About Polar Bears International

Polar Bears International (PBI) is a registered Canadian nonprofit organization with a mission to conserve polar bears and the sea ice they depend on. As a science-based organization with staff including leading polar bear scientists and partnerships that span the circumpolar Arctic, we focus on addressing both the long- and short-term challenges that polar bears face, with a goal of sustaining a future for the bears across the Arctic. Our key pillars of work include research, human-bear coexistence, education, and policy.

While PBI supports projects across the Arctic, Manitoba serves as a base for our outreach, research, and coexistence efforts. PBI has worked with the Churchill community since 1992.

PBI's work in Churchill includes:

- Supporting Churchill's **Bear Smart Working Group**, launched in 2020, an effort that could serve as a model for other communities living with polar bears.
- Developing **materials with bear safety messaging**, including a video, community-specific coloring books, and safety posters.
- **"Bear-dar" Early Detection Radar:** We tested and trained a ground-based radar system in Churchill to identify polar bears and to alert authorities of their approach.
- **Indigenous Knowledge Study:** Working with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers in Churchill, we partnered on an Indigenous Knowledge study of human-polar bear coexistence.
- **Empowering youth voices** by supporting a young Churchill leader's participation at the Arctic Council's Youth Conference.
- Testing the **effectiveness of non-lethal deterrents**, building on earlier research findings that bear spray works well in Arctic conditions.
- **Supporting research on the area's polar bears** through helping fund a long-term population study and a sea ice ecology study.
- Working with the town on **waste management** by providing bear-proof waste bins, supporting research into alternative waste management, and supporting enhanced electric fencing around the current landfill.
- Bringing Churchill leaders together with leaders from polar bear communities in Ontario and Norway for a **Polar Bear Safe Community Exchange**.

PBI's work outside of Churchill includes:

- **Maternal den studies:** PBI and partners are monitoring polar bear behavior at dens in Norway to understand the needs and vulnerabilities of moms and cubs.
- **Population monitoring, energetics, and genetics research:** Across the Arctic, PBI helps fund studies on polar bear numbers, movement patterns, food webs, and genetic diversity.
- **Polar bear den detection:** PBI's long-term research into polar bear den-detection methods helps set industry guidelines to keep moms and cubs safe from disturbances.
- **Zoo-Based Studies:** Our captive partners help with research that would be impossible to conduct in the wild, answering questions about reproduction and energy demands along with directly funding research on wild populations.
- **Global education:** Through educational webcasts, live Arctic cameras, climate communications training, and a handbook for Arctic guides, we reach hundreds of thousands of people each year.
- **Connecting science to policy:** PBI provides international governments, policymakers, and the media with the latest science on polar bears and conservation measures.
- **Outreach from Svalbard, Norway:** We run an interpretive center in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway, a popular stop for Arctic cruises. This gives us the opportunity to talk with visitors about polar bears, climate change and how they can help make a difference.

Churchill's Future

We know change is coming to Churchill. We hope that change will be based on the best knowledge and retain what makes this area special. We respectfully ask the government to:

- Show Canadian Arctic leadership through innovative waste management solutions addressing a key issue across the North. Support the town of Churchill as a pilot community, both logistically and financially, in developing long-term waste management solutions that are scalable and transferable—which will help to keep both people and polar bears safe while benefitting development opportunities.
- Engage scientists and local knowledge holders to understand how an increase in shipping may affect polar bears, beluga whales, and other species.
- Support and coordinate wildlife research in the region so we can understand how populations are faring and make sound conservation decisions. Long term studies that cross Provincial and territorial boundaries are key to detecting and understanding changes.
- Engage the local tourism community as changes to Churchill's infrastructure move forward to understand the unique natural features that bring people here from all over the world and how best to preserve those features while building a vibrant community and economy.