

Selling “Isolation”: Place-based values and tourism in Canada’s Yukon

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The Yukon is a vast territory cushioned in the North West corner of Canada. Yukon resident cultural identity and ‘sense of place’ owes a great deal to historically defining and changing notions of ‘The North’, as well as references to peripherality, spatial marginalization, and isolation. Present-day territorial tourism destination positioning also relies on the marketability of ‘isolation’ as a geo-cultural value that is much in demand. Spanning geographies both real and imaginary, isolation as a place-based value is not homogenously defined and is in a constant state of flux. It has no solid foothold and shifts with the cultural, social, economic and natural movements that humans are exposed to and respond to. ‘Sense of Place’ conceptualizations (Steven & Basso, 1996) intersect with a theory of historical-geographical materialism (Harvey 1996) and frameworks for tourism destination positioning, and highlight questions that allow us to understand ‘isolation’ as a place-based value for residents and tourists in the Yukon: what defining moments have helped to shape isolation as a cultural construct, and how is it used to market the Yukon as a prime tourism destination? How do sustainability issues intersect with ideas and values related to isolation? How does isolation as a tourism destination value sought after by guests, clash with the value it has for hosts?