



– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

**ASSINIBOINE PARK ZOO PREPARES TO BID FOND FAREWELL TO TWO POLAR BEARS AS CALGARY GETS READY TO WARMLY WELCOME THEM TO THEIR NEW HOME**

**27 JULY 2023** – The Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo announced earlier today that two male polar bears from Winnipeg’s Assiniboine Park Zoo will be transferred to the new polar bear habitat at the Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo this Fall as part of the redeveloped Wild Canada zone.

This fall, male polar bears “Baffin” and “Siku” will join the Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo family as part of a partnership with Assiniboine Park Zoo.

“Baffin” (6 years) and “Siku” (7 years) were both orphaned at less than a year of age and identified as candidates for transfer to the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre at Assiniboine Park Zoo. In both cases, the young bears were observed wandering alone in the Churchill area and confirmed to be orphaned before conservation officers intervened.

Research shows that polar bear cubs less than a year old can’t survive on their own, so the decision was made to bring them into human care.

Quote from Jamie Dorgan, Interim Chief Operating Officer of the Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo:

*“The transfer of these polar bears to the world-class polar bear habitat at the Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo represents the efforts of numerous passionate and dedicated teams in conservation-focused zoos and government. Human-caused climate change is threatening polar bear habitat. These rescued bears will receive exceptional care and continue to act as ambassadors for their wild counterparts, helping connect people to nature in ways that encourage them to take stronger action than ever before to protect wildlife and wild places.”*

Quote from Dr. Chris Enright, Senior Director of Zoological Operations, Animal Management and Conservation, Assiniboine Park Conservancy:

*“Baffin and Siku are exceptional polar bears and it has been our privilege to care for them here at Assiniboine Park Zoo. We will miss them tremendously, but know they are going to a wonderful new home at another leading Canadian AZA-accredited zoo where they will help share the story of Churchill, Manitoba, and the impact of climate change on the Arctic with visitors from across Canada and around the world.”*

Assiniboine Park Zoo is currently home to nine polar bears, seven of which live in the Zoo’s Journey to Churchill exhibit. Baffin and Siku were chosen to be transferred taking into consideration the dynamics of the current group and the bears’ individual personalities. Baffin and Siku get along well with each other, and it is believed they will thrive in a smaller group at Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo where they will receive a lot of individual attention and interaction with their dedicated caregivers and visitors.

The Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo’s polar bear habitat was constructed in consultation with industry professionals and polar bear care experts from Winnipeg’s Assiniboine Park Zoo, which is home to the

award-winning Journey to Churchill exhibit and the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre. The result is a world-class polar bear habitat that will be enhanced with exceptional animal care and enrichment programs designed to encourage the expression of natural behaviours, provide cognitive challenges, and stimulate play. The habitat includes expansive tree-filled grassy meadows, rock features, several pools ranging in depth from three to five metres, a wading stream, and an unobscured view of the horizon.

The polar bear habitat was made possible by generous investments from the Taylor Family Foundation, other donors and all levels of government. It will open to the public as part of the Wild Canada grand reopening on Saturday, December 1st, 2023.

### **About Wild Canada:**

Wild Canada is the redeveloped Canadian Wilds zone at Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo. It's reflective of how we see this unique world. A world where people, animals, and the land are connected. Through collaborations with Indigenous communities, we look to honour Indigenous knowledge, science and art, and deepen our storytelling about the connection between humans, wildlife and the land.

The redeveloped zone will envelop visitors in beautiful and immersive habitats, offering more engaging experiences and proactively use storytelling to inspire and educate visitors about the importance of biodiversity, the impacts of climate change, and the complex survival challenges facing iconic Canadian wildlife and wild spaces – and how they can help save these animals from extinction.

The Wild Canada zone redevelopment project was made possible thanks to investments by the Taylor Family Foundation, Brawn Family Foundation, the Government of Canada – Canadian Heritage and Prairies Economic Development Canada, the Province of Alberta, and the City of Calgary, and many generous donors, funders, and partners.

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**Assets:** <https://calgaryzoo.canto.com/b/IN8HI>

**Photo Credit:** Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo (drone footage) and Assiniboine Park Zoo (polar bear photos)

For more information, or to arrange an interview please contact:

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