



The Wâwiyiyaw

National Circle Newsletter For Indigenous Agriculture & Food
August 2026

NEWS

UPDATE



Celebrating Food Day Canada

On August 1, Canadians across the country came together to celebrate Food Day Canada, a national celebration recognizing the people, places, ingredients and traditions that make up Canada's diverse food systems.

Food Day Canada encourages Canadians to shop, cook, dine and celebrate Canadian. The annual celebration shines a light on farmers, fishers, chefs, researchers, food producers and home cooks, while creating opportunities to learn more about where our food comes from and the people who help bring it to our tables.

For the NCIAF, Food Day Canada is also an opportunity to recognize the important contributions of Indigenous Peoples to Canada's food systems. Indigenous Peoples have long maintained deep relationships with the land, water, plants and animals, developing food systems rooted in knowledge, culture, stewardship and community.

Today, Indigenous farmers, producers, harvesters, entrepreneurs and food businesses continue to strengthen these systems while creating new opportunities for economic participation and food sovereignty. From gardens to conventional grain farming, to livestock, aquaculture, value added food businesses to traditional Indigenous food ways, Indigenous-led food systems are an important part of Canada's broader agricultural and food landscape.

Food sovereignty is about more than access to food. It is also about supporting communities in determining how food is grown, harvested, produced and shared, while strengthening connections to culture, land and traditional knowledge. Celebrations such as Food Day Canada provide an opportunity to recognize the many people and communities working toward stronger, more sustainable and locally connected food systems.

On Food Day Canada - and every day - we encourage Canadians to support local and Indigenous food businesses, learn about the food grown and produced in their communities, visit a farmers' market, prepare a meal using Canadian ingredients, and take time to appreciate the people behind the food on our tables.

Food connects us to one another, to our communities and to the land. This August 1, let's celebrate the diversity of Canada's food systems and the people who continue to nourish our communities and grow our future.

After 150 Years, Buffalo Return to Mistawasis Nêhiyawak

August 17 marked a historic moment for Mistawasis Nêhiyawak, as buffalo returned to the community for the first time in approximately 150 years.

NCIAF representatives Michael Burechailo, Business Development Associate, and Monique Desjarlais, ReconciliAG Specialist, were honoured to attend the buffalo release and witness this important step in the community's journey of reconnecting with the buffalo.

The buffalo were gifted to Mistawasis by the Louis Bull Tribe, creating a meaningful connection between Indigenous communities and supporting the continued return of buffalo to Indigenous lands. To prepare for their arrival, Mistawasis also put fencing in place in the back area of the community, creating a safe and secure space for the animals.

The return of the buffalo is about more than bringing animals back to the land. It represents the renewal of relationships, cultural connection, stewardship, and the passing of knowledge and traditions on to future generations.

After 150 years, seeing buffalo once again on the land at Mistawasis Nêhiyawak is a powerful reminder of the resilience of Indigenous communities and the importance of bringing buffalo back home



Learning on the Land: Three Days at the Indigenous Farm & Food Festival

NCIAF's Terry Lerat, ReconciliAG Advisor, and Jane Williams, Director of Strategic Growth, recently spent three days at the 2026 Indigenous Farm & Food Festival, hosted by Soil and Agroecosystem Health (SAGE) and Bridge to Land Water Sky on the lands of One Arrow First Nation.



As with every SAGE gathering, what stood out wasn't simply what was on the agenda. It was how people were brought together to learn from one another.

From the beginning, the environment invited people to talk, share and contribute. Participants were asked two simple questions: What challenge are you facing? and What can you share or teach? From there, conversations moved naturally from one-on-one connections to small groups exploring everything from land-based knowledge and bison caretaking to soil health, community gardens, food sovereignty, medicines, data and agricultural production.

And then everyone got their hands dirty.

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Learning on the Land: Three Days at the Indigenous Farm & Food Festival - Con't

Discovery sessions transformed learning into experience. Participants scraped hides, learning firsthand some of the skill, patience and work involved in preparing them. Chokecherries were crushed by hand, connecting food preparation with the plants and flavours of the land. Seed balls were mixed and hand-pressed, turning conversations about plants and healthy ecosystems into something participants could literally hold in their hands. Seeds and recipes were exchanged alongside stories and experiences.

That intentional progression, talk together, learn together, do together and then go out onto the land together, helped create a circle of sharing that continued throughout the three days.

Muskoday First Nation: Food Sovereignty in Action

A highlight was visiting Muskoday First Nation, where the greenhouse, gardens and buffalo herd demonstrated the power of reconnecting food, land and community.

Most memorable was seeing young people working together in the greenhouse and gardens. Their pride, camaraderie and genuine enjoyment were unmistakable. This wasn't agriculture happening around youth; they were part of it. The buffalo visit carried that same spirit, with herd managers generously sharing their experiences and creating another opportunity for learning on the land.

Muskoday left us with a powerful impression of community, youth and food sovereignty growing together.

Food as Another Form of Storytelling

Food itself became part of the learning.

Throughout the three days, Chef Jenni Lessard worked alongside young people to create meals that celebrated traditional and land-based ingredients. What made it particularly meaningful was the way she created space for them to take the lead, share their stories and talk about why food mattered to them. It was a beautiful example of mentorship in action, with young people given the opportunity, responsibility and confidence to share what they were learning with others.

The meals themselves were a reminder that good food doesn't need to be complicated. Healthy, thoughtfully prepared traditional foods allowed the ingredients to shine, reminding us just how incredible the flavours from the land can be.

The Conversations Between the Sessions

Some of the most important moments weren't scheduled at all. Being together on the land for three days created space for conversations to continue over meals, on walks and between sessions. People openly shared what was working, what wasn't, and what they had learned. As we know, every community has different land, governance, capacity and priorities, but those differences made the exchange even richer. By the end of three days, practical ideas had travelled between communities, knowledge had been shared and new relationships had formed.



Learning from the Land: NCIAF Bison Operation Field Day

The NCIAF recently brought Nation representatives and Buffalo caretakers together for a day of hands-on learning during the NCIAF Bison Operation Field Day at [Quill Creek Farms](#) in Saskatchewan.

Participants had the opportunity to tour the large-scale bison operation and gain an up-close understanding of different genetic herds, including Plains, Woods, and hybrid bison. The field day provided an opportunity to learn about the characteristics and management of different herds while connecting classroom and community knowledge with practical ranch operations.

The group also toured the farm's on-site processing facility and took part in hands-on learning experiences that brought the full bison production cycle to life, from animal care and herd management to processing and the broader opportunities within the bison value chain.

Throughout the day, discussions and activities emphasized animal care, land stewardship, responsible herd management, and practical ranch operations. The field day created space for participants to ask questions, share knowledge and build connections around the role of Buffalo in Indigenous food systems, culture and economic development.

For the NCIAF, opportunities like the Bison Operation Field Day are an important part of supporting Indigenous communities as they strengthen their knowledge and capacity in bison stewardship and production. Bringing people together on the land and alongside experienced producers creates opportunities for knowledge sharing, relationship building and continued growth across the Indigenous bison sector.

The NCIAF extends its sincere thanks to the Griller family for their warm welcome, generosity and willingness to share their knowledge and experience with participants. Their hospitality helped make the field day an engaging and informative experience for everyone involved.

By creating opportunities to learn directly from the land, animals and those with hands-on experience, the NCIAF continues to support pathways toward stronger Indigenous food systems, Buffalo stewardship and food sovereignty.

**To inquire or learn more, please
contact ipbi@nciaf.ca.**



Learning, Growing and Giving Back: Our 2026 Summer Students

This summer, the NCIAC welcomed back returning summer students Michael Burechailo and Jordyn Lovas, alongside newcomer Sean Carrier. Together, they brought enthusiasm, fresh perspectives, and a continued commitment to learning and contributing to the NCIAC's work. Throughout the summer, the students had opportunities to build their professional skills, learn more about Indigenous agriculture and food systems, contribute to meaningful projects, and connect with the people and communities at the heart of our work. As their summer experience comes to a close, we asked Michael, Sean, and Jordyn to reflect on their highlights, what they learned, and how their time with the NCIAC has helped shape their goals for the future.

Michael Burechailo

What was the highlight of your experience working with the NCIAC this summer?

The highlight of my summer was building relationships with Indigenous communities and seeing the impact that agriculture and bison initiatives can have on communities. Being able to attend community events and see projects come to life has made the experience especially meaningful.

What is one thing you have learned about Indigenous agriculture, food systems, or the work of the NCIAC during your time here?

I've learned that Indigenous agriculture is about much more than producing food, it is closely connected to culture, community, land, and long-term sustainability. I've also learned how important relationship-building is when supporting communities in developing their own agricultural initiatives.

What are your future goals, and how has your summer experience with the NCIAC helped prepare or inspire you for what comes next?

My goal is to build a career in professional sports management, particularly in Indigenous sports and recreation, while continuing to stay connected to agriculture and supporting Indigenous communities. My experience with the NCIAC has helped me build stronger communication, relationship-building, and project-management skills, while also showing me how sport, recreation, agriculture, culture, and community development can all work together to create meaningful opportunities for Indigenous communities.

Sean Carrier

What was the highlight of your experience working with the NCIAC this summer?

The highlight of my summer has been learning about everything the NCIAC is doing and seeing the impact its work has on Indigenous communities. Learning about the buffalo way of life has been especially eye-opening and sparked a passion in me that I never knew I had... it made me feel like I ended up exactly where I needed to be, when I needed to be there.

What is one thing you have learned about Indigenous agriculture, food systems, or the work of the NCIAC during your time here?

I learned how Indigenous agriculture works with nature, especially through the Three Sisters: corn, beans, and squash... where each plant supports the others. I also learned that the Bison Initiative is about much more than bringing back the animal; it is about restoring the land, providing food, strengthening communities, and reconnecting people with traditional ways of life.

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Learning, Growing and Giving Back: Our 2026 Summer Students - Con't

What are your future goals, and how has your summer experience with the NCI AF helped prepare or inspire you for what comes next?

My goal is to continue developing my skills and become a marketing guru, while using those skills to support Indigenous agriculture and food initiatives. As a First Nations person myself, I would love to help these initiatives grow, share their stories, and support Indigenous communities while they thrive and flourish.

Jordyn Lovas

What was the highlight of your experience working with the NCI AF this summer?

Working with people, youth, and participating in fun events and programs.

What is one thing you have learned about Indigenous agriculture, food systems, or the work of the NCI AF during your time here?

I have learned how diverse it is. It's not just farming, it's products, processing, food businesses, cooking, etc.

What are your future goals, and how has your summer experience with the NCI AF helped prepare or inspire you for what comes next?

The NCI AF has helped me learn how to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous agriculture into my own future classrooms.



To close out the summer, Michael and Jordyn leave the NCI AF with new skills, experiences, and connections that will continue to shape their journeys, while we're pleased to welcome Sean as he continues on with the NCI AF. We are grateful for the contributions each of them has made to our team and are proud to have been part of their growth. We wish Michael and Jordyn the very best as they take what they have learned this summer into their next chapters, and we look forward to seeing Sean continue to grow with us.

Help Us Find Canada's Indigenous Food Businesses



Do you own an Indigenous food business? Or do you know someone who does?

The NCI AF is inviting Indigenous food businesses from across Canada to become Featured Suppliers in the Indigenous Food Hub. Through our partnership with Sobeys, we're creating new opportunities to connect Indigenous products with grocery retailers while providing access to exclusive grocery readiness training and future market opportunities.

Whether they're just getting started or already selling nationally, we'd love to connect.

Please sign up or share this opportunity and help us ensure Indigenous food businesses across Canada are part of the growing Indigenous Food Hub.



[Join our Indigenous Food Hub](#) or scan the QR Code



Events We're Attending

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

Tri-National Agricultural Accord - Sept 28-Oct 1, 2026

Location: Calgary, AB

Food Forward Summit - Oct 8, 2026

Location: Mississauga, ON

America's Ag Forum 2026 - Oct 19-20, 2026

Location: Quebec City, QC

Indigenous Agriculture Summit 2026 - Nov 26-27, 2026

Location: Regina, SK

The poster features a stylized logo with a colorful leaf-like shape to the left of the word "INDIGENOUS" in large, bold, blue letters. Below "INDIGENOUS" are the letters "Y A G S U M M I T" in a smaller, spaced-out font. A dark blue banner with white text reads "TICKETS ON SALE NOW!". Below this, the dates "NOVEMBER 26TH & 27TH" are displayed in large, bold, white letters. The venue information "Queensbury Convention Centre, 1700 Elphinstone Street, Regina, SK S4P 2Z6" is in white text. A QR code is located on the right side. At the bottom, logos for "nciaf", "CANADIAN WESTERN AGRIBITION", and "sfc" are shown, along with the text "BROUGHT TO YOU BY:" and "PRESENTING SPONSOR:".

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

Three Sisters Salad

Ingredients:

- 4 cups 1/2 inch (1 cm) cubed, peeled butternut squash (about 1 small)
- 2 Tbsp canola oil
- 2 cups cooked or canned corn kernels
- 19 oz can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 1/4 cup white wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp honey
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Preparation

1. In a large bowl, toss squash with canola oil. Place in single layer on parchment lined large rimmed baking sheet. Bake in 400 °F (200 °C) oven for 20 to 25 minutes or until tender. Set aside to cool.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together canola oil, vinegar, honey, parsley salt and pepper. Add squash, corn and beans; toss well. (Salad can be covered and refrigerated for up to 1 day).

Recipe courtesy of Canadian Food Focus.

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