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Government of Northwest Territories





# Where we abide

Way back in 1975 I bought my first house in Yellowknife. I didn't buy it through a realtor, because there weren't any realtors in Yellowknife at that time. I learned about this house from a small ad in the local newspaper, and I bought it from a law firm handling a deceased person's estate. I paid \$28,000 for this smallish three-bedroom, one-bath, 1950s house.

A few years later after I added a deck, I sold it for double what I had paid for it. Today, with more renovations by subsequent owners, it would sell for over \$400,000 and would likely be sold by one of four real estate companies in Yellowknife.

Yes, like the rest of Canada, real estate is big business in Yellowknife and across the North and housing costs are rising here just as they are in most of Canada. In the Yukon, demand, fueled by a buoyant economy, has caused house prices to go up so they are no longer lower than the Northwest Territories. In the NWT, prices are also going up, but mainly because of limited residential construction over the past few years. Dramatic increases in prices of construction materials have also increased prices... but northern prices are nowhere near the out-of-reach prices of Toronto or Vancouver.

In Nunavut, where the government once controlled almost all housing, home ownership is growing, but privately owned houses account for less than a quarter of all stock. The reason of course is that it is very expensive to build a house in Nunavut, and very expensive to rent an apartment or house. That's why most employed Nunavut residents receive an accommodation allowance as part of their remuneration. The amount varies depending on the community, with people living and working in very remote communities with the highest cost of living, getting the highest amount.

For new people moving to the North, don't panic. There are housing options available. With vacancy rates of 3% and 3.5% in Whitehorse and Yellowknife respectively, chances are that newcomers can find accommodation in apartments, condos, row housing, mobile homes or stick built homes.

When I moved North, the vacancy rate was 0% and the housing choices were limited. Today, northern living in our bigger centres can be in downtown condos, modern houses in new subdivisions, apartment blocks, mobile or modular homes, and houses set around wilderness lakes outside of Yellowknife and Whitehorse.

If you're planning a move here and expect a log cabin, that might be harder to find. But if one is available, a local realtor will find it for you.

Marion LaVigne Publisher



Issue number 2, 2021

Move Up Here is published three times per year by Up Here Publishing Ltd. Suite 102, 4510 – 50th Ave. Yellowknife, NT X1A IB9, Canada

Co-publishers: Marion LaVigne and Ronne Heming

Contacts: Advertising: sales@uphere.ca Editorial: editor@uphere.ca

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ON THE COVER: VIEW OF TUNDRA VALLEY, FROM THE WATER OF FROBISHER BAY, BILL WILLIAMS, THIS PAGE: FRANK REARDON, IQALUIT









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The City of Igaluit embraces the intent and spirit of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Priority will be given to Nunavut Inuit; Candidates must clearly identify their eligibility in order to receive consideration under this agreement. We thank all those who apply, however, only those selected to interview are contacted.



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Please note, that while LGANT oversees and maintains the database, we are not involved in the selection of individuals for contracts or temporary assignments. Contact information will be provided to local governments upon request.

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# Where to live in the Far North

If you are considering a move to the Yukon, Northwest Territories or Nunavut you might have some serious questions. "Where will I live?" How much does it cost to live there? In previous issues of Move Up Here we

Where you live has a dramatic influence on how you feel, and life in Canada's North offers unique advantages for your mental and physical health. Picture a comfortable apartment, a condo, or a house, just a few metres from a path through the woods or a trail across the rock and tundra. Whether you are on your own, or making a home with a family, Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Iqaluit have green location advantages that are hard to find in southern cities.

There's a choice of attractive apartment blocks, condos, row housing and single family housing in all three capital cities. Compact and walkable, Yellowknife and Iqaluit offer access to downtown, recreation, and schools near your neighbourhood. Whitehorse is more spread out, with several attractive neighbourhoods (with schools and parks) to choose from, but you may need transportation to the city centre, shopping and major recreation facilities, unless you live nearby.

provided overviews on health, education and recreation (see back copies at uphere.ca/other/move-here). **In this issue we look at Northern housing of all types.** 

For those who want wilderness adventure, Whitehorse offers mountain paths, river walks and ski trails. Yellowknife's rocky terrain hosts multiple lakes and wooded footpaths, with easy access to one of Canada's largest freshwater lakes and parklands not far away. Those who live in Iqaluit have a broad expanse of beautiful rock and a large day use park with a fishing river and views over the ocean right out the back door.

For recreation, each community boasts a pool, several gymnasiums, arenas and plenty of sports clubs that fill the need for summer and winter activity. Community groups are active, and volunteers are always welcome. Try growing food in a shared lot or greenhouse, join a bridge or reading club, or turn to crafts with a potential for sales.

To find out what housing is available in each capital, read on. >>

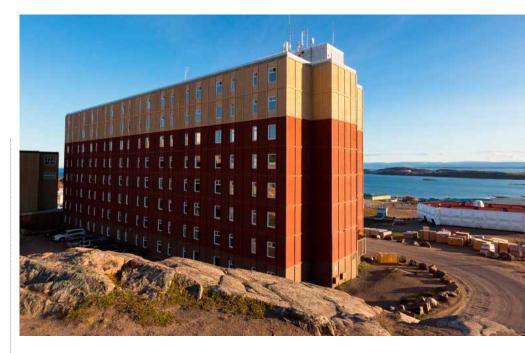


# **Iqaluit**Nunavut's capital

Starting in the east, Iqaluit, on Baffin Island, is the capital of Nunavut and its largest community, with an estimated population of 8,300. Of the 25 communities in Nunavut, the larger ones with populations of 1700 to 3000 are Pond Inlet, Baker Lake, Arviat, Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay. Cambridge Bay on Victoria Island and Rankin Inlet on Hudson Bay, are regional centres.

About a third of Iqaluit accommodation is located in multi-storey buildings, and about a third consists of single detached houses. Almost three quarters of the housing stock in Igaluit are rental units. Rents range from \$1555 to \$4000 depending on size and other factors. Houses and condos sell for \$470.000 and up. About 20 percent of accommodation of all types is owner occupied. The vacancy rate is approaching 0%. Most housing is provided through employers.

The largest landlord has created a virtual community of 350 units, including a wide variety of housing, from single apartments to townhouses with three and four bedrooms. Two high rise buildings perched atop Astro Hill offer both studio and larger apartments. These have indoor ac-



cess to shops and hotel services, including a licenced lounge and a movie theatre. Many high rise units have magnificent four season views of the harbour encompassing the seasonal aurora and late summer sea lift. Premium appliance packages are available, including dishwashers, washers and dryers, and all units can be supplied furnished.

There are several rows of townhouse units cascading down the hill in central Iqaluit, with access by vehicle or on foot to shopping, schools and cultural activities on the roads that ring the downtown area.

Further afield, condos, duplexes and detached houses are available for rent

or purchase on the open market. These are often of unique design, rarely do two or more of the same design appear on a single street, and many are oriented to take advantage of views or the angle of the sun in summer or winter. Unique to Igaluit, most lots are leased, not owned. Houses are arranged in six mini communities with access to schools and shopping nearby. There are no trailer courts.

Utilities (electricity, water, etc.) are often included in rent, but might average \$350 per month for a 900 sq ft unit with Internet costs adding approximately \$120 per month.



# LEFT: ASTRO HILL, COURTESY OF NUNASTAR RIGHT: YELLOWKNIFE, UP HERE

# Yellowknife

Northwest Territory's capital

Yellowknife, capital of the Northwest Territories, is located on a large bay on the north shore of Great Slave Lake. The population totals approximately 21,900 in 2021. The next largest communities in the NWT include Hay River (3793), Inuvik (3399) and Fort Smith (2586), with Behchoko (1983), headquarters of the Tlicho region, approaching 2000.

As of 2019, roughly 58 percent of residents owned their accommodation in Yellowknife, and there were 3000 units available as rentals. Apartment types include high rise buildings, as well as several hundred units in smaller, multi storey buildings. Rental prices range from \$1586 to \$2586 and up depending on the building and amenities. Housing ownership starts at \$330,000 for a mobile home or small condo to single detached units starting at \$489,000.

There's one national landlord with a large percentage of rental holdings and several local landlords with smaller holdings. Between them, they offer an extremely wide range in the type and quality of rental units available, from basic starter units to fully furnished luxury accommodation featuring wide-angle views over the lake and the magical aurora.

Mobile homes and condos are popular, and many condos can be rented from private owners. There's a high rise condominium in the centre of downtown Yellowknife, and several condo developments in surrounding residential neighbourhoods.

Because of the rocky terrain and multitude of lakes, Yellowknife neighbourhoods are all slightly different. Some resemble housing developments in southern Canada. Others are com-



posed of custom built luxury homes. Older areas feature mature trees and lawns. In addition to schools and shopping, there are well-used small parks, ball parks, tennis courts and trails in many neighbourhoods.

vehicle - a

boat, to take advantage

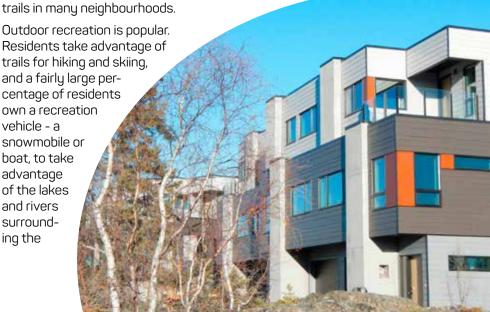
of the lakes

and rivers

surround-

ing the

capital. Both ski trails and snowmobile trails lead out into the surrounding wilderness, and can start right at the back door.







over 40 parks and several cultural institutions. Residents tend to be active and outdoorsy. Enthusiastic cyclists are even making short work of some of the hilliest routes.

With its population growing close to 2.5 percent per year, there's a continuously growing market for new housing. This often takes the form of attractive row housing, and developments are usually presold. One unique feature of Whitehorse accommodation is "store-top" buildings - residential units designed over commercial space, economical, and usually handy to shopping. There's a total of 79 of these units, with more being added.

While rental and owner housing is spread out, there's adequate shopping in most areas, however the main retail area tends to be concentrated in or near the downtown.

Utilities are estimated at \$218 per month for 900 sq ft accommodation, with Internet adding approximately \$138.

# Whitehorse

Yukon's capital

Whitehorse, the Yukon capital, is located in a river valley in south central Yukon, surrounded by mountains. The municipality of Whitehorse represents almost 70 percent of Yukon citizens, some 29,776. Another 3,800 people live in several communities outside the Whitehorse city limits. The next largest community is Dawson City at 2,251 and Watson Lake at 1,521. In total, Yukon's population is some 42,800.

There are approximately 950 buildings with apartments in Whitehorse with some 2231 rental units. These are shared among several dozen landlords, some of whom just have one or two units, and others having a larger rental portfolio. Median rental prices range from \$1155 downtown

to \$2150 in one of the newer areas, depending on size and amenities. A median rent for a house, for example, might be \$1800 per month and up. Utilities would be extra.

Single detached houses are selling for \$590,700 in 2021, with condominiums reaching \$479,900.

Whitehorse has about ten neighbourhoods, scattered on hills and valleys in the surrounding area. Some neighbourhoods are as far as nine km or more from downtown. Other neighbourhoods are between 3.6 to 7 km from downtown. Depending on where the accommodation is located, a car is almost a necessity, although there is an efficient transit system. Each neighbourhood has advantages. There are trail systems, schools, arenas,





	Yukon	NWT	Nunavut
JOB VACANCIES	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2020 Stats Canada		
Vacancies Avg. hourly wage	785 \$20.6	605 \$28.45	375 \$34.75
POPULATION	2016 Census		
Total	35,874	41,786	35,944

	Whitehorse	Yellowknife	Iqaluit
RENTAL PRICES	May 2021 (Internet search)		
1 bedroom 3 bedrooms Townhouse	\$1,400 \$2,266 \$2,250	\$1,586+ \$2,586+ na	\$2,345+ \$2,940+ \$2,940+
HOME PRICES			
Single detached Condo Duplex/row Mobile home	\$590,700 \$479,900 \$457,900 \$325,000	low - MLS         mid - MLS           \$489,000         \$769,900           \$225,000         \$449,900           \$439,000         \$459,000           \$339,000         \$389,000	N/A

Job vacanciesand thecost ofhousingin the threecapitals.

- 1: Whitehorse prices: first quarter 2021, Yukon Bureau of Statistics
- 2: Yellowknife Average prices 2021 all sales: March \$457,000, April \$477,000
- 3: The vacancy rate in iqaluit is almost zero. House sales are rare, prices have increased about 20% in 2021. There are no trailers.











# CAME FOR A YEAR, **STAYED FOR A LIFETIME**

From carpentry to journalism, each one of these people headed North to experience their careers in an entirely new setting. But what they didn't expect was to fall in love with the communities they settled in.

BY DANA BOWEN

## Niels Konge YELLOWKNIFE

### CAME FOR: SIX MONTHS STAYED FOR: 20+ YEARS

After travelling to Europe and experiencing what life was like outside of the BC farm he grew up on, Niels Konge was ready to see more of what his country has to offer.

So in 2001, Konge returned from eight years in Denmark, where he worked in carpentry, and headed to Yellowknife. Despite his plans to stay temporarily, Konge was immediately in awe of what the small city had to offer.

"I understand why people travel half-way around the world to see the Northern Lights and our 24-hour sunlight is incredible," he says.

Konge began his Yellowknife venture by taking on a carpentry

position, which he expected to do for about six months before returning to Salmon Arm, BC.

But three weeks after moving here, Konge met a woman named Renee at the bar. The two instantly hit it off.

Within two years of meeting, the couple were married and two days following their wedding, they started Konge Construction together. The company, which builds both residential and commercial buildings, was a dream long in the making for Konge.

"I always knew I wanted my own business. I grew up on a farm, so I've always been fairly entrepreneurial," he says. "The business has always been successful. I did believe and still believe there's a lot of opportunity for growth in the North."

Konge has also been city councillor since 2012, where he originally got into it with the hopes of changing zoning bylaws in the city. He continues to work toward improving housing in Yellowknife and says he does it to help better the community he has called home for so long. Konge says he sometimes gets itchy feet for a new adventure outside of the North, but the city holds so many memories for him, he says. "I've been here longer than I have in my childhood home."

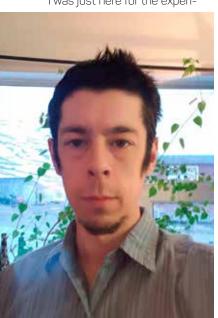
### **Eric Lawlor** PANGNIRTUNG

CAME FOR: 2 YEARS STAYED FOR: 19+ YEARS

Eric Lawlor has had quite a diverse career, but that wasn't at all what he expected to happen upon moving to Pangnirtung, Nunavut.

On his 20th birthday, Lawlor left his home in Dalhousie. New Brunswick to follow a job lead from his cousin, with intentions of staying temporarily.

"I was just here for the experi-



ence," he says.

He began work as associate manager with the Northwest Company grocery chain and immediately felt welcomed.

"I was working with a lot of people who were very nice and friendly and a lot of community members were very friendly with me," he says. "Plus, I met a girl here and we hit it off pretty well."

That was enough to solidify his plans of staying. Lawlor felt right at home within the community and stayed on with the North West Company for four years.

Eventually, he moved on to manage a youth centre and then became a bylaw officer. Now he's mayor of Pangnirtung.

"I knew the ins and outs of the operations so I thought I'd be a good fit [as mayor]," he says. "No one was running at the time either. I had dreams of eventually becoming mayor but maybe not quite this soon. But the opportunity came up so I thought I'd jump on it."

The mayor says COVID has put a stick in some of his plans, but he aims to reopen the youth centre, which closed in 2006 due to a loss in funding. He also intends to tackle some environmental issues through his career, he adds.

In the meantime, Lawlor is looking forward to next year where he will be celebrating a big milestone. On his 40th birthday, he'll have spent half his life in the North. And while he says the community he's in is not perfect-between housing issues and its isolation from the rest of Canada—he can't imagine living anywhere else.

"I love it here," he says. "It's home."



### Rod Savoie

WHITEHORSE AND YELLOWKNIFE

**CAME FOR: 2 YEARS** STAYED FOR: 34+ YEARS

Rod Savoie's first impressions of the North was anything but the cold and isolated place he thought it would be

In fact, when he arrived in the fall of 1987, he loved the crisp air, sparkling lakes and most of all, the lively community. And the job he landed wasn't half-bad either.

"There was a really great group of people at my work. And the work was really interesting and challenging," he says.

Savoie first moved up to Yellowknife after graduating from engineering at the University of Saskatchewan. He took on a position with what was then called FSC Architects (now Stantec) with the expectation of staying for a year or two.

I was just here for the experience"

- Eric Lawlor

That work took him all across the North and while he didn't stay in Yellowknife, he didn't venture too far off either. To this day, Savoie works for the same company, but in Whitehorse.

"I never envisioned spending what is now most of my life here, but I definitely feel that it's home," he says. "Maybe there was a period of time where felt I would move elsewhere to be closer to family, but I've become very comfortable here."

Savoie says that on top of the beautiful scenery, he's thankful for all the opportunities the North has given him. Outside of work, Savoie has been involved with various engineering organizations and has helped groom ski trails around the city.

"I think it's the ability to be involved"

- Rod Savoie

"I think it's the ability to be involved [that keeps me here]. There's a lot of great people and you can get involved in just about anything you want and hopefully bring positive change where you can."

He hopes to continue giving back to the North for years to come.

# Kristen Wright HAY RIVER

# PLANNED FOR: 6 WEEKS STAYED FOR: 11+ YEARS

When Kristen Wright had to choose where to do her college internship in 2010, she decided to take the experience a step further by heading across Canada. "I had never been [north] before and I thought, you know, it's only six weeks of my life and if I hate it, it's not a big deal," she says. "Famous last words."

Wright had heard of another student who had previously interned in the NWT and wanted to try it for herself. She saw the northern trip as an adventure, but it quickly turned into much more than that.

"The experience of working for the [Hay River] Hub was awesome. The people in Hay River were amazing and that was a lot of what convinced me to stay—it was both work and the people."

So, when Wright was soon offered a full-time reporter position and then a year later, an editor role, she couldn't say no.

But Wright's journey didn't stop at Hay River. After two years, she left briefly to spend time at home in Ontario and then she took a communications job in northern Alberta.

Wright eventually returned to the territory—only this time to Fort Simpson and then to Fort Smith, to be with her now-husband. Travis.

Now, with her first child on the way, the couple are returning to Hay River, where they first met.

"We're excited to go back to Hay River. That's where it began for us and it's kind of coming full circle in a way," she says.

When asked if there was a specific moment when Wright decided the North was for her, she draws a blank.

"There was never a moment where it was, 'yes I want to stay.' It was more, 'no I don't want to leave.'"

That feeling remains for her, as she says there is so much to admire about the North.

"There's a sense of community pride here and that's not something I experienced before coming up north," she says. "You realize how amazing it is to be part of a tight-knit community. Everyone is looking out for each other."

She's looking forward to raising her family in the same supportive environment.



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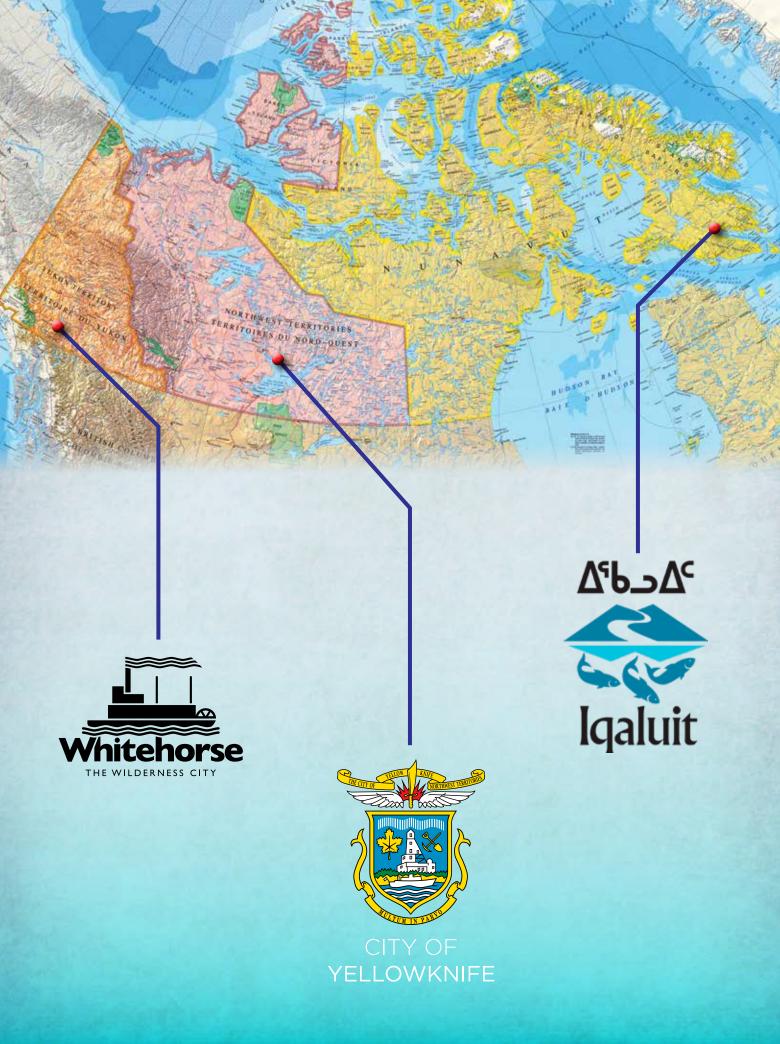
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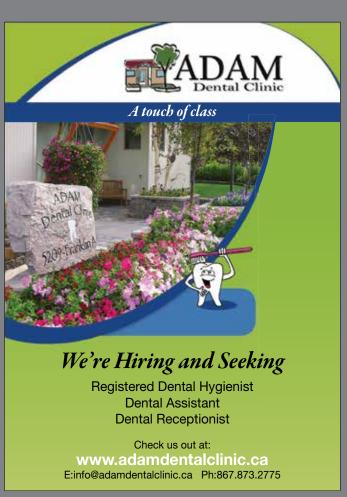














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