



# Press Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Cochrane, Ontario – January 7, 2015**

### **Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed?**

#### **Hammocks for Polar Bears Built by Fire Department and Local Volunteer**

Even polar bears like to relax, and Inukshuk and Ganuk at the Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat aren't any different. So, when Animal Behaviour/Enrichment Specialist, JoAnne Simerson of the St. Louis Zoo recommended hammock beds be made for the bears' holding rooms, the call was put out to see who might be interested in making the polar loungers.

"Although polar bears are arctic animals, they're not that used to lying on cement. In the wild, they'd likely get more insulation from lying in the snow, or potentially by digging into the ground," said Bear Keeper, Dylan McCart.

Since the material list included about 380' of fire hose, Cochrane's Department of Protective Services was called to the rescue.

"The hose comes from our retired unit #3, in service since 1973. I think it's fitting it will find new life in the form of beds - but I also think that if the hose could speak it would probably complain about how it's being treated in retirement - holding the weight of a polar bear," joked Director of Protective Services and Fire Chief, Richard Vallée.

And he's not wrong. Weighing in at approximately 1,000 lbs and 850 lbs respectively, Inukshuk and Ganuk are definitely not lightweights. The beds measure about 6' x 4', are constructed of wood and the "hammock" component is made with interwoven 4" fire hose. The beds themselves had to be constructed to withstand the near legendary power of polar bears - so also aren't light. The combination of the wood, fasteners and fire hose brings their weight total to approximately 250 lbs each. The beds had to be lifted by a team of 3 men when delivered to the bear's holding building and into their rooms.

Doug Randa who volunteered to make the beds loved the idea. "It's the kind of project I really enjoy. I mean, who gets to say they built hammocks for polar bears? I just hope they enjoy them."

Although initially treating the bed like a toy, 5 year old Ganuk was the first to use his bed. After tossing it this way and that, turning the bed upside down and sleeping on it, and moving it to just the right spot, he now appears to have fully embraced his new luxurious furnishings.

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