

Northwest Territories Tourism

# 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

SPECTACULAR  
**NORTHWEST**   
**TERRITORIES**



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



**The challenge of the past year for our industry cannot be understated. The closure of borders and the shut down of travel in the NWT and around the world halted what was on track to be a record-breaking year for tourism in the NWT.**

While other industries and businesses have been afforded a gradual and careful re-opening, this opportunity cannot come for tourism operators until the territory is once again able to welcome visitors.

This Year in Review, then, is a tale of two years.

Three quarters of fiscal 2019-2020 was prior to the emergence of COVID. In those nine months, NWT Tourism undertook an aggressive and highly effective suite of initiatives marketing to consumers, business travellers, media, and

travel trade to showcase the NWT as a place that will transform you. Our marketing efforts were integrated across multiple platforms including digital, social media, web, trade shows, print and more. We were introducing people to the NWT through augmented reality, creating enormous buzz and driving travellers to choose the NWT as their travel destination.

And yet it was the last quarter of the fiscal year — January to March — that dominated our industry and has shifted our focus ever since. As early as January our tour operators were seeing the effects of COVID in Asian markets, and by March, those effects were global.

In times such as these NWT Tourism demonstrates its truly invaluable support to industry. While all tourism-related businesses struggle in the face of COVID travel restrictions, NWT Tourism has been responding through advocacy to secure funding for industry, to redeploy marketing funds to industry supports, and to pivot marketing to keep the NWT alive in the minds of future travellers.

In this Year in Review you'll read about NWT Tourism's "Triple-R" response framework and recovery plan: Response, Recovery, Resilience.

Today we work to respond, recover and build resilience. We continue to advocate for industry, focussing

on creating a clear timeline and roadmap for the safe reopening of borders in hope that there is a path forward to enable a summer season in 2021.

As NWT Tourism works to help industry recover post-COVID, it will do so under new leadership. Cathie Bolstad, NWT Tourism's CEO for the past six years, will be stepping down from her role in December.

Cathie's leadership, energy and dedication to NWT Tourism has moved tourism forward enormously. From the establishment of the Conference Bureau, to evolving marketing to online platforms, to opening up new markets in China, Australia and Mexico, the number of visitors and resulting revenues to the NWT has grown by 43%.

And the past year has shown Cathie's tenacity and tireless advocacy on industry's behalf, as she led the development and implementation of our Triple-R plan for recovery.

I take this opportunity to thank her for strategic and insightful work to grow and support tourism in the NWT. I hope you will take the time to do the same.

**Harold Grinde**  
Chairperson, NWT Tourism

# TOURISM AND COVID-19

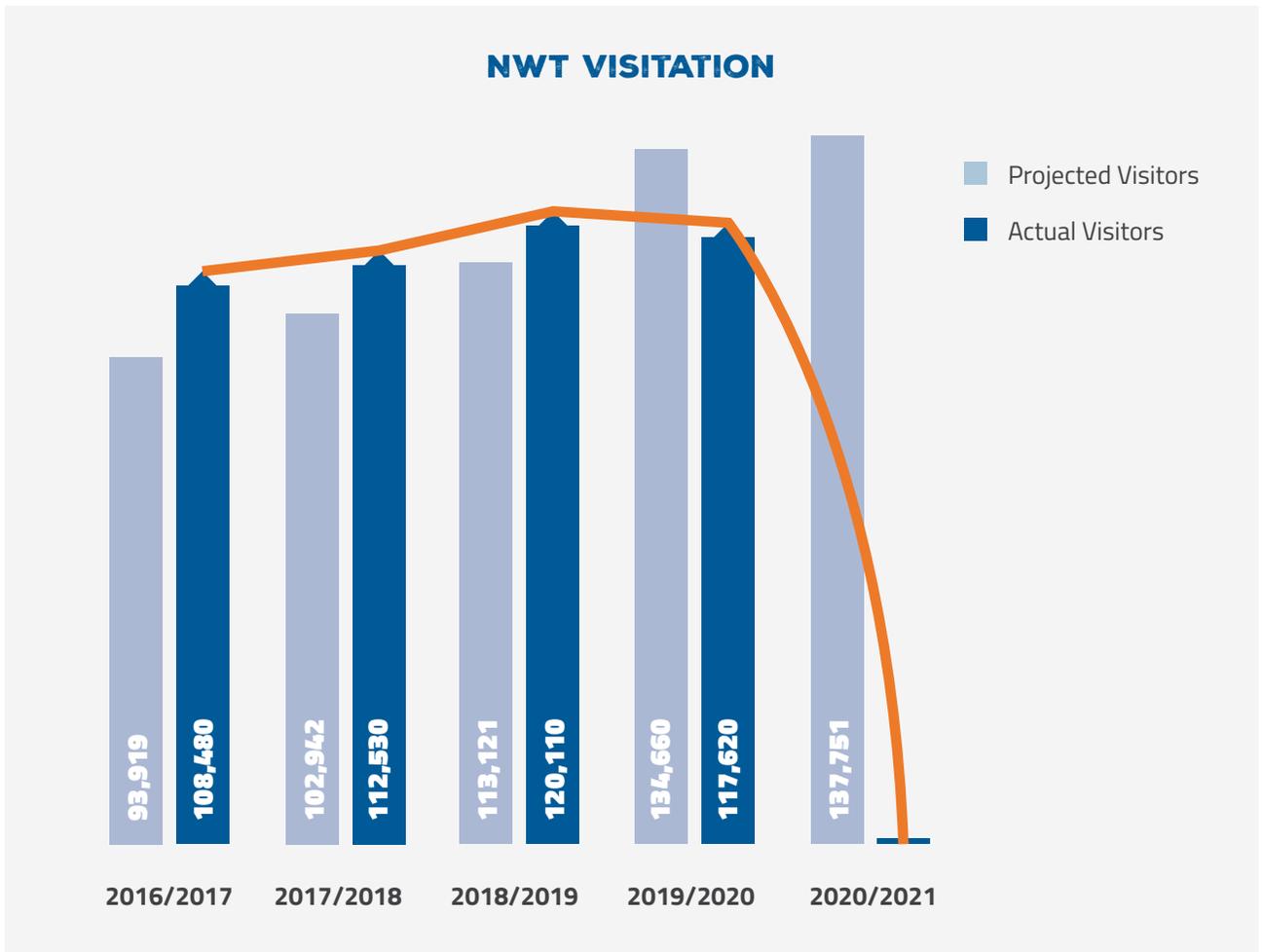
Tourism in the NWT was accelerating toward a banner year as it rounded the corner into the final quarter of the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Tourism visitation and spending were on track for a record-breaking finish.

Then COVID-19 happened. As early as January, tour operators began to see its immediate effect on visitation from Asian markets, and by mid March —

the height of the winter tourism season — international travel stopped altogether.

Aurora viewing, which straddled the emergence of the pandemic, visiting friends and relatives, and business travel all saw declines in visitors in fiscal 2019-2020, resulting in an overall reduction of 2% in visitation and 3% in visitor spending .

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With the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, these numbers tell only a small part of the story. The declaration of the pandemic in March was swiftly followed by the closing of Canadian and territorial borders. Visitation to the NWT ground to a halt, foretelling a huge impact on tourism for the current fiscal year.

As detailed in this report, NWT Tourism quickly pivoted it's marketing in response to the pandemic.

### **In response to the impact of COVID-19, NWT Tourism:**

- Developed a Triple-R Framework: Response, Recovery, Resilience, designed to help the industry survive the pandemic and prepare to emerge well positioned for a strong recovery,
- Worked with provincial and territorial industry associations, chambers of commerce and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada for COVID-19 relief and recovery measures; advocated vigorously with multiple levels of government on policy and funding and liquidity relief for tourism operators,
- Reduced member costs with free 2020 memberships, advocated and achieved free land leases, Tour Operator Licenses and Guide Licences,
- Implemented a summer Staycations Campaign to encourage resident tourism,
- Diverted marketing dollars to support increased operator relief and recovery programs,
- Secured marketing dollars from Destination Canada putting NWT into its Canada NICE program, and worked with General Sales Agents and our agency of record to pivot marketing activities while staying connected to target markets

# NWT TOURISM – RESPONSE & RECOVERY PLAN TO COVID-19 - TOURISM MARKETING

APRIL 28, 2020

SPECTACULAR NORTHWEST TERRITORIES SPECTACULARNWT.COM

RESPONSE	RECOVERY	RESILIENCE
<p><b>CURRENT SITUATION</b> Borders closed, travel restrictions in place, COVID-19 cases and controls are primary indicators, restrictions on gatherings in place, tourism businesses ordered closed, no active cases of COVID-19 in the NWT. Tourism industry focused on survival.</p> <p><b>OBJECTIVES</b> Keep the tourism activities and attractions normally available in the NWT in the minds of consumers for when it is safe to travel again.</p> <p><b>NWT TOURISM MARKETING DURING RESPONSE</b></p> <p><b>MARKETING RESPONSE - "DREAM OF FUTURE TRAVEL"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing spend will be predominantly directed to Search to keep the NWT top-of-mind as a destination when travel resumes</li> <li>Display ads pointing to premium content on the website, with travel outlets being the focus</li> <li>Remove all Calls to Action from promoted marketing pieces</li> <li>Remove travel packages from the homepage of the website</li> <li>Develop materials such as virtual tours from existing photos and video content</li> <li>Develop new story content with best appeal, refresh old content on the website</li> <li>Complete website SEO enhancements</li> <li>Prepare for Recovery Phase by planning NWT/Canada Campaign</li> <li>Enhance content and undertake website maintenance</li> <li>Maintain Relationships with Key Travel Trade in International Markets through General Sales Agents and Trade Specialist</li> </ul>	<p><b>SITUATION - SUMMER 2020 / FALL 2020</b> Travel in localized areas (first within NWT and then from other provinces and territories in Canada) begins, territorial parks begin to open, tourism businesses begin to open and group gatherings of some number start.</p> <p><b>OBJECTIVES</b> Encouraging people to support local. Keep consumers informed about what activities and services are available. To ensure lost travel demand from the previous periods is replaced with domestic audiences and other key markets.</p> <p><b>NWT TOURISM MARKETING DURING RECOVERY</b></p> <p><b>MARKETING RESPONSE: CAUTIOUS AND PHASED TOURISM MARKETING</b></p> <p><b>STAGE 1: HYPER LOCAL TRAVEL</b> Movement within communities and between communities and regions of the NWT resumes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Campaign to restore confidence in the NWT in tourism; residents ready to welcome visitors and confident in the tourism industry awareness of prioritizing resident safety</li> <li>Asset gathering of video and photos in key regions of the NWT utilizing local photographers whenever possible</li> </ul> <p><b>STAGE TWO: LOCAL TRAVEL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local campaign for travel opportunities and "staycations" within the NWT</li> <li>Promote visiting friend and relatives, first within the NWT and later from outside of the NWT</li> </ul> <p><b>STAGE THREE: TRAVEL WITHIN CANADA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic Campaign to primary markets and neighbours in Canada focusing on where travel restrictions have been lifted</li> <li>Promote road trips if NWT Parks are open</li> <li>Media and Travel Trade FAMs resume from within Canada</li> <li>MCIT site visits and FAMs from within Canada</li> </ul> <p><b>STAGE FOUR: RESTRICTED INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resume Media and Travel Trade FAMs internationally</li> <li>Working with existing Travel Trade partners to create packages in preparation for promotion to their audiences</li> </ul>	<p><b>SITUATION - WINTER 2020 / SPRING 2021 / TBD</b> International Travel resumes, international borders open, airlines are adding flights, hotels are resuming operations, large meetings and events are beginning to be scheduled.</p> <p><b>OBJECTIVES</b> Resume marketing on all channels in all marketing including international channels. Marketing activities support the tourism industry to grow sustainably to pre-COVID-19 levels.</p> <p><b>NWT TOURISM MARKETING DURING RESILIENCE</b></p> <p><b>MARKETING RESPONSE: RAMP UP MARKETING TO SUPPORT INDUSTRY REBOUND</b></p> <p>Lost travel demand from the previous periods is replaced with domestic audiences and other key markets. Asia market first focus will be on Asians who are currently living in Canada.</p> <p><b>INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL RESUMES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media FAMs and trade shows resume from all target markets</li> <li>MCIT FAMs, trade shows and site visits resume for all markets; conferences resume</li> <li>Trade FAMs and trade shows resume for all markets</li> <li>Cooperative Campaigns in International Markets with Key Travel Trade accounts</li> <li>Consumer Shows resume</li> <li>Airline Marketing Partnerships are reinstated</li> <li>Develop an aggressive co-operative marketing program which offers businesses extensive marketing support</li> </ul> <p><b>LARGE-SCALE CONSUMER CAMPAIGN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large-scale consumer campaign involving digital ads, website content, social media marketing, and work in partnership with Destination Canada</li> <li>All calls to action re-implemented on spectacularnwt.com website</li> </ul>

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## TRIPLE R RESPONSE TO INDUSTRY'S NEW NEEDS

With the NWT border closed opportunities were severely limited for NWT Tourism to meet its mandate of expanding the NWT tourism industry and the economic benefits to participants in the industry and to contribute to the economic development of the NWT.

Our strategy had to change quickly and responsively.

Rather than stop all external marketing, a decision was taken, based on best practice, to keep up the conversation with potential visitors; to keep the dream of a trip to the NWT alive to enable the industry to recover as quickly as possible.

The strategy didn't stop there. NWT Tourism has developed a comprehensive Triple R Framework in response to COVID-19. This framework guides advocacy and marketing activities and focuses on Response, Recovery and Resiliency as the territory moves from closed borders through loosening of restrictions to eventual re-opening of international and domestic borders.

Reduced member costs with free 2020 memberships and licenses by reducing NWT Tourism's operating costs.



Top: Tony, spectacular IT guy from Global Storm IT sets up laptops for NWT Tourism staff in March so work can continue at home.

Bottom: NWT Tourism staff deliver the first all candidate forum in September 2020 by Zoom video conferencing.

## STAYCATION CAMPAIGN

An example of the Triple R plan in action was the summer Staycation campaign: marketing to support NWT resident operators who were able to work within government restrictions and offer service to the local market. Staycation marketing encouraged residents to vacation in the NWT during the summer, providing some economic support for tourism operators able to take advantage of this market.

In addition to supporting the industry, this initiative served northerners needing a vacation break from home and will deliver long-term benefits to the industry. Locals learned about tourist attractions in their own back yard making them more informed ambassadors for future visiting friends and family.

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Top: New Operator and Member NorthernSky Films had just provided a tour of its new facility to NWTT's staff, then the borders closed.

Bottom: Spectacular Northern Staycation New Product Demo

## ADVOCACY AND INDUSTRY RELIEF

Advocating for the needs of industry during the pandemic and securing funding for relief programs has become an important focus of NWT Tourism's work since the emergence of the pandemic and ensuing border closures.

Since early March, NWT Tourism has undertaken significant work with provincial and territorial tourism industry associations, chambers of commerce and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada on COVID-19 relief and recovery. NWT Tourism compiled and maintained a summary of

federal relief programs, and actively advocated for gaps to be addressed. Advocacy efforts involved letter-writing, briefing notes, and discussions with the NWT's Member of Parliament, staff in Minister Joly's office, CanNor, Senator Anderson's office as well as a presentation to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance & Social Affairs.

NWT Tourism's efforts to reduce costs for operators resulted in land lease fees and tourism operator license and guide license fees being waived.

In early 2020 we submitted a 3 year research and marketing project proposal to CanNor, and

in July we revised that proposal, shifting our funding request to areas and periods that will help us best respond to changes and challenges brought on by COVID-19.

We have been working closely with ITI and CanNor to access and redeploy funds to operator relief and recovery programs. Notably, we reallocated a million dollars of marketing monies back to GNWT to support ITI's GRIT program — Growth and Recovery by Investing in Tourism — and this helped to lever additional federal dollars to this program.

## TOWARD RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

While the GNWT and NWT Tourism are working together to shift marketing resources into operator support programs, NWT Tourism has also secured additional marketing money from Destination Canada. Destination Canada will invest \$500,000 in NWT Tourism's marketing over the next 2 years.

We are using this investment to create fresh and compelling marketing content that showcases our territory for those dreaming about travel in the future. Research shows that those who market during difficult times recover nine times faster than those that don't.

Advocacy work will continue throughout this fiscal year. We will focus on the needs expressed in the member survey: our members

need a clear timeline and roadmap for the safe reopening of borders and we hope that there is a path forward to enable a summer season in 2021. We will continue to push for more liquidity support for the industry until borders reopen, and we will encourage GNWT to apply a lens on all of its communications to ensure support for a rapid recovery for the tourism industry. We want to see GNWT include key messages that demonstrate that goals for managing the pandemic include enabling visitors to return and NWT residents to be comfortable once again in sharing this spectacular place.

And we will continue marketing to ensure the Northwest Territories is alive in the minds of potential visitors so when borders reopen, we are on their list.

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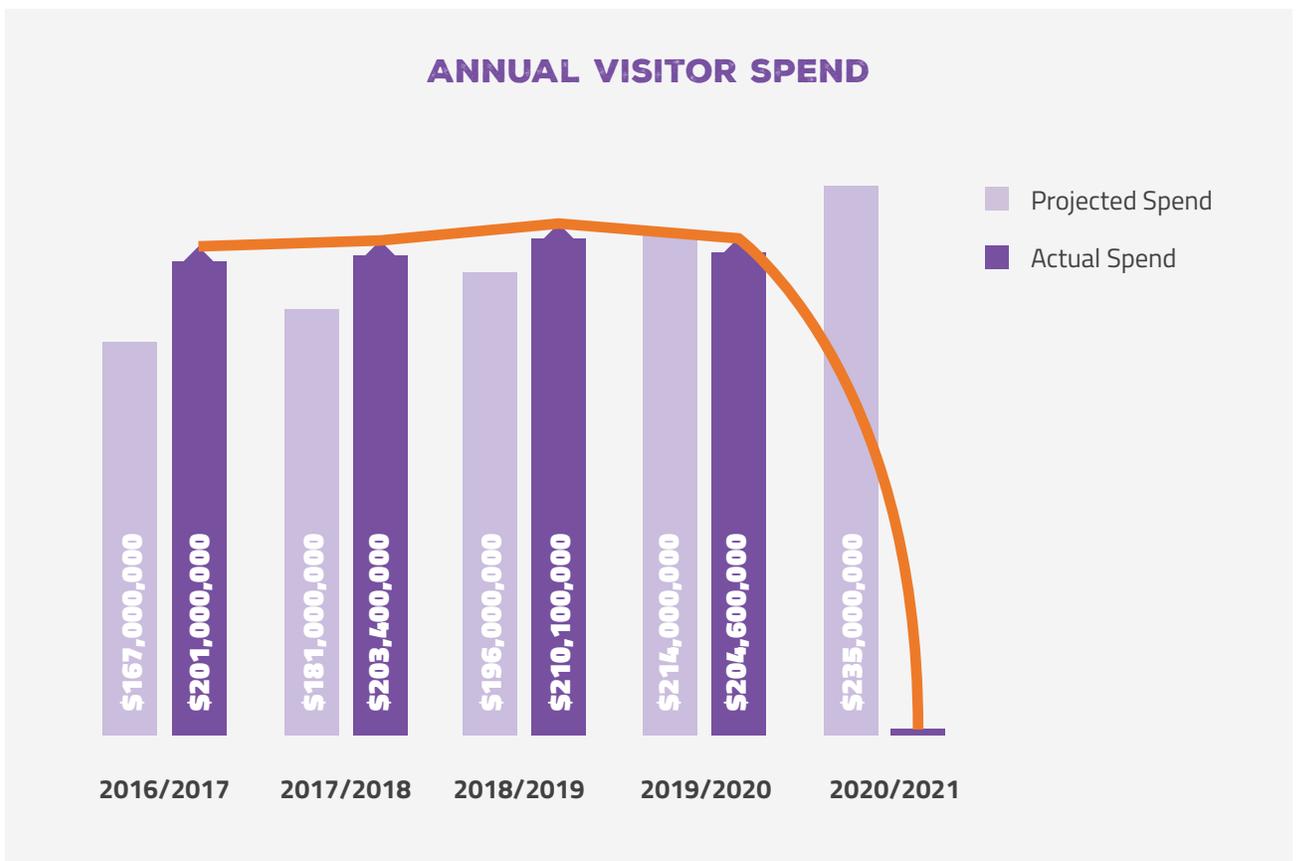
# MARKETING OVERVIEW

NWT Tourism’s fiscal year end is March 31. Marketing efforts and focuses were decidedly different between last fiscal year and the year we are currently in.

Pre-pandemic marketing efforts were bold, dynamic, integrated and were proving highly effective in their call to action. The NWT was on a trajectory to record-breaking visitor numbers and spending as a result of these efforts.

While it may seem counter-intuitive to continue to spend on marketing in the face of travel restrictions, research conducted after the 2008 financial crisis showed that those who stayed in the market recovered nine times faster than those who did not. Following this best practice, NWT Tourism’s pandemic marketing pivoted from a call to action to maintaining key relationships and keeping the destination alive with travellers in support of post-pandemic recovery. The

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Average Spend/Visitor: 2016/17: \$1856 | 2017/18: \$1807.51 | 2018/19: \$1748.39 | 2019/20: \$1734.39

momentum evident in the first three quarters of the 2019-2020 fiscal year can return post-pandemic if NWT experiences remain top of mind when travellers are able to act on their pent-up demand.

Consumer marketing efforts continue, with messages aligned with NWT Tourism’s Triple R plan (see page 5) — Response, Recovery, Resilience. The objective of marketing while travel restrictions are in place works to keep the tourism activities and attractions normally available in the NWT in the minds of consumers for when it is safe to travel again.

Here is an overview of our marketing programs delivered in the fiscal year 2019-2020, and in the past several months as we have worked to support the industry through the pandemic, and position the NWT for a strong recovery post-pandemic.



Top: New Backlight Display Unit, for consumer shows

Middle: Wrapped Aurora car in Toronto

Bottom: Wrapped Aurora car in Yellowknife for Hockey Day in Canada

## CONSUMER DIRECT MARKETING

Travellers are looking online to research and book their travel experiences. In response, NWT Tourism continues to focus on an integrated marketing approach using a range of digital platforms as well as the hard copy Explorers' Guide, consumer trade shows, and the call centre.

Pre-pandemic messaging to this market focussed on a call to action. Messaging has pivoted during the pandemic to keeping the NWT top of mind with consumers, preparing for the reopening of borders when it is safe to travel again.

### Integrated Marketing Campaign

In 2019, the GNWT provided NWT Tourism with funds to execute a large-scale marketing campaign in addition to, and leveraging the efforts of, its core marketing activities. The large-scale marketing campaign (LMC) was conceived as a multi-year consumer marketing strategy with roll out in Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary in early 2020. The message: *Something here will change you* communicates that a travel experience in the NWT will leave a long-lasting positive effect on visitors. Despite being short-circuited by the emergence of COVID-19, this campaign was nominated and named as a finalist in the Canadian Marketing Awards.

#### The campaign incorporated:

- A branded virtual reality car experience whereby passengers could experience the NWT while taking a ride in a branded vehicle,
- A new trade show booth, including virtual reality headsets showing 360-degree videos of cultural experiences, dogsledding, reindeer experience, Aurora, Virginia Falls, and paddling/fishing,
- Social media influencer visits to the NWT,
- A contest opportunity to win a trip to the NWT, and
- Targeted traditional and digital media campaigns.

In addition to these campaign-specific initiatives, the LMC levered NWT Tourism's existing marketing activity with complementary messaging in social media, digital advertising, website, and the Explorers' Guide.

The emergence of COVID-19 caused the cancellation of some of the planned LMC initiatives such as the Calgary consumer show. It also required a change to the transformative messaging we had planned for year two of the campaign. The campaign's message of transformation no longer fit the world situation. When we had begun the campaign, the transformation message we focused on was a positive message, but COVID-19 and its transformative impact on peoples' lives quickly changed how people view "transformation" and we had to respond. Additionally, direct contact human interactions and high touch activities such as VR experiences were no longer a viable method for engaging with audiences during the pandemic.

### Spectacular NWT Website

Despite COVID-19, spectacularnwt.com continues to have strong uptake with more than 450,000 users who visited almost one million pages on our site in fiscal 2019-2020. This included more than 50,000 visits to operator listings pages. This was an increase of 20% year over year.

Traffic to the website was driven by social media, digital advertising, and content marketing.

### Digital Advertising and Social Media

NWT Tourism implemented digital ad campaigns focussing on the Canadian and US markets pre-COVID to maintain our "always on" strategy. Digital ad campaign traffic continued to grow sharply — by 193%. In addition to paid digital advertising, NWT Tourism used social media to connect directly with potential visitors. Facebook, the largest social media outlet in terms of number of visitors and engagement, grew by 3,000 followers, for a total of 75,000 followers by the end of March 2020. These combine with followers across other social media accounts for a total of almost 120,000 followers with a potential reach of more than a million people.

Digital advertising and social media continue to keep the NWT top of mind with potential visitors, and drive traffic to the spectacularnwt.com website.

**Content Marketing**

Content marketing consists of stories about the NWT as a destination. In 2019-2020, individual stories resulted in more than 233,000 pageviews on the website, accounting for a quarter of all web traffic.

**Consumer Shows**

Attending consumer shows has been a staple of the NWT Tourism marketing plan allowing us and our members to increase the awareness of the NWT as a travel destination in face-to-face encounters with the public.

In 2019-2020, NWT Tourism planned to attend five Canadian consumer shows, however we attended only two before the impacts of COVID-19 changed the tourism landscape.

NWT Tourism provided refunds to our industry partners who had purchased booths through our cooperative marketing program, absorbing the financial risk of operators who had invested.

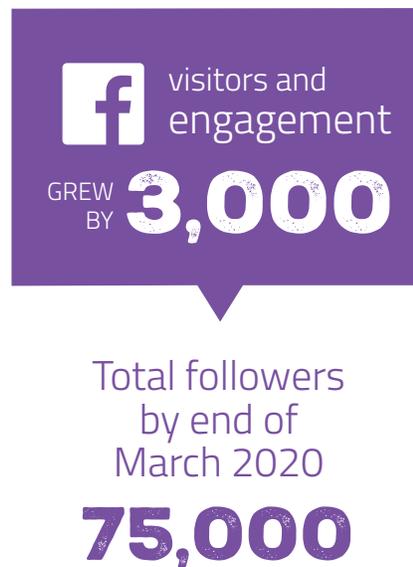
**Call Centre**

While much travel research is conducted online, sometimes nothing compares to the human touch. The Yellowknife Call Centre is a service-focussed option for potential visitors actively considering the destination and seeking more information. Pre-pandemic, the Call Centre handled 158 calls and 221 emails requesting information or seeking advice.

**Explorers' Guide**

The NWT Explorers' Guide is distributed to potential visitors as requested through the NWT Tourism website or the Call Centre. It is also distributed at visitor information centres across Canada and at consumer shows.

In response to COVID-19 NWT Tourism produced an insert to alert potential visitors to consult the GNWT website for updates on border closure and health orders. The insert was included in individual copies of the Explorers' Guide distributed through the NWT Tourism office.



## MEDIA MARKETING

Telling your own story is powerful. Having someone else tell it can be even more powerful. Travel writers, bloggers, influencers and broadcast networks have the ability to showcase our destination to their audiences. We encourage this process by attending media shows, hosting media familiarization tours, and by making high quality photo and video assets available to the media.

### Media Shows

Prior to the pandemic, NWT Tourism attended two media shows: Travel Media Association of Canada Conference (Sault Ste. Marie) in June and Go Media (Victoria) in August. Through these two shows, NWT Tourism conducted more than 60 business to business meetings with media from Australia, Canada, China, Japan, Germany and other international markets.

### Media FAMs

NWT Tourism hosted and aided 18 media familiarization visits in fiscal 2019-2020, with media from Canada, the United States, Australia, Japan, China, Germany, and South Korea.

### Media Coverage

All the media coverage generated through shows and FAMs resulted in stories that have a value equivalent to \$3 million (in advertising), and reaching about 129 million readers.

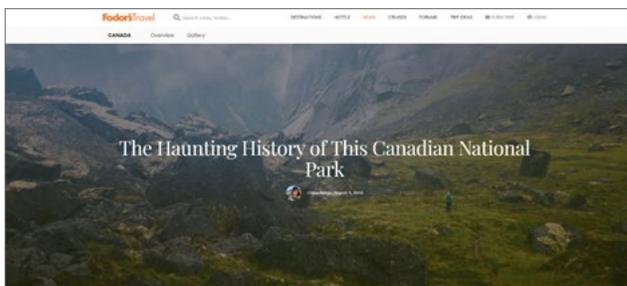
### Photo Library

NWT Tourism populates and maintains an online photo and video database that can be used by travel trade and travel media who are promoting the NWT. In 2019-2020 more than 10,000 photos were downloaded from this library.

### Media initiatives during COVID-19

Since NWT Tourism is no longer able to host travel writers, influencers, film crews or photographers from outside the territory, we are working with local, domestic and international media partners to create paid media content, including advertorials. And, we are also doing some virtual FAMs, hosted locally in the Chinese Language to keep visitors dreaming about coming to our territory, when the time is right.

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Top: March 2020 Korean FAM at Bullocks – departed 9 days before borders closed.

Middle: Virtual FAM Filming with OWM – October 2020

Bottom: Fodor's Travel Media FAM –Chloe Berge – Nahanni

## MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL

Fiscal 2019-2020 marked the sixth year of the NWT Conference Bureau. The Conference Bureau exists to profile the NWT as a destination for meetings and conferences, and it prepares competitive bids to host conferences in the NWT.

In 2019-2020, the Conference Bureau prepared 20 proposals valued at \$4.7 million in potential economic activity.

Additionally, work continued with the Yellowknife Airport, City of Yellowknife and Government of the Northwest Territories to advance the NWT's reputation as a destination for cold weather testing.

### NWT CONFERENCE BUREAU BID PROPOSAL PROGRESSION SINCE OFFICIALLY OPENING

	Fiscal Year in Which the Sale Lead Commenced							Cumulative
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	
Conferences that have occurred Based on year bid <i>(Revenue Realized)</i>	\$1,454,000	\$641,000	\$712,000	\$1,858,600	\$2,855,600	\$132,800	\$0	\$7,654,000
Future Conference Revenue Estimate <i>(Bids won with Hotel Contracts Signed but has not taken place yet, thus revenue not yet realized)</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,080,000	\$668,000	\$900,800	\$220,000	\$3,868,800
Future Conference Revenue Potential Estimate <i>(Awaiting decision on bids and budgets in an evaluation process)</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$250,000	\$3,146,000	\$0	\$3,396,000
Opportunities Lost <i>(NWT Venues too small/Another location selected for the event)</i>	\$989,000	\$877,200	\$1,252,000	\$3,971,000	\$722,000	\$560,000	\$240,000	\$8,861,200
Total Value of Business Handled, including lost bids	\$2,443,000	\$1,518,200	\$1,964,000	\$7,909,600	\$4,495,600	\$4,739,600	\$460,000	\$23,530,000
Total Value of Business Handled, not including lost bids	\$1,454,000	\$641,000	\$712,000	\$3,938,600	\$3,773,600	\$4,179,600	\$220,000	\$14,918,800

**The Conference Bureau attended five trade shows in 2019-2020:**

- Incentive Canada (Vancouver)
- Canadian Meetings & Events Expo (Toronto)
- CSAE (Vancouver)
- Destination Direct (Ottawa)
- Tete-a-Tete (Ottawa)

The Conference Bureau hosted four site visits for organizers that short-listed the NWT as a conference destination. This included a visit by Business Events Canada (BEC). BEC works in international markets promoting Canada. BEC spent three days in Yellowknife seeing firsthand the emerging products the NWT has to offer, including the Diavik Diamond Mine tour, NWT’s Cold Weather Testing Facility, local hotel conference space and off-site venues and attractions.

The Conference Bureau itself conducted a site visit to the South Slave region. With infrastructure investments and the growth in overall tourism offering in the region,

the South Slave is well positioned to be the NWT’s next emerging conference destination. The visit will inform a revised and updated NWT conference planner document and will provide a regional perspective to the Bureau’s Sports Tourism initiative.

The Conference Bureau experienced a spike in bid requests following attendance at shows, speaking to the effectiveness of our investment in these activities.

Like all other areas of NWT Tourism’s marketing effort, COVID-19 affected efforts in the last quarter of the fiscal year. With the long run up to meetings and conferences, the pandemic will undoubtedly have long term negative affects on conference business won in the territory. This has already been demonstrated by a slowdown in new conference bids in February and March 2020. Conferences booked for the summer and fall of 2020 as a result of Conference Bureau involvement have been postponed or cancelled.

The Conference Bureau is managing relationships with these conference planners so that when travel restrictions are lifted, and larger gatherings and events are once again allowed in the NWT, our destination will continue to be the location of choice.



In 2019-2020, the Conference Bureau prepared

**20 PROPOSALS**

valued at **\$4.7 MILLION**



in potential economic activity.



Top: Manager of NWT Conference Bureau Robin Williams at Tête à Tête in Ottawa

Middle: BEC Fam Trip 2020

Bottom: Destination Direct Spectacular Suite 2020



## TRAVEL TRADE PROMOTIONS

NWT Tourism works with the travel trade through established networks in international markets. NWT Tourism works closely with international travel trade companies with offices in Canada and uses the services of General Sales Agents (GSAs) in key international markets: Japan, China, Germany, and Australia.

As in other areas, NWT Tourism pivoted its marketing efforts in early 2020 in response to COVID-19. While borders are closed to travellers from international destinations, it is important to maintain existing relationships with partners in international markets to keep the NWT alive in these markets for when it is safe to travel again.

Prior to the pandemic, in 2019-2020, travel trade promotions were active in these markets.

### China

Through our General Sales Agent (GSA) in China, NWT Tourism used social media channels to make inroads. Ten million visitors read NWT content on Sina Weibo, and we achieved 5.5 million mentions on WeChat. NWT videos were viewed 2.4 million times on Miaopai Video. A detailed sales toolkit specific to the mainland China market was distributed to key travel trade partners for use in training agents in Beijing. NWT Tourism engaged Tencent to create a mobile guide to the Northwest Territories with content specific to Chinese travellers and Chinese-speaking individuals in North America. The app generated more than 124,000 ad clicks and had more than 70,000 users by the end of March 2020. With the help of our GSA we pivoted marketing early to avoid losing investments in the Chinese market. Planned Chinese media activities were cancelled in early 2020 and instead we hosted a North American TV

outlet 'Phoenix TV' on a visit to the NWT before the border closed. The content generated was made available in Mandarin to a North American Chinese audience.

### Australia

Our GSA in Australia helped us reach the travel trade in that country familiarizing them with product in the NWT. We entered a marketing partnership with Luxury Escapes in partnership with Banff & Lake Louise Tourism and Tourism Vancouver, which included a travel package to the NWT with stops in Banff/Lake Louise and Vancouver.

### South Korea

NWT participated in a consumer contest where winners got to experience one of five Canadian trips, one of which was to the Northwest Territories. The South Korean winners visited the North Slave region early in 2020, and their trip featured Aurora viewing. NWT Tourism, in partnership with Destination Canada, hosted a 5-day travel trade FAM early in March for Product managers and senior staff from Korean key trade accounts.

### Germany

NWT Tourism hosted a sales mission for the German and Swiss markets in December 2019. NWT tourism operators attended the sales mission, which included




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Korean Travel Trade FAM –  
Trout Rock Lodge - March 2020

ten business meetings and three training sessions with German and Swiss wholesalers and tour operators. As German offices closed due to COVID-19, our GSA provided online webinars for travel agents, to good uptake.

### Japan

Our GSA in Japan works as part of a team to co-ordinate the Canada Theatre program, a content-based promotion focussing on stories and experiences that generate interest in travel to Canada. In addition, our GSA in Japan assisted with travel trade FAMs, trade promotions, sales calls and seminars, attended Destination Canada meetings in Japan on behalf of NWT Tourism, and attended trade shows, taking appointments with Japanese delegates at Rendez-vous Canada and Focus Japan.

### Mexico

Mexico is a new market for NWT Tourism. In September 2019, NWT Tourism, along with a group of NWT tour operators, travelled to Mexico City for an introductory sales mission including meetings with online travel agents, tour operators and wholesalers. The NWT delegation met with 12 businesses and trained 58 travel agents over 4 days.

### Travel Trade Shows

NWT Tourism participated in two travel trade shows in 2019-2020: Rendez-vous Canada, CITAP (Canada), and Focus Japan (Japan). NWT Tourism staff conducted 144 scheduled appointments with travel trade from all target international markets. Nine NWT Tourism operators attended RVC, and together they had 230 meetings.

In person trade shows are no longer possible, however NWT Tourism has participated in the online Travel and Leisure Show. This allowed us to connect with our domestic key accounts in a virtual setting to strengthen existing relationships and make new connections. NWT Tourism had a virtual booth with downloadable flatsheets, photos, video and COVID information. It also included a real-time chat function to connect with those who had specific questions, or who needed more information. Such innovative approaches serve as a key touchpoint to our partners in travel trade channels, maintaining these important relationships.

### Travel Trade FAM Tours

Five trade FAMs were organized, however, three were cancelled in March 2020 due to COVID-19.

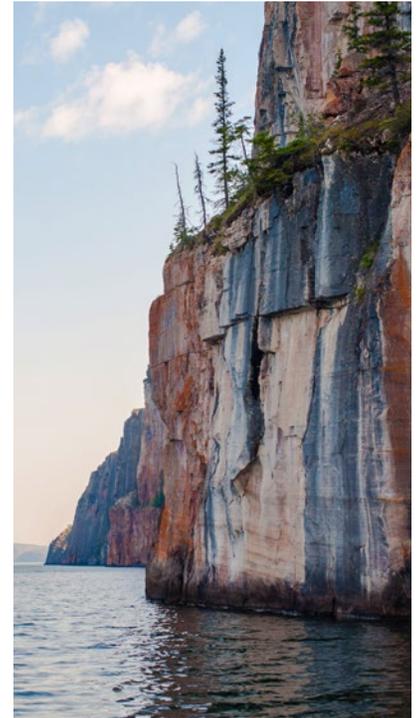
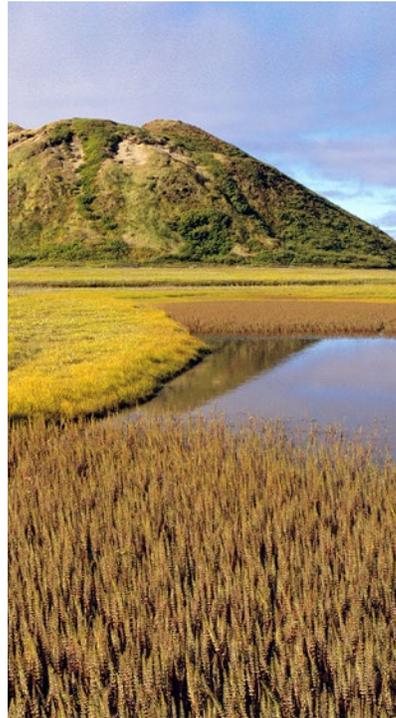
NWT Tourism works with companies in



**6 KEY  
INTERNATIONAL  
MARKETS**



NWT videos were viewed  
**2.4 MILLION**  
times on Miaopai Video



**TOURISM 2020 AND SPECIAL INITIATIVES**

**Region-specific Marketing**

Tourism 2020 provides funding to NWT Tourism for the express purpose of supporting tourism marketing initiatives in each of the NWT’s regions. A budget of \$250,000 is allocated collectively to the five regions.

**Western Arctic**

Activities in support of the Western Arctic included attendance at the Abbotsford RV and Calgary Motorcycle Shows to encourage travel up the Dempster and Tuktoyaktuk Highways. Work on a video featuring these highways continues. A Canadian television series planned to feature Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk in one episode of its production. This was put on hiatus due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and border closures. NWT Tourism has put agreements in place to revive this opportunity once film crews can once again travel into the NWT.

**North Slave**

Z-cards were produced for ŁutselK’e, Dettah and N’Dilo for distribution in hotels and visitor centres to encourage visitors already in the NWT to explore further. Several stories were created featuring notable sights and activities in the region such as the ice road, the YKDFN artisan shop, the NAKA Festival, Thaidene Nënë Park, and the Tłıchǝ Online Store. A video featuring Tłıchǝ artisans was produced and was one of three pieces of augmented reality featured in the 2020 Explorers' Guide.



### Dehcho

Two stories were produced: *Top 10 Things to do in the Dehcho* and *Dehcho: What not to miss*. These stories were promoted on digital platforms and social media channels. Several videos were created promoting summer activities and Indigenous culture. Two flat sheets were created: *Driving the Dehcho Connection* and *The Wonders of the Dehcho*, which were distributed at the Vancouver Outdoor Adventure Show to promote the Dehcho driving route. Large scale visitor information maps for the communities of Fort Simpson, Wrigley, and Fort Liard were also produced.



### Sahtu

A comprehensive regional guide for the Sahtu was created and distributed at the Toronto Outdoor Adventure Show. It will be distributed through local businesses in the Sahtu as well. Social media amplifications promoted paddling, destination awareness, the Canol Trail and Great Bear Lake. A photographer was commissioned to capture photos throughout the Sahtu for NWT Tourism's photo asset library.



### South Slave

NWT Tourism distributed materials featuring the South Slave at the Peace River Trade Show and the Edmonton RV Show. One media FAM was hosted, focussing on the Dark Sky Festival. The region's many festivals, including Paddlefest, Kamba Carnival, Dark Sky Festival and Wood Buffalo Frolics were promoted through co-op story creation and social media promotions. Several flat sheets were produced including *Ten wonders of the South Slave* and *Drive the South Slave*. These flat sheets will provide marketing collateral for new operators and event organizers.

### Promotional Videos

Videos speak loudly as marketing tools because they give the viewer a first-hand experience. In fiscal 2019-2020, NWT Tourism produced a number of videos highlighting the spectacular tourism experiences in the NWT.

### Tourism Week

In recognition of Tourism Week, Spectacular NWT-branded camping chairs were placed in territorial parks in every region of the NWT. Park and chair information was shared on social media. Those finding the chairs kept them, and most shared their finds on social media.

### Regional Showcase

A showcase of the NWT's five regions was developed in partnership with the Yellowknife Airport and GNWT Department of Industry, Tourism & Investment. Spectacular imagery from across the NWT was installed in the Yellowknife airport for residents and visitors to enjoy.

### Promotional videos included:

- A video on the NWT was shown at the Canadian Council of Tourism Ministers' Conference in Halifax June 2019 as an invitation to reconvene the annual gathering in the NWT. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 meeting was postponed.
- A video advertisement was produced and placed on the Corus *Alone* TV program alongside the episode filmed in the NWT.
- The saga fish Media Aurora video project (Aurora Love) was completed and was shown at the NWT Tourism conference in November 2019 and again as part of the SnowKing's Winter Festival.



Left: Kota Kanamori receiving the Service Excellence Award from Gerry Kisoun, Vice Chair of the NWT Tourism Board of Directors



Right: The Explorer Hotel receiving the Operator of the Year Award. Harold Grinde, Chair of the Board of Directors, stands with Kelly Martin (Director of Sales and Marketing), Ed Romanowski (President and CEO) and Danny Dupuis, Engineering Manager

# 2019 CONFERENCE & AGM

The 2019 Conference, held in Yellowknife in November was one of the last times we gathered as an industry full of optimism and potential. A lot has happened since — not of our own making — that has stolen the momentum of our sector.

We are not alone in this. The pandemic has had an impact on tourism worldwide. But the public's appetite for travel and exploration has not changed. It sits waiting for when it is safe to travel again.

As we work to respond, recover and remain resilient, we are preparing for a return to these heady days. As you think about the future, let these photos of an enthusiastic, motivated, and strong industry, full of optimism and potential, inspire you and remind you that we will soon be returning here, just as the visitors will be returning to the NWT. And we'll be ready for them.

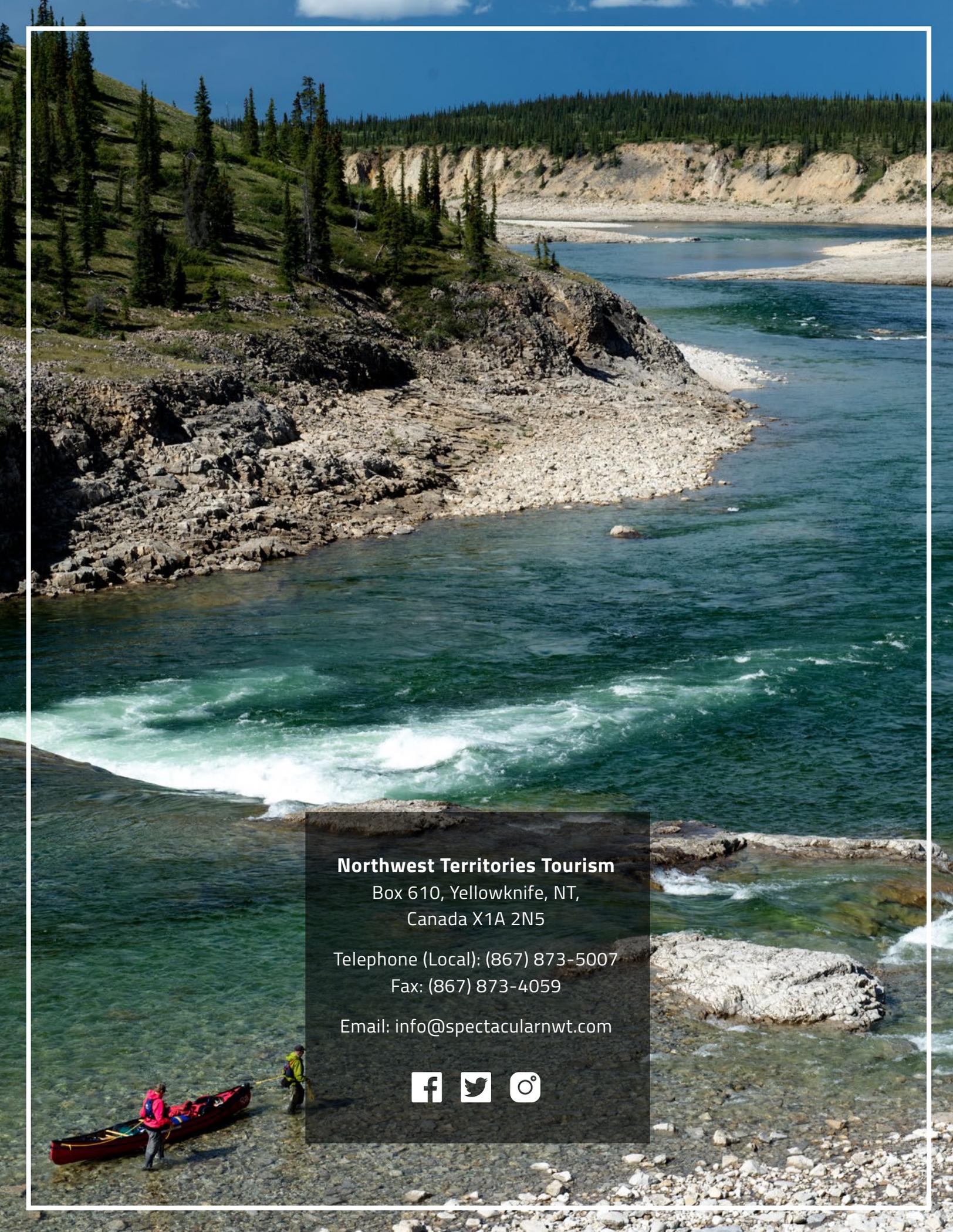
**See you in Hay River at the  
2021 Tourism Conference and AGM.**

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Left and right image:  
Delegates participating in a  
informative and interactive  
2019 Conference and AGM



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