



The Wâwiyiyaw

National Circle Newsletter For Indigenous Agriculture & Food
January 2026

NEWS

UPDATE



Honouring Culture, Identity, and Resilience: Ribbon Skirt Day

Every year on January 4, communities across Canada recognize Ribbon Skirt Day—a day to celebrate the beauty, strength, and cultural significance of the ribbon skirt in Indigenous Nations. More than a garment, the ribbon skirt is a living expression of identity, ceremony, and belonging. It represents who we are, where we come from, and the stories we carry forward.

Ribbon Skirt Day was created in response to moments when Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people were made to feel that their cultural clothing did not belong in schools, workplaces, or public spaces. Instead of silence, communities chose pride. Today, Ribbon Skirt Day is a powerful affirmation that Indigenous cultural expression is not only valid—it is vital.

Across Nations, ribbon skirts vary in design, materials, and meaning. They are worn during ceremony, celebration, everyday life, and moments of reflection. For many, putting on a ribbon skirt is an act of connection to ancestors, to the land, and to community. It is a reminder that culture is living, evolving, and carried forward through each generation.

At the NCIAF, we recognize that culture and food systems are deeply intertwined. Our relationships to land, seeds, harvesting, preparation, and sharing of food are grounded in the same values reflected in cultural regalia: respect, responsibility, and reciprocity. Honouring Ribbon Skirt Day is also about honouring Indigenous foodways—rooted in knowledge passed down through families and communities, shaped by the land, and strengthened through collective care.

We encourage our community to take part in Ribbon Skirt Day in ways that feel meaningful to you: wear your ribbon skirt with pride, learn the story behind its designs, support Indigenous artists and makers, or take time to reflect on the importance of cultural safety in all spaces, including agriculture, food systems, and education.

As we continue working toward food sovereignty, sustainability, and equity, may Ribbon Skirt Day remind us that culture is not separate from this work—it is the foundation of it. When we uplift identity, we strengthen community. When we honour our traditions, we nourish future generations.



Photo: (Left) Monique Desjarlais and her mother (right) wearing ribbon skirts.

Indigenous Prairie Bison Initiative: Supporting Bison Stewardship Across the Prairies

IPBI is a three-year initiative (2025–2028) supporting Indigenous-led approaches to bison restoration, stewardship, and rematriation across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. NCIAF has accepted funding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Strategic Partnership Initiative which is a program ran collectively with Indigenous Services Canada.

As a non-profit, NCIAF is not an industry body nor a government department, but has accepted AAFC funding to engage directly with communities, nations and Indigenous entrepreneurs in the Bison space to better understand interests, priorities, opportunities, and barriers related to starting up or scaling initiatives. The initiative is designed to listen first – working alongside Indigenous communities, bison caretakers, and entrepreneurs to better understand needs, priorities, challenges, and opportunities related to bison on the Prairies.

While the program does not provide direct funding to communities, funding will be used to:

- **Engagement:** We are inviting Indigenous communities, bison stewards, and Indigenous entrepreneurs to share their experiences, interests, needs, challenges, and visions related to raising and stewarding bison. These conversations will directly influence and shape the next two outcomes.
- **Events:** What we hear through engagement will inform regional gatherings and knowledge-sharing events. Funding is available to support the planning and hosting of IPBI-related events in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta that bring communities to deliver knowledge, strengthen relationships, and learn from one another.
- **Education & Resources:** Funding will also be used to collect and develop comprehensive capacity building resources including education, business planning support and feasibility studies. There is much good work already underway and the initiative will look to collect, gather and amplify the existing resources that exist but also work together with other organizations, experts and Indigenous knowledge keepers to collaboratively address gaps with industry experts and Indigenous knowledge keepers. The ultimate goal is to see relevant, timely, and complete resources available to communities and producers.

Beyond the goal to strengthen Indigenous-led bison stewardship with solutions built by Indigenous Bison Stewards, its is the NCIAF's mission to use what is heard to advocate for stronger programming, education pathways, and future funding opportunities from government, industry, and academia.

As part of this work, IPBI will also be inclusive to communities without bison but interested in exploring this option. Capacity-building activities, engagement opportunities, and educational resources developed through IPBI will be accessible to Indigenous communities and producers across the Prairies, including those without existing herds.

AAFC is also working directly with communities to develop learning herds across the prairie region to offer additional training opportunities. To find out more about Learning Herds, please reach out to AAFC directly at aafc.ipbi-iabp.aac@agr.gc.ca

Got Bison? Want Bison?

If you or your community would like to know more about the Prairie Indigenous Bison Initiative

Reach out!

IPBI@nciaf.ca



NCIAF Launches Toolkits - Now Available on Website

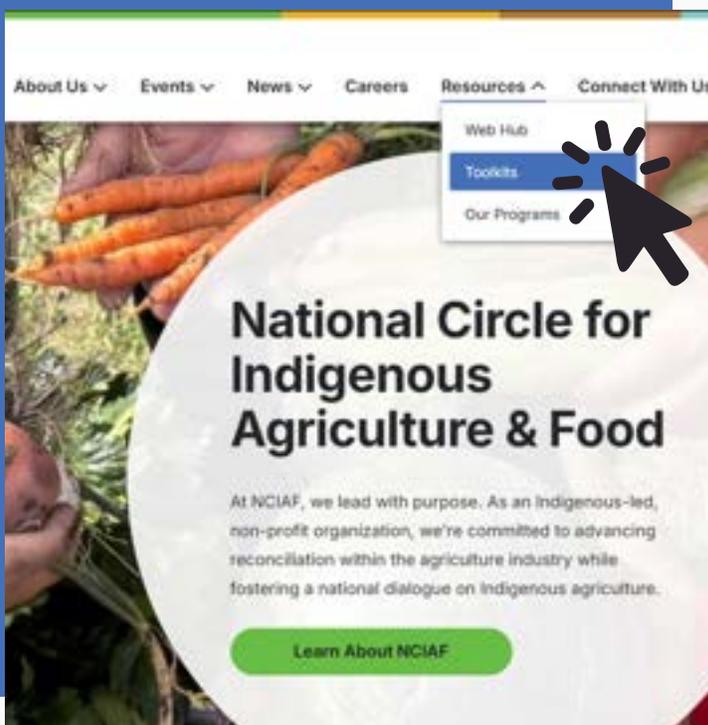


Photo: Screenshot from www.nciaf.ca with a mouse cursor hovering over "Toolkits"

We are excited to share that we have NEW toolkits to share. Located on our website under our "Resources" section, these toolkits were created with care to support Indigenous Peoples, communities, and entrepreneurs as they grow food sovereignty, strengthen connection with land and culture, and bring Indigenous-led agriculture and food projects to life.

We know community gardens are not just places to grow food but spaces where relationships flourish, teachings are shared, and communities come together. Just in time to start planning for the start of the new gardening season, we are highlighting the toolkits in our Community Garden section.

- [Community Garden Planner Checklist](#)
- [Seed Starting Planner](#)
- [Soil & Water Testing Guides](#)
- and much more.

Whether you are planting your first seed, building on an existing garden, or looking for encouragement and practical support, our refreshed toolkits are here for you. They reflect our belief that shared knowledge and accessible tools can strengthen confidence, connection, and pride in community-led food initiatives.

Beyond gardening, we also have toolkits for:

- [Orchards](#)
- [Greenhouses](#)
- [Business Planning & Pitch Competition preparation](#)

We invite you to explore ours toolkits, share them with your networks, and use them as you prepare for the growing season ahead and continue building resilient food systems guided by Indigenous values and knowledge.

Visit nciaf.ca under [Resources and Toolkits](#) to learn more and access the tools.

CANZA and NCIAF Partner to Bring Indigenous Perspectives to Climate-Smart Agriculture



The NCIAF is proud to announce a new partnership with the Canadian Alliance for Net Zero Agrifood (CANZA) to ensure Indigenous knowledge, values, and leadership are meaningfully reflected in Canada's transition to climate-smart and regenerative agriculture.

Through this collaboration, the NCIAF and CANZA will work together to strengthen Indigenous participation in agriculture and help shape solutions that are informed by Indigenous worldviews and deep connections to the land. By centering Indigenous perspectives, this partnership supports more inclusive, respectful, and effective approaches to sustainability in the agri-food sector.

"We're grateful for the opportunity to learn from the NCIAF and to ensure Indigenous farmers' knowledge informs how we design our programs," said Nick Betts, Executive Director of CANZA. Chris McKee, Senior Vice President of Business Development at the NCIAF, added, "By working alongside CANZA, we can help ensure Indigenous voices help shape the future of agriculture."

This partnership aligns with CANZA's mission to co-create and scale measurable, climate-smart solutions that benefit farmers, communities, and the planet—while upholding Indigenous rights, knowledge, and leadership. Together, CANZA and the NCIAF are taking an important step toward a more just, resilient, and sustainable agri-food system for all.

Events We're Attending

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

Future of Food - Feb 10, 2026

Location: Ottawa, ON

Indigenous Business Gathering - March 3-4, 2026

Location: Saskatoon, SK

Food, Fuel, Fertilizer Global Summit - April 8-9, 2026

Location: Regina, SK

Aggie Days - April 15-17, 2026

Location: Calgary, AB

Featured Quote

Here is our featured quote of the month:



NCIAF is doing critical work to develop and support Indigenous Agriculture and Food, while also providing opportunities for people to learn how best to support and contribute to these efforts. We are all guests on this earth and doing better together is a message that I appreciated in a recent learning session with NCIAF. Bayer is thrilled to be a partner with NCIAF and I look forward to continued opportunities to collaborate.



Arvel Lawson
Business Unit Lead
Bayer Crop Science Canada



Bayer

Events We're Sharing

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

Advancing Women in Agriculture - March 8-10, 2026

Location: Calgary, AB

Forward Summit West - May 14-15, 2026

Location: Calgary, AB

Smothered Bison in Crock Pot

Ingredients

- 1 ¼ lbs. Round bison steak cut in strips
- ¼ tsp pepper
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 or 2 green peppers sliced
- 1 large onion sliced
- 1-10 oz. (285 ml) can mushrooms
- 1 lb. tomatoes
- 2 Tbsp molasses
- 3 Tbsp soya sauce
- 1-10 oz. (284 ml) can green beans

Instructions

1. Place bison strips, flour, salt and pepper in crock pot. Stir well to coat steak.
2. Add remaining ingredients.
3. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour, then low for 7-8 hours.
4. Serve with rice.

Recipe courtesy of **Canadian Bison Association's**
A Taste of North America: Bison... Nature's Best is Back!

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

Website: nciaf.ca

Address: Atoskewin Business Center

Regina SK S4S 7K3

Phone: 306-559-6098

Stay Informed

