

A vibrant rainbow arches across a vast, flat landscape of green and yellow wildflowers under a clear blue sky. The rainbow is positioned on the left side of the frame, curving towards the center. The ground is covered in a dense field of wildflowers, with some taller stalks visible. The sky is a deep, clear blue, with a few wispy clouds near the horizon. The overall scene is bright and colorful, suggesting a clear day after a rain shower.

Ghost Bear Institute Annual Report 2025

A Message from the Co-Executive Directors: Jill Cooper & D. Simon Jackson

It took a long time to get to the start line. Researching, documenting, and bringing to life hundreds of stories to explain not only high school lessons, but the complex nature of our nation and the people – the life – that calls it home.

We hoped Nature Labs would succeed, but we knew it was the great experiment. And yet in the 16 months since we launched, we can already say with certainty that the journey was worth it and our wildest dreams are coming true.

More than a quarter million high school students have used the platform. Every single story we produced has been consumed. Daily interaction is the norm. With more than 1300 high schools using Nature Labs across all five courses we offer, we're in every region of the country, including every province and territory, save for PEI. And our audience is growing daily.

And then there's this:

We long believed Nature Labs would need to transition to a pay-to-play model in order for the platform to be financially sustainable. But that no longer appears to be the case. Not only have teachers and students devoured our content, but so too have our partners and citizens at large.

The consequence?

We're increasingly being asked to create content for our partners. That means more like-minded content for our users, as well as new (fast, fun, engaging) content for those we work with. The byproduct is an emerging revenue stream that, along with the generous support from our community of champions, is allowing us to keep Nature Labs free (and ad free) for teachers and students everywhere.

- We partnered with the federal government to help develop their Curious by Nature program – education resources for teachers and families visiting natural spaces all across the country.
- We were also incredibly proud to partner with democracy think tank Section One, and their Students in Democracy Education program. Together, we created a 10-part video series on the fundamentals of liberal democracy, as well as an introductory story on the importance of democracy.

And we did all of this while feverishly working to keep up with the news cycle.

- We brought dozens of new voices into the Nature Labs platform, with many interviews being featured as podcasts for students.
- We helped classrooms make sense of:
 - The resignation of our prime minister
 - The prorogation of Parliament
 - The use of the Notwithstanding Clause
 - The MOU signed between the federal government and the province of Alberta.
- We covered bank rate decisions, UN environmental conferences, and other major national news
- We produced a video series for classrooms on the leadership race and federal election – the structure, the contenders, the issues, and the possible consequences
- We covered the leadership convention, the federal election, six provincial elections, and two territorial elections live – defining terms and answering questions at every step

But 2025 was defined by global instability and we are very proud of our five-part series explaining the trade war: Canada Under Threat. In fact, we became the only education platform to cover the issue and we did so within days of the news breaking.

And when it became clear that this issue was the beginning of an existential crisis for our nation? We created a new five-part, cross-curricular story (and course!): Canada at the Crossroads. Linking class lessons to the very stark choices facing our nation, we worked with politicians, economists, biologists, lawyers, innovators, artists, and thinkers to help students understand the full complexity of this moment we face.



It was a very long 2025, but 2026 promises to be equally busy.

We plan to re-mix and remaster our podcasts. We'll be launching a new Curious by Nature online classroom, complete with stories, lessons, and resources in partnership with the federal government. (Think Nature Labs, but focused on biodiversity and accessible to all learners, in both official languages.) We also hope to continue evolving our web platform, based on feedback from students, while continuously updating and upgrading our lesson stories. And, of course, we'll be breaking down everything that happens in our country, contextualizing it for high schoolers in social studies, science, language arts, art, and careers classes.

In other words, we're just getting started.

As we've said a hundred times, we believe that by enhancing critical thinking skills we can help create a more thoughtful citizenry and a more creative workforce – one that strives to balance the needs of people and nature, one that can better steward our democracy.

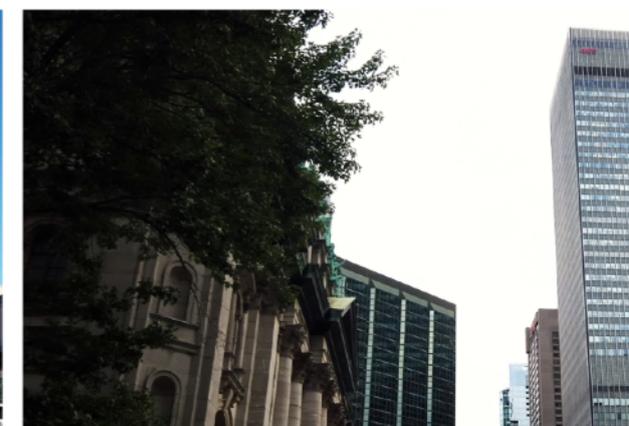
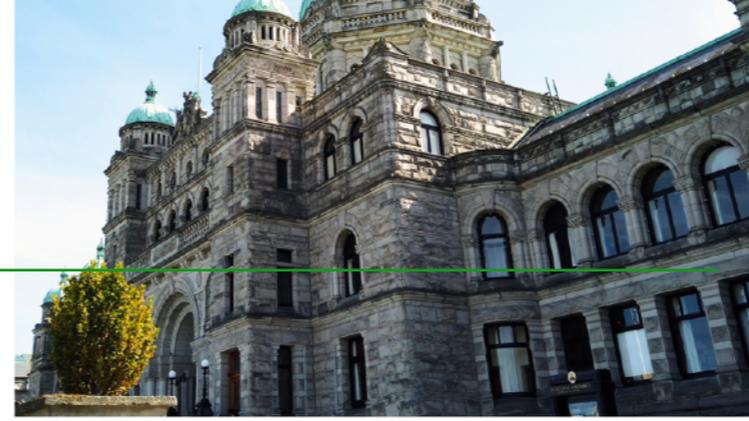
Nature is what has allowed us to deconstruct complex ideas, make them accessible to students from every walk of life, and help spark young minds to rethink old problems in new and innovative ways. That, in turn, is what is allowing us to foster nature literacy; enhance our discourse; level the education playing field; create a made-in-Canada, unbiased resource for students; and help teachers access high quality, up-to-date materials.

That we're beginning to achieve these goals? It's in no small part because of you.

Thank-you for believing in Nature Labs. Thank-you for allowing us to bring our vision to life. And thank-you for helping us deliver this resource to schools across the country. For free. Let's see how many more students we can work with in 2026 – together.

With gratitude,

Simon & Jill



Nature Labs

Imagine transforming the way students learn and connect with the world around them. Nature Labs is helping make this a reality. Trusted by more than 1300 schools in every region of the country and used by more than 300,000 high school students in just 15 months, we're not an advocacy platform – Nature Labs doesn't tell students what to think. We use nature as a captivating metaphor to help the next generation challenge assumptions and unlock their full potential, today and every day.

The Problem:

Current textbooks are outdated, unengaging, and often disconnected from the real-world. Students deserve better.

Our Solution:

Nature Labs offers a free trusted, credible, digital learning platform that brings lessons to life through compelling stories, insights from Canadian experts, and real-world connections.

Why Use Nature Labs:

Our online classroom is enhanced by lesson plans and education resources designed by a teacher for teachers, helping ensure every aspect of Nature Labs is curricula-connected, plug-and-play, and flexible. We help make class lessons relatable and relevant, allowing students to unleash their curiosity, think more critically, and act more creatively in all that they do.

What Nature Labs Provides:

- 5 courses and 30+ a la carte lessons (all lessons are curricula-connected across Canada)
- 12 chapters per course (every chapter can be expanded into endless mini-lessons)
- 150+ lesson stories (diverse experts explain curricula topics to students)
- 30 inquiry stories (connecting curricula and classrooms to real-world issues)
- 200+ conversations with experts (exploring the opinions of diverse and divergent leaders)
- 500+ class activities (lesson plans, games, extensions, quizzes, conversation starters)
- 5000+ resource library (tools curated for students and analyzed for bias)
- 35+ place-based experiences (virtual field trips that explore the Nature Labs virtual classroom)
- 60+ place-based stories (exploring the species and spaces of the Nature Labs virtual classroom)
- 1 teacher manual (how-to instructions, curricula-connections, classroom set-up ideas, rubrics)

Why We Created Nature Labs

Canada is becoming increasingly polarized and divided, with fewer and fewer people understanding how our systems work and interconnect, whether ecological, political, economic, or cultural. And we increasingly don't understand our place in this complex, ever-changing world. The consequence isn't just misunderstanding, but misinformation that rots the foundation of our democracy and robs us of our ability to work together to solve the shared challenges that we face.

We believe fostering systems – and, yes, nature – literacy, healing our democracy, and combatting misinformation begins with education. But this must be a societal challenge, not another burden placed on the shoulders of educators. This is why we created Nature Labs.

How Nature Labs Works

Imagine the wonder of a field trip to the Rocky Mountains or Parliament Hill brought to life in every high school classroom and enhanced by cross-disciplinary master classes delivered by experts and innovators. Now imagine the expensive, out-dated textbook being replaced with an immersive virtual experience that is relatable and responsive to the world where students live, with information being updated in real-time. All of this? It's brought together with balanced storytelling that blends 60 Minutes fundamentals with the pacing of TikTok and the visuals of National Geographic to create the kind of multi-media content needed to spark a passion for learning.

Our online classroom is enhanced by lesson plans and education resources designed by a teacher for teachers, helping ensure every aspect of Nature Labs is curriculum-connected and plug-and-play, actually delivering what educators require. We aim to make education more efficient and effective, freeing-up time for teachers to work one-on-one with students, while providing students with real-world expertise and the tools to transform their lessons into projects that better their community and our world.

Nature Labs is not an advocacy platform. As a citizen-funded project, we have avoided strings-attached funding that might influence bias, real or perceived. We don't seek to create a new generation of activists. We won't tell students what to think and don't take positions on the issues we face – economically, socially or environmentally. We do work, however, to reflect and challenge every perspective in Canada, helping students understand the true complexity of our society. We believe that by enhancing critical thinking skills we can help create a more thoughtful citizenry and more creative workforce – one that strives to balance the needs of people and nature in new and innovative ways.

Why Nature?

Place-based education matters. *Storytelling matters*. It's why and how Nature Labs links diverse courses and lessons together through the narrative arc of two remarkable grizzly bears in Mount Robson Provincial Park.



Why these bears?

They're two siblings – one male and one female – who, despite conventional wisdom, have refused to separate after being run off by their mother. For three years, instead of competing with one another, *these* bears have elected to work together – grazing, hunting, playing, denning. They've learned to survive in an increasingly complex world by helping each other thrive.

This is not just another nature story. It's so much more.

These bears are a visual metaphor for our fragile *yet resilient* relationship with nature *and* with each other. It's a story that underscores that just because something has always *been* so, doesn't mean it must always *be* so. It's a story that reminds us that by working with unlikely allies in unlikely circumstances we can find new solutions to old problems.

We didn't have to pick nature – *two bears* – as our metaphor for the challenges we face or the lessons that must be taught. There are always other metaphors; more pressing issues, more socially relevant issues. But for each of those issues – rightly or wrongly – we can't always agree *on* right or wrong. Or even where to start.

Why Nature?

But nature? We know that before we start debating the value of a park – and before we get into how best to balance people and nature – if we stop and take a breath and really look at this?



We can all agree that this scene is beautiful.

And that matters. By really stopping to look and appreciate this moment together, we can see that our natural inheritance *is* our common humanity. It *is* what unites us. It *is* what makes us equal.

By the end of Nature Labs, students *won't* be able to agree on how best to strengthen our economy or advance social justice or steward our natural environment. But by finding a common starting point – *by using nature to move away from what we disagree with and toward what we can agree on* – we hope students will be more open to listening and learning from those they agree with and those they don't; rethinking what they think they know and reimagining what's actually possible when we work together.

Just like these two bears.

Meet the Co-Founders & Co-Executive Directors:

JILL COOPER

Growing up in rural Ontario, Jill discovered her passion for the outdoors at an early age and realized in her teens that her professional calling was in education.

For a decade, Jill worked to create connections between technology and nature as a high school geography and media arts teacher, promoting experiential education and leading numerous excursions, including a science-focused field trip to Nicaragua.

When she found resource gaps, Jill worked to fill them – first off the side of her desk and eventually in the full-time pursuit of system-wide education resource development. Jill has advised the establishment of a school council for the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada and helped design of the Spirit Bear Youth Coalition’s award-winning education program. And for the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity she worked to build a new multi-faceted training program that seeks to better equip teachers to execute STEAM techniques.

No matter the project, Jill’s hallmark has been an approach that strives to be fair in her research and communication: Presenting unbiased facts to ignite a passion in others to think critically, work collaboratively and demand better of themselves and our world.

For each endeavour Jill has journeyed, she has proven an understanding of how to develop innovative programming from development to curriculum integration to classroom implementation. It’s this unique insight that is at the heart of the Ghost Bear Institute’s projects.



Meet the Co-Founders & Co-Executive Directors:

SIMON JACKSON

Simon is a storyteller, connector and movement builder who has dedicated his life to finding a better balance between the needs of people and nature.

At the age of 13, Simon founded the Spirit Bear Youth Coalition in the quest to unite the voice of young people to save Canada's endangered white Kermode or spirit bear. Through the Youth Coalition, Simon led the campaign that helped raise international awareness about the plight of the rare bear, transforming the organization into the world's largest youth-led environmental movement with a global network of more than 6 million in over 85 countries.

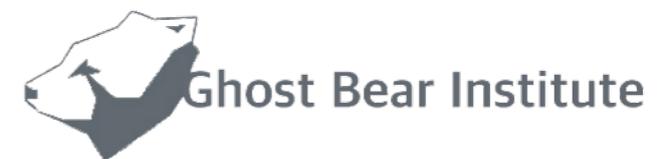
After almost two decades of work, the spirit bear is now saved, with its last intact habitat having been set aside from development through one of the largest land protection measures in North American history.

Simon has received several honours for his work to save the spirit bear, including being awarded Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal, being named as one of the 100 Angels of the Earth by UNESCO and, most notably, being honoured as one of Time Magazine's sixty Heroes for the Planet – one of only six young people selected from around the world. His life's work was the focus of an internationally televised movie, *Spirit Bear: The Simon Jackson Story*.

Simon is an accomplished motivational speaker with agency Speakers' Spotlight and an award-winning photographer and a widely published writer. Having contributed images and chapters to eight books, he has also had hundreds of essays and opinion editorials published in newspapers, magazines, academic journals, web sites and textbooks around the world – many underpinned by his photography. Simon has served as a columnist for CBC.ca and the Huffington Post and recently co-authored the book *A Geography of Hope: Saving Primary Forests*. His writing led him to being named a Fellow of the International League of Conservation Writers.

His varied work has enabled Simon to travel coast-to-coast-to-coast to share the lessons from his journey, as his powerful story is a reminder that one person can make a difference. Indeed, Simon's storytelling ability, combined with his understanding of how successful movements are built, underpins the work of the Ghost Bear Institute.





Ghost Bear Institute

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended December 31, 2025

Unaudited Statement of Financial Position

As at December 31

In Canadian dollars

Assets

Current

Cash

Total current assets

Capital assets, net *[note 3]*

Liabilities and net assets

Net assets

Unrestricted

Total net assets

2025

2024

11,355

7,302

11,355

7,302

21,376

20,319

32,731

27,621

32,731

27,621

32,731

27,621

32,731

27,621

See accompanying notes

Unaudited Statement of Activities

For the year ended December 31

In Canadian dollars

	2025	2024
Revenue		
Partnership Productions	17,500	-
Fundraising/Patreon	24,342	15,869
Image sales	11,237	3,731
	<u>53,079</u>	<u>19,600</u>
Expenses		
Travel costs	7,097	4,247
Project development	1,596	1,484
Production	3,374	4,157
Domain, server and security	877	1,321
Phone and internet	3,455	3,090
Office and software	2,658	850
Insurance	2,508	2,719
Car maintenance	2,131	1,595
Printing and mailing	100	490
Not-for-profit organization fees	87	87
Capital asset amortization	7,052	5,984
Honourariums	15,000	15,000
PayPal and Patreon fees	2,034	1,169
	<u>47,969</u>	<u>42,193</u>
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	<u>5,110</u>	<u>(22,593)</u>

See accompanying notes

Unaudited Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended December 31

In Canadian dollars

	2025	2024
Operating activities		
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses for the year	5,110	(22,593)
Add (deduct) items not affecting cash:		
Amortization of capital assets	7,052	5,984
Cash provided by (used in) operating activities	12,162	(16,609)
Investing activities		
Capital asset additions	(8,109)	(879)
Cash used in investing activities	(8,109)	(879)
Net increase (decrease) in cash	4,053	(17,488)
Cash, beginning of year	7,302	24,790
Cash, end of year	11,355	7,302

See accompanying notes

Notes to the Unaudited Financial Statements

December 31, 2025

1. Nature of the organization

Ghost Bear Institute [the "Institute"] is a federally incorporated not-for-profit organization with a permanent establishment only in Calgary, Alberta. The Institute seeks to inspire, educate and spark a new generation to foster a better balance between people and nature and works to achieve this mandate through its signature program, Nature Labs – a virtual high school textbook that aims to advance nature literacy.

2. Significant accounting policies

These financial statements are prepared in accordance with Part III of the *Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada ["CPA Canada"] Handbook – Accounting "Accounting Standards for Not-for-Profit Organizations"*, which sets out accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations in Canada and includes the significant accounting policies summarized below:

[a] Revenue recognition

The Institute follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions. Unrestricted contributions and fundraising grants are recognized as revenue when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be estimated and collectability is reasonably assured. Externally restricted contributions are deferred and recognized as revenue in the period in which the related expense is recognized. Fees for service are recognized when the service has been rendered.

[b] Financial instruments

Investments are recorded at fair value. Transactions are recorded on a trade basis and transaction costs are expensed as incurred.

Financial instruments, including accounts receivable, accounts payable and accrued liabilities, are initially recorded at their fair value and are subsequently measured at amortized cost, net of any provisions for impairment.

[c] Capital assets

Capital assets are recorded at acquisition cost less accumulated amortization. Amortization is recorded on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives of the related assets at terms ranging from five to ten years.

[d] Contributed services and materials

The Institute is governed and supported by numerous volunteers. Contributed services and materials are not reflected in these financial statements as determining their fair value is not practicable.

[e] Use of estimates

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements, and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Examples of such estimations and assumptions include the useful lives of capital assets and vehicle maintenance and insurance costs. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

3. Capital assets

Capital assets consist of the following:

	2025		2024	
	Cost \$	Accumulated amortization \$	Cost \$	Accumulated amortization \$
Computer equipment	24,033	12,890	16,406	9,417
Camera and audio equipment	24,324	14,091	23,842	10,512
	48,357	26,981	40,248	19,929
Less: accumulated amortization	26,981		19,929	
Net book value	21,376		20,319	

4. Financial instruments and risk management

The Institute's financial instruments consist of cash. The Institute is not currently exposed to credit, interest rate and foreign exchange risk.

Liquidity risk

The Institute is exposed to the risk that it will have difficulty in meeting obligations associated with its financial liabilities. The Institute has in place a budgeting process to help determine the funds required to support the organization's normal operating requirements on an ongoing basis.



About Ghost Bear Institute

Jill Cooper – an accomplished educator – and Simon Jackson – an award-winning storyteller – have spent a lifetime immersed in the stories and landscapes of the place we call home. They’ve travelled from the development-rich Oil Sands to the wilds of the Rocky Mountains, from Clyde River and Val d’Or to Calgary and Halifax, to better understand nature, education and our country. Their takeaway? Nature unites us all. By making the seemingly irrelevant relevant, it’s possible to showcase that nothing is black and white and, through better education, a more thoughtful citizenry that strives to balance the needs of people and nature is possible. This was the inspiration for Nature Labs.

Canada has too many non-profits organizations, yet too few institutions that are respected and considered to be non-partisan by all Canadians coast-to-coast-to-coast.

The non-profit Ghost Bear Institute was founded in 2018 exclusively to be the incubator of Nature Labs with the hopes that the project eventually can live within an existing non-partisan institution. We continue to look for a home for the project that all Canadians can support.

In building Nature Labs, we have purposefully avoided sponsorships and grants that might create a real or perceived bias in the eyes of one school district or another. And we have built both the organization and our content around extensive research and community consultation, inclusive of diverse politics, cultures, geography, age, and expertise.