POLAR BEARS INTERNATIONAL

2018

Annual Report to Members

Your impact on polar bear conservation

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Our mission is to conserve polar bears and the sea ice they depend on. We also work to inspire people to care about the Arctic and its connection to our global climate.

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Krista Wright

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For Wild Polar Bears Everywhere

Blueprints, display panels, and polar-bear-proof garbage cans. I'll always remember 2018 as the year when we broke ground on Polar Bears International House, our new interpretive center and base camp in Churchill, Manitoba.

PBI House will open in the fall of 2019, providing us with a central space for our outreach and research—and allowing us to do even more for polar bear conservation.

Churchill, of course, is known throughout the world as the place where hundreds of polar bears gather each fall to wait for the sea ice to return to Hudson Bay. The town is where it all began for Polar Bears International and where many of our programs—including our Tundra Connections® webcasts, Polar Bear Cams, and Climate Alliance training—take place today.

While Churchill serves as an important hub for PBI scientists and educators, our work on behalf of polar bears spans the Arctic—from Svalbard to Russia and Alaska and many places in between.

Whether we're supporting a polar bear population count in Russia, researching moms and cubs at den sites, or working with Arctic communities to reduce tensions with polar bears, our teams stay busy across the North to secure the polar bear's future.

In this year's annual report, we chose 25 highlights from the past year that show the work you made possible on behalf of the world's polar bears. Your generosity is on every page, in every highlight featured, and we couldn't be more grateful to you.

Thank you for your loyal support and for sharing our vision of wild polar bears in the Arctic, always.

Gratefully,

Krista Wright

Krista Wright
Executive Director

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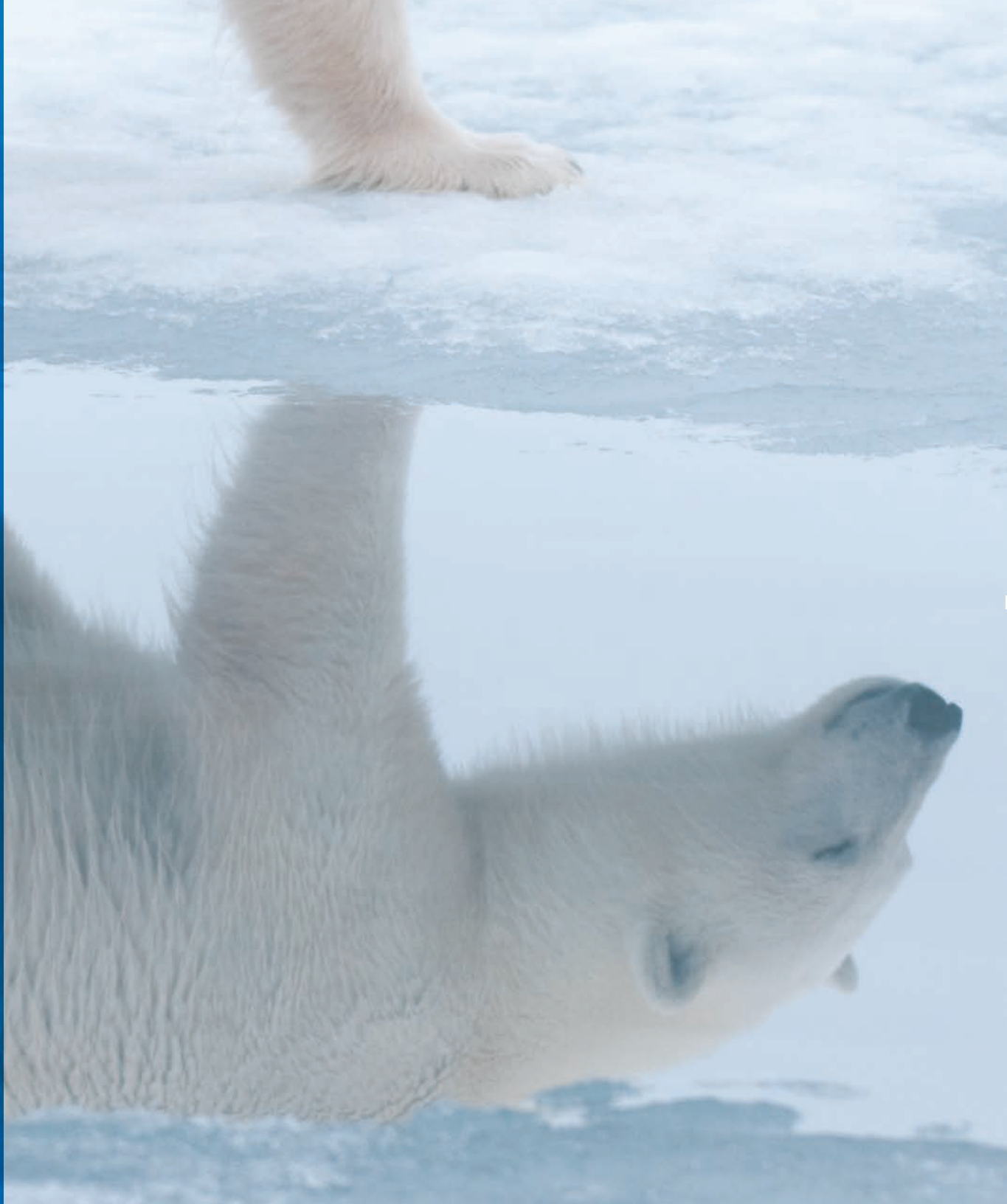
2018 Conservation HIGHLIGHTS

How does your support help polar bears? Let us count the ways.

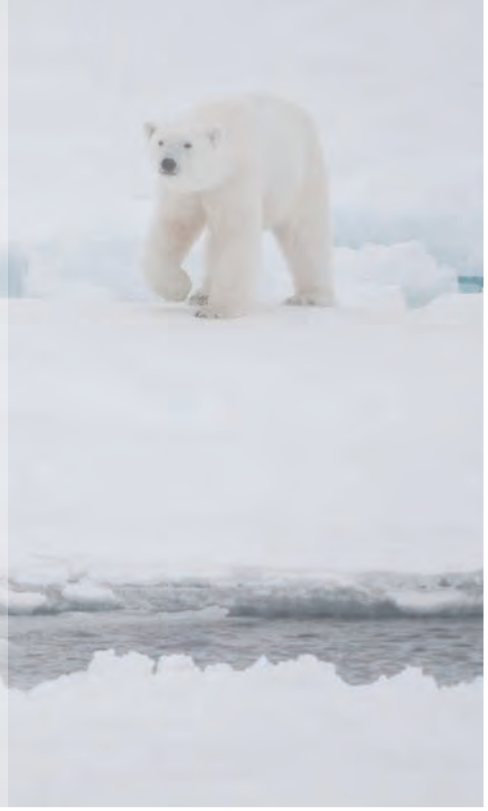
Here are 25 conservation highlights from 2018 that show how your donations are making a difference.



1

Research in Russia.

Russia has long been a big blank spot in polar bear research, with little known about how populations are faring. Your generosity is helping to fund a collaborative study on Russia's Wrangel Island led by Dr. Eric Regehr of the University of Washington. The data gained will help address key conservation challenges for the Chukchi Sea polar bears, including sea ice loss due to climate warming, along with increased industrial activity and shipping in the region.



2

Mentoring the Next Generation.

You made it possible for Jurnee Bignell-Blair of Churchill to intern with us for a third year, gaining insights on educational outreach and field operations. You also helped us engage film and photo interns on projects related to our media library, work with graduate students on research projects and outreach, and help facilitate a leadership camp in Canada's North.

3

Building for the Future. Generous donors allowed us to break ground on Polar Bears International House, our new interpretive center and base camp in Churchill, Manitoba. Located on the main street of town, PBI House will amplify our education efforts and allow us to do even more for polar bear conservation. We've scheduled the grand opening for November 2019.

4

Tundra Connections Outreach.

Thanks to you, our live chats and webcasts during the fall polar bear migration connect scientists and other experts with viewers around the world. Working with partners including the Discovery Education Network, our educational programs reached 658,000 people in 2018—and our polar bear content topped 12 million viewers!

5

Early Warning System. Being able to detect a polar bear as it approaches a community or work station could help prevent deaths or injuries to polar bears and people across the Arctic. Your support is allowing us to test whether a compact radar surveillance system called the SpotterRF can alert wildlife managers to an approaching bear, even in a snowstorm or at night.

6

Safety in Polar Bear Country. Your support makes it possible for us to continue to work with northern communities on how to live safely with polar bears, a growing concern in a warming Arctic. In 2018, we produced a handout with safety tips for residents and visitors. We also created a U.S. version of our polar bear safety coloring book for children in coastal Alaskan villages and are in the process of creating a Russian version.

7

Arctic Ambassador Centers. You made it possible for us to expand our Arctic Ambassador Center network to 47 zoos and aquariums, representing 24 U.S. states, four Canadian provinces, and six European countries! These centers work with us to share information on polar bears, sea ice, and climate change. Not only are they helping to move the dial on climate action, they also participate in research projects that help conserve their wild cousins.

8

World Ranger Day Award. Our annual award honors the men and women who work on the front lines of polar bear conservation to keep people and polar bears safe. In 2018, your gifts enabled us to recognize Erling Madsen, a wildlife officer in Ittoqqortoormiit, Greenland, for his dedication to reducing conflict between polar bears and people—protecting his community and the bears.

9

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. When the Bureau of Land Management proposed that this pristine wilderness area in Alaska be opened up to oil and gas development, our chief scientist, Dr. Steven Amstrup, prepared a detailed scientific report on the risks posed to denning polar bear families as part of a joint effort with the Sierra Club. Because of you, we continue to work on this issue in 2019.

10

A Window into the Arctic. Thanks to your generosity, our live Polar Bear Cams reach audiences around the world, allowing viewers to follow the annual gathering of polar bears on the shores of Hudson Bay as they wait for the sea ice to form. Part of a partnership with explore.org, Frontiers North Adventures, and Parks Canada, the live cams highlight wild polar bears, inspiring people to care.

11

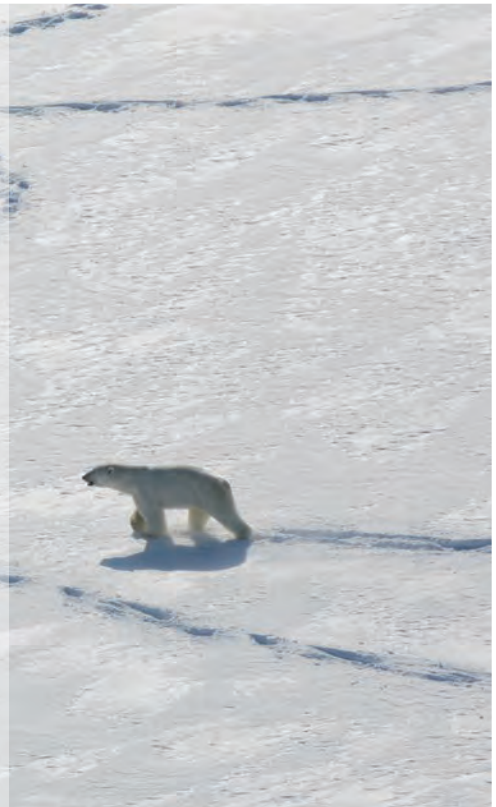
Climate Alliance Training. Your support makes it possible for us to train professionals from our Arctic Ambassador Center network on how to communicate effectively about polar bears, sea ice, and climate change. In 2018, representatives from 16 zoos in the U.S. and Canada graduated from the program.

12

Genetic Diversity. With the Barents Sea experiencing massive sea ice loss, your support is helping to fund a study focused on whether the polar bears that range in the area are changing their movement patterns due to fragmented ice, reducing gene exchange within the population. The study includes bears from East Greenland, Norway, and parts of Russia.

13

Bear Tracker. Once again, your gifts helped fund our Bear Tracker, one of the most popular pages on our website. It allows visitors to follow the time-delayed movements of polar bears on Canada's Hudson Bay. The map includes a sea ice layer that helps provide context, showing how the bears respond to changes including the summer melt and fall freeze-up.



14

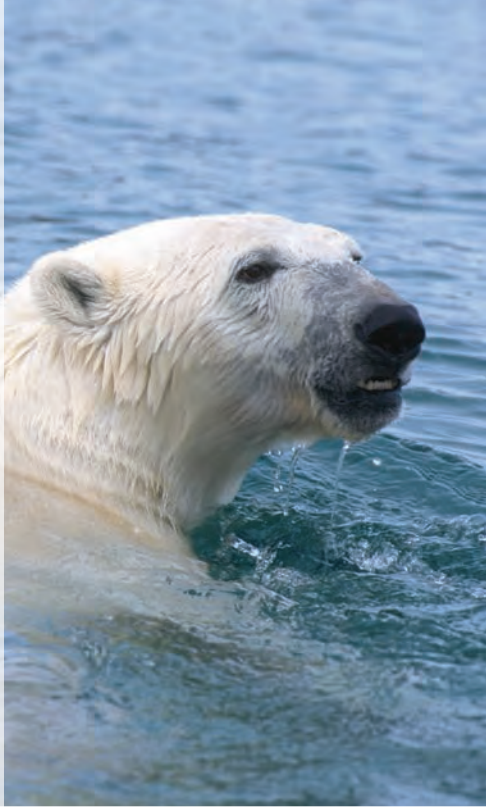
European Outreach. With the addition of Dr. Thea Bechshøft of Denmark to our team, you enabled us to strengthen ties with the European members of our Arctic Ambassador Center network, fostering the exchange of information and laying the groundwork for studies that will help wild polar bears.

15

Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Your generosity allowed Dr. Hannah Voorhees to wrap up her field interviews with native elders in four Alaskan villages, recording their insights into polar bear behavior, numbers, movement patterns, and changes over time. After sharing her reports with participants and inviting feedback, she and her co-author will produce a paper based on their insights.

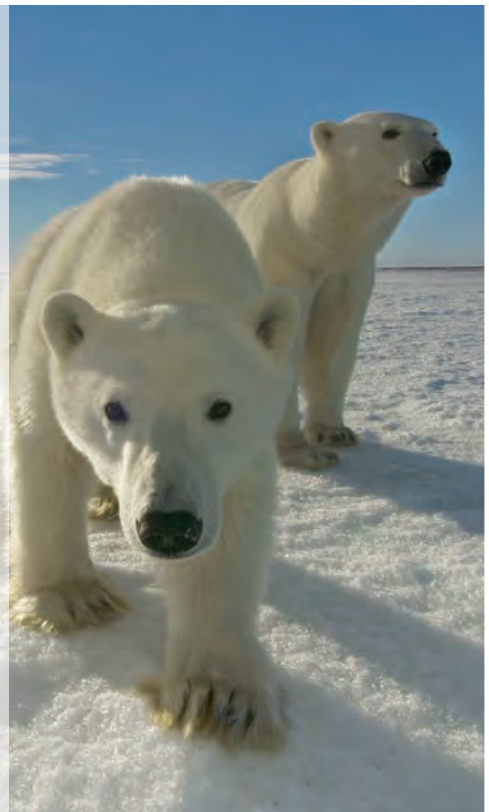
16

A Better Tracking Device. 3M, the company famous for Post-It Notes and adhesives, is helping us design a tracking device that can stick to a polar bear's fur—with the ability to withstand subzero temperatures, snow, saltwater, and other challenges. If successful, the devices will provide a minimally invasive way to study movement patterns and other activities of polar bears in the wild.



17

Bear Spray Research. As part of our wider efforts to reduce tensions in northern communities between polar bears and people, you enabled us to collaborate on a study with members of the Conflict Working Group to test the effectiveness of bear spray as a polar bear deterrent—even during extreme cold and in windy weather. Our senior director of conservation, Geoff York, is now co-authoring a paper that shares those results.



18

Svalbard Den Study. You made it possible for us to continue our long-term study of the behavior and condition of polar bear moms and cubs from the time they emerge from their dens until they depart for the sea ice—information that will help set guidelines to protect them as more industry moves into the North. Our partners include the Norwegian Polar Institute and the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research.

19

Climate Talks in Poland. Thanks to your support, Christopher J. Carter, our representative at the COP24 climate talks, spoke up for polar bears during the December summit. Despite lack of U.S. leadership, he found hope in the new Paris Agreement rulebook, along with bold progress and commitments from mayors, governors, and businesses to accelerate and scale up climate action.

20

Global Media Coverage. From the New York Times to the Washington Post, from the BBC to the Canadian Press, from China to Germany and many places in between, you made it possible for us to serve as a go-to source for fact-based polar bear information. In 2018, our combined potential reach was 2,162,028,896 people.

21

Halls of Congress. Because of you, our chief scientist, Dr. Steven Amstrup, spoke with members of the U.S. House and Senate to urge meaningful action on climate change, sharing insights on the impacts of sea ice loss on polar bears.

22

Sea Ice Ecology Project. New technology, including satellite ear tags and detailed sea ice images from remote sensing devices, are helping scientists better understand how polar bears are responding to changing sea ice conditions. By helping to fund this University of Alberta project led by Dr. Andrew Derocher, you're helping us gain insights on two poorly understood groups: young polar bears and adult males.

23

Polar Bear Summits. Our staff scientists continued to engage on global polar bear issues through participation in the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group, the Polar Bear Range States Conflict Working Group, and the U.S. Polar Bear Recovery Team thanks to your generosity. Due to our strong scientific credentials, we remain the only nonprofit with staff who are members of the IUCN/PBSG.

24

Bear-proof Garbage Cans. Reducing "rewards" helps to reduce conflict between polar bears and people—and food waste is a known reward. Because polar bears are stronger than grizzlies or black bears, we worked with a manufacturer on a polar-bear-resistant waste and recycling can. You enabled us to deliver a test batch to the town of Churchill in September 2018.

25

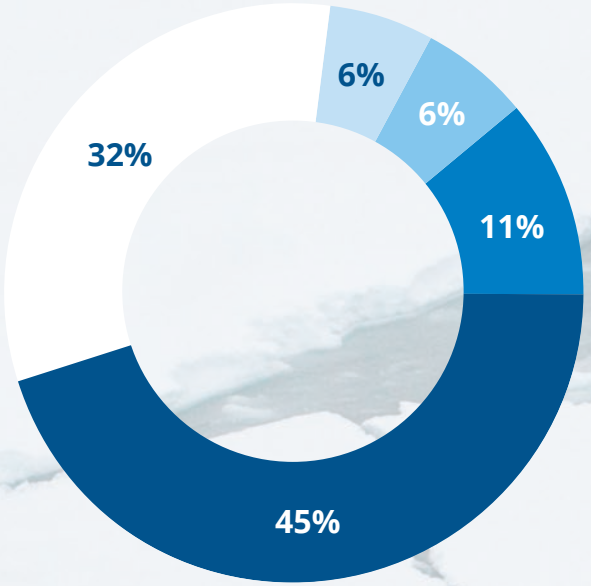
Save Our Sea Ice Campaign. You helped us continue to draw attention to the threats faced by polar bears and how we can help through our global awareness events: International Polar Bear Day, Arctic Sea Ice Day, and Polar Bear Week. Through press coverage, social media outreach, and participation from our Arctic Ambassador Center network, partners, and sponsors, we reached millions of people worldwide.

2018 BY THE NUMBERS

2018 REVENUE

Contributions–*Donor Designated*	$2,713,285
Contributions–*Undesignated*	$1,929,320
In-kind Support	$654,840
Grants	$372,156
Income from Events (Net)	$331,371
Bad Debt Loss	($28,773)
TOTAL REVENUE	**$5,972,199**

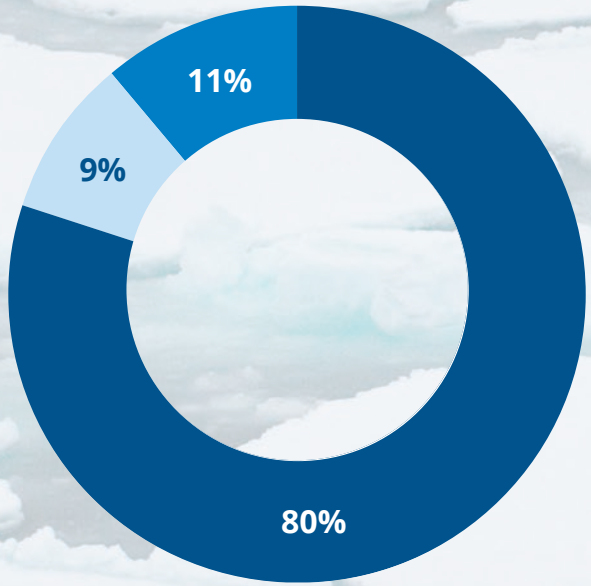
Contributions–*Donor Designated*: **45%**
Contributions–*Undesignated*: **32%**
In-kind Support: **11%**
Grants: **6%**
Income from Events (Net): **6%**



2018 EXPENSES

Program and Services	$2,443,494
Management and General	$260,274
Fundraising	$337,482
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$3,041,250**
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	**$2,786,084**
NET ASSETS AT THE END OF YEAR	**$3,896,406**

Programs: **80%**
Fundraising: **11%**
Management and General: **9%**



NOTE: Our 2018 revenue and expenses increased significantly over 2017, all in support of our conservation efforts. The changes resulted from launching a $2 million Capital Campaign to build Polar Bears International House in Churchill, Manitoba. This new base camp in the polar bear capital of the world will support our Canadian operations. PBI House will open in the fall of 2019.

ALSO NOTEWORTHY: At the end of 2018, we received a big surprise: a $1.5 million pledge to build a second building in Churchill to house our staff and visiting scientists. The second building will also open in the fall of 2019.

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Hope, a Noun

"Hope (noun) - a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen."

We have hope for a healthy future for polar bears. We have hope for the Arctic, for its wildlife and its peoples. We have hope for a better future for all of us.

But this is not blind optimism. We know the challenges are great, the obstacles daunting.

Still, we have hope—because humans can and have done amazing things in this world. They have accomplished things that once seemed impossible.

If we choose to, we can curb global warming trends, save the polar bear's sea ice habitat, and support a healthy future for our own communities and families.

Yes, you are one person. But you are also one of millions committed to solving the climate change crisis, one of millions who care about a sustainable future—one that includes polar bears and other wildlife.

Your influence and your role in this world can and do make a difference. Together, we can have an impact.

Together, we have hope.

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Thanks to all the photographers who contributed to our highlights section: Daniel J. Cox, Kieran McIver, Hannah Voorhees, BJ Kirschhoffer, Christopher J. Carter, Madison Stevens, skeeze@Pixabay.com, Shervin Hess, and Thea Bechshøft.

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