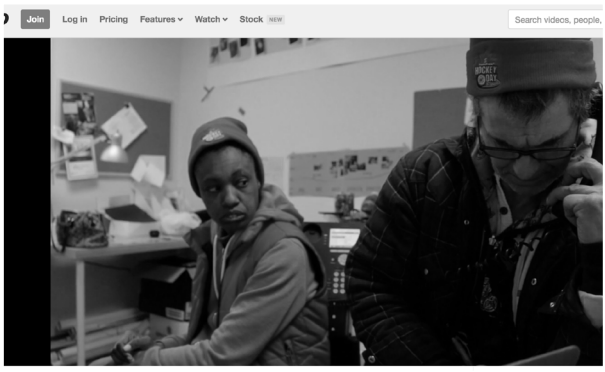
Seven short films of our process!
https://vimeo.com/151425703

Short film: Testing Grounded Data with civil servants in Ottawa.
https://vimeo.com/162751903

Story Return in Edmonton's Strathcona Neighbourhood

In Edmonton's Strathcona neighbourhood, trying to understand what "wellbeing" might mean for people sleeping rough and without stable housing.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYJVRdoRlEE