



# TOWN OF HAY RIVER 2020 MARKETING PLAN

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Hay River is located on the south shore of Great Slave Lake, approximately 45 km off the main highway that extends from the Alberta-Northwest Territories (NWT) border to the city of Yellowknife. Hay River has been branded 'the Hub of the North,' as it is an important transportation link to the rest of the NWT. While the community attracts a significant number of visitors each year, the Town of Hay River and private businesses that cater to tourists have expressed an interest in further developing the tourism sector to attract more visitors to the community.

As part of the tourism development process, the Town of Hay River recently completed a 3-year development plan titled, Town of Hay River 2020 Tourism Development Plan. The plan outlines a number of tourism goals which include attracting more rubber tire traffic to the community, becoming an indispensable component of travel to the NWT, extending visitors' length of stay in the community and to celebrate the history, culture and natural environment of the region.

Key strategies identified in the plan include supporting the development of Indigenous Tourism, tourism packages, sport tourism, festival and events, and attracting more conferences and larger meetings. The plan also identifies the need to build a foundation for community tourism through social media platforms, hospitality training and to set

programs in place that create an integrated tourism culture within the community. Finally, the plan identifies the need to develop a market strategy to improve awareness and demand for local tourism. The intent is for the marketing plan to support the strategies outlined in the 2020 Tourism Development Plan.

The Town of Hay River, in consultation with local tourism operators and stakeholders, has identified three key target markets: the NWT (Yellowknife and local communities), road touring traffic, primary based out of Canada (Alberta, BC, Saskatchewan, Ontario), and overflow Aurora tourists from the saturated Yellowknife market. The community's plan to invest more in tourism development and marketing is happening at an important time. While the global tourism economy has experienced an extended period of growth, the industry is currently in a crisis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the tourism industry is hopeful the current crisis will not extend beyond the next three to six months, it is important that the Town of Hay River align their marketing strategy with partners such as Destination Canada (DC) and NWT Tourism to ensure the community is marketing to the appropriate markets as travel is reinstated, starting with regional travel and followed by domestic travel.

There is a great opportunity for the Town of Hay River to form partnerships with the surrounding communities to market the destination with Hay River as the “Hub” of adventure. Because of the town’s location, day trips can easily be planned to other communities and attractions that are close by. This creates an even more compelling reason to visit the region, extend visitor length of stay and to establish Hay River as the primary base for exploring the region.

To help the community focus their marketing efforts, a number of goals have been set in place. These include: building general awareness of the tourism opportunities that exist in the community, setting a baseline measurement for current visitation, and growing tourism visitation and visitor spending by creating day trips and multi-day packages.

Based on the assessment of current and proposed product development, there are five main tourism product offerings that will be featured. Listed in order of product readiness, these include: general touring (soft adventure), sports tourism, meeting and conference travel (MCIT), Aurora tourism and Indigenous tourism (which is seen to have the potential to be developed over the next 2-3 years). The development and promotion of packaged tours has been identified as a key marketing strategy to help grow the tourism sector in Hay River.

This marketing plan provides key insights into the markets that have the most potential for Hay River including geographic markets (Yellowknife and Alberta) and the road touring market. For local tourism operators looking to expand into the international marketplace, a list of key psychographic and geographic market profiles have been included as an appendix to the plan.

Forming strategic partnerships is a key component to the long-term success of the tourism industry in Hay River. It will be important for the community and local tourism operators to have a clear understanding of what they are bringing to the table and what they want out of these partnerships. The creation of strategic partnerships will increase the community’s position in the marketplace and enable the community to focus on the goal of long-term sustainability.

Once target markets have been identified, and strategic partnerships have been formed the next step in the process will be to communicate product offerings to these target markets. There are three main distribution channels used to market tourism. These include business to consumer marketing, business to business marketing, and the use of product/experience endorsers.

Over the next three years, it will be important for the community to support their tourism product development efforts through strategic marketing activities. These activities can be divided into three specific areas: experience development, market-ready/product testing, and entering into the marketplace.

The marketing plan includes a number of strategic goals and action items which will help guide the Town of Hay River as the tourism plan is developed and implemented. The strategy recommends that the community monitors their marketing efforts to ensure that they are achieving the best results and to make sure that their efforts are aligning with their strategic partners.

# INTRODUCTION

The Town of Hay River is a community of approximately 3,500 people, located on the south shore of Great Slave Lake. The community is located a short distance (45 km) off the main highway that extends from the Alberta-Northwest Territories border to the capital city of Yellowknife. Hay River has been branded 'the Hub of the North' due to its important and historic transportation links to the rest of the NWT. While the community attracts a significant number of visitors each year, primarily via road traffic, the Town of Hay River, local tourism operators and private businesses that cater to tourists (hotels, restaurants, and others) have expressed an interest in further developing the tourism sector to attract more visitors to the community.

As part of the tourism development process, the Town of Hay River recently completed a 3-year development plan titled the Town of Hay River 2020 Tourism Development Plan. The plan outlines a number of tourism goals which include attracting more road touring traffic to the community, becoming an indispensable component of travel to the NWT, extending visitors' length of stay in the community and celebrating the history, culture and natural environment of the region. Planned infrastructure enhancements include Porritt Landing, Fisherman's Wharf, local beaches, and trail systems. The plan also addresses the need to develop unique accommodations that support visitation to the community. As well, it identifies the need for a beautification strategy which will help attract visitors to the community.

Key strategies identified in the development plan include supporting the growth of Indigenous Tourism, developing community tourism packages, further development of sport tourism, focusing on attracting more conferences and larger meetings, supporting local tourism operators through education and training, and supporting the development of festivals and events. The plan also identifies the need to build a foundation for community tourism through social media platforms, hospitality training and also to set programs in place that create an integrated tourism culture within the community. Finally, the plan identifies the need to develop a marketing strategy to improve awareness and demand for local tourism. The intent is for the marketing plan to support the strategies outlined in the 2020 Tourism Development Plan.

The Town of Hay River, in consultation with local tourism operators, has identified three key target geographic markets: the NWT (Yellowknife and other near-in communities), rubber tire traffic (northern Alberta, Canada and international travellers), and overflow Aurora tourists from the saturated Yellowknife market. The primary tourism sectors to promote include the Aurora, Indigenous culture, festivals and events, sport tourism, meetings and conferences, and agriculture tours. The development and promotion of package tours has been identified as a key marketing strategy.





## THE TOURISM SECTOR IN HAY RIVER

The community of Hay River is no stranger to the tourism industry. Located a short drive off the main highway into the NWT, the community has been attracting rubber tire traffic for many years. The town's beaches, campgrounds and walking trails, along with key iconic attractions such as Fisherman's Wharf, the museum, Porritt Landing, the golf course and the nearby Alexandra and Louise Falls have been a draw for many visitors. The community also hosts a number

of annual festivals and events, such as Hay Days, K'amba Carnival and Polar Pond Hockey, that attract visitors from outside the region. There are a number of local tourism operators in the community that offer a wide range of activities, including sport fishing, boat tours, dogsledding, camping and Aurora viewing. There are three hotels, several bed and breakfasts and a number of restaurants that contribute to the visitor experience. Recently, several businesses have developed unique accommodation offerings that have the potential to draw additional visitors to the community.



# TOWN OF HAY RIVER TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

## COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Airport · Daily Jet Service · Community Centre · Library · Walking Trails · Marina · Grocery Stores (2) · Banks (2) · Gas Stations (3) · Car Rental (1)

## TOURISM SPECIFIC INFRASTRUCTURE

### Accommodations

- Hotels (3) - Cambridge Executive Suites, Ptarmigan Inn, Hay River Suites)
- Motels (1) - North Country Inn
- Bed and Breakfast (3) - Anchorage Guest House, Eileen's Bed & Breakfast, Harbour Guest House
- Government Campgrounds (1) - Hay River Territorial Park
- Private Campgrounds (4) - 2 Season Adventures, Castaway Cottages & Campground, Hay River Golf Club and Campground, and Paradise Gardens Campground
- Lodges (2) - Nonacho Lake Fishing Adventures, 2 Season Adventures

### Food and Beverage

- Restaurants (7) - Back Eddy Lounge & Restaurant, Boardroom Restaurant, Big Lake Café & Eatery, Sub on the Hub, The Keys Dining & The Doghouse Sports Pub, Woodland Wok & Grill, Right Stop Convenience
- Catering (2) - Ptarmigan Inn, Sub on the Hub

### Attractions/Activities

Hay River Visitor Information Centre · Hay River Golf Club · Hay River Beach · Alexandra Falls · Louise Falls · Fisherman's Wharf Pavillion · Hay River Heritage Centre · Hay River Ski Club · dBeck kennels · Porritt Landing

In addition to the existing tourism infrastructure, the Town of Hay River 2020 Tourism Development Plan has identified the following planned enhancements.

- Increased capacity of Porritt Landing
- Expansion of Fisherman's Wharf (will be available for use year-round)
- Improved usability of local beaches
- Enhancements to walking trail systems

# MARKETING PLAN STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Town of Hay River has identified a number of key marketing strategies they will undertake to promote visitation to the community and the surrounding region.

**Each of these components will be an integral part of Hay River's tourism marketing strategy.**



Improve tourism traffic to local attractions and amenities through highway signage and wayfinding



Improve marketing materials for key visitor demographics



Improve online presence and reach



Develop strategic partnerships

# TOURISM INDUSTRY OVERVIEW











## GLOBAL TOURISM

As of 2019, the global tourism industry has experienced nine years of consecutive growth. In 2018, the United Nations World Tourism Organization reported 5-percent overall growth of international tourism arrivals. During this time period, the global tourism market experienced 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals and \$1.7 trillion dollars in

international tourism receipts. 56-percent of all international travel is leisure based. Travellers are becoming more knowledgeable and are looking for unique destinations and experiences. At 58-percent, air travel is the primary mode of transportation.

With the global economy in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the future of the global tourism economy is uncertain. Many experts predict it will take anywhere from six months to several years for the tourism sector to rebound, with local and domestic travel to bounce back before international travel.

### 2018 CANADIAN VISITATION STATISTICS

MARKET		# OF ARRIVALS (2018)	% INCREASE FROM 2017	# OF ARRIVALS (2019)	% INCREASE FROM 2018
 United States		14,400,000	+1%	15,000,000	+4%
 United Kingdom		792,000	-3%	876,000	+11%
 China		737,000	+6%	712,000	-3%
 France		604,000	+5%	668,000	+11%
 Germany		406,000	+1%	412,000	1%
 Australia		349,000	-3%	354,000	+1%
 Mexico		404,000	+5%	496,000	+23%
 India		287,000	+15%	333,000	+16%
 Japan		251,000	-15%	252,000	0%
 South Korea		246,000	-16%	214,000	-13%
<b>Total for all markets</b>		<b>18,476,000</b>		<b>19,317,000</b>	

## TOURISM IN CANADA

Inbound international travel to Canada had its best year to date in 2019. For the first time, Canada had more than 22.1 million overnight arrivals and 11 million of these visitors arrived via air, which is a 6-percent increase over the previous year. Tourism expenditures grew by 2.9-percent with international visitors generating \$82.8 billion in tourism expenditures. Visitors from the US continued to make up the majority of tourist arrivals to Canada in 2019. More than 15 million tourists from the US visited Canada in 2019, which is an increase of 3.1 percent. Other top international markets include the United Kingdom (876,000), China (712,000), France (668,000), Mexico (496,000), and Germany (412,000). Top experiences international visitors are looking for include natural attractions, such as mountains and waterfalls, wildlife viewing, national parks and historic sites, trying local food, experiencing local culture and the northern lights.

As is the case with the global tourism sector, the tourism sector in Canada is in the midst of a crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the cancellation of the spring tourism season, and this cancellation is expected to carry on through the summer and possibly longer. While the current situation is bleak, there is optimism that the industry will rebound once the health crisis is over. It may take anywhere from six months to several years for the economy to rebound, with domestic tourism increasing before international visitation starts to improve.

## TOURISM IN THE NWT

Visitation to the Northwest Territories in the 2018-19 fiscal year reached an all-time high. In the 2018/19 fiscal year (April 1 – March 31), 87,000 leisure travellers visited the NWT. This is a 58-percent increase over the past five years. The number of Aurora visitors continues to grow at a substantial rate. This past year, 41,500 visitors travelled to the NWT to see the Aurora. The general touring market performed well with 17,900 visitors travelling to the NWT, followed by the visiting friends and relatives market (15,900 visitors) in 2018/19. For the first time in several years, the sport fishing sector experienced a significant increase: 4,800 anglers visited the NWT in 2018-19, a 23-percent increase from the previous year.

Visitor spending also reached its top performance to date, with more than \$201.5 million in revenue generated in 2018/19. This outperformed the target goal set by Tourism 2020: Opening our Spectacular Home to the World by \$50 million. The biggest economic drivers for this increase were business travel, at \$84.90 million, and the Aurora sector, at \$48.7 million.

**The following tables provide an overview of visitor statistics between 2014-15 and 2018-19.**

## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES VISITATION STATISTICS

MAIN PURPOSE OF TRAVEL	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	%	%
						change (1 year)	change (5 years)
Aurora Viewing	16,400	24,300	29,800	34,900	41,500	19%	153%
*Fishing	4,300	4,600	4,200	3,900	4,800	23%	12%
**General Touring	14,900	19,000	15,800	16,200	17,900	10%	20%
Hunting	510	510	480	430	530	23%	4%
**Outdoor Adventure	2,100	2,400	7,400	6,700	7,200	7%	243%
Visiting Friends and Relatives	17,200	12,200	15,900	14,600	15,600	7%	-9%
<b>TOTAL LEISURE TRAVEL</b>	<b>55,410</b>	<b>63,010</b>	<b>73,580</b>	<b>76,730</b>	<b>87,530</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>58%</b>
Business Travel	29,400	30,900	34,900	35,800	32,600	-9%	11%
<b>TOTAL VISITORS</b>	<b>84,810</b>	<b>93,910</b>	<b>108,480</b>	<b>112,530</b>	<b>120,130</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>42%</b>

## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES VISITOR SPENDING (MILLIONS)

MAIN PURPOSE OF TRAVEL	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	%	%
						change (1 year)	change (5 years)
Aurora Viewing	\$26.80	\$39.70	\$48.70	\$56.90	\$67.70	19%	152%
*Fishing	\$9.30	\$9.70	\$9.20	\$9.70	\$11.60	20%	25%
**General Touring	\$14.00	\$19.80	\$19.30	\$16.40	\$17.80	9%	27%
Hunting	\$7.10	\$7.20	\$6.70	\$6.00	\$7.40	23%	4%
**Outdoor Adventure	\$6.00	\$7.00	\$21.40	\$17.10	\$15.60	-9%	167%
Visiting Friends and Relatives	\$12.00	\$8.50	\$11.30	\$10.10	\$10.90	8%	-9%
<b>TOTAL LEISURE TRAVEL</b>	<b>\$75.20</b>	<b>\$91.90</b>	<b>\$116.60</b>	<b>\$116.30</b>	<b>\$131.00</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>74%</b>
Business Travel	\$71.40	\$75.20	\$84.90	\$87.10	\$79.40	-9%	11%
<b>TOTAL VISITOR SPEND</b>	<b>\$146.60</b>	<b>\$167.10</b>	<b>\$201.50</b>	<b>\$203.40</b>	<b>\$210.40</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>43%</b>

\*Methodology and historical data revised in 2016-17

\*\*Methodology for data collection was adjusted in 2016-17 to more accurately segment General Touring and Outdoor Adventure visitors. This adjustment must be taken into consideration when considering historical comparisons.



## YELLOWKNIFE AIRPORT NON-RESIDENT VISITOR ARRIVALS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Canada	48,204	63,313	88,836	72,928	81,044
United States	2,625	3,289	7,920	4,692	4,142
Japan	7,299	10,814	7,626	13,395	7,913
China	3,732	5,035	6,206	18,894	19,446
South Korea	846	2,424	1,938	3,346	2,049
Australia	292	800	566	179	415
Germany	251	292	114	86	177
Norway	8	12	113	102	53
France	178	61	111	7	80
United Kingdom	457	88	106	78	173
South Africa	72	53	30	18	39
Italy	42	21	26	27	26
Other	632	864	1,137	1,662	1,474
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64,638</b>	<b>87,066</b>	<b>114,729</b>	<b>115,414</b>	<b>117,031</b>

According to data collected by the Yellowknife Airport, the largest markets visiting the NWT (by air) are Canada (81,044), China (19,446), Japan (7,913) and the United States (4,142). This data does not reflect the travellers that arrive in the NWT by road.

### TOURISM IN HAY RIVER

Tourism is an important sector for the Hay River economy. More than 4,000 tourists visited the Hay River Visitor Centre in 2019. The top markets for the community are Canada (Alberta, Ontario, BC), the United States, and Germany. The majority of visitation to Hay River is via road travellers, with July and August being the peak times for visitation. Each road traveller spent an average of 3.6 nights in Hay River. In 2019, a total of 4,526

non-resident campers visited the local campgrounds in the area (Hay River, Twin Falls and Lady Evelyn), resulting in approximately \$2.8 million in local spending.

General touring (soft adventure), sport fishing, and outdoor adventure are the primary tourism activities for the summer season. The community does receive some visitation in the late summer/early fall specific to Aurora viewing. Winter tourism primarily consists of sports tournaments, festivals and events. A number of local tourism operators have expressed an interest in hosting Aurora visitors during the winter, and see opportunities to partner with Aurora tourism businesses in Yellowknife to create packages that include spending time in Hay River.



## INDUSTRY TRENDS

### WELLNESS TRAVEL

Wellness Travel is travel for the purpose of promoting health and well-being through physical, psychological or spiritual activities. Wellness travel is a \$639 billion market and is projected to reach \$919 billion by 2022. In 2018, wellness travellers made 830 million international and domestic wellness trips, with an average trip spend of \$1,528 per trip. Wellness travel grew by 6.5-percent between 2015-2018.

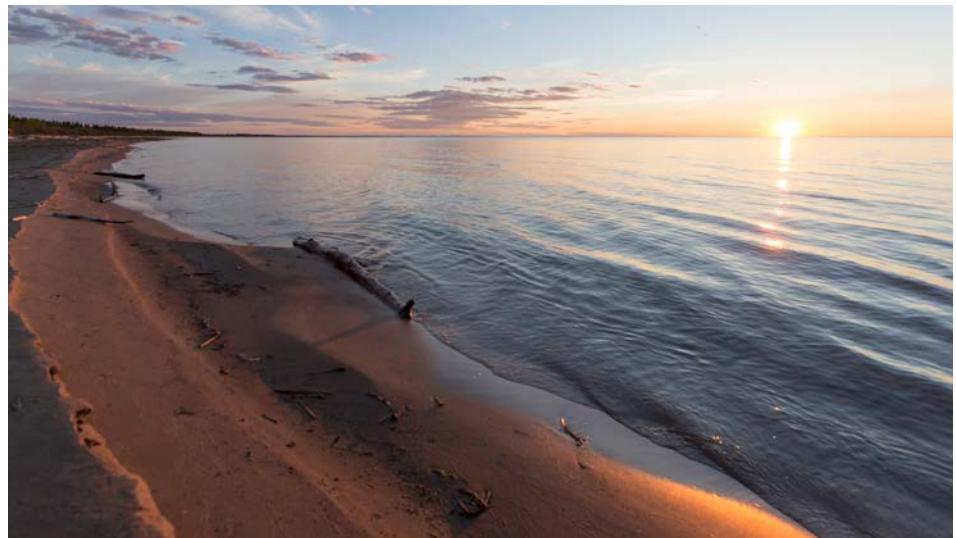
### CULINARY TOURISM

Culinary experiences are one of the top activities motivating travellers to visit a particular destination. As part of this trend, there is a move away from expensive dining to more authentic experiences including sampling local cuisine, visiting local markets and dining with locals.

### INDIGENOUS/CULTURAL TOURISM

According to research conducted by Destination Canada (DC) and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), authenticity is the primary factor for travellers who are considering an Indigenous tourism experience. Travellers are looking for one-on-one interactions with Indigenous people in an intimate setting. They are looking for opportunities to learn about cultures, traditions, art, local food, storytelling and the history of the area. Travellers want to be active participants in a one-of-a-kind adventure that provides them with a deeper connection with their surroundings. Indigenous tourism experiences have typically been booked as an add-on when the traveller is already in the destination, but on some occasions authentic Indigenous tourism experiences are the primary motivation to travel. Some travellers will participate in an Indigenous tourism experience or activity that is one component of a pre-booked package.





## LUXURY TRAVEL

Luxury travel is a brand of travel that consists of the most desirable destinations, luxurious accommodations, convenient transport facilities, and authentic travel experiences. Luxury travel has become one of the fastest growing travel segments. Between 2015-2018, the luxury travel market expanded at a rate of 4.5-percent. This is slightly higher than the overall travel growth rate (4.2-percent). The luxury travel market has remained resilient despite challenging economic times. Over the next ten years, outbound luxury travel is projected to grow at a rate of 6.2-percent, which is one-third greater than projected overall travel growth (4.8-percent). It is important to note that these projections were made before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Luxury travellers seek a full range of travel experiences from active to passive. They are often health conscious. They understand time is money and are willing to pay extra to save time. They value their privacy and are looking for unique educational experiences that

enrich them spiritually and psychologically. As the luxury travel market has matured, luxury travel has shifted from expensive items to exclusive experiences. Luxury travellers are seeking access to people and places that elevate their social status among their friends, associates and online networks. Their goal is to experience an activity that few others have experienced, or visit a place where few people can go. They are looking for a deep connection to other cultures. They want to share travel experiences with their loved ones. The new era of luxury travel will focus on providing access to the most unique travel experiences that money can buy, and those that are only available to a select few.

## LGBTQ2S

The LGBTQ2S market has experienced significant growth in recent years, and this trend is expected to continue. This segment is known to travel more often and demonstrate higher-than-average spending patterns than other travellers. As with any market, the



LGBTQ2S market is incredibly diverse. While some individuals in the LGBTQ2S market focus on products and services that are specifically tailored to the LGBTQ2S traveller, others focus on a destination that makes them feel welcome, safe and respected.

## **BLEISURE TRAVEL**

Bleisure travel occurs when business travel is combined with a leisure holiday. Bleisure travel is becoming increasingly popular. There is a new mindset in today's business traveller, as individuals place a high priority on achieving work/life balance. More than half of bleisure travellers bring a family member or significant other with them. One in 5 business travellers between the ages of 35 and 64 are likely to combine a business trip with a leisure holiday. The average bleisure trip is one to two days in length.

## **SPORT TOURISM**

Sport Tourism is seen as a valuable economic driver for Hay River. The sector in Canada has now grown into a multi-billion dollar industry. The rise in sports tourism has grown across all geographic areas from large urban centres to smaller communities. Sports teams, and the families they travel with, make a significant economic impact on the communities they travel to in order to participate in these events. Many DMOs, including NWT Tourism, are now adding Sport Tourism to their target primary markets.

## **MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL (MCIT)**

Conference tourism has traditionally gravitated to larger urban centres, but business groups, professional societies and service providers are looking for unique destinations to host their conferences and meetings. Northern destinations often have an added appeal as many conference delegates welcome the opportunity to visit an area of Canada that they may never have the opportunity to visit otherwise.

## **TECHNOLOGY TRENDS**

The past few years have seen a significant shift in how consumers are searching for, planning, and booking, their travel. Mobile technology is moving at an increasingly fast pace and has proven to be the method of choice for many consumers seeking travel experiences. Consumers in Hay River's key target markets book travel experiences at an equal or greater rate on their mobile devices than they do on their personal computers. In order to keep pace with these trends, tourism businesses will need to ensure they have a mobile website.

Social media is also playing a key role in the marketing of tourism products and experiences, both from a targeted advertising approach and through marketing that occurs organically. Facebook offers a way to reach key target audiences at a low investment cost and provides the opportunity for tourism businesses to have ongoing dialogue with their guests. Trip Advisor is another important marketing tool. Many local tourism operators are reporting that they get a significant amount of bookings through their Trip Advisor accounts. These social media platforms are being used by tourists to share their experiences in real time with their friends, family and coworkers. The growth of Instagram, Crowdriff and the newly emerging TicTok are providing the opportunity for visitors to share their experience in real time and for marketing destinations to engage in meaningful dialogue with their potential visitors.

## POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

There are a number of political and economic factors that can affect visitation to any tourism destination. The global political climate is constantly changing and political relations between any two countries can deteriorate rapidly. For example, there is growing concern over the recent tensions between Canada and China over the detainment of Huawei telecommunications giant Meng Wanzhou. On January 15, 2019, in response to Canada issuing an updated travel advisory to China, the Chinese government issued their own advisory, urging its citizens to evaluate risks of travel to Canada, citing the detention of a Chinese citizen. As long as political tensions between the two countries remains, Canada's visitation from the Chinese market has the potential to be impacted.

Other political and economic trends that may have a negative impact on visitation include natural disasters (such as the Japanese tsunami of 2011), changes to travel visa requirements, volatile exchange rates, the recent COVID-19 health pandemic, terrorism, and the overall health of any country's economy (consumer confidence, bank lending rates, etc.). While each of these factors is out of the control of any tourism business, it will be important for the Town of Hay River to closely monitor the situation in key target markets and to be proactive when marketing and selling their product in the domestic and international marketplace. It is also advisable to develop a diverse market portfolio and market share, so that the Town of Hay River and the community's tourism operators are not reliant on any one country, or region within the country, for their client base.

## MARKETING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### GOALS

- To increase awareness and interest in Hay River as a primary tourism destination in the NWT
- To set a baseline measurement of current visitation to the community
- To increase visitation to the community
- To encourage tourists to spend more money during their visit to the community
- To diversify the tourism economy by promoting sport tourism, conference tourism, festivals and events, and Indigenous tourism
- To grow the Aurora tourism market

## OBJECTIVES

- To develop highway signage that will draw road travellers into the community
- To develop a set of marketing tools and resources to assist with the promotion and sales of the tourism products and services offered in Hay River (website, advertising, social media platforms, etc.)
- To partner with governments, societies and organizations to support town beautification efforts in order to attract more visitors to the community.
- Develop product information sheets (flatsheets) that showcase packages, sport tourism and the meeting and conference market
- To promote the town of Hay River through a variety of digital and social media campaigns, trade show and cooperative marketing programs
- To develop a minimum of three, and a maximum of five, detailed tour packages, featuring day trip activities and multi-day packages
- To identify opportunities to leverage support from Destination Canada (DC), NWT Tourism, the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) and Business Events Canada (BEC), in an effort to expand the community's market reach
- To establish solid working relationships with key MCIT, media, and travel trade partners
- To partner with local tourism operators with the intent of having Hay River tourism products included in larger tour packages that are being sold domestically and/or internationally
- To partner with the ITI research department, NWT Parks, local hotels and other tourism-based businesses to gather

useful information to help identify who is visiting Hay River, why they are coming, how long they are staying, and what their travel motivators and areas of interest are.

- To create an achievable timeline and detailed strategies for all the goals and objectives put forth in the 2020 Tourism Development Plan

## MARKET IDENTIFICATION

Identifying primary and secondary markets is an important step toward developing a successful tourism strategy. Markets are broken down into psychographic markets (attitudes, beliefs and values) and geographic markets. This approach allows businesses to develop a thorough understanding of these market segments, thus allowing the Town of Hay River and the local tourism operators to better align their product offerings to meet the needs of these markets. Understanding the needs and travel motivations of these market segments will also enable the community to develop a more targeted approach for their marketing efforts.

### PSYCHOGRAPHIC MARKETS

To better understand their target markets, Destination Canada (DC) has developed a market segmentation system based on the science of psychographics. This system, developed in partnership with the Environics Research Group, is called the Explorer's Quotient (EQ). The focus of EQ is specifically the travel market. Psychographics is an evolution of the traditional demographics used to identify, and communicate to, target markets. Instead of just breaking travellers into groups based on age, income, gender, family

status or education level—all of which is useful information—psychographics looks deeper at people’s social values and views of the world.

Working with the EQ data, DC has established 10 different categories that travellers to Canada fit into. These include Free Spirits, Cultural Explorers, Authentic Experiencers, No-Hassle Travellers, Social Samplers, Personal History Explorers, Rejuvenators, Gentle Explorer, Cultural History Buff and Aspiring Escapists. The provincial and territorial destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and DC utilize these segments when developing and executing their marketing and sales plans.

In analysing the EQ data, four psychographic types have been identified as good fits for the tourism products and services offered in the Town of Hay River. These include Gentle Explorers, Authentic Experiencers, Free Spirits and Cultural Explorers. **An overview of these four EQ types can be found in the Appendix.**

## GEOGRAPHIC MARKETS

Like most other regions of Canada, the geographic markets for the Town of Hay River are chosen based on a number of factors. Some of these factors include: markets that are in close proximity to the community, markets that are a match with the products and services available in Hay River, markets that have future potential based on current visitation to the NWT, and markets that are primary markets for NWT Tourism. Other factors considered when selecting geographic markets include access into the community (via road, air access) and the specific needs of the target market the Town of Hay River wishes to access (i.e. language services, etc.).

When selecting target markets, it is also important to consider diversification to ensure the community is not reliant on any one market. Market diversification also ensures a greater chance of an extended tourism season, as some markets may only be interested in certain products that are available during the summer, whereas others may focus on products that are offered in the fall or the winter.

**Based on this information, the following geographic markets have been identified for Hay River:**

### PRIMARY MARKETS

- Yellowknife
- Alberta
- Canada

### SECONDARY MARKETS (ROAD TOURING BASED)

- United States
- Germany
- Australia

### LONG TERM /DEVELOPING MARKETS (AURORA TOURISM BASED)

- China
- Japan
- Korea



## PRIMARY MARKETS

Based on target market size, Yellowknife is the primary target market within the NWT. The most recent GNWT statistics (2018) indicate that Yellowknife has a population 20,607 residents, with the average age being 34.6 years old. The average household size is 2.7 people, and the majority of the population that have children had either one or two. The average family income was approximately \$160,000. Unfortunately, there is limited data on the demographics of Yellowknife, such as the amount spent on travel, activities of interest, etc. Given that there will be a greater emphasis on the local and domestic markets, there is an opportunity for Hay River to encourage the GNWT to focus some of their research on the NWT market so that more detailed profiles can be available to guide future marketing activities.

Local marketing efforts will focus on couples, and friends and families in the Yellowknife area that have a specific interest in camping,

soft adventure activities, festivals and events. Hay River and the surrounding area will be positioned as a quick getaway that offers unique experiences and geography that is very different to what is available in Yellowknife. In example, the expansive beaches and beautiful waterfalls in Hay River could be key things to promote. With the current COVID-19 crisis it is most probable that people will be looking to stay close to home, and a trip to Hay River will be an ideal getaway for Yellowknife residents.

With direct road access and close proximity to the NWT, Alberta is a primary market for Hay River. As of the first quarter of 2020, Alberta has an estimated population of 4.4 million. Alberta continues to have the youngest population of all the provinces with a median age of 36.7 years. 81% of the population lives in urban areas. The average total household income was 93.8 thousand and the average household consisted of three people. Primary activity drivers for Albertans to

visit other destinations include visiting family and friends, beautiful scenery, sightseeing, beaches, lakes and rivers, shopping, history, culture and hiking. To help better define the Alberta market, it will be important for the Town of Hay River to work with ITI Parks and local tourism businesses to glean information on travel motivators for those Albertans who visit. This will help to develop a more detailed profile of the target market.

The primary focus on the Alberta market will be to target road travellers. Activities to target road travellers will include encouraging travellers to make a stop in Hay River on their way to Yellowknife or Wood Buffalo National Park and to position Hay River as an ideal destination for a vacation that includes amazing beaches, waterfalls and other pristine wilderness experiences. Festivals and sporting events will also be used as a draw for communities in Alberta that can access Hay River within a one-day drive. Hay River is the perfect 'Hub' for adventure, travellers lodge/camp in town and take day trips to surrounding communities, attractions, adventures, festivals and events.

The broader Canadian market is also a primary market for Hay River. The main focus will be on road travellers. With safety issues and the current COVID-19 crisis, many Canadians will choose to travel within Canada when travel resumes. Top travel experiences include general touring, fishing, Aurora viewing, soft adventure and cultural activities. **A detailed overview of the Canadian (and international markets) is available in Appendix two of the document.**

In addition to soft adventure and general touring (road touring) the primary market will also focus on the meeting and conference (MCIT) and sports tourism sectors.

## SECONDARY MARKETS

Secondary markets will focus on international travellers that are interested in general touring. The focus with these markets will be to target road travellers who are purchasing fly-drive packages through car and RV rental companies out of Alberta and British Columbia. International markets that fit into this category include the United States, Germany and Australia. Primary activities of interest include nature, wildlife viewing, waterfalls and Aurora.

Marketing efforts for these international markets will be limited to partnering with NWT Tourism and local RV rental companies to help build awareness and interest in Hay River for any traveller that is considering travelling into the NWT. Additionally, road signage will be important for these travellers, as signage can entice these travellers already on the road to stop in Hay River.

## LONG TERM/DEVELOPING MARKETS

Long term markets will focus primarily on the Aurora market. Given that the Asian markets (China, Japan, South Korea) are the largest Aurora viewing markets, the focus will be to develop these markets as Hay River looks to build on their Aurora viewing product. In addition to Aurora, other activities of interest include nature, wildlife viewing, culture and trying local food and drink. To reach this target market, the Town of Hay River will encourage local tourism operators who are interested in getting into this market to partner with Aurora tourism operators from Yellowknife that would be interested in developing new tour packages that include an overnight or longer stay in Hay River. It will be important that any operator looking to partner with a tourism

## GNWT: 2016 ROAD TOURING SURVEY: - TRIP PLANNING SOURCES

Source	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Internet (general)	55%	62%	76%	70%	77%	84%	55%
Word of Mouth	31%	32%	38%	17%	39%	31%	25%
Brochures, Posters, Maps	36%	39%	41%	43%	32%	32%	32%
The Milepost	29%	26%	22%	29%	22%	21%	12%
Travel Guidebooks	29%	23%	26%	30%	30%	23%	14%
NWT Explorers Guide	22%	22%	22%	16%	21%	16%	18%
Spectacularnwt.com	20%	16%	27%	27%	21%	19%	30%
NWTParks.com	n/a	n/a	n/a	12%	18%	29%	35%
Auto Clube	15%	13%	19%	4%	18%	9%	6%

company from Yellowknife understand how the travel trade industry works, and to receive some training in market-ready and export-ready standards.

### THE ROAD TOURING MARKET

According to the most recent NWT Road Visitor Survey conducted by the department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (2016) visitors typically planned their trip eight months in advance, with general touring, unguided outdoor adventure and visiting family and friends as the top trip motivators. The most prevalent sources used from trip planning included:

- \*General Internet (55%)
- NWTParks.com (35%)
- Brochures, Posters or Maps (32%)
- SpectacularNWT.com (30%)
- Word of Mouth (25%)

*\*General Internet results were down 29% from 2015 (84%). The Milepost and other travel guidebooks are being relied on far less in the trip planning process, dropping from 29% in 2010, to between 12%-15% in 2016.*

Road travellers to the NWT are divided into 6 specific visitor groups. These include Outdoor Adventurers, Wilderness Wanderers, Vocation Voyagers, Cultural Connoisseurs, Fair Weather Voyagers and Roaming Retirees. Outdoor Adventurers make up 22% of the total market. They enjoy physical challenges in organized environments. Wilderness Wanderers make up 19% of the market. This group prefers to explore new destinations on their own. Vocation Voyagers (17%) search for affordable vacation destinations as a way to take a break from work. Cultural Connoisseurs (18%) are very interested in participating in Indigenous and cultural experiences. Fair Weather Voyagers (17%) prefer travel ease and fair-weather destinations and Roaming Retirees (8%) seek low-cost northern adventure that is quiet and safe.

Road travellers to the NWT spend an average of 7.5 days in the NWT, with Yellowknife and Hay River the most common primary destinations. One third of road travellers to the NWT arrive in an RV. The majority of road visitors were from Canada (BC and Alberta). Most road travellers were in groups of two



(51%) with only 14% travelling in groups of five or more. The most popular activities included camping, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, fishing, photography, hiking and visiting historic sites. Most visitors preferred unguided activities. The average visitor spent \$783 per person, per trip.

18% of road touring visitors participated in Indigenous tourism activities. They were 55 years and older, had a college or university degree and were first-time visitors to the NWT. The activities most participated in included: viewing of Indigenous cultural displays (61%), attending an Indigenous cultural event or celebration (55%) and experiencing traditional Indigenous foods (43%).

## REACHING YOUR TARGET MARKETS

Once the community and the local tourism operators have established their product offerings and identified their target markets, the next step in the process will be to communicate product offerings to these markets. With a limited marketing and sales budget, it will be important for the Town of Hay River to leverage all resources available to assist with building destination awareness and increase visitation to the community.

There are three main distribution channels that the Town of Hay River can use to get their messaging to target markets. These include: business to consumer, business to business, and the use of product/experience endorsements.

## BUSINESS TO CONSUMER (B TO C)

For most regional markets and smaller tourism businesses, advertising directly to the consumer focuses on the local and national markets. With limited budgets, advertising in international markets would be highly ineffective as the messaging would get lost among the thousands of destinations competing for that same visitor. There is a greater chance of capturing the attention of the national market with advertising, as the domestic market typically has some destination awareness of the NWT.

While print advertising was popular in the past, there has been a recent shift to digital advertising and social media. Digital and social media ads typically drive consumers to the website of the product or service provider from which they can book the product or package from. To ensure optimal return on investment (ROI), the community and local tourism operators will want to consider enlisting the services of a marketing communications agency to coordinate their advertising purchases.

In terms of print advertising, one avenue that Hay River could consider is ads placed in the Yellowknifer and/or News North, particularly as packages, such as a “Weekend Getaway” package, are developed.

Another example of Business to Consumer advertising is consumer trade shows. These are expanded upon below in Phase Three: Taking your product to market.

## BUSINESS TO BUSINESS

Business to Business (B to B) focuses on three main areas. These include the Meetings, Conferences & Incentive Travel (MCIT), Sports Tourism and Travel Trade.

## **Meetings, Conferences, and Incentive Travel**

Meetings, conferences and incentive travel (MCIT) has the potential to attract visitors to the Town of Hay River. NWT Tourism has a proactive conference bureau that has attracted several million dollars in conference revenues. Working with NWT Tourism will provide Hay River with an opportunity to position the town as an ideal location to host mid-sized conference and meetings. There is also an opportunity to position Hay River as a pre/post vacation option for delegates attending conferences in other communities in the NWT.

## **Sports Tourism**

Sports Tourism has a unique distribution channel. It involves working directly with sports organizations and promoting Hay River as an ideal location to host a sporting event. This often includes putting together bid packages to host events and to provide incentives such as reduced accommodation rates and block bookings. Bids are also often enhanced by showcasing the tour activities and dining options that are available in the community. It will also be important for the Town of Hay River to work with territorial sports organizations to encourage them to put forward bids for hosting sporting events in Hay River.

NWT Tourism has recently made it a priority to include Sports Tourism as one of their primary sectors. It will be beneficial for the Town of Hay River to work closely with NWT Tourism so that their marketing efforts can be leveraged.

## **Travel Trade**

The travel trade has the potential to play a key role for any local tourism operator interested in working with the international marketplace. While there are a limited number of export-

ready tourism operators in Hay River at this time, it may be best to limit the marketing done to the travel trade until more businesses express an interest in working with the travel trade and becoming export-ready. However, for operator who are interested in partnering with Yellowknife businesses to develop Aurora packages in Hay River, it will be important that they understand how the travel trade sector works and to ensure that they meet the standards required to work in the international marketplace. More information can be found in the Appendix under the section "Understanding the Travel Trade".

## **PRODUCT/EXPERIENCE ENDORSERS**

Endorsers are influential people who have the ability to encourage people to purchase a product or service they feel strongly in favour of through personal endorsements. In the tourism industry, endorsers include travel media, local ambassadors and past clients.

## **Travel Media**

The travel media often play a key role in promoting and selling tourism destinations. The media coverage by travel writers and broadcast journalists enables a far greater reach than paid advertising, and it also provides a voice of authenticity with readers.

The best way to reach this market is to host travel media for familiarization tours into the community. In a media familiarization tour, the destination would typically cover the cost of accommodations and activities for the media, in exchange for a piece published on the media's outlet. This can often be done in partnership with NWT Tourism or Destination Canada. The key in choosing the right travel media to host is to vet them to make sure they are reputable and their readership matches the target markets that have been identified by the community.

NWT Tourism attends Go Media, which is an annual trade show where key media from within Canada and all of Destination Canada's international markets are invited to participate. During the trade show, NWT Tourism typically participates in scheduled meetings with 30 to 40 travel media. They also distribute a media information sheet, which includes new products. It would be advisable for Hay River to keep NWT Tourism informed of any new tourism products and services being developed. It is conceivable that Hay River might find their own travel media on their own. In example, media go to consumer shows or present themselves to the community.

### **Local Ambassadors**

Local ambassadors can also do a great job of promoting tourism products to their contact circle. Ambassadors can take a variety of forms, such as community elders, local politicians, local celebrities, taxi drivers, front line service staff and virtually anyone who is passionate about the area in which they live. Ambassadors typically like to share the best of their region/community and encourage people to visit. The Town of Hay River can benefit by identifying local ambassadors through channels such as social media, and keeping them updated on any new tourism products or services in the community.

### **Past Visitors**

Past guests play a key role in promoting a business. Word of mouth is often seen as the most effective form of advertising. Tour operators from Hay River should encourage their guests to share their experience via any number of social media platforms such as Trip Advisor and Facebook.

## **PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

Forming strategic partnerships will be an important component to the long-term success of the tourism industry in Hay River. Partnerships will play a key role in product development, extending market reach and increasing sales. There are many opportunities for Hay River to form beneficial partnerships. These include partnerships with other communities in the region including Fort Smith and Alberta, the Government of the Northwest Territories, other destination marketing organizations, key travel trade accounts, local tourism operators and specific product providers such as airlines and hotels. It will be important that the community and local tourism operators have a clear understanding of what they are bringing to the table and what they want out of these partnerships. All partnerships must work to manage the community's position in the marketplace and to focus on the goal of long-term sustainability.

### **REGIONAL PARTNERS**

There are many great opportunities for the Town of Hay River to partner with other communities in the region. Partnerships can include the Town of Fort Smith and a number of communities in Northern Alberta. Partnerships can be formed to develop multi-day regional tours, leverage marketing investments and to share industry research.

### **THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (GNWT)**

The GNWT, specifically the department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI), has a number of programs and services to support



communities and individual businesses involved in the tourism industry. These tourism services focus primarily on product development, research and training, but may also include other areas of support. A complete listing on the various programs and services offered at ITI can be found on the website [www.iti.gov.nt.ca](http://www.iti.gov.nt.ca).

## **DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS (DMO)**

There are three main DMO partners for the Town of Hay River: NWT Tourism (NWTT), Destination Canada (DC) and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC). DC, NWT Tourism and ITAC are all dialled in to the domestic and international markets and have built solid relationships with key travel trade and media accounts. Each of these DMOs can bring export-ready products to market and often bring travel trade and media to the NWT for FAM tours.

All three have large followings on social media accounts. DC has more than 500,000 followers on their main Facebook account, and this does not include all of the followers on their international social media accounts. NWT Tourism has more than 70,000 followers on their Facebook page. While ITAC's Facebook followers are smaller (approximately 14,000), they are a relatively new organization and are quickly building momentum. Once the Town of Hay River and the local tourism operators have an established social media presence, specifically related to tourism, they can capitalize on this exposure by tagging DC, NWT Tourism and ITAC in their own social media posts. Tagging these organizations in posts ensures these other destinations will see the posts, and all of these organizations can and do share select posts with their audiences.

NWTT and ITAC also offer additional programs to support tourism operators. This support includes representing the industry at trade

shows, providing export-ready training, providing assistance with FAM tours and providing discounts on various marketing and sales platforms.

ITAC also provides some assistance with product development and members of ITAC that meet specific criteria (over 50-percent Indigenous-owned, and export-ready) can apply for funding support for product development.

Business Events Canada (BEC) is a division of DC. It focuses solely on the MCIT market. Once the community has developed product that meet the needs of the MCIT market, BEC can bring this product to market, and can bring MCIT FAM tours into the community.

## TRAVEL TRADE

In terms of local trade partnerships, Top of the World Travel is an important partner. They are the only travel agency in Yellowknife and have been in business for 25 years. They know the North well. They are part of the Ensemble Network of high-end travel agencies across Canada and the US. The Town of Hay River would benefit from working on joint promotions and providing Top of the World special rates to promote its products and offerings. Touch the Arctic Tours, a division within Top of the World Travel, acts as an inbound tour operator and can assist with the development and sale of packages, should the community be interested in developing and promoting packages.

## LOCAL TOURISM OPERATORS

There are a number of local tourism operators in the NWT that have built up a sizable customer base in key domestic and international markets. Many of these local tour operators are looking to add new

products for their guests, and the tourism products currently offered, along with those soon to be offered, in Hay River have the potential to be a good fit. Negotiations on commissionable rates, along with the services and programming offered, will need to be confirmed in advance of taking the product to market.

When negotiating with local tourism operators, it will be important for the businesses in Hay River to be strategic. Some local tourism operators may insist on being the only local business to sell Hay River products, but this exclusivity may not work in the best interest of the community, unless the local tour operator is sending a large number of tourists into Hay River and has committed to a long-term partnership. Some local tour operators may be hesitant to create partnerships with the community, as they may feel they are already providing similar tours.

### **Suggestions for partnerships include:**

- Yellowknife Tours
- Bucket List Tours
- North Star Adventures
- Arctic Tours Canada
- My Backyard Tours

## OTHER LOCAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

Partnering with other local business, such as a local airlines and hotels, is also advantageous for the community. As most tours to the community will require a hotel stay, it will be important to receive discounted rates that can be applied to packages.

## NEXT STEPS

Over the next three years, the town will take the following steps to ensure the success and community involvement in the tourism industry. These steps can be divided into three specific areas, which include experience development, product testing, and entering into the marketplace.

### PHASE ONE: EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Developing the experiences that will be offered to guests is a significant part of the process. There are several key steps associated with the product development process. As part of the marketing plan, this process will focus primarily on the experience from a marketing perspective.

- Identify opportunities
- Determine market position
- Develop the actual experiences
- Price the products
- Develop promotional materials

#### Identify Opportunities

Based on the information provided in this market research document, local tour operators within the community will need to determine what tourism products and experiences they would like to offer to potential guests. While general information is provided in this plan, the community needs to dig deeper and be specific about which opportunities exist in the market that fit with the products and services that can be offered in the community. It would be advisable to start with a few product ideas and build from there.

#### Determine Market Position

Determining market position will help to identify what you are doing and why you are doing it. It will also answer a number of key questions, such as whether the tourism products offered in Hay River can take up a unique position, or do they go head-to-head against other communities/tour operators offering similar experiences. It will be important to define this market position and how the community will stay competitive in the marketplace.

#### Develop the Experience

The next step in the process is to develop the actual products and experiences that will be offered to guests. The following is a list of considerations when determining what is required to develop the product. This will provide context on how the experience should be marketed.

- What is the exact nature of the product or experience being offered?
- Who will deliver the product or experience?
- Will they need any special training?
- What equipment will be required?
- Do you already have this equipment, or will it need to be purchased?
- Will this product or experience require transportation services? If so, who will provide this?
- Will meals be provided as part of the package? If so, who will provide this service?

## Product Pricing

The next step is determining the actual cost of the product and setting a price for the product or experience that will be seen as competitive in the marketplace. When determining the price point of the product, the local tour operator must consider a wide range of costs associated with delivering the product. Items may include (but not be limited to): insurance, business licenses, salaries, repairs and maintenance, meals, equipment, fuel (per trip), transportation, etc. It is also important to factor the cost of marketing the business into the overall package price.

### When determining the product price it is important to make the following considerations:

- What are the hard costs of operating the business?
- What is a reasonable profit?
- How many packages do you think you can sell over a season?
- What are your competitors offering and for how much?
- What is the market willing to pay?

There are a number of resources available to assist local tourism businesses with product pricing. ITI can assist the community by putting them in touch with organizations that can provide training in this area.

## Development of Promotional Materials

Before reaching out to the consumer, travel trade, and MCIT markets, it will be important to have a number of sales tools prepared in advance. This will ensure the Town of Hay River is positioned to field all consumer enquires in a timely fashion.

- Highway Signage and Wayfinding
- Development of an enhanced website
- Development of social media platforms

- Product information sheet
- Sample itineraries
- High resolution images and video
- Trade show collateral

## Highway Signage and Wayfinding

Highway signage will play a key role in drawing visitors off the highway and into the community. The Town of Hay River will be strategically placing signage in several locations along the main highway where it begins in NWT from Alberta and prior to the turn off to Hay River, outside of the community of Enterprise. It will also be important for the Town of Hay River to develop a number of wayfinding signs with the community to highlight the various tourism attractions within the community. This new signage will build upon the signage the town has created for the walking trail system within the community.

## Website

While the community of Hay River currently has a website, it may be advisable to develop a website specific for tourism. The website will play a key role in marketing the tourism products and services offered in the community and surrounding areas. The website will be the main vehicle for driving bookings/sales. The website needs to have broad appeal and it is recommended that it include additional sections for MCIT, Sports Tourism, Travel Trade and Travel Media.

The design and imagery will be set up to reflect the community's brand. The main consumer interface will include key information on the tourism products in the community, local tour operators, feature packages, an image gallery, details on how to book packages, travel logistics, and who to contact for more detailed information. The website will also include a section with

a newsletter template where past and potential visitors can sign up to receive e-news updates. The website will also be linked to the destination's social media page(s), which have already been created, and to Trip Advisor. It is advisable that individual tourism operators also have their own websites to promote their products, and where individuals can book tours online wherever possible.

### **Enhancement of the Town of Hay River Facebook Page**

There is an opportunity for the Town of Hay River to enhance their Facebook page to ensure that it is reaching its full potential. The page can be used to engage with the target audience and to promote activities, events and special deals that are happening in the community and that are of interest to potential visitors. As part of this process, a social media plan will be developed that will include a three year strategy that addresses awareness building, creating incentive to travel to the community and managing growth.

**Additional details of the Town of Hay River Social Media Marketing Strategy can be found in Appendix 4.**

### **Local Tourism Operator Social Media Accounts**

It will also be important for local tourism operators to develop their own social media accounts including Facebook and Trip Advisor. The Town of Hay River can support this through training sessions for the local tour operators.

### **Product Information Sheets (Flatsheets)**

Product information sheets will play a key role in marketing and sales for Hay River's local tourism operators. These will be used to promote tour packages to consumers and the travel trade, and to promote the destination to conference planners and sports tourism

organizations. The product information sheets will include details on package pricing, products and services, brief sample itineraries, images, how to get to the community, and key sales contact information. Once produced, the product information sheets will be distributed at consumer trade shows, and they can be used by key partners to share information to travel media and others (such as during sales calls). They will also be used as a PDF file for all follow-up to trade and consumer enquiries. Once the product information sheets have been developed, the costs to update the information will be minimal. It is recommended to produce one product information sheet for each product type being developed including general tours, sports tourism, meetings and conferences, etc.

### **Development of Sample Itineraries**

Another key aspect of marketing/selling the region will be to develop detailed sample itineraries for the various packages offered in Hay River and the surrounding area. Sample itineraries will include transportation logistics and times, a sampling of on-site activities, and specific tour activities and meals that can be arranged for the guests. Three sample itineraries will be developed to showcase the summer, fall and winter tourism offerings.

### **Photo/Video Assets**

Having good, high-quality images and video will be essential if the community is to be successful with their print and online advertising campaigns. It will be important to acquire images and video of the various activities, amenities, and services available. It is advisable to purchase photos through a professional photographer. There is also a great opportunity to reach out to guests who have visited the community to share their images via social media platforms. If the



town does not already have a hashtag, it would be important that they create one to help generate additional exposure from people who post photos of Hay River on their own social media channels .

### **Trade Show Collateral**

The Town of Hay River will also need to develop some new collateral for trade shows. This will include the development for a new 8'-10' display and purchasing promotional items to distribute at the various trade shows the community will participate in. The display will include summer and winter photos and prominently feature Indigenous tourism experiences. A smaller table top display should also be produced.

## **PHASE TWO: PRODUCT TESTING**

Once the experiences have been developed, it will be important to test them before they are fully launched in the market. Testing will provide an opportunity to assess how each aspect of the experience is delivered, and will identify whether improvements are required before selling the product in the marketplace. During this phase the community would invite key partners such as DC, ITI, NWT Tourism, ITAC and local tour operators to experience the product and to provide feedback on their experience. The community would then make adjustments to the product based on the feedback received.

While this phase will add additional costs, the benefits will far out-weigh the costs. A common saying in the industry is that you never get a second chance to make a good first impression. It is imperative that the tourism products and experiences offered in Hay River are of the highest quality. Taking the time to test the products before going to market will ensure the community is positioned for long-term success.

## **PHASE THREE: TAKING THE PRODUCT TO MARKET**

Once the product testing phase has been completed, the next step in the process will be to market and sell the products and experiences offered in Hay River. There are a number of marketing and sales activities that would be beneficial for the community to participate in.

- Social media advertising
- Digital advertising
- Participation in the NWT Tourism Cooperative Advertising Program
- Participation in trade shows
- Sales calls
- Hosting familiarization (FAM) tours

### **Social Media Advertising**

Social media advertising will play an important part in building general awareness and increase bookings for the Town of Hay River. Social media advertising is less expensive than most traditional advertising activities and can be targeted to specific geographic and psychographic markets and niche interest groups. Social media advertising will drive traffic to the community website, and encourage the consumer to consider booking one of the packages offered in the community.

### **Digital Advertising**

Digital advertising will also play an important role in promoting Hay River. Digital ads will be chosen based on the geographic and psychographic markets that have been outlined in the three-year tourism plan. The digital ads will primarily focus on the domestic market and will direct interested parties to the website. The agency placing the digital ads will provide a report on the success of the ads once the digital campaigns has been completed.



### **Participation in the NWT Tourism Cooperative Advertising Program**

Throughout the year, NWT Tourism offers a number of cooperative advertising programs to their members. These cooperative marketing opportunities are an excellent way for tourism operators to gain valuable market exposure at an affordable rate. Local tourism operators must be strategic in their approach to participate in this program, by proactively setting aside funding for a time when an opportunity fits with their target market arises.

### **Participation in Trade Shows**

It is advisable that the community participate in a number of trade shows each year. Suggested shows include the Yellowknife Chamber Spring Trade Show to promote Hay River to the Yellowknife market, and several consumer shows in Northern Alberta that target the road traveller. These trade show will focus on the local market as well as visiting friends and relatives (VFR), and road travellers. To leverage funding, it is advisable to partner with NWT Tourism on their trade show program wherever possible.

It will also be important for the Town of Hay River to partner with NWT Tourism to attend a number of trade shows targeting the meetings and conferences market. The shows that are currently the best fit are the Canadian Society of Association Executives (CSAE) trade show (called Tête à Tête) and Destination Direct. Both shows are held in Ottawa each year and they provide opportunities for attendees to meet with individuals whose job it is to plan and organize meetings and conferences for government organizations. By partnering with NWT Tourism, the Town of Hay River will be able to participate in these events at a reduced rate.



### **Familiarization (FAM) Tours**

In order for Hay River to gain valuable exposure to the travel trade and MCIT partners, it will be important to have some of the key accounts visit the community so that they can experience the product first hand. Each year, NWT Tourism hosts a number of FAM tours that may be suitable for Hay River to participate in. The primary costs for the community would be on-the-ground hosting costs, and the reduction of available inventory when the FAM tours are in the community. Some FAM tours may include an overnight stay in the community, while others will be day trips so that clients can get a tour of the community and see the amenities and services available in Hay River.

# Strategy Implementation

## GOAL: TO GROW THE LOCAL TOURISM MARKET

**STRATEGY:** To position Hay River as an ideal location for weekend getaways and family vacations for the local tourism market (Yellowknife, South Slave communities, Northern Alberta)

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
a)	Develop vacation packages for the summer and winter seasons	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with local tourism businesses to discuss ideas for package</li> <li>Determine package content and rates</li> <li>Partner with a travel agency such as Touch the Arctic to book packages</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop two weekend packages for winter</li> <li>Develop three (2-3 days packages for summer)</li> </ul>	Year 1
b)	Partner with local festivals and events to build promotions targeted at the local market	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with local organizations, sports groups and festival coordinators to determine dates and programs for upcoming festivals</li> <li>Meet with local tourism businesses to create packages around these festivals and events</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop packages around 2 sporting events</li> <li>Develop packages around 3 festivals</li> </ul>	Year 1 & 2
c)	Partner with airlines, hotel and local businesses to support the development of packages	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with local airlines to secure special rates for inclusion in the packages</li> <li>Meet with local hotels to establish special package rates</li> <li>Meet with local restaurants to secure discounted rates or other incentives for people purchasing the packages</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discounted Airline rates for packages (Yellowknife – Hay River)</li> <li>Discounted rates for hotel stays</li> <li>Discounted rates for dining and activities, to create a greater appeal to visit the community and participate in various experiences</li> </ul>	Year 1 (ongoing)

## GOAL: TO GROW THE LOCAL TOURISM MARKET

**STRATEGY:** To position Hay River as an ideal location for weekend getaways and family vacations for the local tourism market (Yellowknife, South Slave communities, Northern Alberta)

Initiatives (We Will...)	Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
d)	Develop a social media strategy for the local market	Year 1
e)	Promote Hay River tourism at a variety of regional consumer shows (Yellowknife Chamber Trade Show, Grande Prairie Sports Expo, etc.)	Year 2 & 3
f)	Participate in targeted social and digital advertising	Year 1, 2 & 3

## GOAL: TO GROW THE GENERAL TOURING MARKET (RUBBER TIRE TRAFFIC)

**STRATEGY:** To encourage travellers to venture off the main highway and to spend time, from several hours to several days, in Hay River and the surrounding region.

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
a)	Develop day tours and multi-day packages targeted towards the road traveller	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with ITI Parks, and local tourism businesses to discuss activities and packages targeted to the RV traveller</li> <li>Develop suggested itineraries that can be featured on the Hay River website and provided in print format to the visitor information centre and hotels</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One multi-day regional package that includes Fort Smith and Wood Buffalo National Park</li> <li>Two 1-day trip packages for Hay River</li> <li>Two to three multi-day packages for Hay River</li> </ul>	Year 1
b)	Develop self-guided tour of Hay River and the South Slave region including maps, etc. in both print and digital format	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with NWT Tourism, ITI, other communities to determine content for the self-guided tours and to secure partner funding to support the project</li> <li>Develop itineraries that highlight local attractions such as walking trails and beaches, promote guided tours, and promote restaurants and other activities that can be purchased in the community</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One self-guided tour of Hay River</li> <li>One regional self-driving tour</li> </ul>	Year 1
c)	Form partnerships with RV rental companies to promote Hay River as a key tourism stop for any of their clients who are travelling into the NWT	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up meetings with RV companies to discuss partnership opportunities</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreements with RV companies to include Hay River tourism information in their office fronts</li> <li>Include Hay River materials in all RVs travelling north</li> </ul>	Year 1 and 2 (ongoing)
d)	Partner with NWT Tourism to promote Hay River and surrounding region through specialized RV apps	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up meeting with NWT Tourism to discuss parameters of project</li> <li>Reach out to other partners such as ITI/CanNor to secure additional funding to support the initiative</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hay River tourism information and packages included in RV Apps</li> </ul>	Year 1 (ongoing)

## GOAL: TO GROW THE GENERAL TOURING MARKET (RUBBER TIRE TRAFFIC)

**STRATEGY:** To encourage travellers to venture off the main highway and to spend time, from several hours to several days, in Hay River and the surrounding region.

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
e)	Partner with NWT Parks to promote the territorial parks in Hay River and area, as well as beaches etc.	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with manager of ITI Parks and RTO to discuss opportunities</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional promotion of Hay River and region through NWT Parks advertising</li> </ul>	Year 1 (ongoing)
f)	Promote Hay River at a variety of consumer shows	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review NWT Tourism consumer show program to determine the target market fit for any of the shows offered through their cooperative marketing program</li> <li>Attend various consumer shows that are a target market fit such as the Edmonton and Calgary RV shows, adventure shows, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased interest and visitation from the self-drive market</li> </ul>	Year 2 & 3
g)	Engage in advertising targeted to road travellers	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with advertising agency to develop targeted social and digital advertising strategy</li> <li>Partner with NWT Tourism on special initiatives such as contests</li> <li>Place all advertising and monitor for ROI based on KPIs agreed upon in the advertising plan</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased visitation to the Hay River website</li> <li>Increased visitation to the community</li> </ul>	Years 1, 2, 3
h)	Work with NWT Tourism and the German GSA to promote Hay River and surrounding region to the German-speaking market	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up call with NWT German general sales agent to discuss opportunities for Hay River with German-speaking tour wholesalers that sell fly-drive itineraries in Northern Canada</li> <li>Develop trade show collateral that can be distributed by the German GSA at the trade shows they attend on behalf of NWT Tourism</li> <li>Secure additional funding to support initiative</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness, interest and visitation from German-speaking market</li> </ul>	Year 2 & 3

## GOAL: TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS THAT ARE HELD IN HAY RIVER

STRATEGY: To position Hay River as an ideal location to host small to mid-sized conference and meetings

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
a)	To develop a process for attracting conferences and meetings to Hay River	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with the manager of the NWT Conference Bureau to identify opportunities for growth of the Hay River MCIT Market</li> <li>Develop MCIT bid package for the Town of Hay River that can be tailored to various conference bids that become available</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build a special meetings and conferences section on the Hay River website</li> <li>Promote all features/assets related to the meeting and conference market that are available in Hay River</li> <li>Develop a bid response template for the Town of Hay River to respond to RFPs to host conferences and meetings</li> <li>Produce a product information sheet (flat sheet) that showcases Hay River's ability to host conferences and meetings</li> </ul>	Year 1
b)	The Town of Hay River to partner with NWT Tourism in the MCIT program	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town meets with NWT Tourism Conference Bureau a minimum of two times per year to ensure they are top of mind with NWTT</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community is aware of all relevant conferences that are taking place over the next 2-3 years</li> <li>Hay River information is included in all NWTT conference promotions (websites, flat sheets etc.</li> <li>Hay River promotional materials are included in all MCIT trade shows and sales calls that NWTT participates in</li> <li>Town of Hay River participates in all site visits for meeting and conference planners that are hosted by NWTT in Hay River</li> </ul>	Years 1,2,3
c)	To encourage employees of government agencies and private sector businesses to plan national/regional conferences held in Hay River	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a list of key contacts to provide information to</li> <li>Develop a MCIT promotional package that employees can use to promote Hay River as a destination for their next conference</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is provided to organizations that can help them promote their meeting/conference being held in Hay River</li> <li>Support is provided to organizations needing help to fill out conference and meeting bid packages.</li> </ul>	Year 1 (ongoing)



## GOAL: TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS THAT ARE HELD IN HAY RIVER

STRATEGY: To position Hay River as an ideal location to host small to mid-sized conference and meetings

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
d)	To attend several MCIT trade shows that target government and private sector conference	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with manager of NWT Conference Bureau to discuss trade show options. Suggested trade shows include, but are not limited to, Tête à Tête and Destination Direct</li> <li>Secure additional partners/budget to support the program</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To attract one-two conferences from each of the trade shows attended (keeping in mind conferences/meetings are often booked several years in advance).</li> </ul>	Years 2 & 3
e)	To participate in targeted digital marketing specific to the meeting and conference market	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review NWT Tourism cooperative marketing program for opportunities that are a fit</li> <li>Work with advertising agency to develop digital ad campaign</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness of Hay River as a meetings and conferences destination</li> <li>2-3 meetings and conferences booked</li> </ul>	Years 2 & 3

## GOAL: TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SPORTING EVENTS THAT ARE HELD IN HAY RIVER

STRATEGY: To focus on targeted marketing initiatives specific to the sports tourism sector

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
a)	To establish the infrastructure required to market the sports tourism sector in Hay River	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To produce a Sports Tourism strategy for the Town of Hay River</li> <li>To develop a special Sports Tourism section on the Hay River website (and on the new Tourism website)</li> <li>To develop a Sports Tourism bid package template that can be used to attract sporting events to the community</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infrastructure is in place to support sector</li> <li>Community is working together to grown the sector</li> </ul>	Year 1
b)	To develop packages (activities, etc.) for sports groups and their families who are visiting the community	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with airlines, hotels and other tourism businesses to discuss ways to partner to grown the sector and to secure reduced rates for sports tourism events</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop 2 day packages for winter and summer</li> <li>Additional promotions to encourage participants and their family to spend money on dining, shopping and activities when in the community</li> </ul>	Year 1
c)	To partner with NWT Tourism to leverage Hay River's marketing initiatives	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with NWT Tourism on an annual basis to ensure the Town of Hay River is aware of all partnership opportunities</li> <li>Secure additional funding through ITI/CanNor etc. to support the program</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hay River sports tourism information included in all NWT promotions when appropriate</li> <li>Increased awareness and interest in Hay River as a sports tourism destination</li> </ul>	Year 1 (ongoing)
d)	To work with local sports organizations to host tournaments and events in the community	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an inventory of local sports organizations in the community</li> <li>Set up a meeting to discuss opportunities to work together and to support their efforts to host events in Hay River</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2-3 new sporting events hosted in the community per year</li> </ul>	Year 1 (ongoing)

## GOAL: TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF AURORA VIEWING TOURISTS THAT VISIT HAY RIVER


**STRATEGY:** To start by focusing on the fall market (rubber tire traffic) and then expand by adding the winter market (Asian/International market)

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
a)	To promote Aurora viewing as an option for the late summer/early fall to the road touring market	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with advertising agency to develop a targeted digital campaign</li> <li>Place advertising and monitor ROI</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build awareness of the great Aurora viewing opportunities in Hay River</li> <li>Targeted digital and social media ads will attract more visitors in the fall</li> </ul>	Year 1, 2, 3
b)	To create Aurora viewing package for the fall and winter	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with local tourism businesses to discuss ideas for the package and to secure discounted rates</li> <li>Develop packages that can be featured on the Hay River website and through digital and social media promotions</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create 2- and 3-day packages that feature accommodation and activities</li> </ul>	Year 1 & 2
c)	Partner with NWT Tourism to leverage marketing support	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review NWT Tourism cooperative marketing program for marketing initiatives that are a fit</li> <li>Meet with NWT Tourism to discuss other opportunities such as their social media promotions, contests, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include Aurora promotions as part of NWT Tourism marketing campaigns</li> <li>Town of Hay River and local tourism operators participate in NWT promotions such as providing packages for contest winners, hosting travel writers and participating in NWT Tourism's cooperative marketing programs</li> </ul>	Years 1,2,3
d)	To develop partnerships with Aurora tour operators in Yellowknife to build up visitation from international markets over years 2-3	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide market-ready/export-ready training for Hay River tour operators interested in accessing international markets so they are in a position to work in the international market</li> <li>Support Yellowknife tour operators and Touch the Arctic Tours to come to Hay River to experience the product, with the intent they will include Hay River as part of their Aurora tour packages</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100 – 200 Aurora packages sold in years 2 and 3 (with the expectation to grow market over time)</li> </ul>	Years 2 & 3

## GOAL: TO PROMOTE THE INDIGENOUS TOURISM PRODUCT IN HAY RIVER AS IT IS BEING DEVELOPED

**STRATEGY:** To work with Industry organizations such as NWT Tourism and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) to support the development and marketing of Indigenous Tourism in Hay River

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
a)	To build awareness for the local Indigenous-owned tourism businesses and other businesses that may be interested in the opportunities available in Indigenous Tourism	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To meet with local indigenous groups to discuss ways to work together to grow this sector</li> <li>• Invite ITAC and/or ITI to present on Indigenous tourism to the community</li> <li>• Become a member of ITAC and sign up for their newsletter</li> <li>• Become familiar with funding programs and other programs that can support Indigenous tourism businesses</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Indigenous tourism operators are active members of ITAC and are accessing the support programs.</li> <li>• New Indigenous experiences are being developed</li> </ul>	Years 1 & 2
b)	Include Indigenous Tourism experiences in packages that are being developed for Hay River (as these experiences become available)	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with local Indigenous businesses to discuss ideas for packages and secure discounted rates</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 – 3 packages developed that include at least one Indigenous tourism experience</li> </ul>	Years 2 & 3
c)	Partner with other communities/regions of the NWT to develop a multi-day Indigenous tourism package	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with ITI, NWT Tourism and regional partners to discuss package ideas</li> <li>• Develop and promote packages</li> <li>• Secure additional funding to support initiative</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Indigenous tourism experience from a local tourism operator to be included in one or two regional/NWT packages.</li> </ul>	Years 2 & 3
d)	To leverage ITAC and NWT Tourism to promote Hay River based Indigenous Tourism packages	<p><b>Action Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with ITAC to inform them of packages that have been developed</li> <li>• Discuss ways to work together to promote Indigenous tourism in Hay River</li> </ul> <p><b>Desired Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous experience featured on ITAC and NWTT websites and in all other marketing channels</li> <li>• Indigenous tourism experiences promoted on <a href="http://ligneousCanada.Travel">ligneousCanada.Travel</a> website</li> </ul>	Years 2 & 3



**The Town of Hay River is committed to working with governments, societies, and organizations to beautify the community, making it more attractive to tourists and locals. The Town realizes this is an ongoing process and will seek funding opportunities to support town beautification initiatives**

# BUDGET OVERVIEW

## GNWT: 2016 ROAD TOURING SURVEY: - TRIP PLANNING SOURCES

Activity/Initiative	Budget		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>DEVELOPMENT OF PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS</b>			
Highway and Wayfinding Signage	\$30,000	-	-
Enhancement of Hay River Website	-	\$20,000	\$2,500
Development of Social Media Platforms	\$3,000	-	-
Social Media Training	\$3,000	-	-
Product information Sheets			
Tour Packages	\$3,500	\$500	\$500
MCIT Package	\$1,750	\$500	\$500
Sports Tourism Package	\$1,750	\$500	\$500
Development of Sample Itineraries			
Self Guided Tour of Hay River	\$1,000	-	-
Self Guided Tour of Region	\$1,000	-	-
Photo and Video Assets	-	\$3,000	\$3,000
Trade Show Collateral	\$5,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$25,500</b>	<b>\$8,000</b>
<b>ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION</b>			
<b>Activities Targeted to Local Market</b>			
Participation in Consumer Shows (YK Chamber)	-	\$3,000	\$3,000
Digital and Social Media Advertising	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
<b>Activities Targeted to General Tourism Market (Road Travellers)</b>			
Participation in Consumer Shows	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Digital and Social Media Advertising			
Print (Milepost, regional guides, etc.)	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
Participation in NWT Cooperative Advertising Program	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Partnership with NWTT on RV App promotion	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Contents and Other Special Promotions	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000

## GNWT: 2016 ROAD TOURING SURVEY: - TRIP PLANNING SOURCES

Activity/Initiative	Budget		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>Activities Targeted to the MCIT Market</b>			
Participation in MCIT Shows	-	\$7,500	\$7,500
Digital and Social Media Advertising	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Hosting site visit	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500
<b>Activities Targeted to the Sport Tourism Market</b>			
Digital and Social Media Advertising	\$2,500	\$4,000	\$4,000
Special Promotions	-	\$2,000	\$2,000
<b>Activities Targeted to the Aurora Tourism Market</b>			
Hosting Yellowknife Tour Operators	\$5,000	-	-
Digital and Social Media Advertising	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500
Participation in NWT Cooperative Advertising Program	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Contents and Other Special Promotions	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
<b>Activities Targeted to the Indigneous Tourism Sector</b>			
Digital and Social Media Advertising	-	\$2,500	\$3,500
Contests and Special Promotions	-	-	\$3,000
	<b>\$36,500</b>	<b>\$48,000</b>	<b>\$52,000</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>\$86,500</b>	<b>\$73,500</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>

## Appendices

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# Explorer Quotient (EQ) Profiles

Research obtained from Destination Canada (DC). While certain information on the percentage of the global and Canadian market is not currently available, the Town of Hay River will work with DC and NWT Tourism to ensure they this information is included as it becomes available.

## GENTLE EXPLORERS

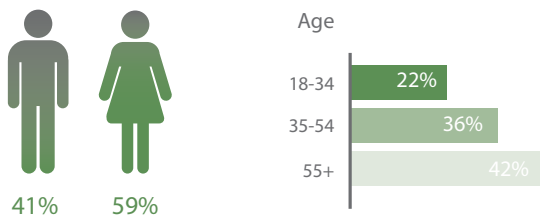
25% OF CANADIAN MARKET

Gentle Explorers are primarily defined by their reluctance to venture far beyond the comfort of home and travel 'on condition,' demanding the very best and most comfortable environments for themselves when they must do so.

### SOCIAL VALUES

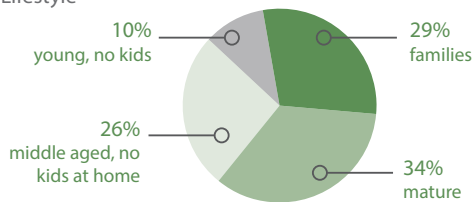
Living virtually, meaningful moments, savor the pleasures of life, high respect for authority, they find it thrilling to try new things

### DEMOGRAPHICS



Employment:	FT employed, higher than average PT or retired
Education:	Average

### Lifestyle



### TRAVEL VALUES

Group travel, historical travel, sampling a variety of activities, enjoy sharing experiences with others, constant travel

### TOP EXPERIENCES

Marine life viewing, wildlife viewing, visiting national parks and well-known historic sites, sightseeing in rural areas, day cruises, visiting small towns and villages

## AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCER

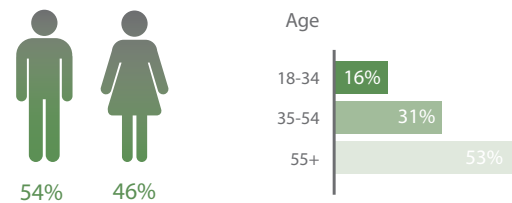
9 % OF GLOBAL MARKET

Authentic Experiencers are typically understated travellers looking for authentic, tangible engagement with destinations they seek, with a particular interest in understanding the history of the places they visit. They are steadfast, understated, responsible, interested and rational.

### SOCIAL VALUES

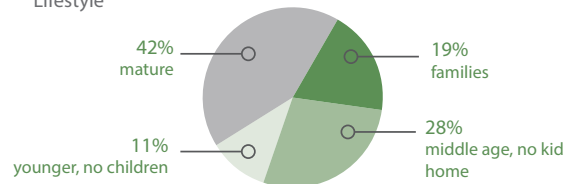
Personal control, spontaneity, cultural sampling, the need to feel responsible, skeptical towards advertising, concerned for the environment.

### DEMOGRAPHICS



Employment:	FT employed, higher percentage of retirees
Education:	Higher than average

### Lifestyle



### TRAVEL VALUES

Living history/culture, comfort and rejuvenation, escape from the daily pressures of life.

### EXPERIENCE APPEAL

Exhibits, historic buildings, architecture, nature observations, shopping and dining, entertaining and the performing arts, accommodation related activities, hands on learning, water based activities, winter activities.

## FREE SPIRIT

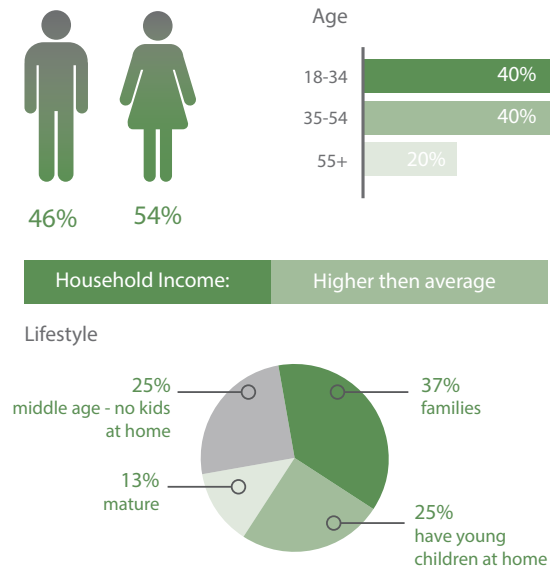
13% OF GLOBAL MARKET

Free Spirits are highly social and open-minded. Their enthusiasm for life extends to their outlook on travel. They are experimental and adventurous, and they indulge in high-end experiences that are shared with others.

### SOCIAL VALUES

Joy of consumption, social mobility, attraction for crowds, confident risk takers, see themselves happy and full of life. They want to show their success to the world.

### DEMOGRAPHICS



### TRAVEL VALUES

Luxury, bragging rights, checklist samplers.

### EXPERIENCE APPEAL

Shopping and dining, entertainment and the performing arts, accommodation-based activities, festivals and events, winter outdoor activities.

## CULTURAL EXPLORER

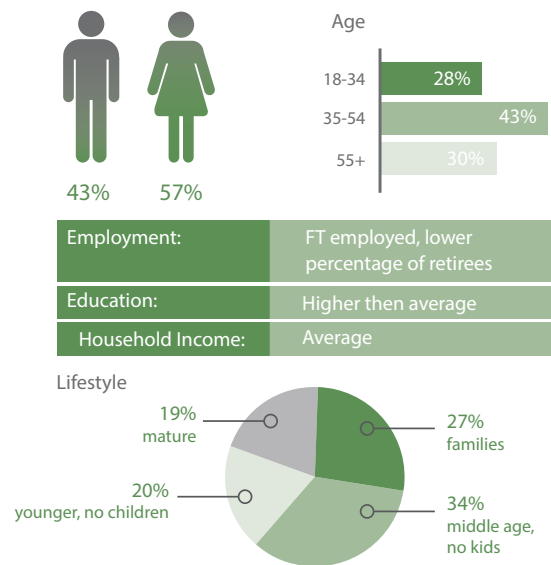
12 % OF GLOBAL MARKET

Cultural Explorers are defined by their love of constant travel and continuous opportunities to embrace, discover and immerse themselves in the culture, people and settings of the places they visit. They are open, accepting, non-traditional and enthusiastic.

### SOCIAL VALUES

Spontaneity, cultural sampling, adaptable to environment, enjoy trying new experiences, like to feel in control, long for personal escape, enjoy personal challenge.

### DEMOGRAPHICS



### TRAVEL VALUES

Constant travel (excited about the next trip), living history, culture, beauty of nature, see travel as a journey, going with the flow.

### EXPERIENCE APPEAL

Nature based activities, cultural exhibits, sightseeing, accommodations and related activities, hands on learning, festivals and events.

# Canada and International Market Profiles

Data gathered is pre-Covid-19. The Town of Hay River closely monitor market information changes as they are provided by Destination Canada and NWT Tourism.



POPULATION: 35.2 MILLION

GDP: RANKED 15<sup>TH</sup> LARGEST ECONOMY IN THE WORLD

Like most other travel destinations across the country, Canada is the primary market for the Northwest Territories, resulting in between 60-percent to 80-percent of travelers to the NWT. With current safety issues around the world, many Canadians are choosing to travel at home. The celebrations associated with Canada's 150 encouraged Canadians to explore their own country and instead of travelling abroad. The marketing efforts of NWT Tourism has done a great job to increase the awareness of the Northwest Territories, and the number of visitors to the territory are at an all-time high.

Travel from all of the major cities in Canada can easily be completed in one day. While the cost to travel to Hay River is more expensive than most southern cities in Canada, competition between the major airlines results in seat sales on fairly regular basis.

## Product Match

General Touring, Cultural Experience, Fishing, Aurora, Sport Tourism, Conferences

## EQ Travel Segments:

Free Sprints 12%, Cultural Explorers 9%, Authentic Experiencers 12%, Gentle Explorers 25%

## Distribution Channels:

- Business to Consumer (web and social media),
- Business to Business (travel agents, MCIT)
- Endorsers (travel media, family and friends)

## Advantages:

- Solid understanding of Canada
- Less travel time to access the NWT than other markets
- No travel barriers (language, food, currency)

## Disadvantages:

- Other areas in Canada may offer similar products at a reduced cost

 **UNITED STATES**

POPULATION: 325.4 MILLION

GDP: 18.5 TRILLION USD – RANKED 2ND LARGEST ECONOMY  
IN THE WORLD NUMBER OF ARRIVALS IN CANADA IN 2017:

14.4 MILLION (+1%)

The United States is Canada's biggest source of international visitors. In 2019, 15 million visitors generated roughly 48-percent of Canada's international tourism revenue. More than 8-percent of potential travellers to Canada expressed an interest in visiting Canada's North. Those considering a trip to Canada are more likely to have visited previously.

In 2018, air arrivals were up 17-percent over the previous year, resulting in 4.53 air arrivals in 2016. Visitors from the US skew slightly older, with ages 55+ accounting for 48-percent of the arrivals. Ontario and British Columbia are the two most popular destinations among US travellers, but US travellers are avidly exploring all regions of Canada. Americans seem to be drawn more to Canada's major cities than its landscapes, but the Yellowknife area is seeing more visitors from the USA, particularly during Aurora season.

Air access from most major cities in the USA can be completed in one day. Most US travellers connect through Toronto, Montreal, Calgary or Vancouver, before making the remaining journey to Yellowknife via Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver or Ottawa. Based on current flight schedules, guests would typically need to spend one night in Yellowknife before visiting Hay River.

### **Top Travel Interest/Motivators**

- Trying local food and drink (65%)
- Natural attractions like mountains, waterfalls (65%)
- Nature parks (55%)
- Hiking or walking in nature (52%)
- Historical, archaeological or world heritage sites (52%)
- Viewing wildlife or marine life (51%)
- Food and drink festivals or events (47%)
- Aurora (44%)

### **Top Travel Barriers (to visiting Canada)**

- Cost (33%)
- There are other places they would rather visit (25%)
- Poor weather (20%)
- No reason to visit anytime soon (15%)
- Not enough time to take a vacation (14%)

### **EQ Travel Segments:**

Free Spirits 14%, Cultural Explorers 9%,  
Authentic Experiencers 14%

### **Product Match**

Fishing, Aurora, General Touring, Cultural Experiencers, Incentive Travel

### **Distribution Channels:**

- Business to Consumer: (social media, web advertising)
- Business to Business: (travel agents, MCIT)
- Endorsers: Travel Media

### **Advantages:**

- Strong US exchange rate
- Less barriers to travel (language, food)

### **Disadvantages:**

- Limited knowledge about destination
- May be less inclined to travel to Canada for an experience in they can have in the USA

 **GERMANY**

POPULATION: 82.3 MILLION

GERMANY IS THE 4TH LARGEST ECONOMY AND THE 3RD LARGEST TOURISM MARKET IN THE WORLD

NUMBER OF ARRIVALS IN CANADA IN 2017: 406,000 (+1%)

According to DC research, Canada currently ranks third, behind the United States and Thailand, in terms of consideration for a long-haul vacation by German travellers. In 2019, more than 412,000 Germans visited Canada. Germans are a good fit for travel to Canada, as they typically have longer annual vacations than most countries around the world. Germans typically received five to six weeks of annual vacation and are avid travellers. German travellers also have a significant interest in the North, with 16-percent of the immediate market potential for Canada indicating they would like to visit Canada's North. They also prefer nature to cities.

Air access from Germany to Canada is excellent. Airline seat capacity increased by 6-percent in 2018 and an additional 10-percent in 2019. Germans are typically adventurous travellers and independent by nature. Most speak enough English that they do not require the use of interpreter while travelling. Germans tend to plan their trips well in advance, often four months prior to booking.

**Travel Interests/Motivators**

- Trying local food and drink (68%)
- Natural attractions like mountains, waterfalls (63%)
- Hiking or walking in nature (63%)
- Nature parks (61%)
- Wildlife viewing or marine life (58%)
- Exploring Indigenous culture, traditions or history (48%)
- Historical, archaeological, or world heritage sites (48%)

**Travel Barriers**

- Cost (42%)
- Length of flight – to Canada (26%)
- Preference for other places (20%)
- Not enough time to take a vacation (17%)
- Poor value for money (15%)

**EQ Travel Segments:**

Free Spirits 12%, Cultural Explorers 17%, Authentic Experiencers 13%

**Product Match:**

General Touring, Indigenous Tourism

**Distribution Channels:**

- Business to Business: (travel trade)
- Endorsers: (Travel Media)

**Advantages:**

- Extended vacation time
- Adventurous travellers, enjoy the outdoors
- Travel primarily during summer (non-Aurora seasons)

**Disadvantages:**

- Less number of German visitors to South Slave region
- Destination less known than other areas such as the Yukon



## AUSTRALIA

POPULATION: 24.7 M

AUSTRALIA IS THE WORLD'S 13TH LARGEST ECONOMY (1.9% OF GLOBAL GDP)

AUSTRALIA RANKS 9TH IN THE WORLD FOR OUTBOUND TOURISM SPENDING (\$27 BILLION USD)

NUMBER OF ARRIVALS IN CANADA IN 2018: 349,000 (- 3%)

Australians are avid travellers and are willing to part with their money for a dream vacation. In 2018, Australian travellers spent the most of all DC markets on their trips to Canada. The average Australian spent \$2,265 per trip. In 2018, people aged 55+ and millennials accounted for 1/3 of all leisure visitors to Canada. The majority of Australian visitors first arrive in Vancouver and British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario are the most visited destinations. There is a growing interest in winter tourism and the Aurora from the Australian market.

There is excellent air access from Australia to Canada, with direct flights between Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne into Vancouver. The average Australian visits Canada for 15 to 20 days, and tours a number of regions. There is great potential to have Hay River included as part of a larger itinerary for people travelling to Yellowknife.

In general, Australians are low-maintenance travellers. They are willing to forgo luxury for an authentic experience, provided the experience delivered on what was promised. There are also no language barriers, associated with other international markets.

### Travel Interests/Motivators

- Trying local food and drink (68%)
- Natural attractions like mountains, waterfalls (63%)
- Visiting historical attractions or world heritage sites (52%)
- Nature parks (50%)
- Viewing wildlife or marine life (50%)
- Aurora (46%)

### Travel Barriers

- Cost (43%)
- Length of flight – to Canada (29%)
- Preference for other places (18%)

### EQ Travel Segments

Free Spirits 16%, Cultural Explorers 15%, Social Samplers 14%

### Product Match

Touring, Aurora, Cultural Experiences

### Distribution Channel

- Business to Business (Travel Trade)
- Endorsers (Travel media)

### Advantages

- Traveller typically has extended holidays
- Easy-going market, no travel barriers such as language/food

### Disadvantages

- Limited destination awareness
- Lower number of visitors to the region



## CHINA

POPULATION: 1.4 BILLION

CHINA IS THE WORLD'S 2ND LARGEST ECONOMY (15% OF GLOBAL GDP)

NUMBER OF ARRIVALS IN CANADA IN 2018: 737,000 (+6%)

China is Canada's third largest market in terms of arrivals, and second in terms of visitor spending. 2018 was a record year for travel to Canada, with 737,000 visitor arrivals from the Chinese market. Visiting friends and relative market (VFR) is a main driver for Chinese visitation to Canada, with 47-percent of Chinese visitors coming to Canada to visit friends and relatives. This often results in further visitation to other areas of Canada.

There is excellent air access from China to Canada, with direct flights between most major Chinese cities into Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary. Most Chinese visitors to the NWT typically stay for three nights. Some Chinese travellers who have visited the Yellowknife area stay longer and have expressed an interest in visiting areas outside of Yellowknife.

Catering to the Chinese market will have its own set of challenges. While most Chinese travellers to Canada can speak adequate English, communication with locals can be challenging. These travellers often request traditional Chinese food during their stay. To best accommodate these guests, it is suggested that Hay River operators partner with tourism operators that currently work with the Chinese market and have them bring their clients to Hay River as part of their overall tour of the NWT.

*\*By working with local tour companies that cater to the Chinese market, Hay River can increase their chances of getting visitation from the Chinese market. The community can also control how visitation in the community occurs by working with these tour companies to ensure that only approved destinations in Hay River are featured in the tour itineraries, and that no tourists are left wandering through the community unattended.*

### Top Travel Interests/Motivators

- Trying local food and drink (68%)
- Natural attractions like mountains, waterfalls (63%)
- Visiting historical attractions or world heritage sites (52%)
- Nature parks (50%)
- Viewing wildlife or marine life (50%)
- Northern Lights (46%)
- Hiking or walking in nature (46%)
- Shopping for souvenirs or clothes (42%)

### Top Travel Barriers

- Cost (43%)
- Length of flight to Canada (29%)
- Preference for other places (18%)

### EQ Travel Segments:

Free Spirits 17%, Cultural Explorers 8%

### Product Match

Aurora, Indigenous Experiences

### Distribution Channels:

- Business to Business: (\*Local Tour Companies, Travel Trade)
- Endorsers: (travel media)

### Advantages:

- There are many Chinese tourists visiting the NWT
- They are interested in cultural activities

### Disadvantages:

- Group may require special language and meal services
- Travel to the NWT is limited to Aurora season



POPULATION: 126.7 MILLION

JAPAN IS RANKED 3RD LARGEST ECONOMY IN THE WORLD.

NUMBER OF ARRIVALS IN CANADA IN 2018: 251,000 (-15%)

A strong currency and increased lift in direct air capacity has resulted in increased visitation to Canada. In 2019, 252,000 Japanese tourists visited Canada. This is an increase of 1,000 people from the previous year. One out of every three visitors explored Canada as a group. Twelve percent of the immediate potential market have indicated an interest in visiting Canada's North.

Japan ranks number one on the list of international visitors to the Northwest Territories. The Japanese have been travelling to Yellowknife for over 30 years now. The destination is well known in Japan. The Aurora and nature are the big travel motivators from the group.

Air access from Japan to Canada has increased this past year, with new flights from Osaka to Vancouver. With Air Canada adding direct flights between Vancouver and Yellowknife, air travel to Yellowknife will be more convenient. Several years ago, direct flights were added between Tokyo and Calgary, which also made travel to Yellowknife more efficient.

When working with the Japanese market it is important that most visitors prefer to have a Japanese-speaking guide for their tours, and some will request specialty food during their stay.

### Travel Interests/Motivators

- Natural attractions like mountains, waterfalls (52%)
- Hiking or walking in nature (48%)
- Aurora (46%)
- Historical, archaeological or world heritage sites (46%)
- Nature parks (42%)
- Trying local food and drink (42%)

### Travel Barriers

- Cost (30%)
- Too far/Length of flight to Canada (26%)
- Did not know about it (17%)
- No reason to visit any time soon (16%)
- Not enough time to take a vacation (14%)

### EQ Travel Segments:

Free Spirits 12%, Cultural History Buffs 16%

### Product Match

Aurora

### Distribution Channels:

- Business to Business (Local Tour Operators, Travel Trade)
- Endorsers (Travel Media)

### Advantages

- Japanese have good knowledge of Yellowknife and area
- Large number of travellers to the NWT each year

### Disadvantages:

- Limited vacation time
- Travellers from this market are typically less adventurous





## SOUTH KOREA

POPULATION: 51.4 MILLION

RANKED 11TH LARGEST ECONOMY IN THE WORLD (1.9% OF GLOBAL GDP)

SOUTH KOREA IS THE 7TH LARGEST OUTBOUND TOURISM MARKET WITH EXPENDITURES AT OVER \$27 BILLION USD  
NUMBER OF ARRIVALS IN CANADA IN 2018: 246,000 (-16%)

Air capacity between South Korea and Canada increased by 38-percent last year. This included Air Canada flights to Vancouver and Toronto. Pleasure travel made up 31-percent of all trips to Canada. Most visitors engaged in fully independent travel (FIT) and sought experiences showcasing Canada’s unique natural and cultural settings. Approximately 21-percent of potential visitors to Canada expressed an interest in visiting Canada’s North.

Most travellers from South Korea are fairly independent, but some will require Korean-tour guides .

### Travel Motivators

- Natural attractions like mountains, waterfalls (60%)
- Hiking or walking in nature (59%)
- Trying local food and drink (54%)
- Nature parks (49%)
- Aurora (36%)
- Exploring Indigenous culture, traditions, history (35%)
- Fall Colours (26%)

### Travel Barriers

- Too far/flight too long (41%)
- Cost (34%)
- Unaffordable exchange rate (18%)
- Not enough time for vacation (16%)
- Language barrier (14%)

### EQ Travel Segments:

Free Spirits 11%, Cultural History Buffs 16%

### Product Match

Aurora, Cultural Experiences

### Distribution Channels:

- Business to Business: (Local Tour Operators, Travel Trade)
- Endorsers: (Travel Media/bloggers)

### Advantages

- Knowledgeable about the NWT
- Active followers on social media

### Disadvantages

- Some travel barriers (language)
- Lower number of visitors to the region

# Understanding the Travel Trade

The travel trade industry is a sales and distribution channel that assists local tourism operators to promote and sell their travel packages in the international marketplace.

There are three main categories in the travel trade industry: Receptive Tour Operators (RTOs), Tour Wholesalers and Travel Agents (and Online Travel Agents).

- **RECEPTIVE TOUR OPERATORS (RTO)**

RTOs specialize in services for inbound travellers from other countries. They often act as a booking agent for tour wholesalers. RTOs develop tourism packages that are sold to tour wholesalers, who then sell their product to travel agents. RTOs will net (discounted rates via tariffs to their overseas tour wholesalers.

*Commission/net rate required: 25 to 30%*

- **TOUR WHOLESALERS**

Tour wholesalers produce vacation packages for domestic and/or international travellers. They bundle these packages together and sell them to travel agencies, who then sell them directly to the consumer.

*Commission/net rate required: 20%*

- **TRAVEL AGENTS**

Travel Agents sell existing pre-packaged travel products directly to the consumer. They are paid through commissions provided by tour wholesalers and services charges and booking fees.

*Commission/net rate required: 10 to 12%*

- **ONLINE TRAVEL AGENTS (OTA)**

OTAs sell existing pre-package travel products directly to the consumer. Unlike travel agents, OTAs sell their product to consumers over the internet. Most OTAs focus primarily on selling flights and accommodations, while some also sell activities or experiences to a lesser extent. Notable OTAs include Expedia, Booking.com and Travelocity.

*Commission/net rate required: 20 to 30%*

For any tour operator in Hay River interested in working with the travel trade, it will be important to work with all categories of tour companies. Most tour wholesalers from international markets buy their product through an RTO.

When working with the travel trade, it will be important to have established commissionable rates. These rates typically need to be valid for at least 18 months, as the travel trade typically starts selling their products at least a year in advance.

Before reaching out to establish working relationships with the travel trade, it will be important for each local tourism operator to have the following resources in place:

- Product information sheet (including all pricing)
- Booking and Cancellation Policy documents
- Sample itineraries
- Images and video

Once these items are in place, the next step will be to set up a meeting with destination marketing organizations (DMOs) such as NWT Tourism, and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) to update them on your product, and share your rate information and target markets. These DMOs will then take this information to any trade shows they attend, and use it when they are following up on trade enquiries.

Other key pieces will be to host the travel trade on familiarization (FAM) tours, make sales calls to the offices of the RTOs (typically located in Vancouver and Toronto), and to attend several trade shows if possible. It typically takes between two to three years to establish working relationships with the travel trade, so the earlier this process is started the more beneficial it will be for the Town of Hay River.



# Town of Hay River Social Media Marketing Strategy

## OVERVIEW

This proposal serves to provide insight and guidance to the development and implementation of a social media strategy for the Town of Hay River Tourism. This strategy serves to be a segment of the overall tourism marketing strategy, which encompasses the common growth and awareness goals.

## WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA, REALLY?

At its core, the rise of social media in marketing has made one thing possible: the ability to tell authentic stories.

While traditional advertising serves to grab the audience's attention, and develop awareness of a brand or product, social media is a tool that allows your audience to engage on a deeper level. It is a tool that can educate, entertain, confirm beliefs, and most importantly, it can inspire. Achieving inspiration happens when preparation and luck meet. This is especially true when we're prepared for luck.

In 2019, Canada had 25.3 million social media users. A number that is steadily growing as social media continues to evolve beyond a past-time, and integrates to a way of life. For most demographics, this is already the reality where it takes the place of traditional outlets like newspapers, and cable tv. Today, brands must have a social media presence in the same way that they must have a logo.

Social media is a tool that provides Hay River the opportunity to tell your story everyday, and share the magic of this destination. Share what keeps you living there, and what unforgettable experiences you have to offer.

## TOURISM SOCIAL & TRENDS

Currently, tourist marketing on social media is being led by two things:

- **User Generated Content** | The images, stories, reviews all created by your audience. This content is then captured and fed back into your social channels as content with deep authentic roots.
- **Highly Engageable Content** | Images, and blog posts that allow the user to go beyond the screen and immerse themselves with the content (ie. recipes to try at home, interactive articles, 360 video).

With building a presence on a limited budget, we will not always be able to go beyond classic "picture and post" style content, but we will be aiming and open to opportunities whenever able.

## LONG-TERM GOALS

Growing a brand new social media channel takes dedication, and consistency. We are looking at the success of these marketing efforts over the course of 3 years, with strategic staggered growth.

## Year 1 - Awareness

The first year will be focused on creating awareness on the basic principles of where Hay River is, and what are the key products the destination has to offer. Fundamental awareness surrounding events, operators, and accommodations will form the bulk of content for year one.

## Year 2 - Incentive

After a strong audience base has been formed by the labour of year one, year two will work to move that audience along the path to purchase (or “down the funnel” as it’s sometimes referred). This will mean an increase in content that speaks directly to the target audiences of:

- **A) Yellowknife**
- **B) Rubbertire Traffic**

## Year 3 - Growth

As our base audience continues to grow, and we’re becoming more tactical about creating calls to action to our key audiences, we can assess where there are opportunities to grow strategy with regards to destination travellers, and aurora / operator overflow. We will further be able to grow the kind of content we can create.

## PLATFORM FOCUS

In the social media landscape, there are dozens of platforms you could be on. But a strategic rule of thumb is to focus on as many platforms your resources allow, and do them very well.

While the social media landscape may change by 2023, at this point in time, we will be focusing on:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- TripAdvisor
- Google SEO\*

*\* While this isn't technically social media, it's a critical aspect of overall digital media performance*

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

This section outlines the strategic process of not only setting up Hay River’s social platforms, but ensuring that they thrive.

1. Platform Assembly  
Creating the platforms, their core content, digital navigation, and base calls to action.
2. Content Calendar  
Development of a document that outlines key dates of products in season, events, opportunities, and a bird’s eye view of overall content. The initial calendar will include 3 months of content, and after that will be updated, and approved on a monthly basis.
3. Frequency  
It’s said that successful marketing is composed of the right message at the right time. In social media, determining the frequency of content on a channel is part of that formula. While initially, asset availability will determine how much we are able to post, we will be aiming for daily posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter whenever possible.
4. Community Engagement  
The power of social media is that it allows your audience to engage with your product and brand. But in order to leverage that engagement, it must be remembered that social media is fundamentally social. Your audience expects a response to comments, questions, and direct messages. It is imperative that this customer service and engagement is provided on a daily basis.

## VISUAL ASSET STRATEGY

The kingpin in a successful social media strategy is access to many, diverse, high quality images and video. What would an account about Hawaii Tourism be without images of pristine beaches? The same goes for Hay River. Digital media is first and foremost visual, and visual inventory is needed in order to tell the story.

Visual asset development must have a two prong approach:

- Capturing User Generated Content (UGC) via software like CrowdRiff
- Ongoing professional photo purchase budget, where you can identify assets needs based on inventory. It is suggested that this begins with:
  - » *Cooperation with Spectacular NWT / Operatory inventories*
  - » *Set annual budget to purchase from stock photos / local photographers*
  - » *Annual photoshoot to capture key products*

Outcrop will further help with setting up, and organizing asset inventory, and ensuring rights usage contacts are lawful and accessible.

## KPIS

The key performance indicators will be monitored closely, and reported on monthly. These factors will be changing year to year, but will remain focused on growth.

## Year 1

- Follower Count (All Platforms - how many people have “liked” your account)
- Engagement Rate (All Platforms - How much your audience is interacting with content)
- Web Traffic - (website only, via Google Analytics)

## Year 2

- Follower Count
- Engagement Rate
- Brand Sentiment (positive vs. negative sentiment in comments mentioning the brand)
- Web Traffic
- Web Audience Demographics (Age & Geographic location especially)

## Year 3

- Follower Count
- Engagement Rate
- Brand Sentiment
- Web Traffic
- Web Audience Demographics
- Website SEO (position of listing on Google search)



