

The Wâwiyiyaw

National Circle Newsletter For Indigenous Agriculture & Food

NEWS

UPDATE



wo inina 2025: Celebrating Indigenous Food Sovereignty

We are proud to present [wo inina 2025](#), a one-day event dedicated to the future of Indigenous food sovereignty. Taking place on February 12, 2025, in Ottawa, ON, this gathering will unite Indigenous community leaders in agriculture and food systems with advocates and stakeholders from across Canada.

Together, we will celebrate achievements, reflect on challenges, and advance the shared mission of strengthening Indigenous food systems and eliminating food insecurity. The day will conclude with a networking reception, providing an opportunity to forge meaningful connections and foster collaboration.

A Space for Empowerment, Celebration, and Advocacy

wo inina 2025 will:

- **Empower Indigenous Voices** Community leaders and advocates will share their stories, challenges, and aspirations for reclaiming food sovereignty.
- **Celebrate Milestones and Successes** Participants will reflect on the significant impact NCIAF has had in addressing food security issues through our programs and partnerships with Indigenous agricultural leaders.
- **Advocate for Growth and Support** Discussions will emphasize the need for sustained investment and reconciliation-driven approaches to protect culturally significant food systems while ensuring long-term sustainability.

We look forward to welcoming our guests to this impactful event as we come together to shape the future of Indigenous agriculture and food sovereignty.



WO ININA 2025



LISTEN. LEARN. ACT.

Celebrating Black History Month: Honouring Black and Indigenous Contributions to Food Systems



BIPOC Caucus of the National Farmers' Union.

February is Black History Month, a time to celebrate the achievements and contributions of Black communities. This month and every month, we recognize the vital role both Black and Indigenous communities have played, and continue to play, in shaping Canada's food systems.

Despite profound contributions, Black and Indigenous farmers have historically faced systemic barriers in agriculture, including limited access to land, equipment, markets, and industry opportunities. Additionally, Black and Indigenous Peoples experience disproportionately high rates of food insecurity.

Yet, in the face of these challenges, many continue to advocate for food sovereignty and equity, working to dismantle structural barriers limiting access to lifegiving foods.

As part of Black History Month, we want to highlight two incredible resources for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) engaged in or aspiring to enter farming and looking to build community:

1. [Farmers Network for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour](#) – This network supports BIPOC Ontario farmers by fostering community, solidarity, and knowledge-sharing through meetups, online discussions, and farmer-to-farmer training.
2. The [BIPOC Caucus](#) for the National Farmers Union – A community of BIPOC farmers dedicated to peer support, knowledge-sharing, and policy influence. The Caucus provides culturally safe spaces and works to remove barriers in agriculture while hosting in-person, farmer-led gatherings across Canada.

NCIAF at SALT's *Prosperity from the Land* Conference

Director of Business Development, Michelle Sandercock, attended [Saskatchewan Aboriginal Land Technician \(SALT\)](#)'s *Prosperity from the Land* Conference in Saskatoon, a gathering focused on economic development opportunities for First Nations. The two-day event brought together Indigenous leaders, economic experts, and government representatives to discuss economic reconciliation and land-based prosperity.

Our participation highlighted the role of Indigenous agriculture in economic development, reinforcing how sustainable food systems and agribusiness contribute to long-term prosperity for First Nations communities.



The conference featured discussions on key economic initiatives, financing opportunities, and Indigenous-led success stories. Michelle engaged with industry leaders and government partners, exploring opportunities to expand agricultural programs and support Indigenous food sovereignty. The panel on First Nations Success in Saskatchewan showcased inspiring economic growth stories. Sessions on carbon market economics, Indigenous financing, and smart technologies provided valuable insights into emerging opportunities for land-based economic development.

Supporting Community Development: Swan Valley Visit From NCIAF's Program Advisor



Program Advisor, Wendy Carnegie, recently visited the Swan Valley region to explore collaborative projects and funding opportunities. Her visit provided valuable insights into local infrastructure, community programs, and training initiatives supporting long-term sustainability.

At the Swan Valley School Division, Wendy toured their Growcer unit, an innovative program fostering youth engagement and partnerships with local First Nations to promote food security and self-reliance. She also visited the school's commercial kitchen, where students gain hands-on experience through Red Seal culinary training, equipping them with professional skills while supporting access to healthy, locally sourced meals.

Another key stop was the heavy mechanics shop, where students receive specialized training in farm machinery, addressing workforce needs in an agriculture-driven economy. Wendy discussed the priorities of the community and assisted with grant applications aimed at securing long-term success for these initiatives.

Her visit highlights the importance of community-led projects in strengthening Indigenous agriculture and food systems. Through collaboration and continued support, we remain committed to empowering future generations and expanding opportunities for sustainable development.

ReconciliAG Advisor Reflections: Advancing Agriculture and Collaboration on First Nations

As January comes to a close, ReconciliAG Advisor Terry Lerat reflects on a month of unpredictable winter weather in southeastern Saskatchewan, marked by rain, wet snow, and strong winds. Despite these fluctuations, Terry remains optimistic about the upcoming growing season, urging producers to stay adaptable in the face of climate variability.

At the [Annual Crop Production Show](#) in Saskatoon on January 14, Terry engaged with industry leaders and explored the latest agricultural technologies. A highlight was his discussion with Ash Mier and Terry Drabiuk of Genesis Fertilizers, who are planning to build a new fertilizer production facility next to an ethanol plant in Belle Plaine—a project promising innovative opportunities for producers.

In addition to these advancements, Terry has been exploring new avenues in hemp production through conversations with Darrell McElroy and the Manitoba Hemp Production Board. He stressed the importance of diversifying crop rotations—moving away from tight canola rotations—to promote soil health and ensure long-term financial sustainability for producers.

On January 27, Terry participated in a four-band meeting hosted by Ochapowace First Nation with representatives from several First Nations communities. The discussion covered key agricultural and economic initiatives, including carbon credits and the potential for carbon trading, as well as the benefits of community gardens and increased livestock production. Terry's ongoing commitment to agricultural development on First Nations lands highlights his dedication to fostering collaboration among producers, industry leaders, and community members.



Empowering Communities through Health Equity: Meet Our Program Specialist



Dakota dog sledding in Moose Cree First Nation with a team of rez-cues turned expert mushers, led by community champion, Phoebe Sutherland.

As the newest member of the team, Dakota Cherry joins the Capacity Development side as a Programs Specialist.

Dakota holds a Master of Science from the University of Guelph, where her research on the Braiding Food Systems project focused on Indigenous food security and sovereignty in Northern, ON.

Originally from Tkaronto, she later moved to Ottawa, on Algonquin territory, to study and work at the heart of Canadian politics. Her passion for food sovereignty was sparked during a 2017 family trip to Moose Factory, ON, where she witnessed food insecurity firsthand, driving her to explore the politics of food and to work with organizations like The Growcer and Just Food to support Indigenous Peoples in reclaiming their food systems.

Her Master's research demonstrated a strong interest among Northern Ontario First Nations in growing their own food, saving seeds, and canning and preserving as part of their food security goals. Through her work, she connected with harvesters, seed keepers, Elders, and garden stewards—mostly women—who demonstrated the power of small-scale, community-led initiatives. She carries this knowledge and passion into her role at the NCI AF, helping to strengthen Indigenous food systems.

In her personal time, Dakota enjoys cooking and growing healthy, local food, connecting with the land, practicing yoga, skiing, and getting involved in her community!

Tell us a little about yourself and your position with the NCI AF.

I'm the NCI AF's in-house "Grant Guru," specializing in writing proposals that braid Indigenous and Western knowledge. I'm always happy to support Indigenous communities and groups by reviewing, brainstorming, or consulting on funding proposals supporting Indigenous food self-determination!

What inspired you to join the NCI AF?

When I began my Master's in 2022, I had no clear path ahead—only a deep passion for food justice. Despite questions from family and friends about where it might lead me career-wise, I followed my heart. One year later, the NCI AF was formed, and the day after my graduation, I interviewed for the Program Specialist position.

This role has allowed me to continue building relationships with my Northern Ontario relations while forging new ones in the prairies.

What have you found to be the best part of working with the NCI AF so far?

"Love what you do, and you'll never work a day in your life." So far, I've loved learning from—and alongside—my fantastic team at the NCI AF. I look forward to visiting communities to learn about Indigenous food traditions in the prairies.



Event Highlights

[Exploring Canada's Role in Agriculture - Feb 10, 2025](#)

Location: Ottawa, ON

[Future of Food Conference - Feb 11, 2025](#)

Location: Ottawa, ON

[wo inina 2025 - Feb 12, 2025](#)

Location: Ottawa, ON

[Canadian Federation of Agriculture AGM - Feb 27-28, 2025](#)

Location: Ottawa, ON

[AWC West - Mar 16-18, 2025](#)

Location: Calgary, AB

[Indigenous Business Gathering - Mar 25, 2025](#)

Location: Saskatoon, SK

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

Stay Informed



Website: nciaf.ca

Address: Atoskewin Business Center
Regina SK S4S 7K3

Phone: 306-559-6098

Funding Opportunities

[Local Food Infrastructure Fund \(Large Projects\)](#)

Accepting applications until February 28, 2025!

This AAFC fund supports projects that strengthen community food security and increase availability and accessibility of locally produced food.

- Priority will be given to projects led by or focused on Indigenous and Black communities.
- Non-repayable contribution funding between \$150,000 and \$500,000.
- Project must include a production element and a minimum of two partnerships to enhance community food security.

[More info.](#)

Contact us to find out how the NCIAF can fill the requirement of project partner on your application.

[Youth Employment and Skills Program \(YESP\)](#)

Accepting applications until February 24, 2025!

The Government of Canada is providing funding to help employers hire young workers in the agriculture and agri-food sectors.

- Employers can receive up to \$14,000 to cover 50% of youth salaries and benefits (up to 80% for youth facing barriers).
- Indigenous-led applications will receive priority for the 2025-2026 program year.
- Agricultural producers, agri-businesses, industry associations, provincial and territorial governments, research facilities, and Indigenous organizations are eligible to apply.

[More info.](#)