

January 2026

# Newsletter



## Youth Mental Health

**Building a Kinder, Braver World with Born This Way Foundation**

Born This Way Foundation co-founders Lady Gaga and Cynthia Bissett Germanotta, the Foundation's President, in conversation with young people.



In this issue of our newsletter, we're highlighting a youth mental health project that Myriad Canada is working on with Born This Way Foundation. Thanks to the generosity of a Canadian family, the Beedies, we can help implement a project that shows the power of listening, learning, and acting together. Celebrate the power of youth-led initiatives that are shaping communities where every young person feels understood, supported, and valued.

# Led by young people, grounded in empathy A Perspective from the Co-founder and President

"Born This Way Foundation began with my daughter sharing her story. Listening to her speak about her mental health journey made me realize how many young people struggle in silence and the impact that one supportive adult can have in a young person's life, just by being there and truly listening. That moment changed how we think about care, and her experience inspired our mission to build a kinder, braver world that supports the mental health and wellbeing of young people."

Since the beginning, we've worked alongside young people to create programs that truly reflect their needs. They lead the way, shaping our research, partnerships, and initiatives like the Be There Certificate, Channel Kindness, and others, which help communities show up with compassion and understanding. When we listen to young people and work with them, we build communities rooted in empathy, connection, and real, lasting change."

**"From day one, young people have been at the heart of everything we do."**

— Cynthia Bissett Germanotta (She/Her), President and Co-Founder, Born This Way Foundation

## Youth Advisory Board

From its inception, Born This Way Foundation brought together a group of young leaders to help shape their mission and vision. Since then, they've continued to welcome cohorts of changemakers from across the globe to guide and inform their research, programs, and initiatives.

The Youth Advisory Board is comprised of 35 young leaders representing diverse communities and spanning 15 countries and 6 continents. They play a pivotal role in the planning and execution of programs and campaigns core to the Foundation's mission. They work closely with staff on a regular basis, advise on programming, serve as online ambassadors, as well as in their communities, and share their experiences on Channel Kindness.



Born This Way Foundation Youth Advisory Board members, Joseph A. and Audrey W. in conversation.

## Channel Kindness

Channel Kindness is a digital space where young people share stories of kindness, resilience, and community. The platform includes interactive features like the Kindness Map, highlighting acts of kindness from around the world to inspire connection and action.

They also run Channel Kindness Storytellers Club workshops, giving young people supportive, joyful spaces to practice writing and sharing their own stories at no cost. Every story shared, every kindness pledge made, and every action taken helps shape a world that celebrates empathy, resilience, and the power of young people making a difference.

Born This Way Foundation, co-founded and led by Lady Gaga and her mother, Cynthia Bissett Germanotta, empowers and inspires young people to build a kinder, braver world that supports their mental health and wellbeing. Based on the scientific link between kindness and mental health, and built in partnership with young people, the Foundation leverages research, programs, grant making, and partnerships to engage young people and connect them with accessible mental health resources. [Learn more at bornthisway.foundation](http://bornthisway.foundation)



Cynthia Bissett Germanotta with Born This Way Foundation Youth Advisory Board Members, Joseph A., Emily F., Khloe T., and Meera.

# Small Victories, Big Courage A personal story from Channel Kindness

During her sophomore year of college in Nigeria, Abdulquadri Ayinde was diagnosed with anxiety and depression. The bright, ambitious student who had excelled in high school—student council president, honor roll, debate team captain—suddenly felt trapped in a world that had shrunk around her. Days when simply getting out of bed felt impossible made her wonder how she had gone from being the "bright future" kid to someone barely making it to morning classes.

The panic attacks started during midterms. At first, she chalked them up to normal college stress, but hiding in bathroom stalls between classes revealed something deeper. The hardest part wasn't the anxiety itself—it was the sense of disappointing everyone who had believed in her. Her roommate noticed first, finding her in the shower

during a panic attack, offering support and saying, "Let's get help together." From there, she began therapy, started medication, and learned the value of vulnerability. Sharing her struggles revealed that many peers—classmates, athletes, even teachers—were facing similar battles.

Now, Abdulquadri Ayinde measures success in small victories: attending early classes, raising her hand in discussions, joining study groups. Social media has become a space to share real experiences, and the responses from friends and family have been overwhelming.

"At twenty, I'm realizing that hope isn't about having everything figured out. It's about acknowledging that some days will be harder than others, and that's okay. It's about understanding that being human means being beautifully imperfect."

**"It's about prevention and intervention—the earlier young people get these tools, the better."**

— Born This Way Foundation Co-Founder and President Cynthia Bissett Germanotta

## Learning to be there for someone

The Be There Certificate is a key component of Born This Way Foundation's work. Created in partnership with Jack. Org, it's a free, online mental health course which aims to give young people the tools to support one another.

Through six self-paced lessons in English, French, and Spanish, participants learn how to notice when someone is struggling, offer compassionate support, and connect them to the help they need.

Since launching in 2022, over 80,000 young people have earned their certificate, with more than 50 completing it daily in 2024. Surveys show that within six months, 70% have used their new skills to help someone, 96% feel more confident offering support, and 95% can better recognize signs that someone might be struggling.



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# Research to advance understanding

Along with their support for the Be There Certificate, Channel Kindness and the Youth Advisory Board, a donation from the Beedie Foundation to Myriad Canada supports new research examining how LGBTQ+ young people connect to online friendships and communities to explore their identities, find peer support, and build lasting friendships.

A survey was conducted in collaboration with Hopelab Foundation Inc., a transformative social innovation lab and impact investor working to support the mental wellbeing of adolescents ages 10-25, especially BIPOC and LGBTQ+ young people. 1,200 respondents were surveyed, and reports were generated around LGBTQ+ young people's experiences in online spaces; exploring pride and support of LGBTQ+ young people in rural communities and suicide prevention.

## A vision of healing: The Beedie Foundation

For Cindy Beedie and her family, supporting mental health initiatives is deeply personal. "Fifteen years ago, a friend's son died by suicide. An event like that derails an entire family, and the trauma continues to haunt them all their lives."

That heartbreak experience shaped the family's approach to giving through the Beedie Foundation, where Cindy is the Executive Director. With three now-adult children who help guide their philanthropy, mental health quickly emerged as a top priority.

"There's a tremendous amount of pressure on young people today," says Cindy. "Al, cellphones, social media, it all causes anxiety. In particular, disadvantaged young people are facing challenges we never imagined."

The family's commitment takes special note of LGBTQ young people, who face even greater risks of isolation and despair. "It's tragic when a child feels there's something inherently wrong with them. Born This Way means there are no mistakes — and we believe that with all our hearts."

That belief is what brought the Beedie family to support this project that is being implemented by Born This Way Foundation. "Any group supporting young people at risk is something we get behind as a family."

She points to the Be There Certificate as an example of impact. "Most young people will tell their peers about suicide before they tell an adult. The toolbox of skills they are given to support a friend is crucial. It's lifesaving."

For Cindy, the hope is simple yet profound: that no young person feels alone. "I think about our friend's son and hope that supporting mental health will prevent tragedies like his. Our dream is to help young people navigate an ever-changing landscape and make their lives a little easier."

Her vision is one of healing. "We just want to fill some of the holes in the system, to fix the torn fabric of society. We want to make the world a better place."

**We are deeply grateful to the Beedie Foundation for their commitment to supporting youth mental health and for the compassion they bring in supporting these projects. Their generosity reflects both lived experience and a heartfelt desire to create a safer, more supportive world for young people.**

## MYRIAD CANADA

At Myriad Canada Foundation understands that philanthropy is about personal stories, and sometimes these stories take us beyond our borders, which is why we manage charitable projects worldwide. We connect Canadians to their favourite charitable causes - anywhere in the world - by crafting personalized solutions for one-time gifts or recurring donations through donor-advised funds. We provide the due diligence and oversight that charitable projects require so that donors can receive charitable tax receipts. We are agile but rigorous. Our focus is on direct outcomes for impactful projects and on minimizing management fees.

As a member of the Myriad Alliance for Borderless Giving, and through 50 years of relationships built through the Myriad Family, we have access to a strong international network and extensive practical expertise and knowledge. The Myriad Alliance for Borderless Giving is a global network of trusted member organizations that facilitate cross-border giving with independent offices in Canada; the United States; Europe; Australia; New Zealand; Singapore; and China, including Taiwan and Hong Kong.

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Born This Way Foundation Youth Advisory Board member, Desi N. following their speech at NYC Pride 2024.