



2020 HAY RIVER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN





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As a transportation hub with several natural attractions and long-standing organized community events, the town of Hay River has a rich history of attracting visitors to the town.

With NWT visitation numbers at an all-time high and projecting to increase, Hay River can further capitalize on the tourism demand by identifying and developing its tourism product. The Town of Hay River and the Tourism and Economic Development Committee recognized the value of an updated tourism development plan that analyzes today's tourism environment and outlines strategic opportunities. Through this interest, a 3 year plan has been developed to set the course of tourism development for the Town of Hay River and to provide insight to the local tourism stakeholders.

The 2020 Hay River Tourism Development Plan builds upon the research, goals and strategies conducted and identified in the community's last approved tourism plan, the 2012 Town of Hay River Tourism Development Plan. The 2012 plan was developed through a thorough analysis of the Hay River area tourism environment and incorporated many data inputs. To build on the work completed through the 2012 plan, more recent key inputs were considered and appropriately integrated into the 2020 version.

A refined vision and complementary set of goals relevant to tourism development for the town of Hay River sets the general direction and focus for tourism improvement. In order to achieve the defined goals and the ultimate vision of tourism for Hay River, a strong understanding of the community's environment is essential. Identified key strengths must be leveraged and opportunities seized while current weaknesses and threats are mitigated. Through this reflection tourism strategies are formed that are realistic and achievable.

The 2020 Tourism Development Plan incorporates a set of yearly initiatives for each strategy presented. Initiatives are prioritized and will be assigned to Town of Hay River staff as objectives for completion. Important to achieving the initiatives is securing necessary financial resources. With a strong competition for limited dollars, it will be important to access contribution funding from outside sources.



LOUISE FALLS



HAY DAYS FESTIVAL



HAY RIVER GOLF COURSE



PORRITT LANDING

1. Plan Forecast

The 2020 Hay River Tourism Development Plan defines a long-term tourism vision and accompanying goals while emphasizing short-term strategies and initiatives. The vision and goals are intended to stand the test of time while the strategic initiatives are presented over a shorter period in attempts to focus on more immediate operational action. Initiatives are allocated through a 3 year schedule with an indication of what success through implementation will look like.

2. Product Development Versus Marketing

A key factor in successfully executing a tourism product is marketing. The 2020 Hay River Tourism Development Plan focuses on identifying and setting a path for development of Hay River's tourism product. In some cases, the 2020 plan may highlight the need for marketing activities, but it will not get into the specifics of how to market. A separate tourism marketing plan will be developed to outline how to best market and support the "sale" of the tourism product identified through the tourism development plan.

3. Researching the Tourism Environment

The 2020 Hay River Tourism Development Plan considers several key inputs and sources of information. This information provides prospective on the tourism environment for Hay River and insight for setting strategies and direction for the community to take in developing its tourism product.

2012 TOWN OF HAY RIVER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The 2012 Town of Hay River Tourism Development Plan was built upon a diverse array of research which included surveys, interviews, and content reviews. Key observations, suggestions and conclusions were identified and formed the basis for a five year strategic plan.

Building a Solid Foundation

This plan identified the need to build a solid foundation that included hiring a full time Tourism Coordinator, developing the Town website to include tourism packages, and developing a marina that provides access to Hay River's water based assets.

Coordinating, Collaborating and Developing

The 2012 plan stressed the importance of partnerships to develop packages and move the community from a day-tripper destination to a weekend or 2-3 day destination. Enhancing the Visitor Information Centre, developing a community brand, expanding relationships with Katlodeeche First Nations, and building community support for tourism were identified priorities.

Assessing Development and Setting Your Sights Higher

Improving the understanding of visitation was thought to be needed to elevate tourism in the community. Development of visitation data and monitoring indicators would be important first steps towards making informed decisions on marketing and future tourism development.

2019 TOWN OF HAY RIVER TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE PLANNING SESSION

In October 2019 the Town's Tourism and Economic Development Committee (T&EDC) held a strategic planning session to develop goals and strategies that they felt were pertinent to developing tourism within Hay River.

Tourism Goals

Through analysis of results of a T&EDC SWOT exercise, participants were asked to reflect on some of the key messages they felt were being presented and transpose them into goals related to the general tourism components of accommodations, accessibility, and attractions. The goals would not be actionable as themselves but would rely on development and execution of specific strategies or initiatives in order to achieve. The resulting top goals agreed upon through the group were:

- **Enhanced Variety of Food Service Options in Hay River**
- **Improved Online Tourism Presence and Booking Services**
- **Developed Look, Theme and Beautification of Hay River**
- **Improved Signage for Local Services, Accommodations, Facilities and Attractions**

Strategies

With the tourism goals defined, the T&EDC worked to identify realistic strategies to achieve them. Strategies were voted on for thought relevance and to prioritize for any implementation. The top results are presented for each goal.

- **Enhanced Variety of Food Service Options in Hay River**
 1. Promote a Multi-Cultural Food Festival
 2. Promote Local Cuisine and Food Ingredients
 3. Promote Dene Food Culture and Interactive Experiences
- **Improved Online Tourism Presence and Booking Services**
 1. Offer Social Media Training for All Local Businesses
 2. Improve Overall Reach of Audience for Hay River Tourism Facebook Page
 3. Encourage Tourists to Post & Share Photos of Local Attractions
- **Developed Look, Theme and Beautification of Hay River**
 1. Incorporate Green Design and Building Standards into Development Bylaws
 2. Enhance Trails / Boardwalk Along River
 3. Implement a Theme for the Town to Incorporate into Infrastructure, Signage and Promotions
- **Improved Signage for Local Services, Accommodations, Facilities and Attractions**
 1. Implement Key Interpretive and Wayfinding Signage for Local Attractions that Incorporate the Established Theme of the Town



2019-23 TOWN OF HAY RIVER STRATEGIC PLAN

The current Town of Hay River Council recognized the importance of taking a strategic approach to outlining priorities that would form the focus of their term of Council. In 2019 Council met with Town management and key representatives to develop a 4-year strategic plan. The result of the session was a high-level strategic document that set a new vision, mission, goals and strategies for the term through consideration of key pillars of Governance, Economy, Social and Culture, and Environment.

One of the goals identified in the 2019-23 Plan was to Promote Hay River as a Tourism Destination. The goal set the tone for the importance of tourism for the Town of Hay River and represents a commitment to ensuring appropriate resources are in place for developing the tourism product. Strategies for achieving the goal were identified as:



K'AMBA CARNIVAL DOG MUSHING

2020 TOWN OF HAY RIVER TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN

The 2020 Tourism and Economic Development Department (T&EDD) Annual Business Plan was developed in consideration of several planning documents and operational needs. It outlines key activities planned to be executed by the Tourism and Economic Development Department in 2020.

- **Develop Tourism Related Infrastructure**
Facilities such as the Visitor Information Centre, Fisherman's Wharf, beach and Porritt Landing are attractive to tourists.
- **Develop and Implement a Tourism Marketing Strategy**
Tourism focuses on Hay River's competitive advantages in areas such as summer tourism and athletic events.
- **Partner with external groups and regional partners to support events and ideas that bring tourists to Hay River**
Hay River is known as a willing partner in local and regional events that attract people to the town and region.

Other goals and strategies are presented in the 2019-23 that can serve to indirectly improve tourism or could be achieved through tourism related initiatives. These should be considered in any tourism planning.

- **Strengthen Relationships between Hay River and Local Indigenous Groups**
- **Promote and Celebrate Local Culture**

Update the Tourism Plan

Through consultation with various local tourism operators, the Tourism and Economic Development Committee of Council, NWT tourism agencies, and Town Council, develop a multi-year Tourism Plan that outlines key initiatives and resources required to support implementation.

Develop a Marketing Plan

Development and execution of a multiyear plan for advertising and promoting core elements of the Tourism Plan. This includes, in coordination with regional municipalities, outfitters, ITI, and NWT Tourism, a strategy and materials to promote tourism within the South Slave Region.

Install Highway Signage

In conjunction with the implementation of the Marketing Plan, the specific design and implementation of highway signage intended to attract rubber tire traffic to the community.

Support Outfitters and Guides

Advocate for development of outfitters and guides, provide general support, and market available services. Encourage and support the development of marketable tourist packages.

Improve the Visitor Information Centre

Complete the final phase of improvements to the Visitor Information Centre. This includes landscaping, parking plan, and window covers.



ANNUAL POLAR POND HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

TOURISM 2020 – INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND INVESTMENT - GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

The GNWT department responsible for planning and managing tourism activity at the Territorial level is Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI). The current version of ITI's strategic planning document, Tourism 2020, outlines key focus areas the Territorial Government will invest in to develop and increase the tourism product for the whole of the NWT. Hay River's alignment with ITI's direction can improve the strength of its own tourism plan and better ensure GNWT financial resources are available to execute it.

Focus Areas

Tourism 2020 concentrates on five focus areas that serve as the foundation for development of the tourism economy. The five focus areas and their key objectives contribute toward the development of products that appeal to visitors. ITI has committed to developing and investing in programs that support the attainment of the five focus areas.

- **Visitor Attraction and Experience**
 1. Increase Visitor Volume and Visitor Spending
 2. Increase Supply and Diversity of Tourism Products
 3. Sustain Demand through Visitor Experience Excellence
- **Aboriginal Cultural Tourism**
 1. Support and Encourage the Development of Aboriginal Cultural Tourism
 2. Increase Capacity to offer Aboriginal Cultural Tourism
 3. Strengthen Aboriginal Cultural Tourism through Partnerships
- **Community Tourism Development**
 1. Build the Foundation for Community Tourism
 2. Engage Stakeholders and Build Capacity for Tourism
- **Skills Development**
 1. Develop and Support the Tourism Workforce
- **Tourism Research and Planning**
 1. Focused Research
 2. Gather, Assess, Report and Monitor
 3. Support Research through Partnerships and Engagement

4. Forming the 2020 Hay River Tourism Development Plan

By analyzing the key findings, conclusions and strategies presented through the research, a new strategic plan starts to take shape. An important first step is to establish a common understanding of what tourism should look like for the future, what goals will be needed to meet the vision, and what strategic actions can be taken to meet its tourism goals. Specific strategic initiatives that the Town will undertake and support through the 3-year perspective of the strategic plan can then be articulated.

VISION

The Town of Hay River's tourism vision serves to act as an inspirational driver for developing its tourism product. It is defined through understanding the Town's strategic position within the local tourism environment and its inherent strengths as a community. Thousands of visitors travel by road each year either to visit Hay River specifically or as part of a journey through the NWT. As the NWT continues to market travel and tourism within the Territory, Hay River can capture an increasing portion of the traffic and entice visitors to spend time in the community through an array of developed products and services.

To be recognized as an essential tourism hub and destination of choice for diversified rubber-tire based tourism within the Northwest Territories.



GOALS

Goals are set as tangible elements that if achieved will make Hay River's tourism Vision a reality. Through analyzing the various inputs considered in building Hay River's 2020 Tourism Development Plan, several goals become apparent. It is important to recognize that the goals can only be achieved through a collaborative approach among the various tourism stakeholders and partners within the community. Communication and coordination between these stakeholders and alignment of business plans is critical.

- Attract more rubber tire tourists
- Become an indispensable component of travel to the NWT
- Extend visitors stay in the community
- Celebrate our history, natural environment, and culture
- Develop a diversified, sustainable catalogue of tourism products and services

STRATEGIES

To achieve the defined tourism development Goals, Hay River's tourism strengths must be leveraged, and weaknesses reduced to capitalize on development opportunities made apparent through the research conducted and presented in this plan. The following are the key tourism strategies that Hay River should focus on during the 3-year outlook of the plan.

- **Develop Infrastructure That Will Showcase Hay River's Natural Environment and Culture**

Hay River has an abundant supply of natural features that are attractive to prospective visitors. These are primarily based around Hay River's remarkable water features. Cascading waterfalls at the outskirts of the community, a large river that runs beside and through the community, and kilometers of sandy beach nestled along one of the largest lakes in the world, the Great Slave Lake, are attractions that differentiate the community from most. Developing infrastructure that takes advantage of these features and improves usability and access is a critical strategy for developing Hay River's tourism product.

- **Support and Encourage Market Ready Tourism Product and Services Through Strategic Partnerships**

Perhaps the biggest weakness facing Hay River for attracting and retaining visitors is its lack of market ready tourism products and services. There are very few organized tours and services currently setup and marketed. With an anticipated increase in tourism demand in the area it will be important to support the development of new and enhanced tourism products available. Strategic partnerships can mitigate the risks inherent with any organization or event start-up and help ensure a better product can be delivered to customers.

- **Entice Visitors to the Community Through Improved Town Beautification**

A common theme presented through the research is that improved beautification is thought to be needed to attract and retain visitors in the community. It is also thought to help with peer promotion of the community especially through online social media channels. Beautification is



thought to be highly controllable through Town of Hay River bylaws and procedures and at a relatively low expense. Town beautification helps showcase the natural features of the community and create interest in local tourism infrastructure, products and services.

- **Advance Marketing to Improve Awareness of and Demand for Local Tourism**

While this strategy does not serve to develop a specific tourism product or service, it was felt that awareness of the importance of marketing could not be overlooked in the 2020 tourism development plan. General initiatives are suggested for marketing areas that the town should undertake. Specific marketing initiatives will be presented through a tourism marketing plan.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Defining specific initiatives, the result that is expected through their execution, and the timeline needed for completion sets a tangible operational plan for achieving the defined tourism strategies. Again, our research helps guide and suggest what activities are desirable for the community. The defined results and completion timelines for the initiatives consider a logical prioritization and limited resources available to the Town over a 3-year plan.

Strategy: Develop Infrastructure That Will Showcase Hay River's Natural Environment and Culture

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
a)	Increase Capacity of Porritt Landing	Capacity for 20+ seasonal rental slips	2020
		8+ slips for short term mooring by tourists	2020
		Safe gateway to waterways	2021
b)	Develop Fisherman's Wharf Pavilion	Increased capacity of Fisherman's Wharf market to 17+ booths	2020
		Fisherman's Wharf market season extended by at least 4 weeks	2020
		3 to 4 events and festivals hosted per year	2021
		On site watercraft mooring facilities in place	2021
		Tourism operators using facility as a meeting place	2022
c)	Improve Usability of Local Beaches	Public Beach encourages full-day activities for families through new infrastructure and programming	2020
		Increased actions are taken to help ensure beaches are accessible and clean	2021
d)	Enhance Trail Systems	Trail signage provides direction and interpretive information for all sections of the Great Trail within main town boundaries	2020
		A new trail guide is developed and published	2021
		Trail system supports winter activity such as snowmobiling, dogsledding, snowshoeing and x-country skiing	2021
		The Great Trail is accessible year-round and is in good condition for a variety of uses	2022
e)	Support Development of Unique Accommodations that Showcase Natural Attractions	Bylaws and policies are in place to support the development and operation of unique tourism accommodations	2021
		Multiple accommodation options are made available and promoted as offering natural attractions such as Aurora viewing and water access.	2023

Strategy: Support and Encourage Market Ready Tourism Product and Services

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
a)	Support Development of Indigenous Tourism Offerings	An Indigenous Culture Tourism Plan is developed in partnership with local indigenous groups	2020
		Traditional foods and products are more readily available for purchase through local vendors	2022
		Interpretive cultural tours are being offered	2022
		Reliable dogsledding tour operations available	2022
b)	Support Development of Community Tourism Packages	4 to 6 tourism packages are established for summer and winter seasons	2022
		Packages are marketed through several channels and payment available online	2022
		Tourism packages have acceptable level of guarantee	2023
c)	Support Further Development of Sports Tourism	Legislation and policies are put in place to increase support for organizations hosting multi-community sporting events	2020
		One new Territorial championship is hosted	2021
		One new National / multi province sporting tournament is hosted	2022
		Recreation facilities are enhanced to host new tournaments and championships	2022
d)	Increase Hosting of Conferences and Large Business Meetings	Appropriate conferencing equipment and supplies are available for Town facilities	2020
		Roles defined and Town employees trained on conference hosting and event support	2020
		4 to 5 large business or conferences held per year within the town	2022
e)	Support Development of Tour Operators	Support offered to prospective tourism operators through education, awareness, and lobbying for business development	2020
		Formalized tours are offered such as interpretive waterfall tours, boat trips to waterfalls, fossil tours, Aurora tours, industry tours of transportation facilities (ie. MTS), industry and cultural tours of fishing facilities (ie. Fish Processing Plant)	2023

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f)	Support Development of Festivals and Events	In-kind support provided to increase feasibility of existing or new festivals and events that attract tourists to the community	2020
		1 new annual festival is formed that showcases culture, local foods and uses new tourism infrastructure	2021
g)	Help Build the Foundation for Community Tourism	Hay River Tourism social media accounts followed/liked by 20% more local accounts	2020
		Town of Hay River's event calendar used by 30% of registered local community groups. The event calendar is considered the main source of information on local events and activities	2021
		NorthernMost Host courses offered to all local hospitality and service businesses	2021
		Program in place to support development of an integrated tourism culture within the community.	2023

Strategy: Entice Visitors to the Community Through Improved Town Beautification

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
a)	Develop Urban Beautification and Landscaping Design Guidelines	Guidelines developed outlining beautification and landscaping requirements for public and private entities	2021
b)	Develop a Community Theme	Theme developed that showcases culture and history of the community	2021
		Evidence that theme incorporated into Town communication, marketing and development	2023
c)	Enhance Landscaping of Public Areas	Trees planted at Recreation Centre greenspace	2021
		Plan developed for enhancing landscaping of existing parks and open spaces	2021
		Trees planted to shade downtown industrial area along highway	2023
		Downtown buildings' designs and upkeep are in accordance with Town theme and beautification guidelines	2023
d)	Increase Visibility and Access to River	Access to and visibility of the forks section (West Channel Bridge) of river improved	2021
		Brushing completed for areas that block viewing access of features and attractions including the river	2022

Strategy: Advance Marketing to Improve Awareness of and Demand for Local Tourism

Initiatives (We Will...)		Desired Result(s) or Achievement(s)	Target Completion Time
a)	Development and Implementation of a Tourism Marketing Plan	Detailed operational plan that supports marketing of strategies identified in the 2020 Tourism Development plan	2020
		Increased face-to-face marketing through attendance at 5-6 relevant tradeshow	2020
		Development of relevant electronic and print marketing material using local artist content where applicable	2021
		Promotional material developed for use at tradeshow and sponsored events	2021
b)	Improve Identification of Local Attractions and Amenities	Highway signage erected to entice rubber tire traffic	2020
		Wayfinding signage throughout town to direct visitors and indicate points of interest	2021
		Consistently branded signage designed and installed for trails, parks, amenities and attractions. Inclusion of "selfie" inspired signage.	2021
c)	Improve Marketing Material Targeting for Key Visitor Demographics	In consultation and alignment with ITI, gather, assess, report and monitor key visitation data from the Visitor Information Centre, local accommodations, and local tourism services	2020
d)	Improve Online Presence and Reach	Campaigns undertaken to increase Town social media account followers by 50%	2020
		Improve Town website's visitor information on events, attractions, activities and services	2021
		TripAdvisor pages developed for all community tourism related organizations	2021
		Online sales of tourism services and packages established	2021
e)	Develop Strategic Partnerships with Regional / Territorial	Conferences and meetings held in Hay River as a result of established relationship with NWT Tourism Conference Board	2020
		Marketing material developed that promotes the South Slave Region as a tourism destination	2021
		Increased rubber tire traffic to Hay River a result of a partnership with Mackenzie Frontier Tourism Board	2021
		Increased rubber tire traffic to Hay River a result of a partnerships with Western Arctic, North Slave Region, Deh Cho Region	2022

AURORA OVER THE TOWN OF HAY RIVER

