

ANIMAL METROPOLIS: HISTORIES OF HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONS IN URBAN CANADA
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Arctic Capital: Managing Polar Bears in Churchill, Manitoba

KRISTOFFER ARCHIBALD

“The Polar Bear Capital of the World” is the slogan of Churchill, Manitoba, a town located on the western shore of Hudson Bay, where the polar bear has become the central attraction in the community’s wildlife tourism–dependent economy.¹ Every autumn, polar bears congregate near Churchill while they wait in a semi-fasting state for Hudson Bay to freeze over so that they can begin seal hunting. While most bears remain outside town limits and pose no threat to residents, some do enter the community, curious about the human inhabitants or attracted by the presence of food. The relationship between polar bears and the town evolved through a combination of natural processes, human intervention, and popular media representations. Churchill, an urban space, has accepted the polar bears, and takes pride in identifying itself as the town that hosts them.

This chapter examines prominent Canadian and American media depictions of polar bears in the Churchill area in the 1970s and early 1980s and discusses how the famed Arctic animal was incorporated into the town’s cultural identity. Although non-Arctic residents had historically perceived the Arctic as remote and isolated, Churchill’s unique relationship with its bears was successfully marketed to domestic and international tourists who, yearning to engage with nature beyond the confines of zoos, began to arrive in the town each fall. Media coverage presented Churchill’s polar bears through a variety of narratives: in some stories, the bears were wild animals, marauding around town and foraging for meals

at the local dump; in others, the bears were subject to a host of wildlife control programs aimed at constructing a safe environment for them, as well as for the residents and tourists with whom they coexisted. Churchill's human–bear coexistence ultimately proved to be both possible and profitable, and illustrated the Arctic's growing accessibility within the popular imagination.

Since the sixteenth century, scholarship, natural histories, and visual art pertaining to polar bears have placed the animal in Arctic environments uninhabited by people, enforcing the perception that encounters with the animal occur in locations isolated from human societies.² From the late 1950s to the late 1970s, the popular press in North America presented many images of wildlife biologists studying the bear in its Arctic habitat.³ Even when polar bears made their presence known in Churchill, scholars did not pay attention to the bears' role in an urban locale. They focused instead on issues related to wildlife tourism: visitors' experiences of the polar bears and the prospects for ecotourism.⁴ Visitors witness and experience conservation efforts aimed at ensuring positive and sustainable human–bear cohabitation in the area. Polar bear tourism is not, however, simply about being educated on wildlife conservation tactics. In Churchill, as with other wildlife tourism ventures, the tourist's gaze alters human relationships with the bear. The focus of the activity is looking at and photographing the animal, and wildlife tourism scholars express concerns that the animal has become nothing more than an experience to capture, via cameras, in a manner that discourages humans from understanding its complexities or its interactions with its natural habitat.⁵ As noted by the tourism scholar R. Harvey Lemelin, the impulse to photograph the bear can stimulate a desire for more exotic photographic collectibles,⁶ presumably fuelling other wildlife tourism markets and situating charismatic megafauna as consumable experiences ever available for human entertainment.

The science that guides wildlife conservation, moreover, is ever-changing. It is updated based upon field and laboratory research, which alters how we go about seeing and interacting with wildlife. Environmental historians focusing on human–wildlife interactions have stressed humans' evolving ecological outlooks on animals, including bears, throughout the twentieth century. Both Alice Wondrak Biel and George Colpitts have noted that while national parks previously allowed visitors to feed bears, by the 1970s policies outlawed it.⁷

Yet one need not be in a national park to experience wild bears. This chapter joins a growing body of scholarship and journalism depicting the town of Churchill as a rich case study around which to think about human–wildlife relations. The importance of polar bears to Churchill’s wildlife tourism economy is stressed in R. Harvey Lemelin’s examination of the cooperative relationship between the parties responsible for polar bear management and the town’s tourism entrepreneurs; he also highlights the media’s role in popularizing the availability of polar bears in the area.⁸ In 2014 Edward Struzik published *Arctic Icons*, a book that narrates the efforts of scientists and wildlife officers to manage human–polar bears coexistence each autumn. Struzik presents a town dependent upon wildlife management for the well-being of the animals and townspeople.⁹ Jon Mooallem engages with Churchill’s polar bears as a species representative of the complicated relationship between North Americans and wildlife. Mooallem’s exploration of the stories Americans tell about animals demonstrates that conceptions of wildlife and wilderness depend upon human representation and intervention, and that human outlooks on wildlife conservation have been fluid. Moreover, he argues that the narratives presented by the media were of great importance in situating Churchill as a tourist destination.¹⁰

This chapter demonstrates that polar bears were not merely a creation of tourism boosters but rather held a central place in Churchill’s urban history and local identity since the late 1960s. The assertion that animals are central to Canadian urban spaces is a recent addition to historical scholarship on wildlife. Whereas much work has discussed the relationship between wildlife and Canadians, it has tended to focus on animals living beyond urban boundaries.¹¹ Sean Kheraj argues, however, that everyday interactions between people and animals in urban environments have influenced modern attitudes toward wildlife – the beasts’ autonomous behavior, he suggests, shaped urbanites’ opinions on wildlife management: Kheraj examines Vancouver’s Stanley Park, where, in the early twentieth century, predators, such as crows and cougars, were killed through sanctioned hunts because they preyed on wildlife valued by park administrators.¹² This chapter builds on such claims and establishes how an urban population’s interactions with wild animals was exported through popular media and ultimately attracted tourists intent on

encountering the creature in what they had previously considered to be its natural but inaccessible habitat.

An Absence of Polar Bears

Before the late 1960s, the polar bear is relatively absent from Churchill's historical record. European settlement of the area was initiated by the fur trade industry: in the late seventeenth century, the Hudson's Bay Company established Fort York as a trading post.¹³ Native peoples from the area, including Cree, Dene, and Inuit, were important participants in the fur economy, bringing furs from the interior to the bayside outpost, including some polar bear pelts. The province of Manitoba, founded in 1870, formally established Aboriginal hunting rights for polar bears in 1930.¹⁴ Recognition of the bear's importance in Inuit culture and economies was also evident in 1973, when Canada, Norway, Denmark, the Soviet Union, and the United States signed the Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears. Of the signatory countries, only Canada recognized its Indigenous peoples by allowing the Canadian Inuit subsistence access to the polar bear through a predetermined annual quota. Under that agreement, the Inuit held the right to allocate portions of that quota for use in non-Inuit sport hunts, which largely occurred in the Northwest Territories and what is now Nunavut.¹⁵ Economic opportunities associated with the polar bear in those territories were attached to the sport hunting industry, a decidedly different form of tourism than Churchill ultimately produced.

The arrival of industrial infrastructure in Churchill expanded the town's economic base beyond the fur trade. In the 1930s a commercial port was constructed at Churchill and a rail line was built to link it with Winnipeg for the purposes of shipping grain from western Canada to European markets. The military's arrival in 1942 further boosted the local economy. That year the US Army Air Corps established Fort Churchill, a base that would go on to be jointly operated by Canadian and American forces during the Cold War. While a tourism industry emerged in the postwar era, Churchill's initial foray into wildlife tourism did not include the polar bear. The Canadian Travel Bureau sought to attract visitors to Churchill with the 1950 promotional film *North to Hudson Bay*, advertising the presence of caribou, white whales, and scientists studying cosmic rays as local attractions. For tourists interested in history, Churchill

was home to Prince of Wales Fort, once the abode of Samuel Hearne, an eighteenth-century English explorer.¹⁶ In the 1960s, birding also attracted visitors to the area;¹⁷ however, while Churchill marketed itself as an Arctic locale well suited to the adventurous tourist, the polar bear was not mentioned as a tourist attraction.

Churchill's polar bears rose to prominence only as a result of the closure of two institutions that had long restricted them. One reason for the scarcity of polar bears in the Churchill area was that until 1957, the Hudson's Bay York Factory purchased polar bear pelts from local native hunters who hunted bears in the region's principal denning area. The shuttering of the York Factory curtailed the hunts, which allowed the local bear population to increase in number.¹⁸ The other reason was the 1964 closure of Fort Churchill. During their tenure in the area, the Canadian and American militaries practised land manoeuvres on the terrain surrounding Churchill, and encounters between soldiers and bears resulted in the fright or death of the latter. As a result, bears learned to avoid humans. The military's departure from Churchill, the outcome of shifting military priorities,¹⁹ meant the bears' numbers grew and their conditioned fear of humans diminished. Additionally, the consequent loss of some 4,000 military personnel from the region²⁰ meant that the town required a new industry to help cushion the loss of military spending. The increase in the bear population and the growing public interest in the animal led Churchill to capitalize upon the animal's presence and embrace a wildlife tourism-based economy.

Polar Bears in Churchill

By the late 1960s, polar bears had colonized the Churchill area. In 1967, seventy-six bears were sighted in the area, a number that increased to two hundred a decade later.²¹ The presence of this massive animal, the sovereign creature of the Arctic region, was firmly established in November 1968 when as many as forty polar bears were recorded by photojournalists at the town dump. That same month a polar bear killed a nineteen-year-old boy who had followed bear tracks near the school.²² The boy's tragic death at the paws of a bear made the animal a local concern; any bear wandering through Churchill's school zone now represented an overlap between the urban and the natural worlds. Deaths from polar bears have

proven to be relatively rare events in Churchill.²³ Most of the bears are lethargic and exist peacefully beyond urban limits; as of 2014 there were only two recorded human fatalities from polar bears in Churchill, one in 1968 and another in 1983.²⁴ Bear attacks on visitors and residents, however, continue to occur occasionally.²⁵

In the early 1970s the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW),²⁶ a Canadian animal protection organization, mobilized to protect polar bears that were causing problems around Churchill. Although established only in 1969, IFAW possessed some 8,000 members globally. Through a series of fundraising campaigns in Europe, the United States, and Canada, it was able to airlift nuisance bears away from Churchill.²⁷ At a cost of \$500 per bear,²⁸ the airlift campaign²⁹ transported nearly one hundred bears between 1971 and 1978.³⁰ IFAW's campaign represented a dramatic effort to conserve the polar bear, which was indicative of the desire in the early 1970s to protect wildlife. The airlift attracted significant media coverage to Churchill and cast a spotlight upon the town's Arctic animal resident, increasing the bear's celebrity nationally and internationally.³¹

From the 1970s into the 1980s, reporters and photojournalists showcased the issue of polar bears in Churchill to nature-oriented, and also more general, audiences in southern Canada and throughout the United States. Journalists visiting the tiny, windswept northern town told tales of bears wandering the streets, eating people's food and garbage, sleeping in awkward locations, and generally intruding on residents' day-to-day lives. This presentation conveyed the message that polar bears had become particularly accessible to human society. In 1978, the *Smithsonian* magazine published an article titled "Polar Bears Aren't Pets, But This Town Is Learning How To Live With Them" that included a photograph taken outside the Churchill airport at dusk. The picture shows a bear wandering freely outside the terminal. Dominated by the outline of the airport's buildings and an approaching car, the polar bear looks small and out of place in its urban surroundings.³² That article was condensed and reprinted in *Reader's Digest* under the title "The Town That 'Hosts' Polar Bears." *Reader's Digest* opened the article by describing how "at the town's Legion Hall, a polar bear walked in at midday and ambled toward a crowd of dart players before being evicted – by an indignant shout from the club steward. Not far away, another bear leapt through a house window at dinnertime and started helping himself at the family table. The homeowner beat him

off with a two-by-four.”³³ A *Time* magazine article described living among polar bears, with one Churchill resident recalling that a polar bear “got into our porch where we kept our meat, and Mother chased him out with a broom.”³⁴ Humorous portrayals like these capitalized upon the sensational image of polar bears as close neighbours. The large number of bears in the area, when combined with their curious personalities and their hunger, meant that some bears did cause problems for humans. Hungry bears were known to pillage and eat local livestock, such as pigs, chickens, and rabbits. In 1982, one resident who raised rabbits lost fifteen of the fluffy creatures to bears’ jaws. Dogs were also at risk. In *Arctic Icons* Struzik explains that in the 1970s working sled dogs were left outside town, tethered to barrels filled with whale and seal meat to sustain them. Polar bears, presumably attracted by the rotting meat, killed some of these dogs.³⁵ By the early 1980s residents had altered this practice to prevent bears coming into contact with such dogs.³⁶ Still, negative accounts of the bears persisted; the majority concerned the bears’ general mischief-making and tendency to damage property, contributing a level of unpredictability and drama to daily life.

While some bears ambled through the streets of Churchill, enjoying the smells, and at times, tastes of local cuisine, some preferred to loiter at the garbage dump outside the town.³⁷ By the late 1970s, photojournalists had been aware of the bears’ presence at the garbage pile for a decade; the congregation of bears at the dump had been photographed and presented to the public by naturalist and news magazines. *Time* published one photograph of six bears rummaging in the dump amongst burning piles of garbage that had been lit ablaze to discourage that very activity. The photograph defines the white bears against background heaps of unidentifiable garbage and dark smoke.³⁸ *National Geographic* published a similar picture in an article examining the Hudson Bay region: this time a bear, with a large number “13” dyed on its fur for identification purposes, stands alone against the heat-induced shimmering backdrop of burning garbage. Flames and smoke rise up behind the bear, whose face is covered in grey soot. A mound of garbage appears in the foreground.³⁹ These photographs and reports presented to the public a polar bear that was far from majestic; rather, these images positioned the bear as an abject nuisance. Instead of a dignified Arctic monarch, the polar bear appeared similar to

black and grizzly bears to the south whom audiences might have encountered in person.

Indeed, scavenging bears were not an unusual spectacle for those vacationing in Canada's Banff National Park or the United States' Yellowstone National Park, where the bears had become habituated to human visitors through feeding. These other species of bears had long been known to dig through garbage in national parks and suburban neighborhoods. In the case of Yellowstone National Park, Alice Wondrak Biel has shown that in the early decades of the twentieth century, bears were fed by park staff in a specially built auditorium as a form of nightly entertainment.⁴⁰ In Banff National Park, vacationers motoring along the scenic roads offered tasty treats to bears in the hope of facilitating a photograph and for personal entertainment.⁴¹ Yet in the 1970s, changes in ecological thinking meant park staff changed their practices and also began re-educating tourists and resident bears. George Colpitts' work on the "'highway bum' bear" explains how Canada's parks staff turned to film as an educational medium in their efforts to alter human-bear relations. Feeding bears was discouraged; instead, visitors were encouraged to respect the bear's space.⁴²

Unlike its southern cousins the black and brown bears, the polar bear had previously escaped the reputation of being habituated to humans, entrenched as it was within popular perceptions of a vast and uninhabited Arctic wilderness. In the early 1980s, however, the polar bear's meanderings amongst trash humans discarded diminished the image of a strong and fearsome animal. Instead, coverage of bears at Churchill's dump situated them as unhealthily fat and dirty, a disconcerting picture that expressly linked wild polar bears with the local human population. Wildlife biologists and Churchill's conservation officers acknowledged that while the story of polar bears growing obese from eating garbage might be upsetting from an ecological perspective, the situation was also disconcerting to employees at the dump. Polar bears, these experts argued, remained dangerous animals. Some bears returned to the dump year after year, even introducing younger bears to the rubbish heap and endangering workers.⁴³

Concerns about wandering bears impacted many aspects of local life. For one, the Manitoba Government Employees' Association reached an unusual union agreement on behalf of sixty Churchill hospital workers. Public bear alerts sometimes prevented hospital employees from walking to work, which reduced their paychecks and compromised the town's health

services. The solution was that any worker stranded as a result of polar bears was entitled to employer-provided transportation.⁴⁴ Public festivities were also affected: community members feared that polar bears might be unwelcome trick-or-treaters at Halloween, a situation potentially dangerous to costumed children. In 1981, *Time* magazine described how each Halloween, armed men checked the town's streets and back alleys before the children went out for the evening. "It was not ghosts and hobgoblins that were on their minds," the author observed, "but polar bears."⁴⁵

Residents' relationships with the bears were complex. Bears were bothersome animals that posed inconveniences to Churchill's community at multiple levels. For "Mother" with her broom, the bear was simply an unwanted pest, best dealt with decisively. Yet polar bears were also acknowledged to be potentially lethal to people and as such required both management and caution. For Churchill residents to enjoy Halloween or walk to work, certain accommodations had to be made. As these examples demonstrate, people willingly took short- and long-term actions to ensure the safety of both humans and bears.

Churchill's human population became determined to coexist as harmoniously as possible with the bears. When journalists of the late 1970s related residents' stories, the theme of tolerance for polar bears was common. Statements such as "Bears were here long before people" and "Dogs are more trouble here than bears" alluded to the acceptance the town had developed for the animal.⁴⁶ Polar bears became a part of the community's identity and most folks took pride in having the bear nearby. Residents bonded over the common presence of bears: "Despite the very real dangers of polar bears, most Churchill residents wouldn't have it otherwise. Dr. Sharon Cohen of the Churchill Health Centre says: 'Nothing unites the people of this town as much as polar bears.'⁴⁷ Residents also felt a sense of stewardship toward the animal. In interviews for documentaries and magazines and in local letters to the editor, locals expressed their willingness to resolve problems with the marauding bears peacefully.

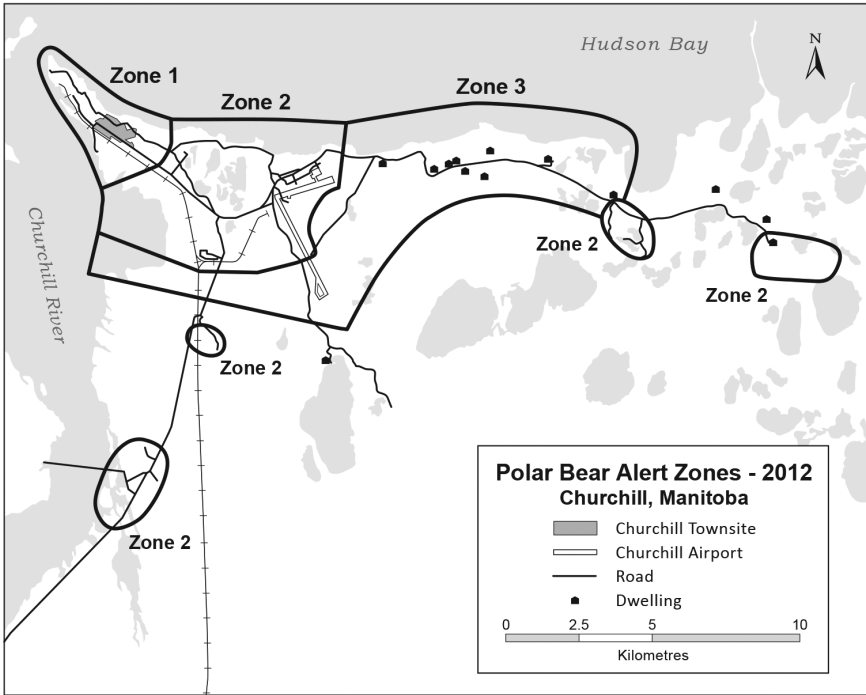
In 1982 *National Geographic* produced a documentary for public television titled *Polar Bear Alert* that displayed Churchill's uneasy situation: residents' fondness for the bear was complicated by the dangers associated with it. The film suggested that residents were considerate of their shared habitat with the bears and lived alongside them using constant vigilance. In the documentary's opening scene, a bear stands in the middle of a street

with power lines, parked cars, and several buildings clearly visible in the background. The narrator explains that Churchill is the “one place in the world where the great white bears roam the streets, immune to the presence of their only enemy, man.” Later in the film, a man who lived on the outskirts of Churchill expresses that one has to exercise some caution because “they [polar bears] live here too.”⁴⁸ Another scene featured a young couple pushing a baby carriage, out for a walk with their toddler. Other than their heavy winter clothing, there is little to distinguish them from any other urban North American couple walking with their child except that the man carries a hunting rifle on his shoulder. The mother comments: “I like to go out for walks and things, but it’s awkward to carry the gun as well as the baby.”⁴⁹ This documentary dramatized the town’s polar bear issue for audiences and helped generate the notion that Churchill was a dangerous but exciting town in which to live. It also cast inhabitants as courageous, as they practised their daily urban activities in the possible presence of marauding beasts. Churchill residents were not going to remain captives of the bears.

Polar Bear Alert set ratings records and has been credited with “putting Churchill and its bears on the map.”⁵⁰ However, some local residents criticized the documentary for the manner in which it sensationalized the cohabitation of people and polar bears. By presenting the bears as monstrous and the people as armed for their safety, the film downplayed the town’s emphasis on treating the bears with caution and respect.⁵¹ While rifles may have been necessary on occasion, Churchill’s bear management drew on other tools and strategies that were devised to better ensure the bear’s survival.

Managing Bears, Educating Residents

Churchill’s residents were not alone in their efforts to protect themselves from polar bears. In 1980, the town instituted a Polar Bear Alert Program in conjunction with provincial wildlife officers to help prevent bears from wandering too close to humans. A 1969 initiative labelled the Polar Bear Control Program had emphasized killing those bears that entered the town; in contrast, Polar Bear Alert aimed to protect the lives of both humans and polar bears, to minimize property damage, and to minimize any food conditioning or human habituation of the bear.⁵² The program



9.1 This map of the Churchill region depicts the Polar Bear Alert Program's zones. Churchill is located in Zone One, whereas the airport is located in Zone Two. Zone Three is largely uninhabited. Data courtesy of Bob Windsor, Manitoba's Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship.

resulted from residents and conservation officers realizing the economic value of live polar bears to the town as derived through wildlife tourism and recognizing that the animals could be managed using humane practices.⁵³ Central to the program was the establishment of three spatial zones that dictated different levels of tolerance for the presence of bears. In Zone One, the area encompassing Churchill's urban core, polar bears were promptly removed. Live traps were set on the outskirts of Zone One to prevent polar bears from wandering too close to many of the town's residences. Zone Two included the airport, and mobile traps were located as needed; however, this area's small number of dwellings diminished the opportunity for human–bear interactions. In Zone Three, polar bears

were monitored but not removed from the area unless wildlife officers received a complaint.⁵⁴ A Bear Patrol comprised of wildlife officers enforced the zones to ensure that the bears remained a safe distance from the majority of Churchill's human population. Citizens aided the Bear Patrol by alerting the officers to bear sightings within the three zones.⁵⁵ Although various media represented the bear as frequently present within town limits, by the early 1980s the town was striving to ensure that humans and polar bears resided in separate spaces.

Under the Polar Bear Alert Program, Churchill took great efforts to avoid killing polar bears.⁵⁶ Officers used noise-making devices to scare them away, a tactic that attracted some condemnation and generated sympathy for the bears. Mrs. Carol MacKenzie's letter to the editor of Churchill's *Northport News* criticized the tactics officers used to scare a bear on the basis that excessive harassment could produce a "mean" bear. She concluded by noting: "Despite my conservative outlook, I feel very strongly that a more liberal attitude could be adopted towards Churchill's Polar Bears."⁵⁷ To address the bears who repeatedly caused problems in the town, a polar bear holding compound – another component of the Polar Bear Alert Program – was trialed in 1979.⁵⁸ The compound, or, as the media dubbed it, the "bear jail," consisted of a metal building outside town that was renovated to accommodate sixteen individual bears and four family groups.⁵⁹ Chronic offenders were caught in live traps and placed in the facility until the ice formed on Hudson Bay and the animals were ready to leave town. The polar bear jail provided officers with a humane method of addressing the issue of nuisance bears and demonstrated that Churchill no longer viewed killing polar bears as an acceptable means of managing the species. The program has been considered a success because of the decreased number of both bear deaths and human maulings since its inception.⁶⁰

Accompanying the physical work of scaring bears away and removing them from Churchill was a public education campaign aimed at improving the safety of human residents. Signs were erected along the borders of the zone system, informing people of where humans' space ended and that of the polar bears began, and deterring humans from entering the bears' zones. Signs on the outskirts of town stating "POLAR BEAR ALERT. STOP. DON'T WALK IN THIS AREA" warned people that that area was off-limits to humans. The signs featured an illustration of a large



9.2 A sign warning Churchill's visitors and residents that they entering a polar bear zone. iStock.com/IPGutenbergUKLtd.

polar bear paw complete with sharp-looking claws to reinforce the idea that polar bears were dangerous.⁶¹ Notices were also visible throughout town, instructing visitors and reminding locals of what to do when polar bears were spotted in town. Topping the list of actions one should take were “Get indoors and stay there” and “Call the RCMP or Conservation Office.”⁶² Another sign that read “Polar Bears and People Don’t Mix” emphasized the importance of proper garbage disposal and provided advice for keeping bears away from garbage. “Odours attract bears – place all garbage in sealed plastic bags” and “Don’t leave any loose garbage around” were tips deemed useful, though given the bear’s famed sense of smell and sharp claws it seems unlikely that a plastic bag alone would have been an effective deterrent.⁶³ The local elementary school held an annual poster design contest aimed at educating Churchill’s children about the dangers of their bear neighbours – the winning poster would best demonstrate that message. Children were also instructed on a safety position to assume in case they were attacked by a polar bear.⁶⁴ These public campaigns helped to prevent human–bear incidents. While people accepted the bear, they

did so with caution evident in Churchill's commonsense slogan: "A safe polar bear is a distant polar bear."⁶⁵

A range of print media publicized these successful campaigns to explain how a potentially dangerous situation might be defused. Audiences of naturalist magazines such as *Canadian Geographic*, *National Geographic*, and *International Wildlife* were shown a delicate relationship between a modern town and a magnificent and charismatic predator; thus, locals as well as readers who engaged with the relevant media were taught that polar bears were still dangerous, even if they looked benign. This print media offered a more balanced approach than the drama of *Polar Bear Alert*, but regardless of the manner in which the bears were presented, their presence in and around Churchill was common throughout the media coverage, and audiences soon began to consider visiting polar bears in the wild.

Churchill's Polar Bear Tourism

Churchill's polar bear tourism industry evolved during the 1970s and coincided with changing tourist demand and an increasingly consumerist attitude toward nature. The increased affluence of the postwar period enabled growing numbers of people to afford a holiday in remote Churchill, a destination that offered Canadians, Americans, and Europeans experiences of the natural world and an escape from their hectic day-to-day lives.⁶⁶ Initially, the polar bears and the town received visitors in the form of media personnel and wildlife biologists who photographed and studied the animals. Yet as Churchill's bears garnered more media attention for airlifts, their antics around town, and apparent cohabitation with local human residents, wildlife tourists began recognizing Churchill as a location offering access to an animal previously unavailable but to a select few sport hunters, scientists, and Arctic explorers. Photographers, cinematographers, and reporters transmitted an image of the bear as a guaranteed spectacle whose magnificence was available for viewing in a uniquely intimate atmosphere. Churchill's bear tourism offered a relatively undeveloped location and an ostensibly authentic experience of watching live bears in their natural habitat.⁶⁷

The town and its entrepreneurs capitalized upon the attention the animal received in the media. Commenting on the best marketing approach for Churchill to take, a government-funded tourism and transportation study



9.3 A young bear sits before a Tundra Buggy. iStock.com/BLFink.

concluded: “Television programs and magazine articles provided many more visitors with information about Churchill, perhaps suggesting that forms of promotion other than the more traditional brochures and guidebooks may be more effective in disseminating tourism related information.”⁶⁸ The diverse stakeholders involved in selling and promoting Churchill’s polar bear tourism agreed on the media’s importance in spreading the message of bear tourism and in fostering interest amongst potential visitors in viewing the bears in person. These stakeholders included management agencies such as the Canadian Wildlife Service and Manitoba Conservation; industry representatives composed of Churchill entrepreneurs involved directly in the industry as tour operators; representatives of Churchill’s service sector and local government; non-profit environmental organizations; and various independent and commercial media.⁶⁹

As the Churchill polar bears were being indirectly marketed to potential tourist audiences, a unique vehicle was constructed to facilitate large-scale bear tourism. Photographer Dan Guravich travelled to Churchill on assignment for the Smithsonian Institution in the 1970s to photograph the bears at the dump and was taken on an unplanned polar bear outing by local mechanic Len Smith. The two men became friends and together conceptualized what became known as “Tundra Buggies,” giant wheeled contraptions that allow groups of tourists to venture onto the tundra comfortably, safely above the bears’ reach, and with minimal impact on the land.⁷⁰ For a price, Tundra Buggies would transport small groups of tourists 21 kilometres away from town and onto the tundra to Gordon Point, within the Churchill Wildlife Management Area.⁷¹ There, in a more natural setting than was achievable from sightings at the dump, tourists witnessed polar bears resting as they waited for Hudson Bay’s waters to freeze.⁷² Although the polar bear experience was marketed as limited to Churchill, visitors actually travelled beyond the town to witness the bear. Tundra Buggies became the vehicle of choice for Churchill’s bear-seeking guests, and photographs of people photographing bears from the safety of these mammoth vehicles became common in tourist and wildlife magazines.⁷³

By the late 1970s, Churchill’s polar bears had been solidly commodified. Tourists able to afford the full Churchill experience, including the not-insignificant costs of travelling to Churchill, tour tickets, and northern accommodations, observed and photographed polar bears from the safety of Tundra Buggies.⁷⁴ Witnessing bears in their natural habitat, free from media manipulations or the cages of zoos, ostensibly provided visitors an authentic experience with one of nature’s majestic creatures. By observing a polar bear firsthand, visitors hoped somehow to obtain a bit of the purity that the natural world has long been perceived to embody.⁷⁵ Just as wilderness enthusiasts had once argued in favour of the power of being immersed in a sublime and spectacular landscape, gazing on wild, free polar bears offered a means of purifying oneself from the ills associated with modern urban living. In addition to providing tours of wild polar bears, Churchill’s tourism industry marketed an array of souvenirs. As of 1990, these included “Inuit carvings of polar bears in soapstone, bone, and ivory . . . polar bear place mats, polar bear pins, polar bear patches (‘Churchill Household Pests’), polar bear postcards, polar bear posters, polar bear puppets, and beer mugs labeled ‘Polar Bear Piss.’”⁷⁶ Tourists

purchased memorabilia from this eclectic collection to adorn their homes, pass on as gifts, and entertain friends.

Accounts and images of people looking at and photographing polar bears presented the creature as an object for the consumption and pleasure of visitors seeking a genuine glimpse of the bear they had heard and seen so much about. In the early 1980s, magazines such as *Life* and *Canadian Geographic* included photographs showing polar bears grouped around Tundra Buggies while tourists competed for the best views. *Life* published a compelling photograph in which a young bear stands on its hind legs, with its enormous front paws on the tire of a Tundra Buggy and looking upward at the vehicle's windows. Hanging out a window a short distance away, a photographer's head and upper shoulder are turned to face the bear.⁷⁷ Later in the article was an image of a polar bear peering through the window at the tourists, looking more curious than dangerous. The photograph conveyed the sense of intimacy a tourist experienced with the bears when all that separated the species was a reinforced windowpane.⁷⁸ These and other images of bears and tourists demonstrated how physically close visitors could get to polar bears, in contrast to the image of potentially dangerous bears that had emerged from Churchill's public education campaigns. High up in machines that dominated the surrounding bears, humans appeared to have peacefully overcome the dangerous animal and ensured their own entertainment. Photos that captured tourists carrying their ever-present cameras reaffirmed the idea that this was a wildlife tourist venture. The close proximity of the bears assured those who made the trek to Churchill that bear watchers would be rewarded with a sort of trophy – a polar bear close up.

Bear watching as a tourist activity grew quickly. In 1984, figures from wholesale tour operators indicated that 41 per cent of the package tours sold for Churchill were concentrated in the weeks of polar bear season. Tour packages themselves accounted for a small percentage of the total visitors, and self-bookings constituted "some 70% of non-business travel to Churchill"; most of these travellers came for the polar bears or whales.⁷⁹ By 1985, those involved in the industry agreed that while room for growth existed, care had to be taken to ensure that the industry did not disrupt the bears' psychology. Beyond fears that large numbers of tourists could impact the bear's mental well-being, tour operators were cautious to keep tourist numbers in check to prevent any reduction in the quality of the



9.4 A lone polar bear on the snowy tundra. iStock.com/HuntedDuck.

experience – the perceived wildness and authenticity of the creature would be diminished when it was framed against another tundra vehicle filled with photo-snapping visitors. As such, it was in the tour operators’ long-term interest to expand cautiously.⁸⁰ Writing in 1990, the geologist Charles Feazel observed that polar bear tourism contributed “at least \$3 million a year into the local economy,”⁸¹ supporting the town’s hotels, restaurants, and shops in addition to the polar bear tours. Churchill’s bear-watching industry understood the fine balance between the economics of Tundra Buggy tickets, the aesthetics of viewing bears in a landscape perceptibly devoid of humans, and ethical concerns for animal welfare when conceptualizing how to ensure a healthy population of bears and a satisfied wildlife tourist clientele. Striking this balance was not new to Churchill, as it had also been a concern in the early 1980s when the images of the polar bears at the garbage dump were published.

Concerns About Polar Bear Tourism

Although the town has benefited economically from bear tourism, some concerns remain, most notably the representation of First Nations groups within the tourism economy and the impact of climate change on Churchill's polar bear population. The Indigenous peoples of Churchill – Cree, Dene, and Inuit – have not played a large role in the town's polar bear tourism and did not appear prominently in publicity images either of polar bears or the local tourist industry; nonetheless, they are important actors in bear management in the wider Canadian Arctic. Indigenous knowledge of polar bear populations has gained recognition among scholars of northern Aboriginal communities and wildlife scientists, who as of 2001 began to acknowledge the Inuit and Manitoba's First Nations' significant contributions to scientific understandings of polar bears.⁸²

Despite First Nations' historical engagement with polar bears in Arctic settings and their more recent involvement in bear management, the role of Churchill's Indigenous communities in polar bear tourism has been less prominent. Edward Struzik observes that initial efforts to attract tourists to Churchill were “multicultural in a unique way, with non-natives working with Cree, Chipewyan, Métis, and Inuit entrepreneurs. Recognizing an opportunity [the media's interest in Churchill's polar bears] . . . they all got together at the Chamber of Commerce level to see how they could turn this publicity into a successful economic venture.”⁸³ To prospective visitors, however, the region's Indigenous peoples may be perceived as inherent to the north, just like the polar bear. Some tour companies do offer Indigenous elements to their polar bear tours; a highlight of Natural Habitat Adventures' “Ultimate Churchill Adventure” package is to “meet the Native peoples of Hudson Bay and learn about their age-old customs and traditions during special cultural presentations.”⁸⁴ Since these cultural presentations are listed alongside Tundra Rover polar bear tours that feature the opportunity to crawl into an unoccupied polar bear den, one wonders to what extent Indigenous peoples and polar bears are portrayed similarly as wildlife tourist attractions.

While the Indigenous people of Churchill may not receive substantial profits from polar bear tourism, their cultural presence remains visible to visitors. A 2008 study on Canada's Inuit and polar bear hunting found “no evidence or suggestion that any of the polar bear viewing ecotourism

companies were Inuit owned and because almost all tourists' needs are met by non-Inuit ecotourism companies, local people are likely to receive a reduced share of profits flowing from bear viewers.⁸⁵ The Eskimo Museum, an institution in Churchill since 1944, contains a collection of Indigenous artwork and cultural artifacts. A popular tourist attraction, the museum reminds visitors that Churchill's population consists of Indigenous peoples in addition to polar bears, whales, and birds.

Climate change, an issue that has increased public and political interest in the Arctic,⁸⁶ is perceived as a threat to polar bear tourism.⁸⁷ A changing Arctic climate could shorten the winter season, reduce the sea ice platform, and hamper the animal's ability to sustain itself through a prolonged summer season.⁸⁸ This link between the polar bear's future and a changing climate, combined with the beast's capacity to captivate the public, led the Center for Biological Diversity to propose in 2008 that the polar bear join the American listing of endangered species. The center reasoned that were the bear to achieve an endangered status, it would force the American government to acknowledge climate change as a legitimate threat. Ultimately, the American government classified the polar bear as "threatened." Wildlife conservationists portrayed it as a mighty animal that the world stood to lose if actions were not taken to alleviate climate change.⁸⁹

The impact of climate change is difficult to predict; it may reduce the Hudson Bay polar bear population and result in thinner, less healthy animals.⁹⁰ In a 2010 study, over 60 per cent of polar bear tourists expressed their willingness to visit Churchill's polar bears in spite of the possibility of seeing unhealthy bears or fewer bears. Faced with the prospect of seeing no bears, however, only 50 per cent of respondents were willing to visit Churchill, a decline the community dreads.⁹¹ Since at least 2004, Churchill's residents have treated the issue of climate change as a significant challenge for polar bear tourism and, by extension, the local economy.⁹² In interviews with community members, the most common issue discussed in relation to climate change was the dangers it posed to the polar bear – a finding that reinforces the bear's importance to Churchill. Churchill's human population knows that a loss of the polar bear and the associated wildlife tourist industry would undermine the town's identity and disrupt the local economy. As one resident reasoned, "The main attraction is the polar bears; there is whaling and birding, but compared to the bears that is a side issue. The main tourist season is during bear season."⁹³

Demand for polar bear tourism is forecast for the next twenty to thirty years.⁹⁴ Ironically, climate change may increase Churchill's wildlife tourism – at least in the short term – because visitors want to travel north to see and experience the animal before it disappears into extinction. As another Churchill resident articulated, “People come up here now with a lump in their throats because they think this bear is doomed . . . Not for the joy of being with a bear, and seeing a bear in the wild. That's secondary now.”⁹⁵

Conclusion

Churchill's wildlife tourism industry situated the polar bear as a wild and quintessential sight indigenous to the Arctic that is uniquely available to bear watchers. In spite of the emphasis Canadian and American media placed on the promise of unobstructed views of these urban polar bears, a range of human activity shaped this tourist experience. For example, Churchill initiated wildlife management and public education programs aimed at keeping the animal outside the town, allowing humans and bears to coexist safely. Furthermore, Churchill's bear watching, although depicted in early media accounts as an urban activity, ultimately emerged as a safari-style endeavour outside town limits, complete with specialized vehicles that protected tourists while allowing them to achieve closer physical proximity to the bear than was previously possible. The rise of polar bear tourism meant that the Arctic was available for consumption and entertainment, no longer beyond the reach of affluent tourists. Churchill's relationship with polar bears in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrated that in the face of a natural predator, a broad respect for wild animals could empower a town to manage creatively and ultimately profit from an unusual, potentially dangerous, natural phenomenon. Into the next few decades, the Churchill region will continue to be a setting through which wildlife tourists may experience the Arctic as a safe, accessible space, albeit one whose appeal faces an uncertain future.

Notes

- 1 "Everything Churchill," Travel Manitoba, www.everythingchurchill.com (accessed 23 July 2014). For an accessible discussion of the centrality of polar bear tourism to Churchill's economy, see Michael P. Chotka, *Climate Change and the Tourist Economy of Churchill: Perspectives of Local Residents* (Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg, May 2014), 1–33.
- 2 Richard Perry, *The World of the Polar Bear* (London: Cox and Wyman, 1966); Charles Feazel, *White Bear: Encounters with the Master of the Arctic* (New York: Ballantine, 1992); Ian Stirling, *Polar Bears: A Natural History of a Threatened Species* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2011); Kieran Mulvaney, *Ice Bear: A Natural and Unnatural History of the Polar Bear* (London: Hutchinson, 2011); Richard Ellis, *On Thin Ice: The Changing World of the Polar Bear* (New York: Vintage, 2010). While this scholarship gives some attention to the topic of Churchill and polar bears, there is little engagement from a historical perspective.
- 3 Kristoffer Archibald, "From Fierce to Adorable: Representations of Polar Bears in the Popular Imagination," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 45, no. 3 (2015): 266–82.
- 4 This literature includes studies on how tourists view the bear, how differing ecological outlooks generate tensions amongst bear watchers, and the influence of the visual sense in shaping perceptions of ecological degradation. R. Harvey Lemelin, "The Gawk, The Glance, and The Gaze: Ocular Consumption and Polar Bear Tourism in Churchill, Manitoba, Canada," *Current Issues in Tourism* 9, no. 6 (2006): 516–34; R. Harvey Lemelin and Elaine C. Wiersma, "Perceptions of Polar Bear Tourists: A Qualitative Analysis," *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* 12 (2007): 45–52; R. Harvey Lemelin, David Fennell, and Bryan Smale, "Polar Bear Viewers as Deep Ecotourists: How Specialised Are They?," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 16, no. 1 (2008): 42–62.
- 5 Scholars critical of the polar bear tourists' gaze include Gerry Marvin, who writes that visitors "might see them close up but this is essentially a distant encounter from the safety of a vehicle. The polar bears are transformed, reduced to being a sight, another tourist attraction." Gerry Marvin, "Perpetuating Polar Bears: The Cultural Life of Dead Animals," in *Nanoq: Flat Out and Bluesome*, ed. Bryndis Snaebjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson (London: Black Dog, 2006), 158. See also Lemelin, "The Gawk, The Glance, and The Gaze."
- 6 Lemelin, "The Gawk, The Glance, and The Gaze," 517.
- 7 Alice Wondrak Biel, *Do (Not) Feed The Bears: The Fitful History of Wildlife and Tourists in Yellowstone* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006); George Colpitts, "Films, Tourists, and Bears in the National Parks: Managing Park Use and the Problematic 'Highway Bum,'" in *A Century of Parks Canada, 1911–2011*, ed. Claire Elizabeth Campbell (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011), 153–78.

- 8 R. Harvey Lemelin, "Wildlife Tourism at the Edge of Chaos: Complex Interactions Between Humans and Polar Bears in Churchill, Manitoba," in *Breaking Ice: Renewable Resource and Ocean Management in the Canadian North*, ed. Fikret Berkes et al. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005): 192–93.
- 9 Edward Struzik, *Arctic Icons: How the Town of Churchill Learned to Love its Polar Bears* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2014).
- 10 Jon Mooallem, *Wild Ones: A Sometimes Dismaying, Weirdly Reassuring Story About Looking at People Looking at Animals in America* (New York: Penguin, 2013).
- 11 Historical studies of wildlife in Canada, including Janet Foster, *Working for Wildlife: The Beginnings of Preservation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); George Colpitts, *Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western Canada to 1940* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002); Tina Loo, *States of Nature: Conserving Canada's Wildlife in the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native Peoples and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2007), have tended to focus on human relationships to wildlife outside urban spaces.
- 12 Sean Kheraj, "Demonstration Wildlife: Negotiating the Animal Landscape of Vancouver's Stanley Park, 1888–1996," *Environment and History* 18 (2012): 497–527.
- 13 Shelagh Grant, *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010), 78.
- 14 R. Harvey Lemelin, "Human–Polar Bear Interactions in Churchill, Manitoba: The Socio-ecological Perspective," in *Marine Wildlife and Tourism Management*, ed. James Higham and Michael Lück (Cambridge, MA: Cabi, 2007), 98.
- 15 This situation enabled some Inuit communities in Nunavut to profit from the sale of their guiding expertise and quota. The sport hunting industry was pursued cautiously, establishing itself prominently in Nunavut in the mid-1980s after the sealskin market had collapsed and residents sought alternative economic ventures. Like Churchill's polar bear tourism, it offered a means of attracting new capital to remote Arctic communities. Lee Foote and George Wenzel, "Conservation Hunting Concepts, Canada's Inuit and Polar Bear Hunting," in *Tourism and the Consumption of Wildlife: Hunting Shooting and Sport Fishing*, ed. Brent Lovelock (New York: Routledge, 2008), 366.
- 16 *North to Hudson Bay* (Canadian Government Travel Bureau, 1950).
- 17 Lemelin, "Wildlife Tourism at the Edge of Chaos," 188.
- 18 Stirling, *Polar Bears*, 157–58.
- 19 Shelagh Grant suggests, for example, that the American military's reduced Arctic presence after 1965 is attributable to America's need for troops in Vietnam and a redeployment of military spending to space exploration. Grant, *Polar Imperative*, 337.

- 20 Lemelin, "Human-Polar Bear Interactions in Churchill, Manitoba," in *Marine Wildlife and Tourism Management*, 99.
- 21 Ibid., 100.
- 22 Stirling, *Polar Bears*, 158.
- 23 According to Polar Bears International, the leading conservation organization whose mission it is to protect the polar bear through protecting its sea ice habitat, there have only been two human fatalities in Churchill, the incident described above and the case of a local man in 1983 who stuffed his pockets with meat from a freezer in the ruins of the recently burnt Churchill Hotel and was killed by a bear. "Attacks and Encounters," Polar Bears International, <http://www.polarbearsinternational.org/about-polar-bears/essentials/attacks-and-encounters> (accessed 28 July 2014).
- 24 "Polar Bear Alert Program Frequently Asked Questions," 27 January 2014. Bob Windsor, email message to author, 23 December 2014.
- 25 In the fall of 2013, for example, a 30-year-old woman visiting Churchill was attacked by a polar bear in town. She was saved by a local 69-year-old man who in turn was also attacked by the bear. On Halloween night, after the trick-or-treating was finished, another man was attacked. "Woman Recounts Harrowing Attack by Churchill Polar Bear," *CBC News*, 19 December 2013; "Man, Woman Attacked by Polar Bear in Churchill," *CBC News*, 1 November 2013. Struzik overviews these maulings and Churchill's wildlife officers' response. Struzik, *Arctic Icons*, 283-87.
- 26 Alan Herscovici, *Second Nature: The Animal-Rights Controversy* (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1985), 71.
- 27 "Manitoba Receives Bid to Airlift Polar Bears from Churchill area," *Globe and Mail*, 8 October 1971; Martin O'Malley, "Into the White Horizon: Operation Bear Lift Finally Begins - With Barely Room for One Polar Bear on the Plane," *Globe and Mail*, 18 October 1971. The animal welfare organization campaigned worldwide for financial assistance, a process that included an advertisement in a prominent Canadian paper and the director, Brian Davies, travelling to Europe. "It's Time to Kill the Polar Bears Unless You Help Them [Advertisement]," *Globe and Mail*, 3 October 1971; "Funds for Airlifting Polar Bears Assured, Director Says After Trip," *Globe and Mail*, 4 November 1971.
- 28 Richard Davids, "The Town That 'Hosts' Polar Bears," *Reader's Digest*, June 1978, 122-25. The cost per bear was reported at \$400 by the *New York Times*.
- 29 This interesting event in the life of Churchill's polar bears was not unique to the era. In Glacier National Park, grizzly bears were airlifted away from humans. Jeanne N. Clark, "Grizzlies and Tourists," *Society* 27 (1990): 30.
- 30 *Stranded Marine Animals*, pamphlet (International Fund For Animal Welfare, 1978). *Stranded Marine Animals* pamphlet obtained by author through e-mail message via IFAW's international office. For a greater discussion on IFAW and its philosophy, see Herscovici, *Second Nature*, 69-115.

- 31 IFAW's campaign was so well publicized that its arrival in Churchill "was attended by reporters from all over Canada, from London, Bonn and Paris, and by a television team from Chicago." "Polar Bears Airlifted Out, Return Because They Love the Dump," *New York Times*, 21 November 1971, 34. For a Churchill perspective on IFAW in the community, see "Davies Returns for Bearlift II," *Northport News* [Churchill], 28 October 1972.
- 32 Richard Davids, "Polar Bears Aren't Pets, but This Town Is Learning How to Live with Them," *Smithsonian*, February 1978, 70–79.
- 33 Richard Davids, "The Town That 'Hosts' Polar Bears," *Reader's Digest*, June 1978, 122.
- 34 Frederic Golden, "A Plethora of Polar Bears," *Time*, 21 December 1981, 70–71.
- 35 Struzik, *Arctic Icons*, 62.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 106.
- 37 Sub-adult and female bears with young are the animals most likely to scavenge at the dump – adult males tend not to frequent the dump. This behaviour is explained by polar bear biologists Stirling and Lunn as resulting from the animals' nutritional needs and learned traits. Observations of bears at the dump reveal cases of juvenile bears returning to the dump until maturity, at which point it is thought that their hunting skills have advanced enough to provide them sufficient caloric levels until they can resume seal hunting on Hudson Bay. N.J. Lunn and Ian Stirling, "The Significance of Supplemental Food to Polar Bears During the Ice-Free Period of Hudson Bay," *Canadian Journal of Zoology* 63, no. 10 (October 1985): 2291–97.
- 38 Identifiable garbage included a package bearing the brand McCain, a multinational frozen foods corporation. The presence of such manufactured packaging reinforced the fact that these bears were scavenging among modern human garbage and that Churchill in northern Manitoba enjoyed the current conveniences of larger southern cities. Golden, "A Plethora of Polar Bears," 70–71.
- 39 Readers learnt that wildlife biologists dyed numbers on the fur of bears identified as "chronically aggressive." Bill Richards, "Henry Hudson's Changing Bay," *National Geographic*, March 1982, 395; *Canadian Geographic* expressed disgust at this situation, noting of one photograph how a "family of filthy bears has grown into obesity at the Churchill garbage dump." Fred Bruemmer, "Churchill: Polar Bear Capital of the World," *Canadian Geographic*, December 1983–January 1984, 24.
- 40 On the image of grizzly and black bears in Yellowstone National Park see Alice Wondrak Biel, *Do (Not) Feed The Bears: The Fitful History of Wildlife and Tourists in Yellowstone* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).
- 41 Colpitts, "Films, Tourists, and Bears in the National Parks," 158–60.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 153–78.
- 43 Bear biologists were concerned that bears at the dump could become increasingly aggressive as they became ever more familiar with humans working in the area.

- Stirling, *Polar Bears*, 169. Richard Davids reported on dump employees being harassed by polar bears in the course of their daily work. Davids, "The Town That Hosts Polar Bears," 123.
- 44 Peter Carlyle-Gordge, "The Dark Side of Winnie-the-Pooh," *MacLeans*, 22 September 1980, 33; "Polar Bear Clause in Union Contract," *Globe and Mail*, 4 September 1960.
- 45 Golden, "A Plethora of Polar Bears," 70–71.
- 46 Davids, "Town That 'Hosts' Polar Bears," 122–25.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 *Polar Bear Alert*, narrated by Jason Robards (National Geographic Society, 1982).
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Mooallem, *Wild Ones*, 29.
- 51 Ibid., 29–31.
- 52 The Control Program changed names to the Alert Program to better reflect its broader mandate of protecting both bears and humans. Feazel, *White Bear*, 158.
- 53 See the video interview with Manitoba Wildlife Manager Daryll Hedman on the Polar Bears International website. "Churchill, Canada's Polar Bear Alert Program," Polar Bears International, <http://www.polarbearsinternational.org/media/video/churchill-canadas-polar-bear-alert-program> (accessed 7 August 2014).
- 54 The Polar Bear Alert Program continues to exist and has been recognized globally for its success in protecting humans and bears – a 2014 article championing the program's success reports that on average less than one bear is euthanized per year. Bob Windsor, "Polar Bear Alert Program," *The Fur Harvester*, Winter 2013–14, 3–6.
- 55 Technical Workshop, *Polar Bears: Proceedings of the Technical Workshop of the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group*, Grand Canyon, Arizona, February 1983, 8–9. For more popular coverage see *Polar Bear Alert*, 1982. The *Globe and Mail* also did a piece on polar bear education in Churchill's elementary school: see "Churchill Pupils Are Intrigued by Nanook, but Parents Fear His Northward Migration," *Globe and Mail*, 15 October 1971. A 1985 survey of Churchill's residents reported that almost 90 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the Polar Bear Alert program. Struzik, *Arctic Icons*, 173.
- 56 As of 1980 the official stance of the Canadian government, presented in a bear safety pamphlet to employees working in bear country, was "Shoot to kill only as a last resort." According to the pamphlet, one was to give the inquisitive creature a chance by first trying to scare it off through non-lethal means. Thomas G. Smith, *Danger, Polar Bear!* (Ottawa: Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, 1980).
- 57 Carol MacKenzie, "Letter to the Editor," *Northport News* [Churchill], 28 October 1972.
- 58 Struzik, *Arctic Icons*, 91–93.
- 59 For example, the term "bear jail" was used by the science magazine *Omni* in 1985. George Nobbe, "Bear Jail," *Omni*, April 1985, 36.
- 60 "Churchill, Canada's Polar Bear Alert Program," Polar Bears

- International, <http://www.polarbearsinternational.org/media/video/churchill-canadas-polar-bear-alert-program> (accessed August 7, 2014). The popular media has reflected this perspective and suggests that the Polar Bear Alert program and the capacity for Churchill's wildlife officers to humanly address the presence of polar bears will only grow in importance as climate change reduces the bears' access to seals and causes them to seek food within Churchill. Ed Struzik, "Polar Bear Wrangler Job Getting Harder, Thanks To Climate Change," *Huffington Post*, 22 November 2015.
- 61 Golden, "A Plethora of Polar Bears," 70–71.
- 62 Richard C. Davids, *Lords of the Arctic: A Journey Among the Polar Bears* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), Appendix I.
- 63 Fred Bruemmer, "Churchill: Polar Bear Capital of the World," *Canadian Geographic*, January 1984, 26.
- 64 *Polar Bear Alert* (National Geographic Society, 1982).
- 65 Richards, "Henry Hudson's Changing Bay," 380–404; Fred Bruemmer, "Never Trust Nanook," *International Wildlife*, July–August 1979, 20–27.
- 66 Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 197. Modified nature, such as ski hills in the American Rockies, also attracted affluent tourists looking to escape their daily lives. On ski tourism, see Annie Gilbert Coleman, *Ski Style: Sport and Culture in the Rockies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 147–213.
- On the construction of experience and the social complexities of tourism in the twentieth century, see Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: Lawrence Press of Kansas, 1998); and Ian McKay, *Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).
- 67 Churchill's polar bear viewing industry repeated a situation played out in 1960s Africa, where photographic safaris and films of African fauna situated animals as part of a recreational economy wherein they were valued by affluent tourists for their aesthetic qualities. Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife in Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 194.
- 68 Marshall Macklin Monaghan Limited, *Churchill Tourism and Transportation Study* (Transport Canada and Manitoba Department of Highways and Transportation, 1985), 9.14.
- 69 Lemelin, "Wildlife Tourism at the Edge of Chaos," 189–91.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 192–93; Downs Matthews and Ian N. Higginson, "Dan Gurravich (1918–1997)," *Arctic* 51 (June 1998): 181–82.
- 71 The Churchill Wildlife Management Area is nearly 850,000 hectares and protects the region's polar bears' summer resting area and maternity denning areas.
- 72 Lemelin, "Wildlife Tourism at the Edge of Chaos," 189.
- 73 The parallels between Tundra Buggies and the jeep of the African

- safari are worth noting. Both vehicles transport visitors into a foreign environment that is conceptualized as the domain of the animals tourists are looking to see. The vehicles buffer the tourists from the animals and restrict the experience to one of sight, as opposed to touch, despite the close proximity of the impressive creatures, who become habituated to the presence of the travelling humans.
- 74 The true polar bear experience was thus restricted to the privileged, more affluent classes of society. This situation continues. An all-inclusive one-day bear watching tour for October 2014 aboard a Tundra Buggy, return flight to Winnipeg included, costs \$1,500 according to Frontiers North Adventures. "Churchill Polar Bear Adventure," Frontiers North Adventures, <http://www.frontiersnorth.com/adventures/churchill-polar-bear-adventure> (accessed 21 July 2014).
- 75 Price, *Flight Maps*, 175.
- 76 Feazel, *White Bear*, 164.
- 77 Anne Fadiman, "The Great White Bears," *Life*, February 1984, 42–46. A similar photograph appeared in *Canadian Geographic*. Bruemmer, "Churchill: Polar Bear Capital of the World," 20.
- 78 Fadiman, "The Great White Bears," 42–46. The closeness of bears to people in Churchill was also demonstrated in *Popular Photography*, which noted that a picture of polar bears was shot from 7 feet away, and in the travel magazine *Travel Incorporating Holiday*. *Outdoor Canada* made a similar observation. Guravich, "King of the Arctic," *Popular Photography*, May 1984, 77; Wayne Lynch, "Making Tracks to the Bears," *Travel Incorporating Holiday*, October 1983, 38; John Sylvester, "Polar Bear Safari," *Outdoor Canada*, April 1983, 31.
- 79 Marshall Macklin Monaghan Limited, *Churchill Tourism and Transportation Study*, 4.29.
- 80 *Ibid.*, 4.12. The caution employed around the expansion of the bear-watching industry positions polar bear tourism as an early example of ecotourism. Definitions for ecotourism vary; however, the principal goals are to "foster sustainable use through resource conservation, cultural revival and economic development and diversification." David Newsome, Susan A. Moore, and Ross K. Dowling, *Natural Area Tourism: Ecology, Impacts and Management* (Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2002), 14.
- 81 Feazel, *White Bear*, 159.
- 82 Magdalena A. K. Muir and Lloyd N. Binder, "Traditional Knowledge and Northern Wildlife Management: The Arctic Circumpolar Route," in *Collecting and Safeguarding the Oral Tradition*, ed. John McIlwaine and Jean Whiffin (München: K. G. Saur, 2001), 137.
- 83 Struzik, *Arctic Icons*, 147.
- 84 "Ultimate Churchill Adventure," Natural Habitat Adventures, www.nathab.com/polar-bear-tours/ultimate-churchill/ (accessed 16 September 2014).
- 85 Foote and Wenzel, "Conservation Hunting Concepts," 124.
- 86 Stéphane Roussel and John Erik Fossum, "The Arctic Is Hot Again in America and Europe," *International Journal* (Autumn 2010): 799–808.

- 87 Climate change is acknowledged to be affecting Arctic tourism ventures in general. A 2010 article examining Arctic cooperation and Canadian foreign policy cites the increase in cruise ships and yachts to Greenland as but one example of how warmer temperatures are changing Arctic tourism. Michael Byers, "Cold Peace: Arctic Cooperation and Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* (Autumn 2010): 902.
- 88 Some researchers, such as Linda Gormezano, an ecologist at the American Museum of Natural History, suggest that polar bears faced with six months on land could offset their shortened seal hunting season by consuming snow geese and their eggs as well as caribou. See Linda Gormezano and Robert Rockwell, "What to Eat Now?: Shifts in Polar Bear Diet During the Ice-Free Season in Western Hudson Bay," *Ecology and Evolution* (September 2013): 3509–23; D.T. Iles et al., "Terrestrial Predation by Polar Bears: Not Just a Wild Goose Chase," *Polar Biology* (September 2013): 1373–79.
- 89 The wealth of media coverage on polar bears and climate change is significant, making polar bears into arguably one of the most recognizable species in western media. Jon Mooallem's *Wild Ones* offers a decent overview of the Center for Biological Diversity's legal and public relations strategy in their effort to have the bear listed as endangered. Mooallem, *Wild Ones*, 13–101.
- 90 Amongst polar bear biologists there appears to be disagreement about the impact of climate change on the health of populations. Reg Sherren, "Polar Bears: Threatened Species or Political Pawn?," *CBC News, Technology and Science*, 2 September 2014, www.cbc.ca/news/technology/polar-bears-threatened-species-or-political-pawn-1.2753645 (accessed 24 September 2014). The polar bear's evolutionary history also complicates discussion surrounding the animal's future in a changing climate. In 2011 evolutionary research on the polar bear revealed that modern polar bears emerged from interbreeding between the extinct Irish brown bear and a prehistoric polar bear. The researchers postulate that abrupt climate changes in the last ice age brought the two species into contact and may be a "mechanism by which species deal with marginal habitats during periods of environmental deterioration." Ceiridwen J. Edwards et al., "Ancient Hybridization and an Irish Origin for the Modern Polar Bear Matriline," *Current Biology* 21 (9 August 2011): 1251–58.
- 91 Daniel Scott, Colin Michael Hall, and Stefan Gössling, *Tourism and Climate Change: Impacts, Adaptation and Mitigation* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 340.
- 92 Chotka, *Climate Change and the Tourist Economy of Churchill*, 14.
- 93 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 94 Jackie Dawson, Emma Stewart, and Daniel Scott, "Climate Change and Polar Bear Viewing: A Case Study of Visitor Demand, Carbon Emissions and Mitigation in Churchill, Canada," in *Tourism and Change in Polar Regions: Climate, Environment and Experience*, ed. Jarkko Saarinen (New York: Routledge, 2010), 96.
- 95 As quoted in Mooallem, *Wild Ones*, 44.

