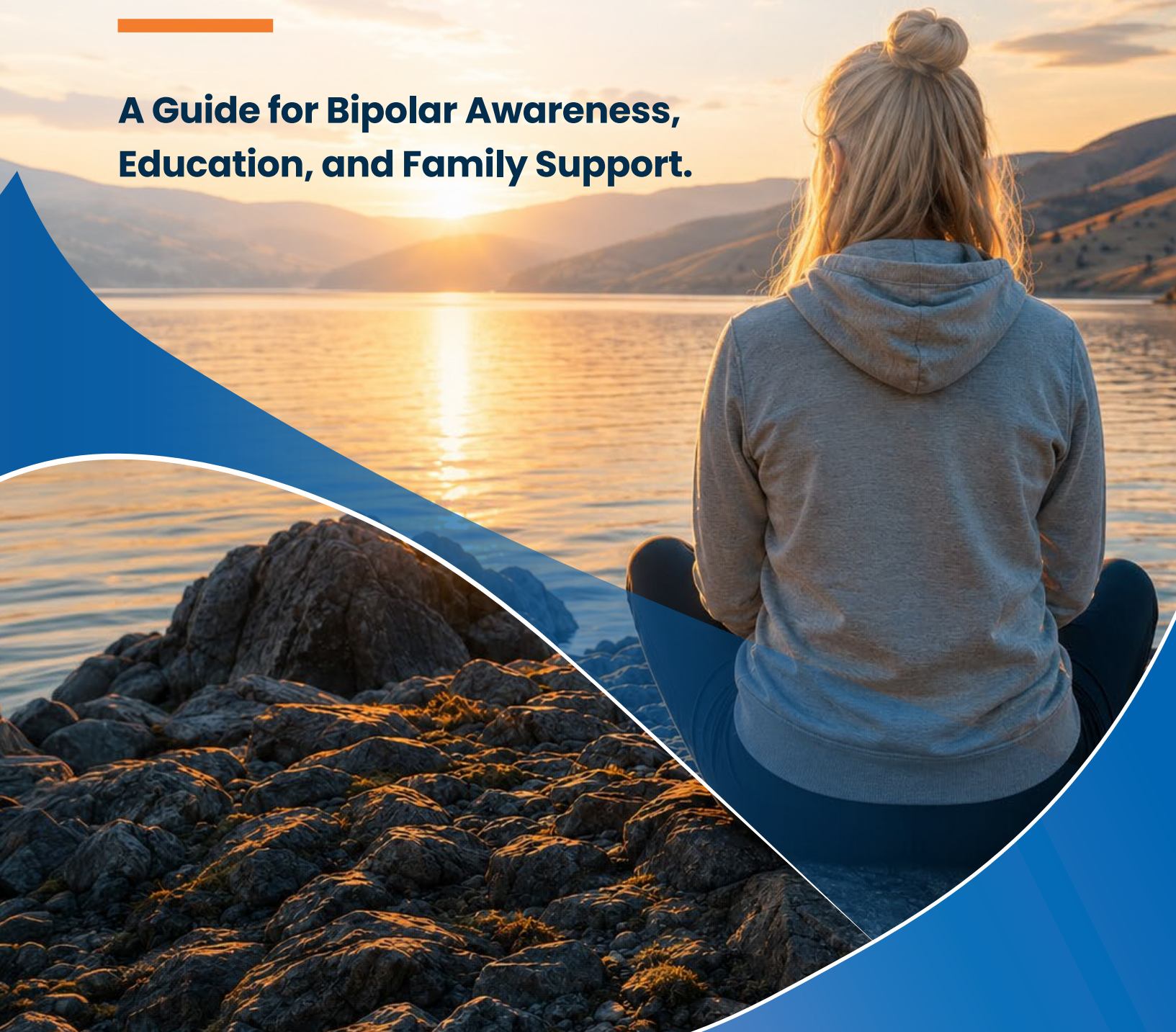




Hope Starts with Understanding

**A Guide for Bipolar Awareness,
Education, and Family Support.**



Inside This Guide

A clear look at our mission, story, and next phase of growth.

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Our Mission & Vision

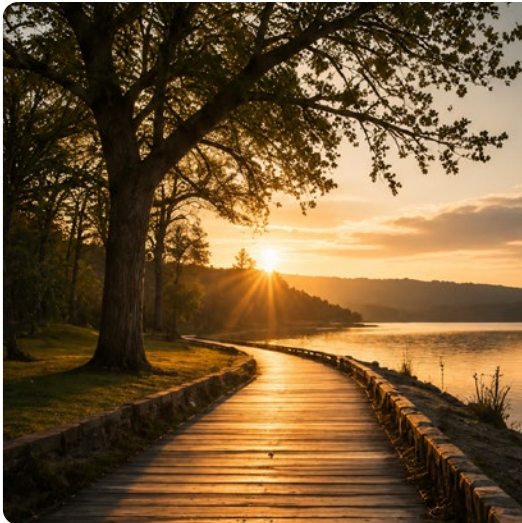
Our mission defines why we exist. Our vision guides the future we're working to create.

OUR MISSION

Inspired by Dakota Millen's life and legacy

the Dakota Bipolar Awareness's Foundation exists to ensure that no individual or family faces bipolar disorder without trusted information, compassionate support, and hope.

Through education, family support, and advocacy, we help people recognize bipolar disorder earlier, reduce stigma, and navigate the journey with confidence.



OUR VISION

A Canada where every individual and family affected by bipolar disorder has access to trusted knowledge, compassionate support, and timely care before crisis deepens.

A Message from Our Founder

A personal invitation from Ken Millen, *President & Founder* of the Dakota Bipolar Awareness Foundation.

The Dakota Bipolar Awareness Foundation was created in honour of my daughter, Dakota Millen, whose life continues to guide the purpose of this work.

Dakota's story is deeply personal to our family, but the need behind this work reaches far beyond one family. Bipolar disorder affects individuals, parents, children, partners, siblings, schools, workplaces, and communities. Too often, families are left trying to understand a complex illness without the right information, support, or guidance at the right time.

We created this foundation to help change that.

Our work is driven by a commitment to be a catalyst for bipolar awareness and the broader mental health conversation by funding early detection, streamlining treatment, engaging family support, and reducing stigma. Through this work, we believe pain can be turned into purpose—and that hope can be created when families, professionals, educators, and community partners come together.

As the foundation grows, we are focused on building practical resources, sharing expert guidance, expanding education, and helping more people access trusted information before crisis deepens. We are proud to begin this work in the Okanagan Valley, while building toward a larger vision of support across Canada.

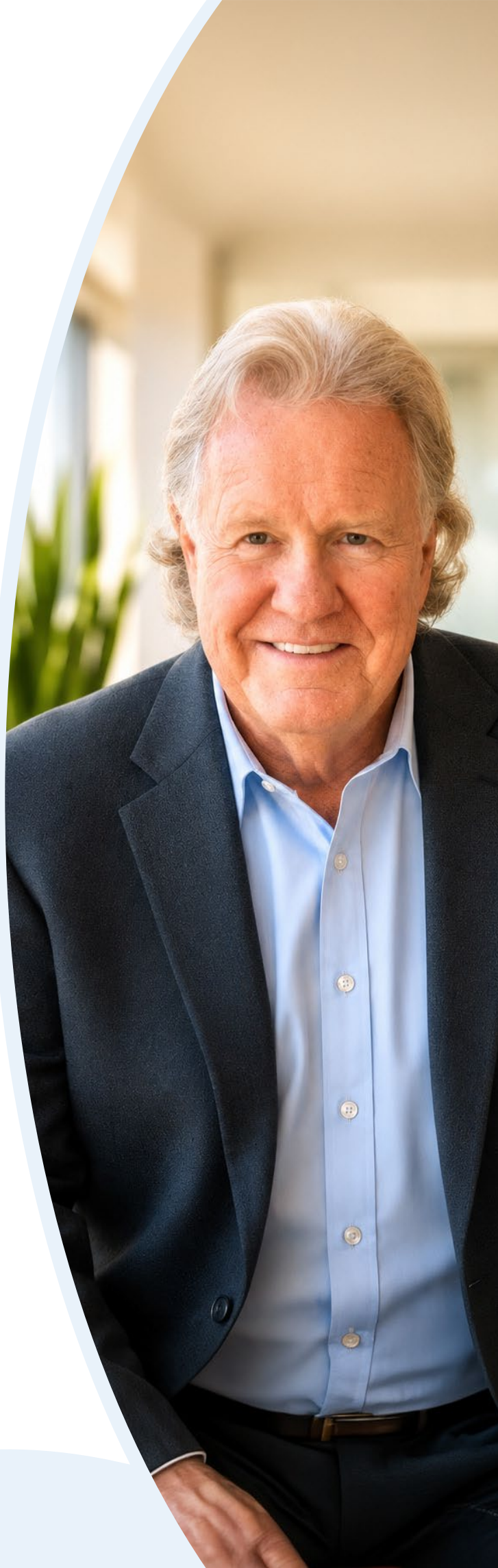
Your help can bring hope, resources, and support to more families navigating bipolar disorder.

Together, we can honour Dakota's life by helping others feel less alone.

Ken Millen

President & Founder

Dakota Bipolar Awareness Foundation



Why Understanding Matters

How bipolar disorder affects individuals, families, schools, and communities.

Bipolar disorder is often misunderstood, and for many families, the path to support can feel confusing, fragmented, and overwhelming.

When someone is struggling, the people closest to them often become the first line of support – parents, partners, siblings, friends, teachers, counsellors, and community members. Yet without clear information, families may not know what signs to look for, what questions to ask, or where to turn before a crisis deepens.

That is why understanding matters.

When families and frontline supporters have access to trusted resources, they are better equipped to recognize changes earlier, reduce stigma, respond with compassion, and help connect individuals to appropriate care and support.

The Dakota Bipolar Awareness Foundation exists to help close this gap by making bipolar awareness, expert guidance, and family support more accessible.

Bipolar Disorder by the Numbers

1 IN 50

may experience bipolar disorder in their lifetime.

2.4M+

Canadians are living with bipolar disorder.

1 IN 2

experience onset in childhood or adolescence.

10 YEARS

average delay between symptom onset and diagnosis.

20%

of individuals diagnosed attempt suicide.

70%

say stigma makes it harder to seek help and support.

REFERENCES

1. Canadian Mental Health Association. (2023). Bipolar disorder. 2. Statistics Canada. (2022). Mental health and well-being. 3. Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2022). Mental health and substance use. 4. Merikangas, K. R., et al. (2017). Lifetime and 12-month prevalence of bipolar spectrum disorder in the National Comorbidity Survey replication. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 221, 389–376. 5. Grande, I., et al. (2016). The bipolar disorder epidemiology in Canada (CAN-BIND): Data from the Ontario health survey. *Bipolar Disorders*, 18(6), 595–603.

Dakota's Story

The personal story of Dakota Millen and the mission to turn pain into purpose.

Dakota Millen's story is the heart of this foundation.

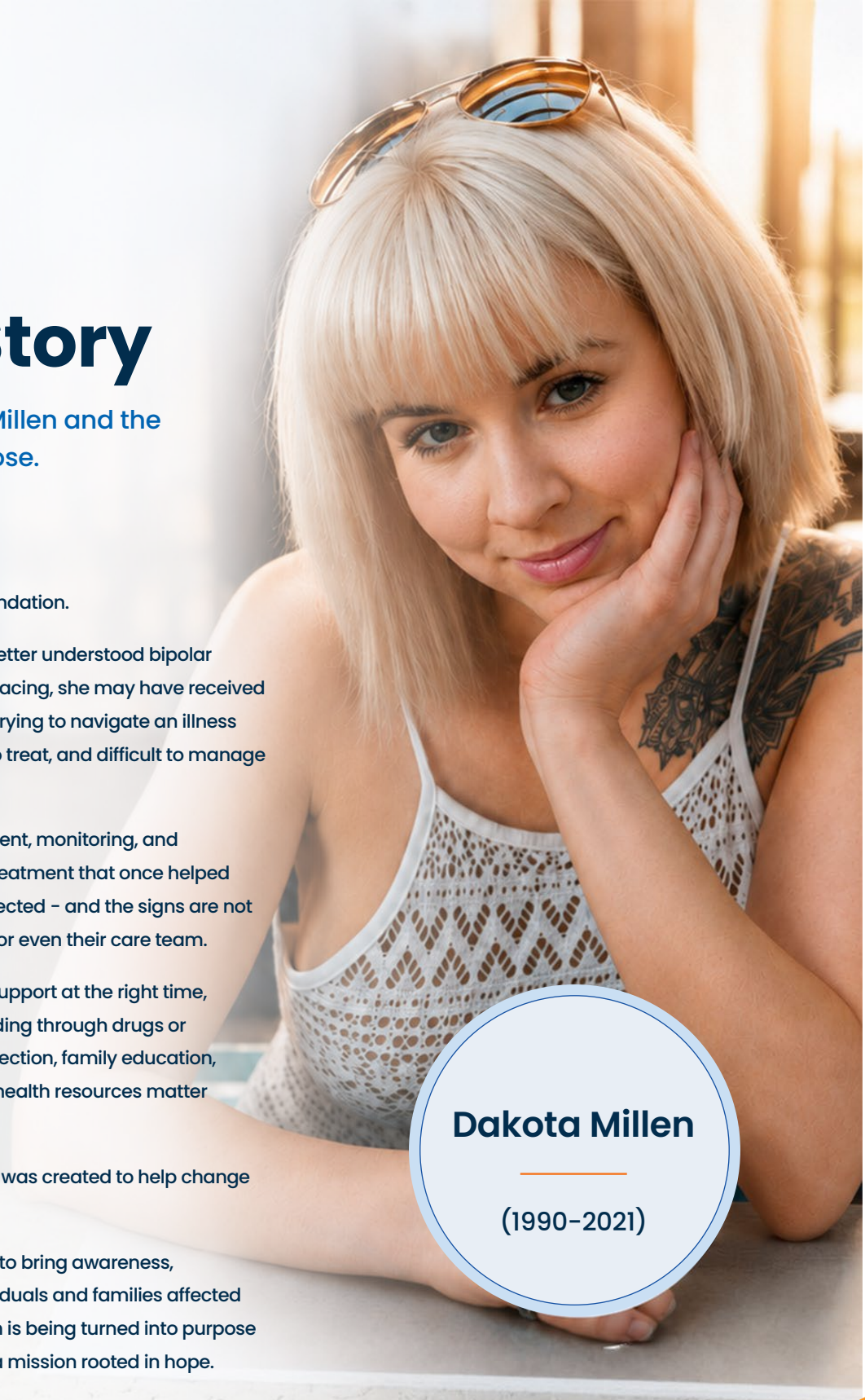
If Dakota, her family, and her friends had better understood bipolar disorder and the severity of what she was facing, she may have received help earlier. Like many families, they were trying to navigate an illness that can be difficult to recognize, difficult to treat, and difficult to manage without the right information and support.

Bipolar disorder can require careful treatment, monitoring, and medication management. Sometimes a treatment that once helped may stop working, or may not work as expected – and the signs are not always clear to the individual, their family, or even their care team.

When individuals do not receive the right support at the right time, they may try to cope in unsafe ways, including through drugs or alcohol. These risks highlight why early detection, family education, better monitoring, and accessible mental health resources matter so deeply.

The Dakota Bipolar Awareness Foundation was created to help change this story for other families.

In Dakota's memory, the foundation works to bring awareness, education, resources, and support to individuals and families affected by bipolar disorder. Through this work, pain is being turned into purpose – and Dakota's legacy continues to guide a mission rooted in hope.

A portrait of Dakota Millen, a young woman with blonde hair and bangs, wearing sunglasses on her head and a white lace top. She is resting her chin on her hand and looking directly at the camera with a gentle smile. A circular callout box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Dakota Millen

(1990–2021)



Dakota's legacy calls us to support earlier detection, stronger family education, and more accessible mental health resources.

Creating Lasting Change

The Strategic Priorities That Guide Our Work.

Creating meaningful change requires more than good intentions—it requires a clear sense of purpose. These strategic priorities guide our decisions, shape our initiatives, and focus our efforts on where we believe we can make the greatest difference for individuals, families, and communities affected by bipolar disorder.

01**Educating Canadians about bipolar disorder and reducing stigma**

Greater understanding creates compassion, reduces stigma, and encourages more people to seek help sooner.

02**Equipping families with trusted tools and guidance**

Empowered families are better prepared to recognize early warning signs, provide support, and navigate the journey with confidence.

03**Advocating for earlier diagnosis and better care**

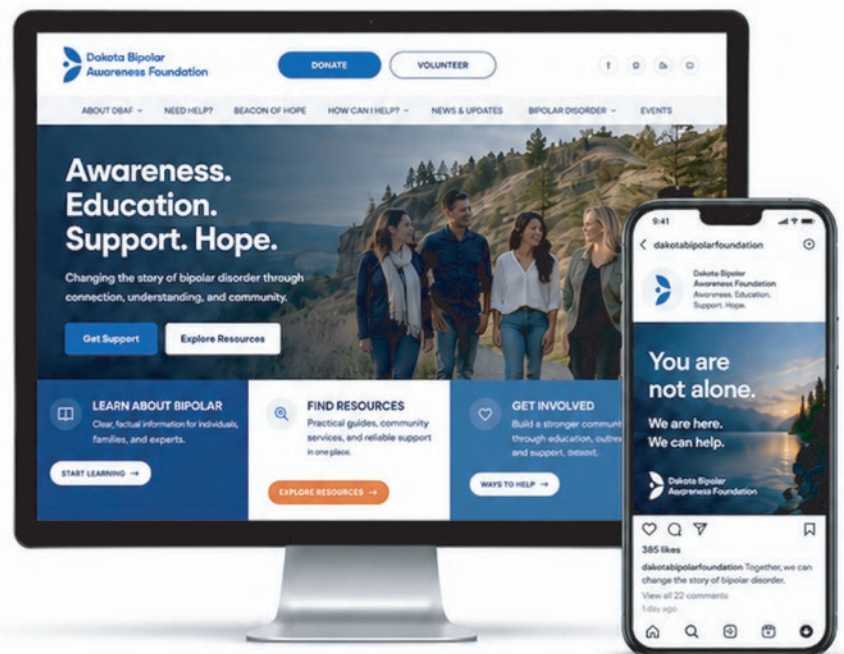
Earlier recognition and timely access to care can improve outcomes before individuals turn to crisis, self-medication, or street drugs.



Resource Hub & Community

Making trusted information easier to find, understand, and share.

When bipolar disorder enters a family, finding trustworthy information can be overwhelming. We are building Canada's most trusted destination for practical guidance, expert-reviewed resources and compassionate support, so families know where to turn first.



Growing Our Impact

From a strong local foundation to a trusted national resource.

TODAY

5,000

Facebook and Instagram followers

FIVE-YEAR VISION

25,000+

TODAY

5,000

Annual Website Visitors

FIVE-YEAR VISION

100,000+

TODAY

2,500

Newsletter Subscribers

FIVE-YEAR VISION

12,500+

Building the Resource Hub



Website Growth & Reach: Expand our national reach through search visibility, partnerships, campaigns, and new content—helping more Canadians discover trusted bipolar resources.



Newsletter Growth: Build an engaged community where individuals and families can access trusted resources, expert guidance, Foundation updates, and opportunities to learn and connect.



Social Media & Awareness: Build community through campaigns that spark meaningful conversations, increase awareness, share trusted information, and connect people with our website.



Trusted Partner Listings: Work toward having the foundation's website listed as a trusted resource on aligned mental health, community, healthcare, education, and nonprofit websites.



Searchable Resource Library: Build an easy-to-navigate collection of trusted bipolar resources, bringing together educational guides, expert insights, videos, family tools, treatment information, and additional supports to help individuals and families find the information they need, when they need it.

Beacon of Hope Education

Turning expert voices and lived experience
into accessible learning resources.

Beacon of Hope was created to bring people together through honest conversation, trusted information, clinical insight, lived experience, and hope. It has helped create a space where bipolar disorder can be discussed with more openness, compassion, and understanding.

We are focused on turning this valuable content into practical learning resources that can reach more people beyond a single event. These resources may include videos, discussion guides, digital toolkits, speaker insights, personal stories, and other practical learning materials adapted for individuals, families, clinicians, and community organizations.



Our Vision for Growth



10,000+
Clinicians reached

Our long-term vision is for Beacon of Hope Education to reach more than 10,000 clinicians across Canada, helping frontline healthcare professionals recognize bipolar disorder earlier, strengthen clinical understanding, support timely care, and share hope with individuals and families.



Nationwide
Learning network

Our goal is to build a nationwide learning network by equipping 25 community representatives across Canada with Beacon of Hope educational resources to share through Canadian Mental Health Association branches, clinics, hospitals, and community organizations. Combined with our Resource Hub, website, and newsletter, this network will help ensure trusted bipolar education is accessible in communities across the country.

Policy & Integrated Care Advocacy

Helping mental health care become easier to access and understand.

Mental health care can be hard to access and difficult to understand. Many individuals and families face long wait times, high private costs, unclear next steps, and services that do not always feel connected.

Policy shapes how care is funded, organized, and delivered. In mental health, policy can affect which services are covered, how individuals are referred, how care teams work together, and how quickly someone can receive support.

Integrated care brings different parts of the support system closer together, including family doctors, mental health professionals, clinics, schools, families, and community services. The goal is to make the path from concern, to assessment, to treatment, to ongoing support easier to navigate.

Advocacy helps bring attention, partnerships, funding, and public support to changes that could improve the system. It also helps bring the experiences and needs of individuals and families into conversations about how mental health care can be improved, building greater awareness and support for meaningful change.

Together, policy, integrated care, and advocacy can help create a mental health system that is better organized, more connected, and easier to navigate.



Working Together for Better Care

Through collaboration with academic and clinical partners, including UBC Okanagan and Dr. Lesley Lutes, we are supporting research, policy conversations, and integrated care approaches that can help individuals and families find support earlier and navigate the mental health system with greater clarity.

Creating Earlier Points of Connection



Policy & Government Advocacy

Support research, planning, and collaboration with clinical, community, and government leaders to help improve mental health policy, funding, and legislation over time.



Connecting Care from First Concern to Follow-Up

Help support ways for individuals to move from concern, to assessment, to treatment, to ongoing follow-up with less confusion and fewer gaps.



Clearer Diagnosis & Treatment Planning

Support stronger approaches to screening, diagnosis, treatment planning, medication monitoring, and follow-up care.



Helping Families & Communities Stay Involved

Recognize the important role families, caregivers, schools, and community partners can play in helping individuals understand their options, stay connected to care, and access support sooner.



Stronger Partnerships for System Change

Work alongside healthcare providers, researchers, educators, and community organizations to support coordinated, person-centred mental health care that puts people first.

Advisory Panel

Learning from Canada's leading voices in bipolar research, psychiatry, and psychology.

**Dr. Edward
H. Taylor**
PhD, MSW

ASSOCIATE DEAN &
PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Dr. Ed Taylor is an associate professor, mental health clinician and researcher at UBC Okanagan, currently serving as Associate Dean in the Faculty of Health and Social Development, with a career dedicated to advancing the understanding of bipolar disorder.

**Dr. Benjamin
Goldstein**
PhD, MD

SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR,
CENTRE FOR YOUTH
BIPOLAR DISORDER

Dr. Benjamin Goldstein is a child and adolescent psychiatrist, Professor at the University of Toronto, and Director of the Centre for Youth Bipolar Disorder, dedicated to improving outcomes for youth affected by bipolar disorder and advocacy.

**Dr. Lesley
Lutes**
PhD, R. Psych

PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITY OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Dr. Lesley Lutes is a professor of psychology whose research focuses on mental health, behaviour change, and well-being. Her work looks at ways to make mental health support easier to access and better connected with everyday healthcare.

**Dr. Kamyar
Keramatian,**
MD, MSc, FRCPC

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Dr. Kam Keramatian is a psychiatrist and researcher dedicated to improving the early recognition and treatment of bipolar disorder through clinical care and research.

**Dr. Leena
Chau**
PhD, MS

POSTDOCTORAL
FELLOW, UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Dr. Leena Chau is a mental health researcher whose work supports earlier diagnosis, improved treatment pathways, and better outcomes for people living with mood disorders.

“ Together, these experts bring decades of research, clinical care, and lived understanding to the **Beacon of Hope** Education initiative.

Institutional Relationships

Working alongside respected organizations to strengthen education, awareness, and community impact.

Meaningful partnerships help expand our reach, strengthen the quality of our educational resources, and connect individuals and families with trusted support. By collaborating with respected academic, clinical, and community organizations, we are building a stronger foundation for earlier understanding and improved mental health outcomes across Canada.



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Academic Excellence

Our relationship with UBC helps connect the Foundation with academic research, education, and evidence-informed approaches that strengthen our public resources and long-term initiatives.



CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
Kelowna & District

Community Connection

Working with CMHA Kelowna & District helps expand access to trusted educational materials and supports community awareness through local mental health networks and partnerships.

INTERNATIONAL
BIPOLAR
FOUNDATION

INTERNATIONAL BIPOLAR FOUNDATION

Global Perspective

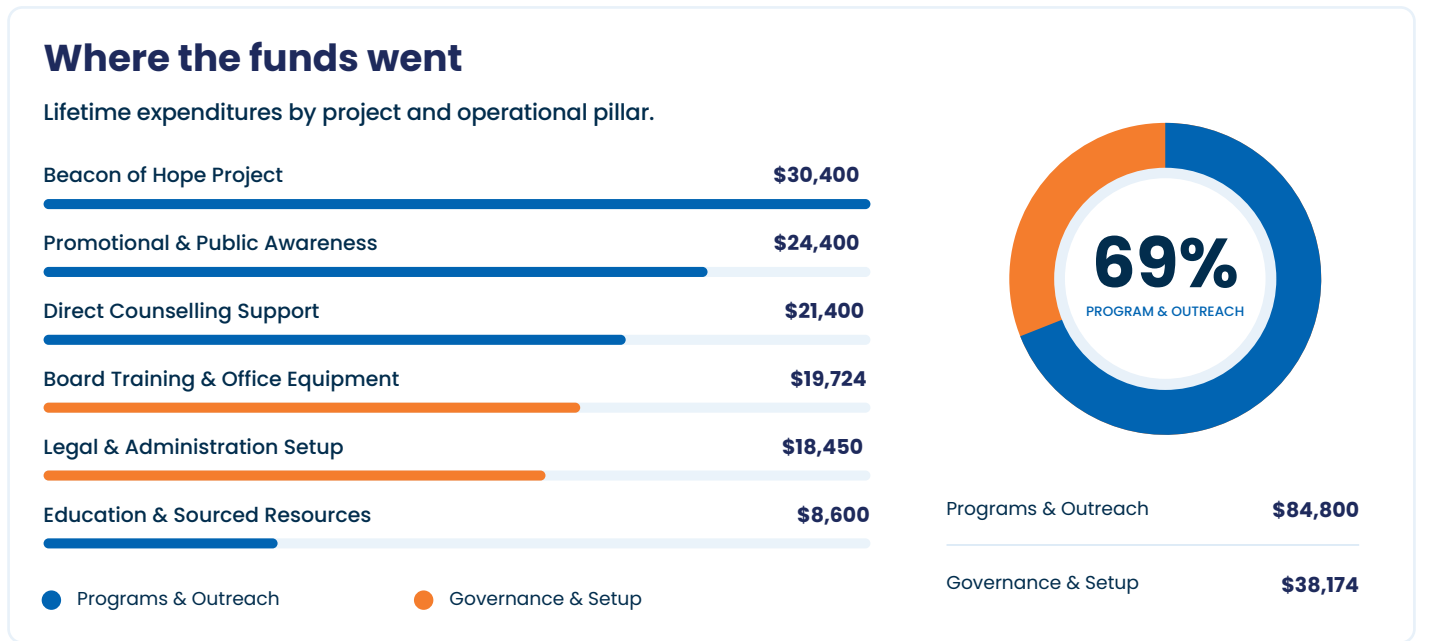
Our connection with the International Bipolar Foundation supports collaboration, knowledge sharing, and access to internationally recognized educational perspectives that help strengthen our work in Canada.



Financial Stewardship

A clear view of how early support built a strong foundation for growth.

Since receiving Canadian charitable status, the Foundation has completed its core setup and structural launch phase. Major non-recurring administrative and infrastructure costs are now behind us, creating a stronger base for focused program expansion.



Support Us

Explore meaningful ways to contribute to our foundation's mission and help bring hope, resources, and guidance to more families.



Supporting our foundation gives you or your organization a meaningful opportunity to advance mental health awareness, strengthen community wellbeing, and help ensure individuals and families have access to trusted information, practical resources, and earlier support.

Corporate partners may be recognized through our website, social media, event materials, community updates, or other appropriate foundation communications.

Ways to Support



How you can support us include a corporate gift, multi-year partnership, community impact opportunity, event or education support, legacy gifting from wills and estates or appropriate in-kind contribution. To discuss a partnership, please contact:

Ken Millen

President & Founder

Contact

Ken Millen

President & Founder

kenmillen@dakotafoundation.ca

250-859-9723

dakotafoundation.ca

Charitable Information



The Dakota Bipolar Awareness Foundation is a registered Canadian charity. Eligible donations may receive an official charitable tax receipt—donations accepted via Visa, Mastercard or Cheque.

Our address is 1989 Harvey Avenue, Kelowna, BC V1Y 6G5.

Charitable Registration: 76161 8107 RR0001

Your gift helps move the foundation's work forward – with greater focus, stronger tools, and deeper support for families who need a place to turn.





Together, we can change the story.



dakotafoundation.ca

Version 1.4 August 2026
Charitable Registration: 76161 8107 RR0001