



The Wâwiyiyaw

National Circle Newsletter For Indigenous Agriculture & Food
April 2026

NEWS

UPDATE



Honouring Earth Day: Rooted in Responsibility, Guided by Relationship

Each year on Earth Day, we are invited to pause, reflect, and recommit to our relationship with the land. For Indigenous Peoples, this relationship is not symbolic or seasonal—it is foundational. The land feeds us, teaches us, and holds our histories, responsibilities, and futures. At the NCIAF, Earth Day is not a single moment on the calendar, but a reminder of the work we carry forward every day.

Indigenous agriculture and food systems are grounded in reciprocity. Long before sustainability became a mainstream conversation, Indigenous communities practiced land stewardship through careful observation, respect for natural cycles, and knowledge passed down through generations. From seed saving and soil care to hunting, harvesting, and sharing food within the community, these systems are built on balance and responsibility.

Today, Indigenous producers, knowledge holders, and food leaders continue to protect and revitalize these practices while navigating modern agricultural landscapes. Across the country, Indigenous-led farms, gardens, bison herds, fisheries, and food initiatives are strengthening food sovereignty, restoring ecosystems, and creating opportunities for future generations. This work is climate action. It is economic development. It is cultural resurgence.

At the NCIAF, we are proud to support and amplify Indigenous leadership in agriculture and food. Through advocacy, capacity-building, youth programming, and national collaboration, we work to ensure Indigenous voices and knowledge are centered in conversations about food systems, land use, and sustainability. Earth Day reminds us why this work matters—and why it must continue.

As we mark Earth Day, we invite you to reflect on your own relationship with the land and the food you eat. Support Indigenous producers where you can. Learn whose land you are on. Plant something, share a meal, or spend time outdoors with intention. Small actions, rooted in respect, contribute to collective care.

The land has always provided. Our responsibility is to protect it, honour it, and ensure it remains healthy for generations yet to come.

Aggie Days: Generational Education

The NCIAF was proud to take part in Aggie Days at the Calgary Stampede, where the team spent several engaging days connecting with youth, families, and educators through hands-on learning and meaningful conversation.

From the outset, the NCIAF booth was filled with energy as school-aged visitors eagerly explored Indigenous agriculture and food systems. Interactive experiences invited curiosity, including examining a stretched hide and traditional scraping tools, and learning through rhythm and laughter as Adam Subject shared drumming with children. The team was also honoured to meet Calgary Stampede First Nation Princess Raegan First Rider, adding to the sense of celebration and connection.



Day three began with the Giddy Up event, which offered a quieter, sensory-friendly morning designed to welcome youth with diverse needs. Throughout the day, a steady stream of visitors stopped by the booth, engaging with the NCIAF team through thoughtful questions and conversations. These exchanges created opportunities to deepen understanding of Indigenous food systems, land-based knowledge, and cultural practices.

The final day was especially powerful. Visitors showed strong interest in bison and the many teachings connected to them—learning about the importance and uses of hides, the tools used to work them, and the meaning of the skull.

There was also deep appreciation for teachings on traditional medicines and their connection to the land. At the tipi, guests gathered respectfully to listen and reflect, creating a meaningful space for shared learning.

Throughout the event, seed paper was shared with visitors—small but symbolic reminders of renewal, responsibility, and the future being nurtured together.

The NCIAF extends sincere thanks to everyone who stopped by, asked questions, listened deeply, and shared in the experience. The enthusiasm, respect, and curiosity shown at Aggie Days made the event both inspiring and unforgettable.

Did you receive NCIAF wildflower seed paper at Aggie Days? Watch how to plant it [here](#).

Be sure to tag the NCIAF and use #NCIAFWildflowers to share your blooms with us, we can't wait to see them grow!





SIAL Canada 2026: A Global Food Stage—and a Clear Opportunity for Accelerating Indigenous Inclusion in 2027

From April 29 to May 1, 2026, the NCIAF was proud to attend Salon International de l'Alimentation (SIAL) Canada in Montreal, one of North America's premier agri-food business events, bringing together innovators, producers, processors, retailers, and global food leaders from around the world.

Representing the NCIAF at this year's conference were President and CEO Kallie Wood and Senior Vice President of Business Development Chris McKee, who attended to engage in conversations, explore emerging market opportunities, and assess how Indigenous food systems and businesses are being represented on one of Canada's largest food innovation stages.

SIAL Canada is undeniably an impressive showcase—highlighting innovation, technology, product development, international trade, and evolving consumer trends. But as we walked the show floor and participated in discussions, one important question remained: Where were Indigenous products, producers, and food entrepreneurs?

This observation is not criticism—it is opportunity. An opportunity for NCIAF to lead in this space.

Indigenous food businesses are not a niche market. They are a growing and important part of Canada's food economy, bringing unique products, perspectives, and approaches to sustainability, food sovereignty, and economic reconciliation. National and international food platforms should reflect that reality more visibly. That is why we are especially excited about what comes next.

The NCIAF is currently working with the leadership of SIAL for 2027 in Toronto: highlighting and promoting Canadian Indigenous food business, www.sialcanada.com.

The NCIAF looks forward to working alongside partners to help elevate and accelerate Indigenous producers, processors, and food brands onto this important national stage—ensuring Indigenous excellence is visible, celebrated, and connected to real market opportunity.

A sincere thank you to the City of Toronto for supporting the NCIAF's registration at SIAL Canada 2026 and helping us be part of this important conversation as we look toward building something meaningful for the future.

The future of food in Canada must include Indigenous leadership—and we look forward to helping shape that future in Toronto.



Bringing Buffalo Home: Supporting Indigenous Leadership in the Bison Sector

For Indigenous Peoples across the Prairies and throughout Turtle Island, buffalo are far more than livestock. They are relatives, teachers, and providers—central to culture, food systems, and ways of life for generations. Today, Indigenous communities are leading the work of restoring that relationship, and the Indigenous Prairie Bison Initiative (IPBI) is a key part of that momentum.

Led by the NCIAF and supported through a \$2 million partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the initiative supports Indigenous communities and producers in building sustainable, Indigenous-led buffalo operations. The work focuses on capacity-building, training, herd management, economic development, and advancing Indigenous food security and food sovereignty—while reconnecting communities with one of the Prairies' most culturally significant animals.

Buffalo sit at the intersection of agriculture, culture, land stewardship, and community wellness. For Indigenous communities, buffalo production offers opportunities for economic diversification, youth engagement, regenerative land management, entrepreneurship, and culturally grounded food systems. It also supports healing and intergenerational connection.

The initiative emphasizes collaboration as the path forward. Partnerships with organizations such as the Canadian Bison Association and other sector leaders demonstrate what is possible when Indigenous leadership, industry, and governments work together with shared purpose.

Ultimately, bringing buffalo home is about more than herds—it is about building legacy. By supporting Indigenous leadership in the bison sector, the Indigenous Prairie Bison Initiative is helping create long-term pathways for strong communities, resilient food systems, and meaningful economic reconciliation.



Fresh Perspectives: Our Riipen Student Cohort

In February and March, the NCIAF welcomed another cohort through [Riipen](#), a project-based learning platform that connects educators, organizations, and learners to collaborate on real-world industry projects, helping bridge the gap between education and employment. The student participating in this cohort is Amy, and we invited her to answer a few questions as part of our spotlight feature.

Amy has since been hired on with the NCIAF as a Data Analytics Intern. As part of her role, Amy supports data analytics and reporting initiatives, providing valuable insights that help inform our work. She has already made meaningful contributions by assisting with building our internal dashboard and integrating data, strengthening how we track and understand our impact.



Tell us a little about yourself and your schooling, hobbies, passions, and/or career goals.

Hi, I'm Amy! I'm a 4th year Computer Science student at the University of Lethbridge and a Software Development graduate from Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. Through my education, I've developed strong technical skills in areas such as data analytics, programming, and software development, with hands-on experience using tools like Power BI and Python. I am particularly interested in data science and data engineering, especially in turning data into meaningful insights and building systems that support data-driven decision-making. I enjoy working on projects that involve solving real-world problems through data and analytics. Outside of school, I like exploring new technologies, working on personal projects, and staying active.

What inspired you to apply for this project with the NCIAF?

I was inspired to apply to the NCIAF project because it offered the opportunity to work on a real-world data project that has a meaningful impact. I was also interested in gaining experience in a startup/non-profit environment, where there is more opportunity to take initiative, work closely with a team, and contribute to meaningful work. The chance to work with raw data and develop both technical and collaborative skills made this project especially appealing.

What have you enjoyed most about working with the NCIAF so far?

What I've enjoyed most is the opportunity to apply what I've learned in class to a real project and see how it all comes together. Working on dashboards, solving data challenges, and refining the user experience has been really rewarding. I've also enjoyed collaborating with the team, sharing ideas, and learning from others throughout the process!



Events We're Attending

Stay connected with us at events we are attending! We're excited to engage with communities and support Indigenous agriculture.

NAAAN Tri-National Event - May 11-13, 2026

Location: Calgary, AB

Wanuskewin Buffalo Workshop - May 21, 2026

Location: Saskatoon, SK

Events We're Sharing

While we won't be attending these events, we encourage you to explore opportunities to learn and network.

Forward Summit West - May 14-15, 2026

Location: Calgary, AB

Featured Quote

Here is our featured quote of the month:



Working alongside the NCIAF is an opportunity to support Indigenous food sovereignty, promote shared learning, and seize mutually-beneficial economic partnerships that advance indigenous agriculture across Canada. Together, we can build a more inclusive, resilient, and innovative future for agriculture across Canada.



Keith Currie
President

Canadian Federation of Agriculture



Suncake – Sunflower Seed “Cheesecake”

Crust Ingredients:

- 1 cup pepitas (can also use sunflower seeds or a mix of both)
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup

Filling Ingredients:

- 2 cups raw sunflower seeds soaked in warm water 1+ hour
- 1/2 cup non-dairy yogurt
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1/4 cup coconut oil
- 1 cup frozen berries (optional)
- dried edible flowers (optional decoration for topping)

Preparation

1. Blend the crust ingredients in a food processor until it sticks together. Press into a 6-8 inch springform pan and freeze.
2. Blend soaked seeds, lemon juice, remaining maple syrup, vanilla, and coconut oil until silky smooth.
3. At this point, you can add frozen berries for color and flavor. I recommend setting aside half the filling mixture for a neutral color layer in the cake. With the remaining filling, blend with frozen berries.
4. Pour filling over crust. If adding a second layer, allow the first layer to freeze for 30 minutes-1 hour before adding second layer. (The second layer can rest in the refrigerator during this time.) Add optional edible flowers on the top layer while it is soft. Freeze for 5-6 hours or overnight.
5. Thaw for 10-20 minutes before slicing.

Recipe courtesy of [Indigikitchen](#).

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Stay Informed



Please reach out to info@nciaf.ca if you would like to list an event.