

Manitoba High School Students Spend Day at Assiniboine Park Zoo Before Heading to Churchill to Learn About Climate Change

For immediate release: Winnipeg, February 7, 2020 – A group of 20 high-school students are at Assiniboine Park Zoo today, spending the day learning about social media and barriers to climate change action before departing to Churchill on Saturday morning. The full-day workshop and three-day trip to Churchill are part of a special program developed by the Assiniboine Park Conservancy (APC) and delivered in partnership with Polar Bears International and the Churchill Northern Studies Centre.

“Canadian youth will inherit the impact of today’s action – or lack of action – on climate change,” said Karen Lind, Manager, Education & Programs, Assiniboine Park Conservancy. “This program has presented us with an incredible opportunity to engage, mentor and empower the next generation of climate change champions.”

Five Manitoba high schools are participating in the program: Collège Powerview, Maples Collegiate, Collège Churchill, Gordon Bell High School, and Collège Pierre-Elliott-Trudeau. Larger groups of students from the participating classes (chemistry, English, global issues, and tourism) chose to focus on unique topics related to climate change that ranged from city planning, to water issues and consumerism. APC staff coordinated with local experts to tailor presentations for each class to deepen their understanding of the impact of climate change.

Additional presentations and lesson plans were developed by Cate Friesen, an award-winning CBC producer and facilitator at The Story Source, and Luana Moar, a local Indigenous youth who has become an influential voice for environmental awareness.

A smaller group of 20 students was selected to participate in today’s workshop and the trip to Churchill. The workshop will include a presentation from Luana Moar, a session on social media strategies, a tour of the Zoo’s Journey to Churchill exhibit, and opportunities for the students to get to know each other before spending three days together in Churchill.

“Climate change is a complex and sometimes overwhelming subject. It can also be hard for people to feel motivated to address climate change if they feel disconnected from its impacts,” said Dr. Stephen Petersen, Director, Conservation & Research, Assiniboine Park Conservancy. “The trip to Churchill and the opportunity to learn about the impact climate change is having on the environment, wildlife and people of the north is a very impactful part of this experience.”

While in Churchill, the group will stay at the Churchill Northern Studies Centre, a field station dedicated to supporting researchers focused on subarctic knowledge and facilitating experiential education. The group’s itinerary includes a presentation from Polar Bears International, a session on sea ice and its importance to northern wildlife, a visit to the Itsanitaq Museum, which houses a collection of Inuit carvings and artifacts, northern lights viewing, dog-sledding and more.

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Connecting with the community of Churchill and the people who live there is also an important part of the experience. APC staff and participating students, who are flying to and from Churchill, are using their luggage allotments to deliver food and other supplies to the community. They will transport over 2,000 lbs of food donated by Winnipeg Harvest to the Hungry Bears Food Bank along with hygiene products donated by Lauren Cogan, who raised money on her 17th birthday to purchase the products, and other supplies.

As a final project, following their return from Churchill, the students will develop social media campaigns highlighting their personal barriers to climate change action, while also providing hopeful solutions. APC will support their efforts by sharing some of their work on the Park and Zoo's own social media channels.

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