

**POLAR BEAR**  
**SELF-GUIDED PROGRAM**  
**GRADES K—5**



## WELCOME

Home to 170 furry, feathered and fabulous animal species, Assiniboine Park Zoo is a great place for exploration and discovery. With over 80 park-like acres to explore, the Zoo is open year-round with both indoor and outdoor exhibits, providing visitors with the opportunity to interact with animal species from all corners of the globe.

Journey to Churchill, the Zoo's international award-winning northern species exhibit, is home to polar bears, muskoxen, Arctic fox, and other northern species. Visitors experience a variety of naturalistic landscapes and animal viewing areas. Interpretive signage and interactive displays invite students to learn about biodiversity, climate change, and conservation.

It is an educational classroom like no other, inviting exploration, challenging thinking, and promoting personal action.

## STOP, LOOK, LEARN, & LISTEN

Engage your students in learning about Manitoba's amazing polar bears. Use this guide to get the most out of your self-guided visit.

**STOP:** Take your time at each exhibit. Look, learn and listen.

**LOOK:** Sometimes animals are sleeping or cleverly camouflaged. Encourage students to learn by observing.

**LEARN:** Be on the lookout for interpretive signage and interactive displays. These are great sources of information and launching pads for lively discussion.

**LISTEN:** Ask questions to keep your students engaged and respond positively to their answers and ideas.





## RULES & GOOD BEHAVIOUR

Groups visiting the Zoo must respect and follow the Zoo rules.

Please be kind to the Park and Zoo. Do not litter. Use the available garbage and recycling cans.

Class and group behaviour is the responsibility of chaperones. We reserve the right to ask a group that is disruptive, or presents a danger to themselves or others, to leave the Zoo without compensation.

Please leave the following items at home:

- ◆ plastic straws
- ◆ pets
- ◆ flying discs
- ◆ balls
- ◆ skate boards
- ◆ wheelie shoes
- ◆ balloons

*The maximum number of children/youth in the Zoo gift shops at one time is 10. They must be accompanied by at least one chaperone.  
NO BACKPACKS ALLOWED IN GIFT SHOPS.*

## CONTENTS

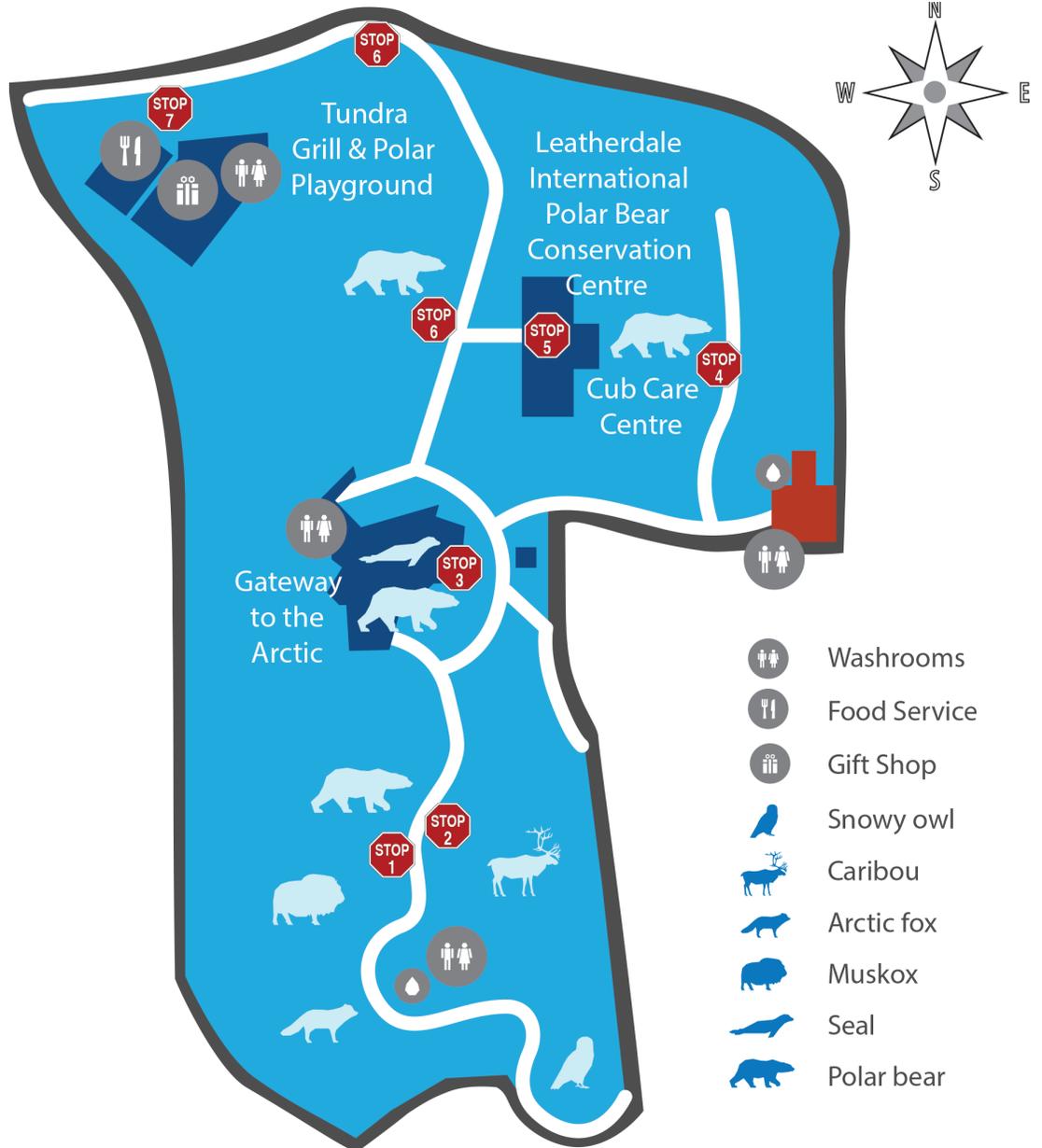
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# SELF-GUIDED TOUR MAP

## Journey to Churchill

The included map shows each of the Stop and Learn locations in Journey to Churchill. If you would like a full Zoo Map be sure to grab one at the Zoo Entrance.



**Gateway to the Arctic:** Polar bear, seal, 360 Aurora Borealis Theatre, Sea Ice Passage

**Leatherdale international Polar Bear Conservation Centre:**  
Learn about polar bears, the Arctic ecosystem, research in action, and climate change

**Tundra Grill:** Restaurant, Arctic Treasure Gift Shop, Polar Playground



# WAPUSK POLAR BEAR HABITAT VIEWING WINDOW

## BACKGROUND

A towering inuksuk welcomes visitors to Journey to Churchill. Here, visitors encounter snowy owls, Arctic fox, muskoxen, caribou and polar bears. With few visible barriers between the species, visitors experience the vastness of the landscape. Interpretive content describes the age, scale, fragility, and beauty of the tundra and the many species that depend on it.

## ACTIVITY

Supplies:

- ◆ Ethogram
- ◆ Pencil
- ◆ Stop watch
- ◆ Clipboard or something sturdy to write on

Make your way to the viewing window at the Wapusk polar bear habitat. This is your first opportunity to view polar bears. Your students will begin their ethogram activity sheet here.

Ethology is the study of animal behaviour. Scientists use ethograms to help with this research. Your ethogram chart has a list of polar bear behaviours on one axis and time on the other.

Look for bears, choose one bear to watch, and record your observations. Ask students to check off the behaviour they observe every 20 seconds for 3 minutes, starting at the one mark and working their way down the chart. Announce the time every 20 seconds so your students know when to record their observations.

## QUESTIONS

1. What affect might the weather play on the polar bears' behaviour?
2. What affect might the time of day have on the polar bears' behaviour?
3. What else can you think of that would affect polar bear behaviour?
4. Do you see any enrichment items in the polar bear area? These include balls, floats, food treats like lettuce or ice blocks. Why do you think these items are there?

## BONUS ACTIVITY

There are six more polar bear viewing opportunities as you continue through the Journey to Churchill exhibit, so keep your ethogram handy and reference it throughout your visit. The Ethogram Activity Worksheet has multiple polar bear viewing locations listed, consider printing multiple copies to take advantage of this learning opportunity.



# WAPUSK POLAR BEAR HABITAT, POLAR BEAR BEHAVIOUR INTERPRETIVE COLUMN

## BACKGROUND

Polar bears follow the rhythm of their internal clocks. Their behaviour changes as they move through the seasons and the lifecycle of mating, denning, feeding on the sea ice, and returning to land.

## ACTIVITY

Visit the wooden “Polar Bear Behaviour” interpretive column on the pathway between the Wapusk polar bear viewing window and the caribou habitat. Read the information with (or for) your students and encourage discussion by engaging them with age appropriate questions.

## QUESTIONS

1. Name and describe each of the four seasons?
2. What are the wild polar bears doing right now? Are they on the ice or land?
3. How does polar bear behaviour change from season to season?
4. How does our (human) behaviour change from season to season?
5. Can you think of other animals that change their behaviour depending on the season? (For example, black bears hibernate and snowy owls migrate)
6. How is climate change affecting polar bear behaviour?

## BONUS ACTIVITY

Look for our mobile interpretive cart and touch fur, claws and skulls belonging to Arctic animals. Depending on the season and weather you may find it at the Arctic fox habitat, in Gateway to the Arctic, or at the polar bear cub transition area behind the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre.

*Please note, the interpretive cart is hosted by our friendly and informative volunteers. Depending on volunteer schedules, the cart may not be available during your visit.*



# GATEWAY TO THE ARCTIC, AURORA BOREALIS THEATRE

## BACKGROUND

Polar bears share a vast, complex ecosystem with plants, animals and people — all of whom depend on each other for survival. The interpretive displays in Journey to Churchill include stories, images, art, artifacts, and recorded interviews that convey the traditional and contemporary relationships of Indigenous Peoples to the land and wildlife, and the significance of the effects of a changing environment on their way of life.

## ACTIVITY

Located inside Gateway to the Arctic, the domed Aurora Borealis Theatre is a place of wonder and awe. With the play of the northern lights above and the encircling wall projecting a 360 degree horizon, visitors are immersed in a vast Arctic landscape.

Watch the Arctic's seasonal beauty unfold as you enjoy our feature film Rhythms of the North and learn about the people and animals that live in Canada's north. After exiting the theatre, engage your students with age appropriate questions and discussion about the film. The film plays on a repeated 9 minute loop.

## QUESTIONS

1. What is the Cree name for grandmother?
2. What are the three changes the Kookum notices since she was a little girl?
3. In the film, the Kookum mentions that the ice is not as safe as it used to be. Why do you think that is?
4. What do you think the film is trying to teach people?

## BONUS ACTIVITY

Gateway to the Arctic is the primary viewing point for polar bears and seals. Underwater viewing tunnels, known as Sea Ice Passage, give visitors the rare opportunity to view these amazing creatures swimming from below the surface of the water. Look for bears and note their behaviour on your ethogram activity sheet.

Even if the bears aren't swimming when you visit, the seals usually are. There are also numerous interactive interpretive stations where students can learn all about life on and under the sea ice.

Answers: 2. Kookum  
3. (1) Polar bears wait longer as freeze up comes later, (2) The bay opens up earlier and the belugas arrive sooner, and (3) the ice melts sooner



# LEATHERDALE INTERNATIONAL POLAR BEAR CENTRE, CUB CARE CENTRE

## BACKGROUND

A key component of the Journey to Churchill exhibit, the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre is a state-of-the-art polar bear rescue and transition facility. The only facility of its kind in North America, the Centre is the first home within the Assiniboine Park Zoo for rescued polar bears. Here, polar bears are given the highest standard of care as they adjust and transition to their new home.

## ACTIVITY

Visit the Cub Care Centre behind the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation. There are three separate enclosures, each with their own swimming pool for the bears. The number of bears living in this area varies throughout the year. Get out your ethogram, look for the bears, and record their behaviour.

## QUESTIONS

1. Why are the polar bear cubs not with the other bears in Journey to Churchill?
2. Do the polar bear cubs walk to the Sea Ice Passage from here?
3. What do the polar bears eat at the Zoo?
4. How long do the polar bear cubs stay at the Polar Bear Cub Care Centre?

## BONUS ACTIVITY

If you have time, this is good chance to take a quick tour through the Kinsmen Discovery Centre. You won't find any polar bears there, but this indoor exhibit is home to all kinds of cool creatures plus a mob of cute and curious meerkats!

Answers: 2. No, the Polar Bear Cub Care Centre is not connected to the Sea Ice Passage, the young bears get to splash and play together here  
 3. Polar bears at our zoo eat large pieces of meat, polar bear chow (dry kibble for large carnivores), fish, and leafy greens (kale and romaine lettuce)  
 4. Until they are at least three years old and are at a healthy enough weight to join the other bears in Journey to Churchill



# LEATHERDALE INTERNATIONAL POLAR BEAR CONSERVATION CENTRE, INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

## BACKGROUND

The Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre is also a hub for environmental and wildlife education, research and conservation. Here, you can learn about polar bears, the Arctic ecosystem, research in action, climate change, and what you can do to reduce your impact on our environment.

## ACTIVITY

Climate change is harmful to the sea ice that polar bears rely on for their survival. The good news, is that there are small things that we all can do to reduce our impact on the environment and help polar bears. Look for the spinning wheel interpretive display and encourage students to discuss and learn how they can help save sea ice.

## QUESTIONS

1. Are you already doing some of these things at home?
2. What else do you think you could do?
3. Are there things we could be doing at school?

## BONUS ACTIVITY

The interpretive centre is filled with interesting displays on a wide range of topics including polar bears and climate change, video interviews with polar bear researchers and conservation managers, and fun facts about polar bears in answer to questions posed by Winnipeg students. Give students time to explore and interact with the displays.



## CHURCHILL COAST POLAR BEAR HABITAT

### BACKGROUND

As you make your way from the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre to the Town of Churchill, there are several opportunities to observe polar bears.

- ◆ Stop at the dens across from the interpretive centre. You may find a polar bears resting, seeking shade from the summer sun or shelter from the winter wind.
- ◆ Around the corner at the amphitheatre you may find bears sleeping or splashing in the swimming pool.
- ◆ Further down the path at the Churchill Northern Studies Shelter is a large viewing window that overlooks the expansive Churchill Coast habitat. If you are lucky, you may see polar bears playing or roaming across the tundra-like landscape.
- ◆ The Tundra Grill restaurant is your final opportunity to view polar bears and update your Ethogram Activity Worksheet.

### ACTIVITY

Get out your ethogram and look for the bears. Watch and record their behaviour on your activity sheet.

### QUESTIONS

1. What polar bear behaviour occurred the most? And the least?
2. What is your favourite polar bear behaviour?
3. Do you think your behaviour affects the behaviour of the polar bears at the Zoo?
4. What conclusions can be made about the polar bears' behaviour from your observations?
5. How do you think this information can be used to aid in conservation efforts?

### BONUS ACTIVITY

There are many artifacts in this section of the exhibit – from the always popular helicopter to the Churchill weather station – that highlight how life on the edge of the Arctic is a little bit different. Take some time to explore, check out the interpretive displays, and learn how people have adapted to survive and thrive in the north.

Answers: 3. Yes! When visitors respect animals by being calm and quiet the animals behave well and are happy. When visitors are loud and try to get attention by knocking on windows, the animals may hide



## TOWN OF CHURCHILL

### BACKGROUND

The Tundra Grill and Polar Playground area is the culmination of the Journey to Churchill. With buildings, artifacts, and displays resembling the town of Churchill, students will feel as though they have been transported to the northern frontier.

### ACTIVITY

Look for the inuksuk located near the CN rail car. An inuksuk is a stone landmark or cairn built by humans. They were used by the Inuit and other peoples of the Arctic region of North America, and come in varying shapes and sizes. They served an important role in the culture of peoples of the Arctic region. Many conveyed messages, while others were used as aids in hunting. Still others had a spiritual meaning. This is an appropriate spot to gather students and reflect on their Journey to Churchill.

### QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn about polar bears?
2. What would you like to do to help save sea ice?
3. What is something really interesting that you learned today?
4. After exploring and getting to know the Zoo polar bears, what questions would you like to have answered?

### BONUS ACTIVITY

Younger students will also love the Polar Playground, located indoors next to the Tundra Grill restaurant. The playground is uniquely designed to engage children in a polar-themed active play. This is also a good time for a washroom break before you continue on with your Zoo visit.

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*Thank you for exploring Journey to Churchill. We hope that you had a great time learning about polar bears, the tundra, and the many amazing things that Canada's north has to offer.*