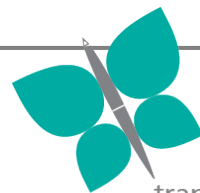


# City of Yellowknife

## Destination Marketing Strategy

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# Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

- CCMTA:** Canadian Council for Motor Transport Administrators
- CED:** City of Yellowknife Department of Communications and Economic Development
- CSAE:** Canadian Society of Association Executives
- CVB:** Convention and Visitors Bureau
- DMF:** Destination marketing fee
- DMO:** Destination Marketing Organization
- FAM Tour:** Familiarization tour
- GNWT:** Government of the Northwest Territories
  - ITI:** GNWT Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment
  - MCIT** Meetings, Conventions, and Incentive Travel
- MACA:** GNWT Department of Municipal and Community Affairs
- MOU:** Memorandum of Understanding
- MPI:** Meeting Professionals International
- NFVA:** Northern Frontier Visitors Association
- NFVC:** Northern Frontier Visitors Centre
- NWT:** Northwest Territories
- NWTT:** Northwest Territories Tourism
- ROI:** Return on investment
- The City:** The City of Yellowknife
  - VIC:** Visitor Information Centre
- YKCC or Chamber of Commerce:** Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

# Executive Summary

The City of Yellowknife developed a Tourism Strategy in 2014 which identified the need for a Destination Marketing Strategy. This strategy fulfills that need, and is designed to promote Yellowknife as destination for tourists and business travellers.

## *The Situation*

### Environment for destination marketing

This strategy has been developed with keen consideration to the prevailing market conditions and trends. These environmental factors are of strategic consideration and influence the success of destination marketing efforts.

Currently, three major geopolitical factors create a positive environment in which to attract visitors to Yellowknife:

- The low Canadian dollar makes it attractive for foreign visitors to undertake their visits now and for longer periods. With the low dollar, more Canadians are choosing to take their vacations within Canada rather than travelling to other countries. The Canadian dollar is expected to be low in the medium term.
- The low price of oil reduces the cost of travel and makes it attractive for road traveller within Canada and from the USA to reach NWT now more than ever, and reduces (or slows the rise of) the cost of airline travel.
- Political unrest and threats of terrorism in many parts of the world have not (yet) reached Canadian shores. Canada is seen as a “safe” destination.

These factors combine with a growth in the ability to travel among one of the North’s major tourism target markets: Asian tourists. There is a growing upper middle class in Asian countries like Japan, China and Korea, and combined with the previously described factors make this the right time for a Destination Marketing Strategy.

### Economic impact of tourism

Visitors contributed close to \$98M to Yellowknife’s economy in 2014 and the number of visitors has been trending upward over the last 5 years with an average growth of 5% both in visitor numbers and revenues generated. The average visitor spends \$1,550 during their stay in Yellowknife, with most of this spent on hotels, restaurants and other businesses.

A 10% increase in the number of visitors annually will increase revenues by \$10M which will create thriving local businesses, increase employment opportunities and overall standard of life in Yellowknife

and ultimately produce additional tax revenue. To achieve such growth requires an investment by the City of Yellowknife to incubate a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), enhance the visitor experience and pursue tourism marketing initiatives in partnership with other tourism stakeholders.

The DMO, and destination marketing efforts, must be adequately resourced in order to be effective. Cities with which Yellowknife competes for tourists, including Fairbanks (Alaska), Reykjavik (Iceland) and Whitehorse, and have large budgets for their destination marketing programs. For instance, Fairbanks, a city with a population of 32,000 spent \$ 3.3M on destination marketing in 2015. The City of Yellowknife will need to provide initial seed capital investment of approximately \$350,000 in fiscal year 2017 to establish its DMO and fund the initial marketing activities until a visitor levy can be established. A visitor levy, targeted to be in place by 2018 will provide sustainable funding the DMO budget without the need for further City investment.

## *Critical Success Factors*

There are a number of factors that are critical to the success of this Destination Marketing Strategy:

- 1) Sufficient investment/budget: Other jurisdictions that compete for the same visitors as Yellowknife have multi-million dollar marketing budgets. In order to compete, the City will need to invest some seed capital, and fund long term marketing (DMO) through a visitor levy.
- 2) Enhancement of the visitor experience: There are many factors that could result in a less than optimal experience for visitors, such as visible homelessness and substance abuse, lack of a downtown tourism hub, and few way finding materials and signage in the language of visitors. Tourism marketing will need to support initiatives that ensure a positive visitor experience.
- 3) Online presence: Technology is rapidly transforming the travel industry. Visitors increasingly expect more online travel information and booking options online. More travellers are increasing their use of online tools to research, plan, and book travel. Rating services such as TripAdvisor are increasingly credible and relied upon by travellers. A comprehensive and robust online presence is a destination marketing imperative.
- 4) Packaged, easy to purchase (online) tourism products/tours: Yellowknife does not currently have a large number of prepackaged, easy to buy tours and visitor activities. These are needed in order for Yellowknife to attract tourists, and for tour operators to maximize the potential of tourists' visits.
- 5) Strong, clear, compelling brand that describes YK's key differentiators: Yellowknife needs to stand out from other jurisdictions that compete for adventure and aurora travellers. Yellowknife must distinguish itself from the herd, and its positioning must make this location desirable; a place where people say "I've got to go there!"
- 6) Partnerships among tourism stakeholders: Yellowknife is too small a jurisdiction, with too few resources, to be able to afford overlap, duplication or gaps in its tourism marketing effort. Efficient requires effective partnerships and pooling of effort and resources.

- 7) **Political support:** The strategy will require the support of the City Council to succeed. Council is being asked to allocate City budget and to initiate a visitor levy to resource the Destination Marketing Strategy. Demonstration of tourism’s economic impact will be crucial to gaining and retaining this support.

## *Target Markets and Positioning*

Given the current and anticipated future environment for tourism in Yellowknife, the unique characteristics that Yellowknife has to offer visitors, and historical traveller characteristics, this strategy targets the following tourist markets:

**Visiting friends and relatives:** These are people with personal connections to the community through a family member or friend living in the city. This connection provides a reason for them to visit Yellowknife.

**Canadian and American tire traffic:** These are North American tourists who travel by road and enjoy the outdoors. Yellowknife provides them an affordable and accessible destination with multiple opportunities unlike other places including abundance of outdoors, aurora and camping.

**Aurora travellers (primarily Asian tourists):** Yellowknife has been proven to be the best place in the world to view the aurora. This group is here to enjoy the northern lights more than anything else.

**Convention and meeting travellers:** There has been a steady growth in Yellowknife over the years as a destination for conference and there exists opportunities to keep and grow this momentum.

## **Positioning**

Yellowknife provides something unique to each of the target markets. These are the distinct things that set Yellowknife apart from the other northern destinations. The “Embracing Life on the Edge” brand positioning describes and highlights the attributes of Yellowknife with its big skies; northern lights and midnight sun; a city on the edge and the unique characters and characters. This is what Yellowknife will be known for and will be the unique experiential promise made to all the target markets described above.

## *Destination Marketing Strategy at a Glance*

The Destination Marketing Strategy will help to drive tourism, business, and conference activity resulting in increased revenue for the City of Yellowknife. The strategy has four goals, which describe the

outcomes that will be achieved over the period of this strategy. The objectives identify how we will know that the strategy is succeeding; that the outcomes (goals) are being met. The strategies detail how the goals and objectives will be achieved; the approaches that will be used to achieve success.

## Goals

1. Yellowknife has a Destination Marketing Organization that works with tourism stakeholders as a catalyst and broker of marketing partnership opportunities for Yellowknife.
2. Yellowknife's brand is well-established and recognized among stakeholders, residents, and visitors. Yellowknife is known as an accessible destination providing unique and authentic northern Canadian experiences such as aurora/midnight sun, natural/outdoor experiences, and authentic cultural experiences.
3. Yellowknife is considered a highly attractive and desirable location for regional and national conferences, meetings, and events.
4. Yellowknife residents, City Council, and tourism stakeholders are highly supportive of destination marketing due to its demonstrated benefits, value and ROI.

## Objectives

- A destination marketing organization (DMO) is established for Yellowknife by 2018.
- An adequate and sustainable revenue stream (such as through a visitor levy) is established by 2018 and funds the work of the DMO.
- The number of conference, meeting and event attendees (coordinated in partnership with the Conference Bureau) increases by 10% per year for the next 5 years, *as measured by NWT Tourism's Conference Bureau Activity report*.
- The number of (non-conference) visitors increases by 10% year over year for the next 5 years, *as measured in ITI's annual Tourism Indicators report for the North Slave Region (Yellowknife Visitor Numbers)*.
- Traveller exit surveys return high levels of (overall) visitor satisfaction, *as measured from the results of the NWT Visitor Exit Survey Report*.
- Residents, when surveyed, identify tourism as positive and providing an overall net benefit to Yellowknife, *as measured by a resident survey to be conducted by the City of Yellowknife or its DMO*.
- City Council continues to support, year over year, the existence and resourcing of Yellowknife's Destination Marketing Organization.
- Stakeholders, tourism operators and local businesses are working collaboratively to attract and serve visitors to Yellowknife.

## Strategies

1. Communicate Yellowknife's tourism brand.



2. Negotiate, mandate and commission a destination marketing organization.
3. Continue to act as coordinating body for tourism stakeholders, and encourage opportunities to work in partnership.
4. Work closely with NWTT, NFVA and other stakeholders to lever and expand existing tourism marketing efforts.
5. Work closely with NWT Tourism's Conference Bureau to close the sale on conferences and meetings for Yellowknife.
6. Develop and implement a coordinated online strategy that includes web, social media, and online commerce.
7. Improve the visitor experience through low cost, high impact efforts.
8. Initiate dialogue with residents, stakeholders, operators, and local business with respect to destination marketing and impacts.

## Implementation Priorities

The goals, objectives and strategies envision a 3-year planning and implementation horizon. Not all will be pursued in the immediate term; initiatives and strategies will be rolled out over the course of the three year plan. The following details the implementation priorities for each year.

### ***Pre implementation: 2016***

- Approve Destination Marketing Strategy
- Develop Yellowknife tourism brand
- Initiate discussions with NFVA regarding the formation of a DMO
- Initiate discussions with GNWT (MACA) and the Yellowknife Hotels Association regarding implementation of visitor levy
- Create a forum for partners to meet to update on progress and coordinate efforts

### ***Year 1: 2017***

- Establish a Tourism Manager position within the City's Economic Development Department dedicated to destination marketing (this position may be devolved to the DMO once established)
- Continue discussions and negotiations with respect to establishing a DMO
- Continue discussions and negotiations with respect to establishing a visitor levy
- Collect baseline data on resident attitudes toward tourism
- Develop directional signage and other materials for visitors in multiple languages
- Consolidate web presence; create and launch an online strategy
- Develop a single Yellowknife visitors' guide
- Partner with NWT Tourism on local tourism/media familiarization tours
- Partner with NWT Tourism to provide content for its website
- Partner with NWT Tourism to promote/secure conference and meetings travel

**Year 2: 2018**

- Commission DMO, funded by visitor levy funds
- Create a downtown visitor’s hub
- Develop and implement tools to communicate with the public on the impact of tourism
- Implement online and social media strategy
- Create and launch “host” campaign
- Continue to explore and maximize partnership opportunities with tourism stakeholders
- Begin exploration of opportunities with link-up jurisdictions such Edmonton, Whitehorse, and NWT communities
- Broker the development of tourist “packages”
- Begin planning to host first annual tour operator conference
- Conduct annual Yellowknife resident tourism survey

**Year 3: 2019**

- Continue to explore and maximize partnership opportunities with tourism stakeholders
- Continue to explore and maximize opportunities with link-up jurisdictions such Edmonton, Whitehorse, and NWT communities
- Continue to broker the development of tourist “packages”
- Continue to implement and monitor social media strategy
- Host first annual tour operator conference
- Review and update Destination Marketing strategy

**Budget Summary**

Implementing this strategy will require the following resources:

	<b>Additional City funds</b>	<b>Visitor Levy funds</b>	<b>Total</b>
June – Dec 2016 (balance of fiscal 2016)*	\$0	\$0	\$0
Jan – Dec 2017	\$350,000	\$0	\$350,000
Jan – Dec 2018	\$0	\$950,000	\$950,000
Jan – Dec 2019	\$0	\$1,000,000 - 3,000,000	\$1,000,000 - \$3,000,000

\*Funding for 2016 fiscal year to come from existing CED budget.

While DMO will be funded by the visitor levy as soon as such a levy can be instituted, the City will need to provide the initial investment to establish the destination marketing organization and marketing programs that will be crucial to the strategy. The City's contribution is an injection of seed capital. This approach is consistent with the City's approach of acting as an incubator or catalyst to put in motion initiatives that then become self-sufficient.

# Introduction

The City of Yellowknife's Destination Marketing Strategy supports its 2015-2019 Tourism Strategy. This Destination Marketing Strategy is aimed at maximizing the effectiveness of the City's tourism marketing efforts and establishing a unique and compelling brand for Yellowknife as a destination. This strategy reconciles the current tourism marketing activities and supports the achievement of the goals and objectives identified in the City's Tourism Strategy.

The Destination Marketing Strategy provides the context giving rise to the need for a cohesive destination strategy for the City of Yellowknife and ways to build a high-performing tourism ecosystem by driving sustainable year-round visitation. This is based on an analysis of the current market trends, an environmental scan of the tourism industry in Yellowknife and the NWT and global trends with regards to the tourism industry. The strategy describes the City of Yellowknife's value proposition for tourists and visitors and analyses the city's resources relative to other similar jurisdictions namely Fairbanks, Whitehorse and Reykjavik.

The strategy outlines the expected economic impact of a Destination Marketing Strategy for the Yellowknife economy as well as a set of tools and mechanisms for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness the performance of the Destination Marketing Strategy.

The strategy profiles the key demographic of travellers and tourists that are likely to visit Yellowknife, their unique characteristics and how to market to each target groups.

The strategy describes distinct factors that set Yellowknife apart from other destinations, which can be used in destination marketing to establish Yellowknife's unique position. It lays out the goals, objectives and strategies for the next three years (2017-2019). It also defines the priorities, tactics and marketing plan to prepare for implementation (fiscal 2016) and for the first full year of implementation (2017). This includes the budget for 2016, 2017, and 2018 and identifies a source for sustainability of funding for destination marketing initiatives.

# Context for Destination Marketing

Destination marketing, defined, is promotion and marketing of a place (i.e. Yellowknife) or event. A destination marketing strategy is a strategy designed to attract people to come to Yellowknife as tourists.

Yellowknife's Tourism Strategy, commissioned in 2013, completed in 2014, and for the period 2015 – 2019 assesses the entire Yellowknife tourism context, and addresses not only the need for destination marketing, but also for enhancing partnerships, establishing structures and infrastructure to support destination marketing, funding of marketing activities, and various elements of the tourist experience. To this end, the Yellowknife Tourism Strategy 2015 – 2019 set three goals with a multitude of objectives under each:

1. Enhance tourism management model and partnerships
  - a. Hire a meetings and marketing coordinator
  - b. Pursue authority from the GNWT to levy a hotel tax
  - c. Maintain the role of the NFVA until a DMO is established
  - d. Continue to participate in the NWT Conference and AGM
  - e. Continue participation on the NFVA Board and NWT Tourism Marketing Committee
  - f. Seek representation on the NWT Tourism Board of Directors
  - g. Engage local First Nations in tourism
  - h. Establish a Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)/Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)
2. Increase destination awareness
  - a. Support the growth of conference tourism
  - b. Raise market awareness of Yellowknife
  - c. Allocate a share of (proposed) hotel tax revenue to signature festivals
  - d. Incorporate tourism into the City brand
  - e. In partnership with NFVA develop and deploy a summer mobile tourism kiosk
3. Improve tourism Infrastructure and services
  - a. Help support and coordinate customer service training sessions in partnership with other levels of government
  - b. In partnership with downtown businesses, expand the City's existing annual Spring Clean-up initiative into a spring/summer monthly downtown clean-up program and expand the Adopt-a-Street Program
  - c. Improve tourism directional signage at key downtown intersections
  - d. Continue and prioritize downtown revitalization and government dock redevelopment
  - e. Assess viability of building a convention facility

The City of Yellowknife's Destination Marketing Strategy supports its 2015-2019 Tourism Strategy. This Destination Marketing Strategy (2016 – 2019) reconciles tourism marketing activity with the Tourism Strategy and supports the achievement of several of the goals and objectives of the Tourism Strategy.

Goal 2, increasing destination awareness, and in particular, objectives a, b, and d, constitute the primary purpose and objectives of the Destination Marketing Strategy. However, the strategy also recognizes and addresses other objectives as required in order to effectively market Yellowknife as a destination—particularly the pursuit of a visitor levy and the establishment of a Destination Marketing Organization.

# Yellowknife's Tourism Environment

As described in the City of Yellowknife Tourism Strategy, and verified by the City of Yellowknife during interviews informing the development of the Destination Marketing Strategy, overall responsibility for tourism falls under the mandate of the Department of Communications and Economic Development (CED).<sup>1</sup>

CED undertakes a number of tourism marketing-related activities and has contracted the Northern Frontier Visitors' Centre (NFVA) to "provide tourist information Services to both visitors inquiring about Yellowknife and visitors to Yellowknife".<sup>2</sup>

CED also works in partnership with other organizations and levels of government that share its interest in tourism, including NWT Tourism, the Government of the NWT Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, and the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce.

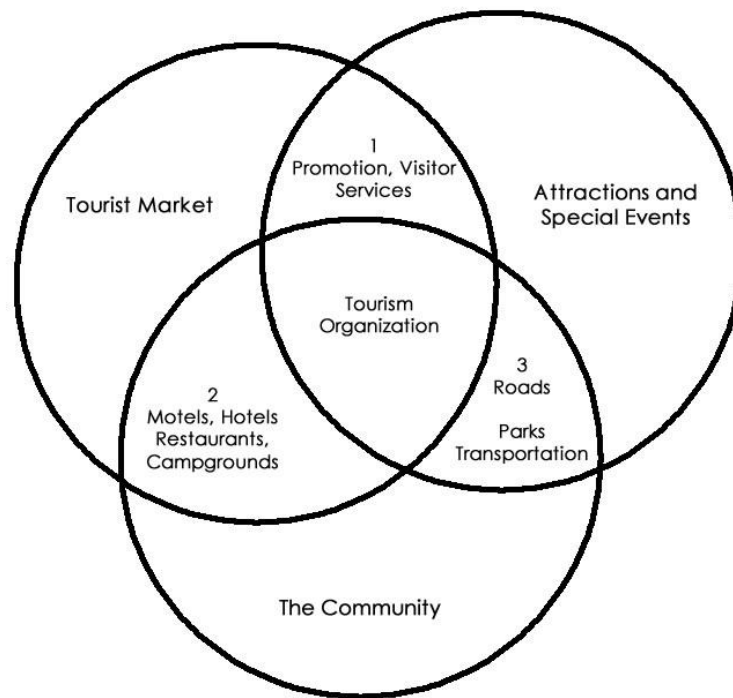
As identified in the Tourism Strategy, "...the tourism industry requires a range of elements to be in place in order to function effectively..."<sup>3</sup> Including community, attractions/special events, and a tourist market. The point of intersection these elements is a tourism organization.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Yellowknife Tourism Strategy, page 6

<sup>2</sup> Northern Frontier Visitors Centre Service Contract, August, 2014. The City and NFVA have continually entered into three-year service contracts. The current contract will be up for renewal/renegotiation in 2017.

<sup>3</sup> City of Yellowknife Tourism Strategy, page 8



*Figure 1: Key requirements of a tourism industry*

There are many different models for a tourism organization, however its role generally includes the following:<sup>4</sup>

- Provision of visitor information services
- Destination marketing
- Provision of industry support programs
- Industry communication
- Tourism research
- Lobbying regarding issues with implications for tourism

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 9



In 2013, these services were provided as follows:

Visitor info services	Destination marketing	Conference support services	Customer service training	Industry communication	Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NFVA - VIC and website</li> <li>• City (provides some visitor info via City's website)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited destination marketing being done for Yellowknife</li> <li>• GNWT ITI conducts destination marketing for the NWT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NFVA provides local tourism info to conference planners</li> <li>• Coordination of conference bids not being done in Yellowknife</li> <li>• NWT Tourism supports at NWT level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fee based training available in Yellowknife but limited uptake</li> <li>• NWT Tourism has three programs (fee-based)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some role played by NFVA but generally focused on NFVA members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NFVA tracks VIC stats</li> <li>• GNWT ITI tracks NWT visitor stats</li> <li>• Limited Yellowknife visitor data available</li> </ul>

Figure 2: Provision of tourism services

No organization or entity currently exists with a strong destination marketing function that focuses specifically on promoting tourism to Yellowknife. As such, the City of Yellowknife Tourism Strategy has identified this Destination Marketing Strategy as a pivotal need for enabling and maximizing the benefits of tourism for Yellowknife.

## Environmental Scan and Trends

The environment in which destination marketing will take place affects, influences, and sometimes directs marketing. The following are some of the strategic considerations that will affect destination marketing. The understanding of the environment comes from the City's Tourism Strategy, from research, and from interviews with stakeholders including NWT Tourism, NFVA, the GNWT Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce, and City Administration and Council members.

### The impact of global economics and geopolitics

Tourism fluctuates year over year and is affected by global economic and geopolitical issues. For example, after attacks on the World Trade Centre in the United States, air travel around the world was affected; high costs of fuel in the early 2000s sent the cost of travel higher.

In the same way, there are a number of current geopolitical and economic factors that create opportunities for attracting tourists to Yellowknife.

Price is a key consideration for travellers in making travel decisions. Historically, the cost of travel to Yellowknife was seen as a deterrent; however, current conditions have made travel to Yellowknife more affordable than ever.

The Canadian dollar is currently devalued against other international currencies, especially the US dollar, making travel to Canada increasingly affordable. The increasing size of the middle class with more disposable income in countries such as China, India and Brazil<sup>5</sup> also creates even more potential visitors for Yellowknife.

With the dollar expected to remain low compared to the US dollar for some time, there is an opportunity to encourage visitation from the United States and Canadian domestic travellers ('staycations'). Relative to other Canadian destinations, there is a further opportunity to market a trip to Yellowknife as being more affordable than it has ever been—particularly with American tourists. At the same time, oil and gas prices are at historic lows, further reducing travel costs by air and by road.

Other economic factors, such as the closing of the Snap Lake Diamond Mine and the downturn in resource exploration throughout the territory, create an opportunity to demonstrate the potential of tourism as an economic driver for Yellowknife and may help to increase support for destination marketing efforts.

On the geopolitical side, current global threats, uncertainty and fears with respect to the safety of some destinations has made Canada desirable as a "safe" vacation destination. As well, an increase in unpredictable events such as extreme weather and political unrest in other jurisdictions may make the stability of northern Canada attractive to a cautious traveller.

Taken together, these factors create an opportunity to market Yellowknife as an accessible and appealing destination. However, this opportunity may evolve as geopolitical and economic realities change. Therefore, full advantage should be taken in the immediate term to establish and solidify Yellowknife's destination brand so that it continues to be desirable even as the environment evolves.

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<sup>5</sup> City of Yellowknife Tourism Strategy p. 11

## Destination marketing resources relative to other jurisdictions

Strong and increasing competition from other jurisdictions, such as growing competition for aurora visitors from places such as Iceland, Yukon, Alaska and Fort McMurray are supported by significant investments in tourism by these destinations.

For example, Explore Fairbanks, the Destination Marketing Organization for Fairbanks, Alaska set a budget of \$3,488,583 for 2016. Of that amount, 57 per cent (or approximately \$2 million) was designated for direct marketing (such as television commercials and magazine ads targeting a specific audience) and indirect marketing (such as social media accounts, blogs and newsletters that are used to build customer trust and loyalty, as well as a rapport with potential customers).<sup>6</sup>

Currently, marketing Yellowknife as a destination is just one of many economic development functions of the City's Communications and Economic Development Department. There is no dedicated tourism marketing budget, nor personnel dedicated to tourism marketing. Tourism marketing is integrated into the overall mix of economic development efforts of the CED division. From these budgets all marketing efforts are funded. In this way, tourism/destination marketing "competes" for resources with other City campaigns ranging from the "Our Yellowknife" project to the "Scoop the Poop" initiative.

This approach is insufficient to make a meaningful impact on visitor numbers or experience, visibility, branding, or positioning of Yellowknife as a destination. Likewise, it is insufficient to convert the high potential opportunities – the low hanging fruit – into a return on investment.

In 2016, the City of Yellowknife allocated \$105,400 to Communication activities and \$170,500 to tourism activities—a total of \$275,900 (or 1/7 what Explore Fairbanks dedicates to destination marketing).

With competitive destinations dedicating significantly larger budgets to destination marketing, there is a risk that Yellowknife will be overlooked as a travel destination.

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<sup>6</sup> Explore Fairbanks 2016 Strategic Marketing Plan, page 90

### ***Funding destination marketing efforts***

In the case of Fairbanks—a city of 32,469 people<sup>7</sup>—84 per cent (approximately \$2.9 million) of the DMO’s funding is generated through a **visitor levy**.<sup>8</sup> Given that Fairbanks shares many of the same features that might attract visitors (aurora viewing, gateway to wilderness experiences, etc.), the visitor levy represents a clear competitive advantage that allows its DMO to invest in marketing Fairbanks. And as more jurisdictions begin to view tourism as a sustainable source of economic development, the competition for visitor attention will only increase.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) has indicated that a visitor levy was first considered in the NWT more than 15 years ago. However the GNWT found a number of hotel operators and communities opposed a levy due to a perceived negative impact on the cost of travel in the NWT.

In 2012, the Yellowknife Hotel Association, with the support of the City of Yellowknife and the NWT Association of Communities, brought a visitor levy forward to MACA as a method of funding tourism initiatives for the NWT.

As part of MACA’s research into a proposed levy, it noted three possible courses of action, including:

- passing stand-alone legislation that would create a territory-wide visitor levy,
- amending municipal legislation to allow community governments to have the authority to administer a visitor levy, or
- encouraging communities and operators to institute a voluntary Destination Marketing Fee (DMF).

Given MACA’s lengthy legislative agenda and priorities to amend legislation in other areas, the Department elected to not make a visitor levy a legislative priority. More recently, the Department of Finance released a document indicating that the GNWT would explore the implementation of a NWT-wide Hotel Room Tax. It is unclear who or what organizations would be the beneficiary of such tax funds.

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<sup>7</sup> Population estimate taken from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/0224230>

<sup>8</sup> Explore Fairbanks 2016 Strategic Marketing Plan, page 84

At the present time, the voluntary DMF represents the City's best opportunity to generate revenue to fund destination marketing efforts.

## Visitor experience

In order for destination marketing efforts to ultimately be successful, those who visit Yellowknife need to have positive experiences. Those who have positive experiences will share them with friends, leave positive reviews on social media sites like TripAdvisor, and are more likely to make a return visit. In contrast, those who have negative experiences will also share them with friends, leave negative reviews and are unlikely to make a return visit.

There is a concern that visitors' experiences are negatively affected by factors such as poor service, lack of packaged "experiences", and challenges accessing tourist services such as hotel, restaurant and retail stores. Given the power of testimonials and reviews and prevalence of social media, these types of negative experiences can create a deterrent to other potential travellers.

The most pressing challenges related to visitor experience include:

### ***Limited accommodations, activities and services***

The number of hotel rooms within the city limits Yellowknife's potential with respect to destination marketing, particularly conferences. There have been a number of hotel upgrades, expansions and construction announcements recently, signalling a growth in Yellowknife's tourism capacity. (Of note, a new 146 room Nova Hotel, a 75-room expansion on the Explorer Hotel, redevelopment of the training centre on the Dettah Road into a five star hotel, and indication by a foreign investor of its intention to build a new hotel. These are all developments within the past year.)

Other challenges include early closing times for restaurants and bars, and the lack of readily-apparent activities and experiences for visitors once they arrive in town. This problem is exacerbated by the number of empty storefronts downtown (particularly in Centre Square Mall).

### ***The lack of signage or other materials available for visitors in their own languages***

Without information in their language, it can be difficult for visitors to connect with existing amenities, activities and touring options. Better signage and the availability of more information resources in a variety of languages would be a simple and cost effective way to improve the visitor experience.

***There is currently no downtown “hub” for tourism.***

Yellowknife lacks a central location where vendors can congregate, which attracts tourists, and provides basic supports like connecting tourists with activities and information. While a number of activities and services might be considered to be within walking distance of downtown, many visitors will not consider walking beyond downtown as a viable option—especially in the cold winter months. Relatively long commutes and/or expensive taxi fares are also a limiting factor. And despite being only a short distance away, the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre is not easily accessible for visitors and can be difficult to find.

***Yellowknife’s social issues, such as homelessness and substance abuse, are visible to visitors, especially downtown.***

In order to position Yellowknife in the best light and to deliver a superior visitor experience in competition with other destinations there is a clear need to improve the downtown experience. Visitors to Yellowknife are often confronted with experiences related to social issues that can leave them feeling uncomfortable or even unsafe. While such issues have a negative impact on visitor experiences in and of themselves, they also run counter to one of the key strengths identified by stakeholder research—welcoming and friendly residents.

Social issues such as homelessness and substance abuse are particularly visible in the downtown core where many tourists congregate.

**Online experience**

The City of Yellowknife has an online presence, specifically:

- the redesigned website,
- the City’s social media presence, and
- the *Our Yellowknife* video series.

The City’s online presence also extends well beyond the City’s owned digital media and includes other online media such as the EdgeNorth website.

These online efforts are primarily directed at Yellowknife residents; however, they serve to demonstrate the potential of using online tools to engage potential visitors. Even more importantly, Yellowknife's online presence—social media in particular—has created 20,000 potential ambassadors for the City. Yellowknifers are proud of their community and eager to help promote it to potential visitors, particularly friends and family.

With technology rapidly expanding, visitors increasingly expect more online travel information and booking options. Travellers are increasing their use of tools to research, plan and book travel online<sup>9</sup> rather than going through a travel agent. As well they are increasingly using and relying on rating services such as TripAdvisor.

While there are many positives about Yellowknife's online presence, it is not optimized for destination marketing.

The rise of online and mobile technology has decreased the lead time visitors need to make their decisions. Historically, visitors have planned their trip an average of ten months in advance of travel, and made a firm decision to travel five months in advance—a planning horizon that is being shortened with the assistance of technology.

If Yellowknife wants to establish itself in the increasingly competitive market of destination marketing, an online experience that allows potential visitors to quickly and easily research and book travel is needed.

Yellowknife lacks a single, comprehensive website that visitors could use as a one-stop resource. At present, there are at least four websites that would be of interest to visitors or potential visitors to Yellowknife:

- [www.visityyellowknife.com](http://www.visityyellowknife.com) (NFVC),
- [www.yellowknife.ca](http://www.yellowknife.ca) (City of Yellowknife),
- [www.spectacularnwt.com](http://www.spectacularnwt.com) (NWT Tourism)
- [aboveallyellowknife.typepad.com/yellowknife-northerner-t/](http://aboveallyellowknife.typepad.com/yellowknife-northerner-t/) (independent)

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<sup>9</sup> City of Yellowknife Tourism Strategy page 20

While each site contains information that visitors would find valuable, they have limited interconnectivity and much duplication, unnecessarily complicating the potential visitor's online experience.

Yellowknife's destination marketing efforts would benefit from a more coordinated online approach that makes it easier for visitors not only to find information, but to make reservations and purchases online. Websites targeting visitors to Yellowknife should also be interconnected with social media to make it easier for visitors to share their experiences online and to interact with vendors and tourism operators.

### Lack of tourism packages

Demand for customized/personalized travel is increasing as is demand for experiential and active versus passive vacation activities.<sup>10</sup> At present there are few well-packaged experiences for people visiting Yellowknife, and they are not easy to buy online. There is a need to create easy- to-buy tourism packages for Yellowknife: bundles of experiences and activities that will entice travellers to pick Yellowknife, make it easy for travellers to buy the experience of their choice, and will improve the likelihood of the traveller having a positive visit they recommend to others.

### Support of residents and City Council depends on ROI

No Destination Marketing Strategy can succeed without the support of residents and City Council, and the interest of residents is a key driver of the City's agenda. Resident support depends on the City's ability to demonstrate the potential for economic benefit from destination marketing. If the value of destination marketing and tourism is clearly demonstrated it is anticipated that public support for destination marketing will follow.

Visitors to the NWT, and to Yellowknife in particular, are rising along with visitor spending:

- Overall visitors to the Northern Frontier Visitor Centre— both at the downtown and airport locations – have increased year-over-year since 2012<sup>11</sup>. In 2015, more than 40,000 people went through the Northern Frontier Visitor Centre.

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<sup>10</sup> Department of ITI North Slave Tourism Indicators, page 3.

<sup>11</sup> Northern Frontier Visitors Association



- The total number of visitors to Yellowknife has grown by approximately 48% (from 46,587 to 69,094 from 2009/10 to 2013/14<sup>12</sup>) while spending has increased by 43% from \$61.2 million to \$87.7 million over the same period.
- Per capita visitor spending, which had been relatively stable from 2010 to 2013, saw a marked increase (almost 30%), from \$1,201 in 2013 to \$1,550 in 2015<sup>13</sup>.
- \$47.2 million was spent in Yellowknife on business travel in 2015. Tourism is a \$140 million/year industry in the NWT. Much of this benefits Yellowknife, as most visitors must come through Yellowknife on their way anywhere in the NWT<sup>14</sup>.

If the benefits of destination marketing are not well communicated to residents, they will be likely to focus on the City's expenditures on destination marketing (which is easily identifiable) while dismissing or without recognizing returns.

### Existing and potential partnerships

There are differing views on the City of Yellowknife's role in tourism marketing. Given resource limitations, the City has worked to be an incubator and catalyst of activities and initiatives with tourism potential, and augmenting ongoing efforts in support of tourism. For example, the City helped incubate the local summer farmers' market. A dedicated group of local residents who initiated the market continue to organize, operate and grow the market successfully. The City also supports a number of Yellowknife's annual festivals and events, such as Folk on the Rocks, the Long John Jamboree and Ramble and Ride.

These activities, while suggesting a cost-effective way forward and a unique and important role for the City of Yellowknife, are currently insufficient to maximize benefit from the "low hanging fruit". There is much tourism opportunity and benefit that could be secured for Yellowknife with a relatively small investment of additional resources with partners.

The example of conference travel clearly illustrates how increased partnership would benefit the City.

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<sup>12</sup> Department of ITI North Slave Tourism.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Department of ITI - Research and Planning

NWT Tourism promotes conference travel to the NWT as a part of its role as the Territory’s conference bureau. Given that Yellowknife is one of the few locations able to host such events, it is in position to derive most of the benefit from these efforts. Since 2014, NWT Tourism estimates that it has generated more than \$3 million in potential conference revenue, with more than \$1.6 million of this coming from 9 confirmed events in Yellowknife to be held 2015—2019.

There is great potential for the City to further increase conference travel to Yellowknife by working in partnership with NWT Tourism to “close the loop” on opportunities, without which, a significant tourism opportunity will be lost.

Some believe that NWT Tourism has a responsibility to do this work as it operates NWT’s Conference Bureau—and as noted above, the City does derive great benefit from NWT Tourism’s efforts. However, NWT Tourism is limited in how much it can specifically market Yellowknife—no more or no less than other NWT communities. The City can help to fill the gap by promoting Yellowknife in ways that the NWT Conference Bureau, as an entity with a territory wide mandate, cannot.

The City’s relationship with the Northern Frontier Visitors Association also represents an opportunity to improve destination marketing efforts by strengthening partnerships.

The City funds the Northern Frontier Visitors’ Centre to provide a range of services that promote Yellowknife to visitors that have arrived in Yellowknife. The Centre also provides additional services outside of the contract such as resources for special events, Visitors Guide, City Map, etc. However, despite rising numbers of visitors each year, the City’s service contract contribution has remained relatively unchanged. Increased funding, as well as a more clearly defined mandate with respect to destination marketing, will help to strengthen the partnership between the City and NFVA.

In order to maximize its role as incubator, the City will need to work in close partnership with organizations, like NWTT and NFVA, as well as other local tourism operators, business owners and stakeholders. All stakeholders consulted in developing this strategy indicated a willingness to strengthen their partnership with the City. As the City implements this strategy, this willingness provides opportunities to create efficiencies, improve visitor experiences, and more effectively market Yellowknife as a destination.

## Earned media

Northern Canada—and Yellowknife in particular—has been the focus of a number of reality television shows, such as *NWT Ice Pilots* and *Ice Road Truckers*. There is an opportunity to lever the popularity of these shows and partner with them to encourage people to consider a trip to Yellowknife. In 2014, NWT Tourism estimates that more than half of visitors who visited the NWT had watched *Arctic Air*, a television serial set in the NWT.

In addition, there has been increased attention and interest in Aboriginal culture in the national media. There is an opportunity for Yellowknife to highlight Aboriginal cultural experiences as a part of the destination's unique appeal.

### **Yellowknife as a gateway**

In addition to the geopolitical and economic environment creating a significant, if immediate tourism opportunity, Yellowknife is one of the few NWT communities with road access, making it possible for travellers to take advantage of lower cost road travel.

Yellowknife is the hub for transportation and travel throughout the Northwest Territories, and there is an opportunity, through destination marketing, to encourage visitors destined for other parts of the territory to extend their stay in Yellowknife rather than just passing through. Airline access to Yellowknife has improved (there are direct flights from Edmonton, Calgary, Ottawa, and new direct flights from international destinations like Beijing to Calgary), creating new opportunities to highlight Yellowknife's accessibility as a destination.

In later years of this strategy, once basic infrastructure and local partnership arrangements are solidified, the DMO should also be looking to opportunities to partner with other jurisdictions and locations (such as Alberta/Edmonton, and other NWT locations) to lever marketing opportunities.

# Economic Impact

Tourism has the potential to be an important and sustainable part of Yellowknife’s economy. It already contributes significantly, and these benefits can be grown through a strategic investment in destination marketing.

According to ITI’s research, in 2014, the NWT generated \$146M in visitor revenues from almost 92,000 visitors. ITI figures identify that 75% of all visitors come to Yellowknife. Extrapolating, the City of Yellowknife benefitted from \$98M in 2014.

Since 2008 there has been an overall upward trend in both the number of visitors to the NWT and visitor spending. While some years were up and some years down, overall spending and the number of visitors grew by an annualised average rate of 5 per cent over the past 5 years with the highest growth in 2014<sup>15</sup>.

The following charts, provided by the Department of ITI, show that in 2014/15, there was a total of 63,119 visitors, and they spent a total of \$97.8 million. This means that on average, each visitor spent approximately \$1,550 over the course of their stay (\$97.8 million divided by 63,119 visitors).

## Number of visitors to Yellowknife

Visitor Type	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Aurora Viewing	5,371	5,273	6,640	7,226	15,331	21,190	16,015
Fishing	1,765	1,548	1,209	1,136	967	846	1,040
General Tourism	10,529	10,315	9,177	9,533	10,813	10,529	10,600
Hunting	28	22	13	14	15	15	15
Outdoor Adventure	646	585	585	708	954	585	646
Visiting Friends and Relatives	8,317	11,536	11,984	10,553	12,341	12,610	15,382
Business Travel	22,196	17,308	16,383	16,053	15,920	23,319	19,422
<b>Yellowknife Visitors</b>	<b>48,852</b>	<b>46,587</b>	<b>45,990</b>	<b>45,222</b>	<b>56,342</b>	<b>69,094</b>	<b>63,119</b>

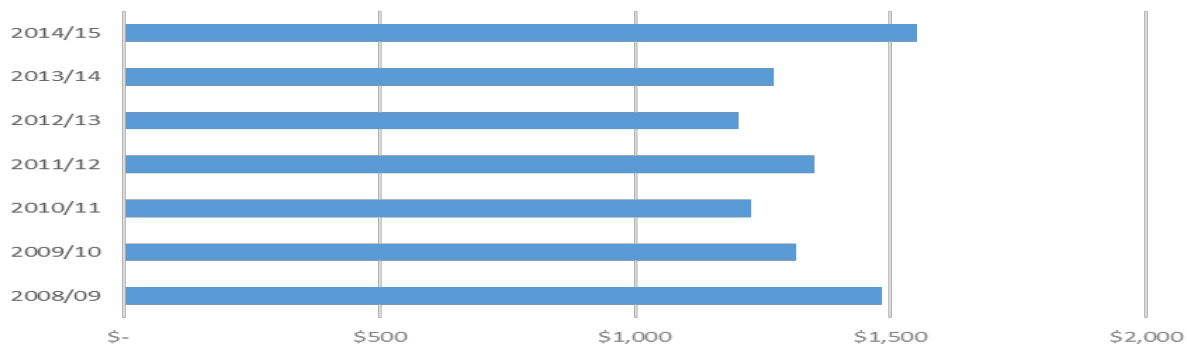
<sup>15</sup> GNWT ITI Research and Planning

## Yellowknife visitor spending \$M

Visitor Type	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Aurora Viewing	7.1	7.0	6.2	10.0	14.8	20.5	25.7
Fishing	4.1	3.0	2.9	3.1	2.6	2.3	2.2
General Tourism	5.9	5.8	6.8	7.8	9.0	9.0	10.0
Hunting	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Outdoor Adventure	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.8	1.3	1.8
Visiting Friends and Relatives	3.6	4.8	5.9	6.4	7.5	8.0	10.7
Business Travel	49.3	38.4	32.7	32.0	31.8	46.6	47.2
<b>Yellowknife Visitors</b>	<b>72.5</b>	<b>61.2</b>	<b>56.4</b>	<b>61.1</b>	<b>67.7</b>	<b>87.7</b>	<b>97.8</b>

The average visitor spends \$1,550 in Yellowknife over their entire stay, which is typically spent on local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, transport and retail.<sup>16</sup>

## Year over year visitor spending trends



Using these historical numbers, we can extrapolate economic impact and return on investment to the economy from different rates of tourism growth. As the chart below shows, even a modest increase in

<sup>16</sup> 2013 Canadian Tourism Industry Annual Report

visitors to Yellowknife (5%) will have an economic impact that well exceeds the proposed expenditures in tourism marketing.

If the targeted 10% growth in tourism is achieved, there would be an economic impact of +/- \$10,000,000 annually (or \$20,000,000 over two years). Considering the City would need to provide seed capital of some \$370,000 over two years, this represents more than a 50-fold return on investment to the Yellowknife economy.

The chart below shows economic impact and return on investment to the economy at a variety of tourism growth rates:

Growth Rates	Economic Impact		ROI	
	2017	2018	2017	2018
5%	\$4.9 M	\$5.1 M	13	12
<b>10%</b>	<b>\$9.8 M</b>	<b>\$10.8 M</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>10</b>
15%	\$14.7 M	\$16.9 M	41	17
20%	\$19.6 M	\$23.5 M	55	24

The chart below shows the results from a 10% growth in tourism visitors. If 10% more visitors come and each spends, on average, \$1,550, it will inject \$9.8 million into the local economy in a single year. Even with the City's cost of tourism marketing deducted, the net return is over \$9.45 million in 2017, a return of approximately \$27 for every \$1 invested by the City

	2017	2018
Number of visitors (10% increase)	6,312	15,149
Average Expenditures	\$ 1,550	\$ 1,550
Economic Impact	\$9.8 M	\$10.8 M
Campaign Expenditure	\$.35M	\$.95 M
<b>ROI</b>	<b>27:1</b>	<b>10:1</b>

An investment of \$3M over the next 3 years from the visitor levy (which are outside the City budget and revenues), could be expected to yield a return on investment of 23:1.

This return on investment rate is comparable to most destination marketing ROIs according to Destination Canada, Brand USA and Destination BC.

In addition to attracting visitors and their spending on local businesses, destination marketing drives broader economic growth by sustaining air service, creating familiarity, attracting decision makers, and

improving the quality of life in a place. This will also result in increased revenues for the City of Yellowknife through increased business licences and commercial property tax revenues.

# Target Markets

## *Market/Traveller Profiles*

Given the current environment affecting visitor travel, trends in tourism, historical travel statistics, and the City's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with respect to tourism, the primary markets for the Yellowknife Destination Marketing Strategy are:

- Visiting friends and relatives;
- Canadian and American road travellers;
- International "aurora" travellers, primarily Asian tourists;
- Convention travel.

### Visiting friends and relatives

#### ***Unique Characteristics***

Members of this target market have a personal connection with the community because they know someone who lives in Yellowknife. This connection provides a reason – that might not have previously existed – to explore this part of the world. Some have researched Yellowknife to learn more about the place where their friend or relative lives, while others are only aware of the facts and stories they hear through their friend or relative. In many instances, the only reason they may travel to Yellowknife is to visit their friend or relative and they are likely to plan repeat trips.

Yellowknife is a community that hosts people from over Canada and from other countries. As such, visiting friends and relatives may also be from diverse geographic and cultural backgrounds. They vary in age although it's very common to see two main groups: parents and grandparents (50 years old or above) and young siblings or friends (20-40 years old).

#### ***Needs***

This target market's priority is to spend quality time with loved ones. They stay with their friends or relatives or at a nearby hotel/B&B and learn about the place their friend or relative calls home. They care about the wellbeing of the person they are visiting (particularly relatives) and, as such, are interested in the opportunities and the quality of services available to their loved ones.

A secondary priority for this target market is to see and experience the stories they hear through their loved ones and create their own authentic memories. They want to discover a new place and engage in activities other visitors engage in, such as sightseeing tours, visiting restaurants and shops, attending special events and doing unique winter or summer activities (i.e. boating, ice fishing, flying, dogsledding)



Some friends and relatives are likely to plan return trips for special occasions (i.e. weddings, holidays, birthdays, special events, etc.) or during a different season, and may bring other people along with them.

### ***Messaging***

- Visiting friends and family in Yellowknife is an opportunity to visit a unique and exciting place.
- Visitors who experience everything Yellowknife has to offer will want to make return trips.
- Yellowknife offers once-in-a-lifetime experiences that people will want to share with their friends and family.

### ***Marketing Tools and Approaches***

- Friends and family (i.e. word of mouth, stories, their friend's or relative's Facebook posts, etc.) – Provide Yellowknifers with a “self-guided tour” or a “host package”. Social media campaigns including targeted crowd-sourced social media videos as a means for Yellowknifers and visiting friends and relatives to share information, photos and videos to encourage increased travel to Yellowknife.
- Content development on tourism websites specific to friends and family to help identify places of interest and things to do when they visit. This will also provide a useful pre-planning tool for the visitors.
- Signage and wayfinding system to help them explore and navigate the city when their friends are not with them or are at work.

## **Canadian and American tourists, travelling by road**

### ***Unique Characteristics***

Tourists who travel by road are adventurers. They may have experience backpacking or RVing and are outdoor people at heart. While some may travel by road because it is less costly, others may choose this mode of transportation as part of the experience. Some of these travellers are spontaneous (i.e. they choose to do a road-trip without much planning) but most take the time to plan the trip in advance (i.e. they ask for time off work, they plan the trip between university semesters, they plan with other friends, they buy all the equipment they need in advance, etc.). These people are equipped for a long stay and the unexpected. They are generally open to surprises and unique experiences and are likely to explore other places in the NWT and Canada while passing through Yellowknife, or vice versa (i.e. they are likely to come to Yellowknife while visiting other places in Canada).

This market includes retirees: those with the time to spend touring by road. Retirees differ from their younger counterparts in that they are likely to travel by recreational vehicle. They have more money to spend, and are more likely to be seeking comfort in addition to adventure.

The Government of the NWT, Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment has published a profile of NWT road travellers which was researched and compiled by Malatest Market Research. The GNWT research identified six visitor groups:<sup>17</sup>

- Social Sightseers: who enjoy meeting new people and easy travel experiences (24%);
- Roaming Retirees: who seek quiet and safe Northern adventure at low cost (19% of travellers);
- Comfort Seekers: who search for the comfortable vacation experience (18%);
- Outdoor Adventurers: who enjoy physical adventure and unguided tours (16%);
- Vocation Voyagers: who desire a break from work without a guide (14%); and
- Cultural Connoisseurs: who participate in Aboriginal and cultural activities (9%).

Characteristic	Outdoor Adventurer	Comfort Seeker	Cultural Connoisseur	Roaming Retiree	Social Sightseer	Vocation Voyager
<b>Number of nights</b>	6.2	5.4	6.2	6.0	5.9	5.9
<b>Trip planning (firm decision to visit the NWT)</b>	5.9 months	4.8 months	4.7 months	5.2 months	4.3 months	8.2 months
<b>Travel party size</b>	3	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.2	3.1
<b>Main purpose of travel</b>	Wilderness, isolation, landscape or wildlife	Always wanted to visit	Always wanted to visit	Always wanted to visit	Always wanted to visit	Always wanted to visit
<b>Return visitor</b>	25%	37%	14%	39%	32%	32%
<b>Plan to return</b>	76%	45%	61%	66%	71%	46%
<b>Important visitor considerations</b>	Outstanding scenery	Outstanding scenery	Outstanding scenery	Outstanding scenery	Personal safety	Outstanding scenery
	Viewing wildlife	Parks and wilderness areas	Cleanliness and hygiene	Viewing wildlife	Meeting new people	Parks and wilderness areas

<sup>17</sup> ITI 2014 Road Survey Summary Report, page 3

Characteristic	Outdoor Adventurer	Comfort Seeker	Cultural Connoisseur	Roaming Retiree	Social Sightseer	Vocation Voyager
	Physical adventure	Relaxing break from work	Personal safety	Personal safety	Having fun while being entertained	Viewing wildlife
<b>Least important vacation considerations</b>	Luxury accommodations	Luxury accommodations	Luxury accommodations	Exciting nightlife	Luxury accommodations	Luxury accommodations
	Package tours to a destination	Package tours to a destination	Exciting nightlife	Luxury accommodations	Exciting nightlife	Exciting nightlife
	Exciting nightlife	Exciting nightlife	Opportunity to purchase arts and crafts	Personal challenges	Experiencing nature without a guide	Number of airline transfers

Figure 3: Comparison of visitor group trip characteristics

While these groupings categorize all NWT visitors, those travelling to Yellowknife can be expected to be well reflected in the above groups.

### Needs

This target market may be passionate about the country, nature, wildlife and the outdoors and they want to “put a pin” on all the locations they have visited in Canada. These travellers are keen on completing challenges and bucket lists, and they usually have a checklist of places to visit in their lifetime. When planning their trips, they need to know where the stopping points are along the drive so they know where they can fuel up, get food or spend the night (i.e. campgrounds, motels and camper pull over stops along the way). When they get to Yellowknife, they want to engage in unique and adventurous experiences such as dogsledding, snowshoeing, hiking and boating.

### Messaging

- The North is more affordable and accessible than ever.
- The North is a safe destination.
- Yellowknife has some of the best hunting and fishing in the world.
- Yellowknife has the campgrounds and facilities to support road trippers as they explore the NWT.
- Yellowknife is a gateway to all of the amazing experiences the NWT has to offer.
- Yellowknife is a destination that should be on your bucket list.

### ***Marketing Tools and Approaches***

- Provide online tools and resources that allow Canadian and American tourists to access the information they need to plan a trip to Yellowknife
- Include relevant content online including on the website, blogs and social media (visitor account videos, photos and road trip information).
- Partner and coordinate with NWT Tourism to promote Yellowknife to this target market.
- Place signage for exploring and navigating through the city and its attractions.

## **International “aurora” travellers, primarily Asian tourists**

### ***Unique Characteristics***

International travellers who come to Yellowknife to see the aurora are primarily Asian tourists. They choose Yellowknife on referral from friends and family who have travelled, through the considerable marketing efforts of NWT Tourism and its agents and through online research. The aurora has cultural significance in Asian cultures, particularly Japanese culture. These tourists are willing to spend the money to see the atmospheric phenomenon: this is what draws them to Yellowknife.

### ***Needs***

Some of these travellers are affluent and seek comfort along with their aurora experience. Even though seeing the aurora is the priority for these travellers, they want to engage in other activities and authentic experiences during their stay such as guided tours, dogsledding, snow showing, visiting galleries, shops and restaurants, learning about aboriginal culture, taking photos of their experiences, and so on. Many of these travellers are not fluent in English and need to be able to find information in their own language.

### ***Messaging***

- Yellowknife is the best place in the world to view the aurora.
- Travellers will enjoy wide open spaces and unique experiences.
- Yellowknife is a place to relax and get away from the stresses of modern city life.
- Yellowknife is a unique destination with an array of unique experiences, beyond aurora.

### ***Marketing Tools and Approaches***

- Work in partnership with NWT Tourism on FAM tours (familiarization tours): host tour operators, travel media, industry representatives and travel agents to create awareness of Yellowknife as a destination.
- Translate promotional, marketing, and informational materials into the languages of the target market.

- Translate signage into Asian languages to help the visitors explore and navigate throughout the city and connect with tourist supports and activities.
- Create and promote itineraries/package tours that expand the experience beyond the aurora.

## Convention and meeting travel

### ***Unique Characteristics***

Meeting planners and travel professionals are the gatekeepers to the conference and business travel industry. They are familiar with conference destinations across Canada and the world and their main priority is to meet their clients' expectations. This target market may be interested in Yellowknife as a unique and therefore appealing location for conferences, business meetings and retreats.

### ***Needs***

Meeting and conference planners look for new opportunities that they can promote to their clients in the form of packages or incentives to bring their conference to a particular destination. This particular market is concerned with logistical considerations (does Yellowknife have the capacity to host a 250-person conference?) as well as those factors that differentiate it from other potential host cities for events and conferences.

### ***Messaging***

- Yellowknife can accommodate your conference/meeting/retreat needs and meet your budget.
- Yellowknife offers unique experiences unlike any other conference location.
- Participants can extend their stay and enjoy unique opportunities after the conference.

### ***Marketing Tools and Approaches***

- Partner WITH NWT Tourism to promote Yellowknife in meeting planner conferences.
- Host, fund and promote familiarization tours (in conjunction with NWT Tourism) for conference planners.
- Attend conferences that will be coming to Yellowknife future years and promote attendance.
- Create activity packages for add on stays.
- Create a strong welcome for arriving delegates (such as a large "Welcome" sign at the airport, on the City's electronic signage and so on).

# Marketing Strategy

## *Positioning and Branding*

There are a number of distinct factors that set Yellowknife apart from other northern destinations, which can be used in destination marketing to establish Yellowknife's unique position.

### City on the edge

Yellowknife is on the edge—of expansive lakes, untamed wilderness, of civilization itself—putting visitors on the cusp of a diverse range of activities and experiences.

We are undiscovered and natural; we provide a unique Canadian experience and one of the few authentic travel experiences left in Canada. Yellowknife provides a unique opportunity for visitors to experience authentic northern life.

### Big skies – the northern lights and the midnight sun

The northern lights and the midnight sun are unique northern experiences, and Yellowknife can offer the best of both to visitors. Yellowknife has been proven by researchers at the University of Calgary as the **best place in the world** to view the aurora. Yet this claim to fame is not being widely promoted. In addition, visitors can experience life under the midnight sun during the summer months with more than 20 hours of daylight at the summer solstice.

For others, the big sky of Yellowknife also represents the wide open spaces and pristine natural environment that surround the city.

### We have character... and characters

Old Town, house boats, float plane fly-in, Folk on the Rocks, Ragged Ass Road. Yellowknife is a place like nowhere else. With a permanent bridge between its prospecting past and its modern present, Yellowknife is the unique marriage between modern amenities and comfort, the rugged pioneering spirit that founded the town, the expanse of pristine nature and abundant outdoor pursuits out our back door, and the welcoming, laid back and relaxed environment where all are family.

## *Goals*

Implementation of this marketing strategy will work to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Yellowknife has a Destination Marketing Organization that works with tourism stakeholders as a catalyst and broker of marketing partnership opportunities for Yellowknife.

2. Yellowknife's brand is well-established and recognized among stakeholders, residents, and visitors. Yellowknife is known as an accessible destination providing unique and authentic northern Canadian experiences such as aurora/midnight sun, natural/outdoor experiences, and authentic cultural experiences.
3. Yellowknife is considered a highly attractive and desirable location for regional and national conferences, meetings, and events.
4. Yellowknife residents, City Council, and tourism stakeholders are highly supportive of destination marketing due to its demonstrated benefits, value and ROI.

## Objectives

The City/DMO will know that the above goals are being achieved when the following objectives are met:

- A destination marketing organization (DMO) is established for Yellowknife by 2018.
- An adequate and sustainable revenue stream (such as through a visitor levy) is established by 2018 and funds the work of the DMO.
- The number of conference, meeting and event attendees (coordinated in partnership with the Conference Bureau) increases by 10% per year for the next 5 years, *as measured by NWT Tourism's Conference Bureau Activity report.*
- The number of (non-conference) visitors increases by 10% year over year for the next 5 years, *as measured in ITI's annual Tourism Indicators report for the North Slave Region (Yellowknife Visitor Numbers).*
- Traveller exit surveys return high levels of (overall) visitor satisfaction, *as measured from the results of the NWT Visitor Exit Survey Report.*
- Residents, when surveyed, identify tourism as positive and providing an overall net benefit to Yellowknife, *as measured by a resident survey to be conducted by the City of Yellowknife or its DMO.*
- City Council continues to support, year over year, the existence and resourcing of Yellowknife's Destination Marketing Organization.
- Stakeholders, tourism operators and local businesses are working collaboratively to attract and serve visitors to Yellowknife.

## Strategies

### Communicate Yellowknife's tourism brand

Yellowknife is known for many things, but does not have a singular, consistent brand (tourism marketing) identity. Brand is the bundle of attributes and characteristics that spontaneously come to mind within the target market. Say "McDonalds" and immediately the "golden arches" come to mind, along with, consistent-quality burgers, salty fries and other fast food.

Say “Yellowknife” within the target markets and the perceptions may vary considerably. In many case, people mistakenly assume that Yellowknife is in the Yukon. We have been known as a gold mining town (and by the gold knife pin distributed by the City), as the ‘Diamond Capital’, as the home of the Championship Dog Derby, as the location of one of Canada’s most toxic sites (Giant Mine).

A positive, strategic, deliberate and consistent positioning, supported by a visual and emotional brand is needed as the foundation for destination marketing. While distinct, a Yellowknife destination marketing brand complements the existing NWT Tourism brand in order to best take advantage of opportunities created by NWT Tourism’s own marketing efforts. The brand clearly differentiates Yellowknife from competing destinations while also accentuating the attributes and characteristics that resonate with potential visitors.

The Yellowknife destination marketing brand concept that accompanies this strategy and plan has been developed around a bold and evocative statement inviting potential visitors to “Embrace Life on the Edge...” while also connecting them with any number of unique experiences Yellowknife has to offer, such as the aurora, the midnight sun, ice roads and untamed wilderness.



The brand statement invites visitors to experience everything Yellowknife has to offer, and emphasizes Yellowknife’s status as a gateway to these experiences. It is highly emotive, can be interpreted as a



challenge, incorporates a strong call to action and provides an opportunity to tell compelling stories about life on the edge.

The brand is flexible. “On the edge” can be used in customized formats to call target markets to come to Yellowknife which is “on the edge” of wilderness, adventure, aurora, cultural experiences, ... the list is endless and expandable.

The brand statement and supporting messaging is supported by visuals and a palette that uses bright colours and a gritty font that attracts the eye and represents of Yellowknife’s character and identity. Branding materials will also use images that do more than reflect the kinds of experiences—they will show people embracing “life on the edge”, making it easier for potential visitors to imagine themselves doing the same.

The brand basics in the creative presentation that accompanies this strategy and plan include a look and feel (visual brand), colour palette, fonts, and visual identity guide, as well as the overarching marketing campaign slogan and supporting messaging.

Branding fundamentals are included in the appendix.

### **Negotiate, mandate, and commission a destination marketing organization**

There are many models for organizing the entity responsible for destination marketing. Some jurisdictions embed this function within municipal government; others establish stand-alone not-for-profit entities specifically charged with destination marketing. Still others contract this responsibility to an existing entity such as a Chamber of Commerce.

In order to be maximally effective, and to be able to operate unencumbered by government constraints; in light of existing relationships, mandate, and the MOU between the City and NFVA, this strategy recommends that the NFVA be mandated, contracted, and (financially) resourced to expand its role to include being Yellowknife’s DMO.

At minimum, this strategy will require the City and NFVA to renegotiate the terms of their current agreement, and also to ensure that NFVA is properly resourced to fully execute this Destination Marketing Strategy.

### **Hire a Tourism Marketing Manager**

Additional human resources are needed within the City of Yellowknife – over a short term -- to drive the Destination Marketing Strategy. The City will need to staff a dedicated Tourism Marketing Manager within the CED to implement the initial year of this strategy. This position will be designed to devolve to the DMO when it is established (targeted for 2018). This approach is consistent with the City’s role of acting as incubator and catalyst for important activities.

## **Continue to act as coordinating body for tourism stakeholders, and encourage opportunities to work in partnership**

The City has an opportunity to be a catalyst for and a creator of a venue for conversations in partnership between the City, NFVA, NWT Tourism, the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce, Hotel Association and other stakeholders so that partnership opportunities can be maximized. Ongoing communication among such stakeholders will uncover opportunities for partnership and leverage of effort. Enhancing and maintaining a trusting and cooperative relationship among stakeholders will create efficiency of effort, and maximize opportunities. At minimum, the City should establish and chair a forum for tourism partners and stakeholders to meet regularly in order to update on progress and coordinate efforts.

## **Work closely with NWT Tourism, NFVA and other stakeholders to lever and expand existing tourism marketing efforts**

Immediate partnership opportunities already identified include the following:

- Work together with tour operators to help “package” Yellowknife tourism products so that it is easy for visitors to buy extended stays to their planned travel. These packages could be put on the NWT Tourism website, sold by Top of the World Travel, or promoted and brokered by NFVA.
- City of YK should provide content for the NWT Tourism website. The site features blogger stories. City could work with NWT Tourism to understand its blog content parameters and initiate a blog channel for the City. (NWT Tourism cannot do this on its own, but has invited the City to provide content that, NWT Tourism will profile on the NWTT website).
- The City should continue to participate in co-op advertising initiated by NWT Tourism, such as Globe and Mail advertising.
- The City can also work with NWT Tourism on familiarization tours. The City could host a function for the media with the local travel trade, and provide other programming that showcases what Yellowknife has to offer. This might include hosting a dinner (for example, at Bullocks), opening venues to the media, getting NFVA to host the familiarization tour, and so on.
- The World Shore Lunch presents another opportunity for partnership, particularly in finding a more suitable location for the event than the NFVA parking lot. Working with NFVA, the City should aim to hold this event in Sombe K’e Park. With assistance, this can become another marquee festival.
- Work together to produce one tourist guide only. Currently the City of Yellowknife, NNSL and NWT Tourism all create guides for Yellowknife tourists. This duplication can and should be eliminated.

## **Work closely with NWT Tourism’s Conference Bureau to close the sale on conferences and meetings for Yellowknife**

Closely related to the strategy of acting as coordinator and working in partnership, this strategy is to close the loop on the work being done by NWT Tourism’s Conference Bureau. NWT Tourism serves as the NWT Conference Bureau (evaluated on an annual basis by the GNWT). This resourcing includes a full time manager who works to connect with conference planners to create interest in the NWT and compile conference proposals and bids.

Yellowknife is one of the few locations within the NWT capable of hosting large meetings and conferences, and as such, the city is well positioned to benefit from this ITI investment and NWT capability.

Part of getting conferences across the finish line and maximizing the opportunity includes things like: attending meeting planner shows to help win conferences; creating and packaging activity packages for add on stays; creating a strong welcome when delegates arrive, such as having a large “Welcome CCMTA” sign at the airport, on the City’s electronic signage, etc.

It would entail things like hosting, funding and promoting familiarization tours for conference planners, attending conferences that will be coming to Yellowknife in the next year and promoting attendance, advertising Yellowknife in the most popular MCIT publications and websites such as MPI, Ignite, Incentive Works, CSAE, and by taking ownership of the City’s membership on event management and registration websites such as CVENT.

For example, the Canadian Council for Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) Annual Meeting is coming to Yellowknife in 2017. If a CED employee were to attend the 2016 event to host a hospitality event to promote the 2017 Yellowknife conference it would help get people revved up about coming to Yellowknife. An engaging video, presented at the end of the 2016 conference that highlights attributes and characteristics that appeal to potential visitors may also encourage delegates to plan to attend the 2017 meeting in Yellowknife and explore opportunities to extend their stay with add on packages.

## **Develop and implement a coordinated online strategy that includes web, social media, and online commerce**

Research shows a trend toward travellers’ increased use of online tools to research, plan, and book their travel. Destinations that do not have rich data, easily-navigated and highly informative sites that enable online booking will risk being left out of tourist travel considerations.

There are currently at least four websites that speak to tourism in Yellowknife. These should be linked, content enhanced and consistency embedded across the four websites. The NWT Tourism website enables potential visitors to book tours from the website, although there are few packages available for booking at present.

Under this strategy, the City will create unity and consistency among the websites that currently promote Yellowknife as a tourist destination, encourage the development of easy-to-purchase packages, and provide compelling content for the sites.

The City should actively partner with NWT Tourism to ensure that the Yellowknife section of its site is greatly enhanced, and seamlessly links to Yellowknife's other online destination marketing resources.

In addition to coordinating websites, this strategy includes the development of a comprehensive social media strategy that monitors and maximizes popular travel-related social media sites such as TripAdvisor, Airbnb, and so on.

### **Improve the visitor experience through low cost, high impact efforts**

Yellowknife attracts a large number of tourists whose first language is not English. Anecdotal evidence suggests that businesses that provide signage in Asian languages benefit from greater tourist traffic than those who provide English only signage.

Under this strategy, the City would provide directional signage (to the downtown core, to the NFVC, to the library, mall, Old Town, and other key tourist destinations) in Japanese and Chinese languages.

In subsequent years of the strategy, additional marketing materials, such as a restaurant/services directory, should be produced in multiple languages.

### **Initiate communication and dialogue with residents, stakeholders, operators, and local businesses with respect to destination marketing efforts, impacts and returns**

The City's Destination Marketing Strategy will only succeed if tourism is seen by residents – and City Council – as a beneficial economic activity. And while it goes without saying that a community's economy benefits from tourism, compelling benefits and ROI need to be communicated so that the community can assess whether the nature and quantum of benefit is sufficient to gain and maintain their support.

Under this strategy, the City – or the Destination Marketing Organization – will communicate with and engage regularly with residents, business owners, City Council and others – on progress toward fulfillment of the goals of this marketing strategy, and the overall returns to Yellowknife from its marketing efforts.

## *Three-year Implementation Priorities*

### **Pre implementation: 2016**

- Approve Destination Marketing Strategy
- Develop Yellowknife tourism brand
- Initiate discussions with NFVA regarding the formation of a DMO
- Initiate discussions with GNWT (MACA) and the Yellowknife Hotels Association regarding implementation of visitor levy
- Create a forum for partners to meet regularly in order to update on progress and coordinate efforts

### **Year 1: 2017**

- Establish a Tourism Manager position within the City's Economic Development Department dedicated to destination marketing (this position may be devolved to the DMO once established)
- Continue discussions and negotiations with respect to establishing a DMO
- Continue discussions and negotiations with respect to establishing a visitor levy
- Collect baseline data on resident attitudes toward tourism
- Develop directional signage and other materials for visitors in multiple languages
- Consolidate web presence; create and launch an online strategy
- Develop a single Yellowknife visitors' guide
- Partner with NWT Tourism on local tourism/media familiarization tours
- Partner with NWT Tourism to provide content for its website
- Partner with NWT Tourism to promote/secure conference and meetings travel

### **Year 2: 2018**

- Commission DMO, funded by visitor levy funds
- Create a downtown visitor's hub
- Develop and implement tools to communicate with the public on the impact of tourism
- Implement online and social media strategy
- Create and launch "host" campaign
- Continue to explore and maximize partnership opportunities with tourism stakeholders
- Begin exploration of opportunities with link-up jurisdictions such as Edmonton, Whitehorse, and NWT communities
- Broker the development of tourist "packages"
- Begin planning to host first annual tour operator conference
- Conduct annual Yellowknife resident tourism survey

### Year 3: 2019

- Continue to explore and maximize partnership opportunities with tourism stakeholders
- Continue to explore and maximize opportunities with link-up jurisdictions such as Edmonton, Whitehorse, and NWT communities
- Continue to broker the development of tourist “packages”
- Continue to implement and monitor social media strategy
- Host first annual tour operator conference
- Review and update Destination Marketing strategy

# Marketing Plan

The following outlines tactics for the first three years of implementation (2017-2019), as well as the detailed implementation plan, schedule and budget for the first year of implementation (2017).

## *Tactics*

This section describes the marketing tools and activities that will be undertaken in support of the strategies and priorities for the Destination Marketing Strategy from 2017-2019. A detailed schedule for year 1 (2017) is included under the heading **Implementation plan and schedule**.

### Pre-implementation (June – December 2016)

#### **1. Approve strategy and communicate strategy to stakeholders**

Several stakeholders were consulted in the development of this strategy. The success of this Destination Marketing Strategy requires strong partnership, cooperation, and collaboration among a broad cross section of tourism stakeholders. One of the first imperatives will be to communicate the strategy to stakeholders and invite them to work in partnership with the City on its strategy.

#### **2. Develop and establish Yellowknife's Destination Marketing brand**

This strategy and plan includes a draft concept for a brand that encapsulates all that Yellowknife has to offer as a travel destination. One of the initial steps of this strategy will be to refine the brand to support a positive, strategic, deliberate and consistent positioning reflective of existing NWTT branding and other wordmarks. The brand will be visual and emotional and will be the foundation for all marketing products (e.g. the DMO website, media kit, advertisements, etc.).

#### **3. Begin discussions with GNWT and NWT Hotels Association regarding a visitor levy**

A visitor levy must be put in place to create a sustainable source of funding for destination marketing efforts. The levy will allow local hotel and tourism operators to collect a small fee, of approximately 3% on all hotel room stays in Yellowknife. A similar levy exists in most major Canadian cities including Edmonton, Calgary, St. John's (3 per cent), Jasper, Medicine Hat (2%), Vancouver (3.5%), and Winnipeg

(5%) for example<sup>18</sup>. The revenue from this fee will be dedicated to funding the destination marketing efforts described in this plan.

The City will need to work closely with MACA and the Yellowknife Hotel Association to get their cooperation to implement the levy and encourage them to participate in the program.

**4. Initiate discussions with NFVA regarding establishment of a DMO**

Creating a DMO creates an independent entity dedicated to marketing Yellowknife as a destination. This approach has been used successfully in other jurisdictions such as Fairbanks and Reykjavik.

Consistent with an approach to eliminate overlap and duplication, this strategy proposes that the DMO be created within an existing tourism entity such as the NFVA, for which such a role would be a natural extension of its existing mandate. (NFVA currently works to meet the needs of visitors once they arrive in Yellowknife; the addition of DMO responsibilities would extend this role to include reaching out to visitors before they arrive in Yellowknife.) The NFVA has indicated an interest in exploring this role with the City.

The DMO will be mandated, contracted and (financially) resourced. As part of its year 1 tourism marketing priorities, the City’s Tourism Marketing Manager will develop a plan that includes timelines, key activities, terms of reference (TOR), information about the visitor levy and transition planning. With approval of the plan by CED, the Marketing Manager will begin discussions and negotiations with NVCA with respect to taking on the DMO role.

**5. Establish and chair a tourism stakeholders’ forum (ongoing).**

The City will create a forum for partners to meet regularly to update each other on destination marketing activities, and to look for opportunities to partner, lever and coordinate efforts. The City will act as a catalyst for conversations between the NFVA, NWT Tourism, the Chamber of Commerce, Yellowknife Hotels Association, ITI, tourism operators and others to maximize opportunities for partnership and foster cooperative and trusting relationships. Partner meetings should take place at least quarterly.

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<sup>18</sup> [www.tour-guide-canada.com](http://www.tour-guide-canada.com)



## Year 1 tactics (2017)

### **1. Staff a full-time marketing position.**

A full-time Destination Marketing Manager position within CED will be needed to move forward the implementation of the Yellowknife Destination Marketing Strategy. The City will fund a position in fiscal 2017 until a visitor levy can be instituted to fund the position on a permanent basis (see below). Ideally, this position will transition to the DMO as its Executive Director once it is established.

### **6. Collect baseline data by surveying Yellowknife residents.**

In order to measure progress on the Destination Marketing Strategy, baseline data needs to be gathered before the strategy is implemented. Therefore, a baseline survey will be developed and administered to Yellowknife residents. The survey will include questions to measure public opinions and support for tourism in Yellowknife. The survey will be repeated annually to measure movement against baseline.

### **7. Establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or partnership with NWT Tourism's Conference Bureau.**

NWT Tourism's Conference Bureau is doing important work to promote Yellowknife as a conference destination: one of the goals of the Destination Marketing Strategy. In order to close the loop on the work being done by NWT Tourism's Conference Bureau, the City should establish an MOU with the Conference Bureau. The MOU would formalize an agreement between the City of Yellowknife and NWT Tourism's Conference Bureau that sets out expectations, roles and responsibilities to work together on marketing efforts and to maximize opportunities. The MOU can include specific activities such as identifying and pursuing conferences, hosting familiarization tours for conference planners and creating a Yellowknife conference-specific press kit, to get bids "across the finish line".

### **8. Measure and communicate tourism ROI (ongoing).**

Without resident and City Council support, the Destination Marketing Strategy will not succeed. Therefore, the City needs to demonstrate the benefits, value and ROI of destination marketing efforts.

The Measurement and Evaluation section of this marketing plan describes how success will be measured, and this success will need to be communicated to Yellowknife residents on a regular basis. To do this, the City will compile data and stories emphasizing the benefits that residents and local businesses derive from destination marketing in a single publication that could be included as an insert in NWT News/North or the Yellowknifer.

The City will launch a regular (annual or semi-annual) communication for distribution to Yellowknife residents. The communication will highlight stories, facts and financial benefits of investing in tourism. The information will also be mounted online on the City website.

**9. Create high impact signage.**

Signage helps visitors find their way around Yellowknife. With proper signage (i.e. branded, in various languages and highly visible), visitors will be better able to explore what Yellowknife has to offer. By 2019, Yellowknife will have signage informed by wayfinding principles and reflective of the destination marketing branding.

**10. Consolidate web presence; create and launch an online strategy (ongoing).**

Various organizations in Yellowknife have taken the initiative to promote the city online. In order to streamline efforts and consolidate information, the City will assess potential links, similarities, overlaps and gaps between the various websites and their viewership. The City will look for ways to coordinate efforts among the organizations that host these websites to, at a minimum, ensure links between the sites, and explore opportunities to consolidate efforts. Discussions will be initiated with partners and stakeholders about best ways to have a consistent, effective web presence.

Online users are constantly flooded with information. To help them navigate through all the information about Yellowknife available on the Internet, the City will create and implement a comprehensive 2016-2019 online strategy. The strategy will:

- Create unity and consistency among websites that currently promote Yellowknife as a tourist destination (e.g. [City of Yellowknife](#), [Visit Yellowknife](#) and [Spectacular NWT](#)).
- Encourage the development of easy-to-purchase online packages.
- Provide compelling content for existing sites (such as the NWT Tourism site) that promote – or have the potential to effectively promote -- Yellowknife as a travel destination.
- Include a comprehensive social media strategy for the use and monitoring of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. (DMO-dedicated social media accounts will launch in 2018 when the DMO is commissioned. In the meantime, the City will create and share content with existing organizations that have a social presence so they can share it and promote it with their followers).
- Include opportunities to maximize promotion of Yellowknife on popular travel websites such as [Trip Advisor](#), [Airbnb](#), [Couch Surfing](#), [Booking.com](#), [Expedia](#), [Lonely Planet](#), etc.
- Include a high-level editorial calendar for all platforms.
- Mobilize residents through the creation of sharable content (i.e. content they can interact with and feel prone to share with their personal networks on social media).

**11. Investigate development of a single Yellowknife visitors' guide.**

Yellowknife has a variety of visitors' guides available for tourists. To provide consistency and unity of messaging, the City will initiate discussions with tourism stakeholders to create a single Yellowknife visitors' guide.

## Year 2 tactics (2018)

All tactics marked as “ongoing” in year 1 will continue in year 2. Additional year two tactics include:

### **1. Create and launch a “host” campaign (ongoing)**

An important way to improve visitor experience is to equip local residents to be good hosts. Yellowknife residents promote Yellowknife to their friends and family through word of mouth, stories, their personal social networks, and so on. Therefore, a host campaign would include four elements:

- Providing residents with content and relevant information about Yellowknife to share with their friends and family (e.g. places to go to in Yellowknife, things to do/see, etc.). This content will primarily be shared via social media.
- Providing residents with information about tours and packages for their relatives or friends. This information can be picked up in physical locations across the city and shared online.
- Encouraging residents to be good hosts for all visitors by making them ambassadors of Yellowknife. The City can acknowledge Yellowknifers’ friendly character towards visitors by featuring stories, local ambassadors and local initiatives that support destination marketing. This will be done through social media.
- Promoting/placing ads on websites and social networking sites that the target market visit when researching the place their friend or relative calls home (e.g. City of Yellowknife website, Spectacular NWT website, etc.).

### **2. Participate in NWT Tourism FAM tours**

Travel media need content and legitimate information sources. The City of Yellowknife can provide both. Information, images and videos that promote Yellowknife as a destination will be packaged in the form of a media kit. The set of promotional materials will be distributed to media in cooperation with NWT Tourism at tourism and travel conferences and through their tourism agents. The media kit will also be shared with partners so they can upload it to their websites or distribute it to their clients and stakeholders. The media kit enables journalists to access information and media so they can write about Yellowknife. Elements of the media kit can also be repurposed as sharable content for social media.

The City will also explore opportunities to participate with NWT Tourism to host Yellowknife-based familiarization tours with travel media and industry representatives.

### **3. Prepare to commission DMO**

Once the DMO has been negotiated and the visitor levy approved, the City will prepare to commission the DMO in 2018. If appropriate, the City will transfer its full time destination marketing manager to the newly formed DMO and the staff will take the role of Executive Director of the DMO.

### **4. Broker packages between operators (ongoing)**

Many aurora tourists who come to Yellowknife lack daytime activities while they wait for their nightly aurora tours. The City will initiate, through the partnership forum, the development of tourist “packages”

among tour operators that can be promoted at the tourism hub/kiosk, at the NFVC and on the NWT Tourism website. These might include, (as ideas or examples) a series of one- to two-hour self-guided tours that visitors can download from a website or pick up at the downtown visitor hub. The tours will encourage visitors to discover Yellowknife on their own and provide them with daytime activities to engage in while waiting for aurora viewing. The City can work with designated “tour stops” to provide incentives at each stop (e.g. visitors can collect a postcard at each destination or get their photo taken with a Polaroid). These self-guided tours can be tailored to the season and the target market. These tours can benefit from the wayfinding signage plan.

Local tour operators offer enticing experiences for visitors but tend to operate in silos. The City, along with other tourism stakeholders such as NWTT and NFVA will foster partnerships where possible. In order to improve the experience of visitors once they arrive to Yellowknife and to cater to the target market, the City will work toward brokering visitor packages between the various tour operators and travel agencies in Yellowknife (e.g. Top of the World Travel). These packages can be included in promotional initiatives and on the NWT Tourism website and can cater to each type of traveller identified in the target market (e.g. the website can include proposed itineraries for the “adventure seeker” different from itineraries created for the “culture connoisseur”, and so on).

The City can also explore the possibility of featuring local tour operators and other organizations and businesses in marketing and promotional materials. This tactic could provide advertising revenue.

**5. Establish a downtown visitor hub or a “tourism marketplace” (ongoing)**

A successful Destination Marketing Strategy relies on visitors having a positive visitor experience once they arrive in Yellowknife. The City/DMO will act as incubator and catalyst for a physical space in downtown Yellowknife (e.g. Centre Square Mall) to support tour operator kiosks and offer information about packages and activities to do in Yellowknife. The City will fund and coordinate the establishment of this hub until the function is transferred to the DMO.

**6. Conduct annual tourism Yellowknife resident survey (ongoing)**

Measuring progress is key to the success of the Destination Marketing Strategy. The City will conduct a survey of Yellowknife residents using the questions from the survey conducted earlier in 2017 to collect baseline data. This survey will be the first indication of progress on the Destination Marketing Strategy and will be conducted at the end of every year.

**Year 3 tactics (2019)**

All tactics marked as “ongoing” in years 1 and 2 will carry on in year 3. Additional tactics include:

**1. Investigate partnerships with other jurisdictions**

An important sector of the target market chooses Yellowknife as a travel destination because they can also visit other travel destinations nearby (e.g. they come to see the aurora in Yellowknife and then go ski in Banff). This tactic is about creating and promoting bundled products or packages by working with

other Canadian and northern jurisdictions. These bundles benefit both jurisdictions that create a strong internationally-competitive tour offering.

**2. Plan and execute an operator workshop/conference.**

The newly commissioned DMO will plan and execute a workshop/conference for Yellowknife tourism operators and the tourism travel trade. This workshop will provide a forum and opportunity for tour operators to pursue further partnership opportunities among operators, provide training that will help operators further develop their products and how they are marketed to others. It will also serve a dual purpose of introducing, in a single location, the tourism travel trade to Yellowknife tourism products.

**3. Review and update the Destination Marketing Strategy**

Once the DMO is commissioned and established, this marketing strategy should be reviewed and updated. Successes should be identified along with changes to the marketing/tourism environment. Progress against goals should be evaluated, and where appropriate, new goals, objectives and strategies developed.

*Implementation Plan and Schedule*

This section presents a detailed schedule of marketing tactics for pre-implementation (2016) and the first year of implementation (2017). The schedule includes a recommended timeline, actions and who has lead responsibility.

The timeline will be subject to changes depending on approvals and unforeseen circumstances.

**Implementation timeline: June – December 2016**

Timeline	Tactic and specific actions	Lead
<b>Spring 2016</b>	<b>Approval and roll out of Destination Marketing Strategy</b>	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present Destination Marketing Strategy to City Council for approval</li> <li>Upon approval, communicate strategy to stakeholders</li> <li>Use roll out to initiate tourism stakeholder forum</li> </ul>	CED (City)
<b>Summer 2016</b>	<b>Develop brand</b>	
May - August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue development of the Yellowknife Tourism brand including development of visual identity guide, colour palette, font and marketing templates (such as signage, advertising, etc.)</li> </ul>	Contractor
<b>Fall 2016</b>	<b>Initiate visitor levy negotiations</b>	
September - November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Congee support from Yellowknife Hotels Association and other tourism stakeholders for introduction of visitor levy</li> <li>Meet with MACA/GNWT to explore options for implementation of a visitor levy</li> </ul>	CED (City) Stakeholders MACA

Timeline	Tactic and specific actions	Lead
<b>Fall 2016</b>	<b>Initiate DMO negotiations</b>	
September - November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with NFVA to explore/confirm interest in operating DMO</li> <li>Discuss potential DMO terms of reference</li> </ul>	CED (City) NFVA
<b>Fall 2016</b>	<b>Recruit Tourism Marketing Manager</b>	
November-December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop job description, terms of reference</li> <li>Place job ad and recruit and interview candidates</li> </ul>	CED (City) NFVA

### Implementation timeline: 2017

<b>Winter 2016</b>	<b>Staff a full-time marketing position.</b>	
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing Manager on-boarded</li> </ul>	CED (City)
<b>Winter 2017</b>	<b>Establish MOU with Conference Bureau</b>	
January - February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with Conference Bureau to explore mutual conference marketing opportunities, roles and responsibilities</li> <li>Confirm agreements in MOU</li> </ul>	Marketing Manager (City) Conference Bureau (NWTT)
<b>Winter/ Spring/ 2017</b>	<b>Continue DMO discussions with NFVA</b>	
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize Terms of Reference</li> <li>Establish roles, responsibilities, and relationship</li> <li>Establish budget</li> <li>Create MOU/contract</li> </ul>	Marketing Manager (City) NFVA
<b>Winter/ Spring/ Summer 2017</b>	<b>Continue visitor levy discussions and initiate levy</b>	
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend regular meetings to identify and resolve issues, identify process, determine mechanisms for initiation, and implementation schedule with 2018 start date.</li> <li>Finalize levy agreements for implementation January, 2018</li> </ul>	Marketing Manager (City) MACA Hotel Association
<b>Spring 2017</b>	<b>Collect baseline data by surveying Yellowknife residents.</b>	

March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create survey tool.</li> <li>• Analyze data.</li> </ul>	Marketing Manager (City)
<b>Summer 2017</b>	<b>Visitor's guide</b>	
June - Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with stakeholder forum members on options to consolidate Yellowknife visitor's guide, and pursue agreed options.</li> </ul>	City and partners
<b>Summer 2017</b>	<b>Create high impact signage</b>	
June - Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with stakeholder forum members on signage function, location, and language priorities.</li> <li>• Work with contractor to design, create and install signage</li> </ul>	Marketing Manager (City) Stakeholders
<b>Fall 2017</b>	<b>Consolidate web presence, create and launch online strategy</b>	
September - December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with stakeholder forum members on various websites and options to maximize tourism benefit and minimize overlap.</li> <li>• Create social media strategy involving interested stakeholders</li> <li>• Implement online strategy</li> </ul>	Marketing Manager (City) Stakeholders

# Measurement and Evaluation

The City of Yellowknife undertake ongoing performance measurement and evaluation that will allow the City to take advantage of opportunities as they arise, maximize efforts on areas delivering highest levels of impact, and measure and report on the success of the strategy. The measures of success for this plan will be more than the number of visitor arrivals to City of Yellowknife. More refined measures of success will include how the brand is perceived, success in the setup of the destination marketing support organizations and improving the visitor experience.

Goal	Key Performance Indicator (objective)
Yellowknife has a Destination Marketing Organization that works with other tourism stakeholders as a catalyst and broker of marketing partnership opportunities for Yellowknife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A destination marketing organization (DMO) is established for Yellowknife by 2018.</li> <li>• An adequate and sustainable revenue stream (visitor levy) is established by 2018 and funds the work of the DMO.</li> </ul>
Yellowknife’s brand is well-established and recognized among stakeholders, residents, and visitors. Yellowknife is known as an accessible destination providing unique and authentic northern Canadian experiences such as aurora/midnight sun, natural/outdoor experiences, and authentic cultural experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of (non-conference) visitors increases by 10% year over year for the next 5 years, <i>as measured in ITI’s annual Tourism Indicators report for the North Slave Region (Yellowknife Visitor Numbers)</i>.</li> <li>• Traveller exit surveys return high levels of (overall) visitor satisfaction, <i>as measured from the results of the NWT Visitor Exit Survey Report</i>.</li> <li>• Social media analytics</li> </ul>
Yellowknife is considered a highly attractive and desirable location for regional and national conferences, meetings, and events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of conference, meeting and event attendees (coordinated in partnership with the Conference Bureau) increases by 10% per year for the next 5 years, <i>as measured by NWT Tourism’s Conference Bureau Activity report</i>.</li> </ul>
Yellowknife residents, City Council, and tourism stakeholders are highly supportive of destination marketing due to its demonstrated benefits, value and ROI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents, when surveyed, identify tourism as positive and providing an overall net benefit to Yellowknife, <i>as measured by a resident survey to be conducted by the City of Yellowknife or its DMO</i>.</li> <li>• City Council continues to support, year over year, the existence and resourcing of the city’s Destination Marketing Organization.</li> <li>• Stakeholders, tourism operators and local businesses are working collaboratively to attract and serve visitors to Yellowknife.</li> </ul>



# Budget

This Destination Marketing Strategy will be funded in large measure by a visitor levy. However, the City must make initial investments in destination marketing until the time that the levy is in place and available funds are flowing to the City/DMO from the levy. This approach is consistent with the City's past practice of incubating sustainable activities with one-time investments.

This need for City investment in tourism marketing will exist until the visitor levy is approved and may need to be renewed depending on the timing of the visitor levy. This strategy and budget is predicated on the assumption that the visitor levy will be in place by January 2018, and that the City will resource the strategy from City revenues until that time. The projected budget for the remainder of fiscal 2016 (pre-implementation) and fiscal 2017 (year 1 marketing plan), which will require an investment estimated at approximately \$370,000.

In the following years of the strategy, the DMO will operate on a budget determined by levy receipts, but anticipated to be of \$1 M to \$3 M representing approximately 50% of the visitor levy revenues. The quantum of levy revenue made available to tourism marketing will dictate how quickly the plan can be implemented and the outcomes that can be achieved.

## Budget: Pre-implementation (to December 2016)

Activity/task	Basis of cost	Additional Budget
Roll out strategy to stakeholders	Internal staff cost Hospitality cost for meetings Mailing costs for communications	\$0
Develop and establish Yellowknife's Destination Marketing brand.	Agency costs	\$0
Initiate discussions with GNWT and YK Hotels Association regarding visitor levy	Internal staff cost	\$0
Initiate discussions with NFVA regarding establishment of a DMO.	Internal staff cost	\$0
Establish and chair a tourism stakeholders' forum (ongoing).	Internal staff cost Hospitality cost for meetings Mailing costs for communications	\$0
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$0</b>

The City will also need to fund budget for fiscal 2017. (Once established in 2018, the visitor levy will provide sustainable funding for the DMO.)

## Year 1 Implementation Budget (January – December 2017)

Activity/task	Basis of cost	Budget
Staff a full-time marketing position.	6 months of full time management position plus statutory deductions and benefits	\$150,000
Continue discussions and negotiations with respect to establishing a visitor levy	Internal staff cost	\$0
Continue discussions and negotiations with respect to establishing a DMO	Internal staff cost	\$0
Collect baseline data by surveying Yellowknife residents.	External contract	\$30,000
Continue to stakeholders' forum (ongoing).	Internal staff cost Hospitality cost for meetings Mailing costs for communications	\$2,000
Establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or partnership with NWT Tourism's Conference Bureau.	Internal staff cost Budget for participating in MPI (or similar) conference, Conference Bureau fam	\$50,000
Create high impact signage.	Internal staff cost Production/printing/installation costs	\$50,000
Consolidate web presence; create and launch an online strategy (ongoing).	Internal staff costs	\$0
Investigate development of a single Yellowknife visitors' guide.	Internal staff costs Production/printing/distribution	\$18,000
Partnership activities	Pursuing opportunities arising from partnership forum discussions	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$350,000</b>

## Year 2 Implementation Budget (January – December 2018)\*

\*This year two budget anticipates that funds from the visitor levy will begin to flow in 2018, and will provide approximately \$1 million in support of destination marketing activities in the first year. Should the levy be delayed, and not in place for fiscal 2018, marketing activities can continue, but will proceed at a slower pace.

In 2019 and years following, the DMO will have access to the up to \$3M from the visitor levy which will be used to fund year 3 priorities and future operational needs of the organization.

Activity/task	Basis of cost	Budget
Continue stakeholder forum (continued from year 1)	Internal staff cost Hospitality cost for meetings Mailing costs for communications	\$2,000
Partnership activities (continued from year 1)	Budget for pursuit of joint initiatives	\$100,000
Continue to partner with Conference Bureau (continued from year 1)	Internal staff cost Budget for participating in MPI (or similar) conference, Conference Bureau fam	\$50,000
Implementation of online strategy (continued from year 1)	Internal staff cost Social media and web services costs (may be contracted)	\$60,000
Fund production of visitor's guide (continued from year 1)	Internal staff costs Production/printing/distribution	\$18,000
Create and launch a "host" campaign	Agency costs	\$100,000
Participate in NWT Tourism FAM tours.	FAM hosting budget Internal staff costs	\$50,000
Prepare to commission DMO (including visitor hub or "tourism marketplace").	Full time management position plus statutory deductions and benefits Office renovation, rent and furniture Operations costs	\$500,000
Broker packages between operators and develop marketable tours/packages	Internal staff costs Hospitality cost for meetings Contracted design, printing	\$10,000
Conduct annual tourism Yellowknife resident survey	External contract	\$20,000
Continue to measure and communicate tourism ROI (continued from year 1)		\$20,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$950,000</b>

## Appendix: Brand Concept

# Concept

Yellowknife's tourism brand is as bold, evocative, quirky as the community and its people. Proudly different, living on the edge of many things: adventure, weather extremes, skies that go on forever – with aurora in the winter and endless sun in the summer. We're extreme and loving it.

Step off the tarmac and be prepared to be surprised. Urban appeal edging up against rustic folklore. On the edge of wilderness, there's plenty to see and do, both on land and on water. Paddle board on the Bay. Kite ski on the ice-road. Fish in one of Canada's deepest lakes or dare to take the Arctic plunge in frigid temps. Culture is alive and rich with many native legends and traditions.

We dare you to take to embrace our Yellowknife. Embrace life on the edge.

# Imagery



## Keywords

**PEOPLE**

Community

SURPRISE!

LIFE ON THE EDGE

Endless sun in the summer

AURORA IN THE WINTER

EDGE OF WILDERNESS

EMBRACE

**Extreme**

URBAN APPEAL

# Colours

Much like the city's location, at the edge of wilderness and land comes ....life! That WOW factor in there 'it' is! The colours for this campaign has to be daring, have to pop and grab attention. Bold, contemporary colours add to the 'edginess' of this direction.

Primary



Secondary



# Fonts

Rugged, eye-catching, solid and bold

**IMPACT LABEL**

IMPACT LABEL

Gotham - light **Gotham - bold** Gotham - medium



## Tourism Logo

Yellowknife a city perched at the edge of more pristine wilderness than you've ever imagined. Where "in the middle of nowhere" meets all the comforts of home with charming Northern urban flair. Where the aurora and midnight sun will take your breath away. We are the gateway to Canada's North.

The city deserves a proper tourism logo paying homage to its many characteristics but focusing on the two capturing qualities: aurora borealis and midnight sun.

Two ways to show this, movement and colours.

The waves, a simple movement yet packed with such Northern allure. The dancing night skies, the blazing rays of the midnight sun and the enthusiastic snap of the arctic wind, not to mention the lapping sounds from the many lakes that surround the capital city.

And the colours can't come more alive then they do in Yellowknife, its a wonder more people don't live here! The eye naturally gravitates to bright colours which motivates, awakens and encourages inspiration.

Together with a modern serif font that is strong and thick, these elements simply say...

Yellowknife.

tourism  
**Yellowknife**  
Northwest Territories





**Yello**<sup>tourism</sup>  
Northwest Territories



