



STARLING MINDS CASE STUDY

Starling Minds Delivers Mental Health Support to Remote Communities

The Northwest Territories Teachers' Association



“Starling Minds goes above and beyond to provide us with friendly and personalized support. The team always accommodates our members’ needs so that they feel cared for. This personalized service has made Starling a big success for our organization and is why we continue to partner with them.”

Fraser Oliver, President of the NWT Teachers' Association

ABOUT THE NWTTA



The Northwest Territories Teachers' Association (NWTTA) is a professional organization composed of approximately 800 teachers from three distinct bargaining units who work within the Northwest Territories' publicly funded school system. As the sole bargaining agent for all teachers in the NWT, the organization interprets collective agreements to protect its members. Additionally, the NWTTA works to further support NWT teachers by offering professional development services, health and wellness resources, and curriculum support.

The Challenge: Stigma, Access & Mental Health Concern

The Northwest Territories is the third-largest subdivision of the second largest country in the world. Given how vast the geographic region is, 35% of NWT teachers work in fly-in communities that don't have regular access to doctors or medical professionals.



When doctors do visit communities, it is on a rotational basis. Mental health professionals like psychologists or psychiatrists are even more difficult to access and require long wait times and expensive flights to major city centers.



35% of NWT teachers work in fly-in communities that don't have regular access to doctors or medical professionals.

+ 40 hours work week

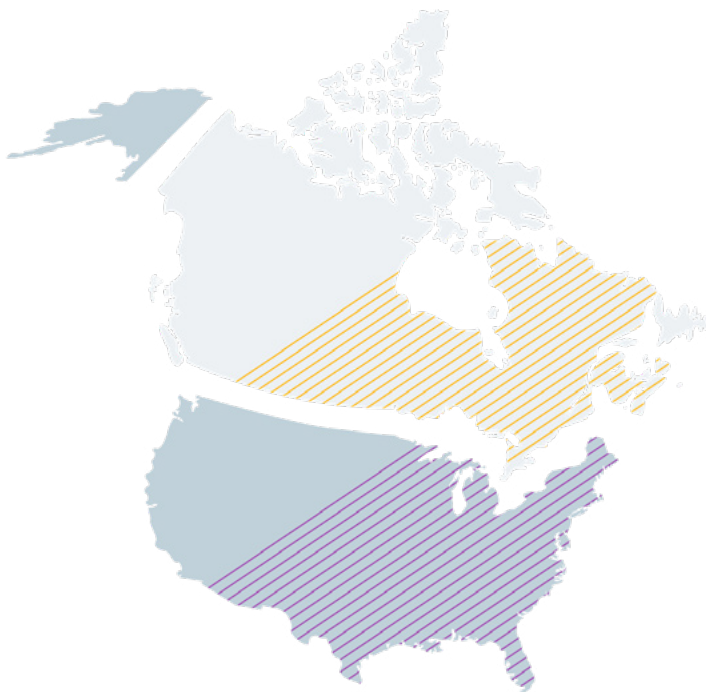


Extremely high stress levels

In recent years, the NWTTA surveyed its members to better understand workload and wellness issues. Fraser Oliver, President of the NWTTA shares that "results were unanimous in that teachers were working well above a 40-hour work week and stress levels were extremely high." He adds, "we knew we needed to find an innovative stress management and mental health program that could reach teachers wherever they are."

The NWTTA President Fraser Oliver also expressed concerns about stigma. Recognizing that even though mental illness stigma has decreased in recent years, Oliver expressed that “Overall, many teachers still view mental illness and the inability to cope with stress as weakness.” Oliver continues, “We knew that teacher privacy and confidentiality would be imperative in addressing their mental health.”

Coupling together the issues of stigma, lack of access to mental health professionals, and growing stress-levels, the NWTTA and government sponsors made it a priority to help teachers better manage worrisome stress levels. With executive support from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment governmental body, the NWTTA began looking for a solution to better support its members.



**49% of Canadians
and 56% of Americans**
who report mental health symptoms
do not receive treatment
(CMHA 2018, MHA 2018).



“I grew up in a family where talking about emotions was not something we did. Everyone has feelings, but I was raised in a world where boys and men don’t talk about them. Before Starling, I didn’t really have a vocabulary to talk about these things. One of the ways it helps is to give me some language to talk about my emotional and mental health which I didn’t have before. It’s an eye-opening thing.”

—NWTTA Starling Member

The Solution: Starling Minds for Mental Health & Stress Management

In the fall of 2016, Starling Minds rolled out for teachers across the Northwest Territories. Project sponsors identified that the technology met all of their requirements and more. Stakeholders were excited at the opportunity to be of the first in human history to offer far-reaching and evidence-based mental health technology.

For the NWTTA and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, acquiring Starling Minds was an easy decision because members would have access to:



Evidence-based mental health programs based on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques that teach strategies to build mental fitness and decrease stress.



24/7 mental health support for members and their families in remote communities who have severely limited access to mental health practitioners, if at all.



A private and confidential tool that removes the concern of stigma as members can get help from the comfort of their homes.



Leading mental health education that would only otherwise be taught in one-to-one sessions by a licensed psychologist who has been trained in CBT.



A proven program that builds resilience and decreases mental health symptoms such as anxiety, worry, and sadness so that members can be more effective at work and at home.

The NWTTA President Fraser Oliver shares, “In a time when mental health and stress concerns are not viewed by the public as positive, this program allows people to work on their mental health in private and at their own pace from wherever they are without their colleagues or the public knowing.” He continues, “For the first time in history, Starling gives immediate support to our members and their families who cannot wait weeks or months to get professional help from outside of their communities.”

“This was a really helpful beginning for me. I appreciated the explanations and definitions. The examples and videos made more sense to me than any information I’ve ever received from doctors or therapists I have talked to in the past.”

—NWTTA Starling Member

The Impact: Improved Work & Personal Lives

The NWTTA receives reports that share aggregate mental health results on NWTTA members.

These reports help organizations remain proactive if overall member mental health begins to decline. Member data is kept 100% confidential wherein statistics shared are for the group as a whole. Information provided also gives project stakeholders an understanding of the impact Starling is making.



"Yes, Yes, Yes and Yes..."

I need to keep myself as mentally healthy as possible. In order to do that I need to understand how my mind works and learn new skills to manage my stress. I can finally do that!"

—NWTTA Starling Member

After one year with Starling Minds, the NWTTA learned that:



Member depression symptoms reduced by 23% ↓

Member anxiety symptoms reduced by 6% ↓

Member worry symptoms reduced by 7.4% ↓

Given the success of the program and how much member mental health improved, the government and the NWTTA continue to allocate budget towards Starling Minds. Fraser Oliver, President of the NWTTA exclaims,

"Starling Minds goes above and beyond to provide us with friendly and personalized support. The team always accommodates our members' needs so that they feel cared for. This personalized service has made Starling a big success for our organization and is why we continue to partner with them."



About Starling Minds

Founded by Dr. Andrew Miki in 2013, Starling Minds is a diverse group of people unified with a common mission: to improve the well-being of others by making evidence-based mental health support available for everyone. Today, over 150,000 people have access to the Starling platform through their organization so they can build mental fitness and learn new skills that help them become more resilient and confident.

Starling Build Resilient Minds.

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