



The Wâwiyiyaw

National Circle Newsletter For Indigenous Agriculture & Food
July 2026

NEWS

UPDATE



Celebrating National Bison Week

Starting every second Sunday of July, National Bison Week is an opportunity to celebrate the cultural, ecological, and spiritual significance of bison and their enduring relationship with Indigenous Peoples across the Northern Plains.

For generations, bison have been central to Indigenous ways of life, providing food, clothing, tools, shelter, and materials while holding deep cultural and spiritual significance. Their story is also one of resilience. After devastating population declines, efforts led by Indigenous communities, conservation organizations, producers, and partners are helping restore bison to the landscape and strengthen their role in healthy ecosystems and thriving food systems.

Across the Prairies, there are many ways to learn more about bison during National Bison Week. Visit a national or provincial park to see bison on the landscape, explore museums and cultural sites that share the history of bison and Indigenous Peoples, or attend events hosted by First Nations, Métis communities, conservation organizations, and bison producers.

Places such as Wanuskewin Heritage Park offer an opportunity to experience the ongoing relationship between bison, the land, and Indigenous Peoples. Wanuskewin is home to a thriving herd of Plains bison, including calves born this year, reflecting the important role that bison restoration can play in cultural revitalization and conservation.

National Bison Week is also a chance to recognize the contributions of Indigenous bison producers and communities who are helping build a strong and sustainable bison sector. Supporting Indigenous-led bison initiatives can contribute to food sovereignty, economic development, land stewardship, and the revitalization of traditional knowledge.

The NCIAF is proud to support the growth of Indigenous participation in the bison sector through the Indigenous Prairie Bison Initiative (IPBI). Through this initiative, the NCIAF is working with partners to strengthen capacity, provide training and mentorship, and create opportunities for Indigenous communities and individuals to participate in the growing Prairie bison sector.

This National Bison Week, we invite you to learn, connect, and celebrate. Visit a bison herd, learn from Indigenous communities and knowledge holders, support a bison producer, or enjoy bison as part of your next meal. Every opportunity to connect with bison is an opportunity to better understand their importance to the land, people, culture, and future of the Prairies.

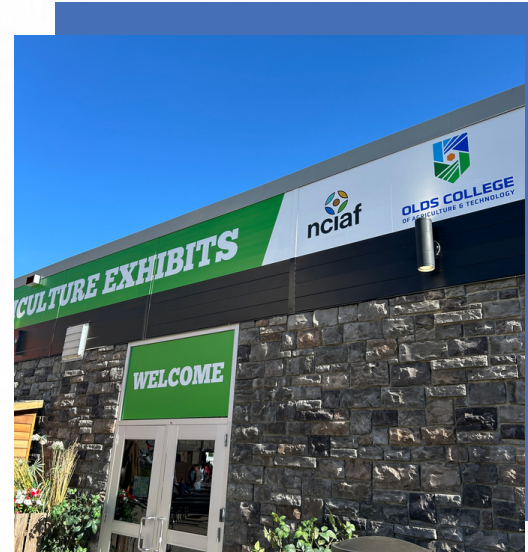
NCIAF Celebrates Indigenous Agriculture and Culture at the 2026 Calgary Stampede

In July, the NCIAF participated in the Calgary Stampede, joining one of Western Canada's largest celebrations of agriculture. The NCIAF had an engaging display, sharing the growing story of Indigenous agriculture, food sovereignty, and Indigenous food systems with thousands of visitors from across Canada and around the world.

Located in the agriculture barns, the NCIAF welcomed visitors throughout the Stampede with a traditional tipi and a stretched bison hide, creating an inviting space for meaningful conversations about Indigenous agriculture, bison restoration, community gardens, food sovereignty, and the work being led by Indigenous communities nationwide. The booth officially opened during Sneak-A-Peek, where many visitors were introduced to the NCIAF for the first time. Through educational resources, temporary tattoos, and engaging discussions, guests learned about the important role Indigenous agriculture continues to play in building strong, sustainable communities.

Throughout the two-week event, the booth remained a hub of activity. Visitors shared stories about projects happening in their own communities, explored funding opportunities, and discussed ways they could support Indigenous agriculture and food initiatives. Many expressed interest in volunteering, partnering with the NCIAF, applying for future opportunities, or donating to help strengthen Indigenous food systems. These conversations reflected the growing interest in Indigenous-led agriculture and the importance of building meaningful partnerships across the sector.

The NCIAF also participated in two Taste of Stampede events which showcased Indigenous agriculture through a vibrant chef competition. Kallie Wood, President and CEO, Chris McKee, Senior Vice President, and Justice Acoose, Comms Specialist, represented the NCIAF during the first event, while Monique Desjarlais, ReconciliAG Specialist, joined the team for the second.



The second event featured Noble Premium Bison, providing an opportunity to highlight the company's commitment to Canada's bison industry and the growing role of bison in Indigenous agriculture and food systems. Kallie Wood joined Kelly Long, CEO of Noble Premium Bison, and Mike Jacobson, COO of Noble Premium Bison, as judges for a chef competition featuring creative dishes prepared with Canadian bison.

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NCIAF Celebrates Indigenous Agriculture and Culture at the 2026 Calgary Stampede - Con't

Beyond the agriculture programming, NCIAF staff took part in several cultural celebrations at Elbow River Camp. The opening ceremonies welcomed Nations from across Treaty territories through traditional songs, dances, and introductions, accompanied by the powerful sound of drums and singers. The experience celebrated the strength, resilience, and rich cultural traditions of Indigenous Peoples while setting the tone for the weeks ahead.

One of the highlights of the Stampede was participating in the Grand Entry at the Calgary Stampede Powwow. Kallie Wood, Chris McKee, Monique Desjarlais, Michael Burechailo, Business Development Associate, and Youth Warriors Jacob Weaselchild and Chelaine Smokeyday-Dreaver had the honour of joining dancers, singers, drummers, and participants from across Turtle Island during the Grand Entry on two occasions. It was a meaningful opportunity to celebrate Indigenous culture while standing alongside communities from across North America.

The second week of Stampede featured several unforgettable moments at Elbow River Camp, including the Youth Powwow. The arena was filled with talented young dancers who participated with remarkable pride, confidence, and passion across the many dance categories. One of the most moving moments came as the Powwow Princesses and many of the youth introduced themselves in their traditional languages. Hearing so many young people speak their languages fluently was a powerful reminder that these languages, despite generations of decline, are being revitalized and passed on to future generations. Witnessing Indigenous youth carrying their languages, traditions, and identities forward with such pride was both inspiring and hopeful.



The Youth Powwow also featured outstanding cultural demonstrations, including Chris Kaquitts of Stoney Nakoda Nation, who shared the beauty and significance of the Men's Chicken Dance with spectators. Throughout the day, the energy, talent, and cultural teachings showcased the strength and resilience of Indigenous youth while celebrating traditions that continue to thrive through the next generation.

As the Calgary Stampede came to a close, the NCIAF left with new relationships, strengthened partnerships, and countless meaningful conversations that will continue well beyond the event itself. The experience reinforced the growing momentum behind Indigenous agriculture and food systems while celebrating the cultures, traditions, and communities that continue to shape this important work. The NCIAF is grateful for the opportunity to share these stories and looks forward to building on the connections made throughout this year's Calgary Stampede.



NCIAF and Red Deer Polytechnic Partner to Advance Indigenous Agriculture, Research and Education

The NCIAF is proud to announce a new five-year partnership with Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP), formalized through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on July 28, 2026.

This collaboration reflects a shared commitment to advancing Indigenous agriculture, food sovereignty, applied research and community-driven education. Together, NCIAF and RDP will explore new opportunities to support Indigenous learners and communities, strengthen Indigenous food systems, and create meaningful pathways for skills development, innovation and leadership in agriculture and food.

The partnership will focus on opportunities for collaborative applied research, as well as the development and delivery of education and training tailored to Indigenous learners. A joint Partnership Committee will help guide the work, monitor progress and identify new opportunities for impact throughout the five-year agreement.

“This Memorandum of Understanding with Red Deer Polytechnic represents far more than a formal agreement—it reflects a shared commitment to respect, partnership, and meaningful action,” said Kallie Wood, President and CEO of NCIAF. “Together, we are creating space for community-informed research, culturally relevant education, and stronger connections that elevate Indigenous leadership, innovation, and contribution across agriculture and food.”

By bringing together Indigenous communities, industry, government, researchers and knowledge keepers, the partnership will also help foster a broader dialogue around reconciliation, sustainable agricultural growth and the vital role Indigenous Peoples continue to play in stewarding land, food and community well-being.

“This partnership creates meaningful opportunities for Indigenous communities to shape the future of agricultural productivity in ways that respect culture, land and tradition,” said Stuart Cullum, President of Red Deer Polytechnic.

The NCIAF looks forward to the important work ahead with RDP as we continue to build meaningful partnerships that empower Indigenous leadership, elevate Indigenous knowledge and contribute to a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable future for agriculture and food in Canada.

To learn more about this partnership, read the full media release [here](#).

Expanding Market Access for Indigenous-Made Foods

The NCI AF is proud to announce the first initiative under our National Market Access Strategy, developed through our partnership with Sobeys Inc., a subsidiary of Empire Company Limited.

Together, we launched a dedicated display of Indigenous-made products. Manitoba was selected after Sobeys identified it as the province where customers most frequently asked for greater access to Indigenous products.

This initiative represents more than retail merchandising. It is a practical step toward removing barriers for Indigenous entrepreneurs, increasing product visibility, and creating new pathways to mainstream markets. The insights gained through this initiative will help build a scalable model that can expand opportunities for Indigenous businesses across Canada.

We believe meaningful partnerships create meaningful outcomes. By bringing together industry, Indigenous entrepreneurs, and consumer demand, we are helping build a stronger, more inclusive Canadian food system. This is more than a display. It is another step toward making Indigenous-made products part of everyday shopping across Canada.

Help Us Discover Canada's Indigenous Food Businesses

Do you own an Indigenous food business? Or do you know someone who does? As we expand our partnerships and prepare for future retail opportunities, we're looking for local, regional, and national Indigenous food products from across Canada.

We're inviting Indigenous food businesses to become Featured Suppliers in the Indigenous Food Hub, a growing national network that helps connect Indigenous products with retailers, distributors, and other buyers looking to source Indigenous-made foods.

These entrepreneurs will also receive exclusive access to our NCI AF/Sobeys Grocery Readiness Series, designed to help prepare Indigenous businesses for success in grocery retail.

Know an Indigenous producer? Please share this opportunity and help us ensure Indigenous food businesses from every corner of Canada are represented.

Become a Featured Supplier today on our [Food Hub](#)



Building Connections from Coast to Coast to Coast: NCI AF Explores Agriculture in Nova Scotia



This summer, the NCI AF had the opportunity to explore agriculture on Canada's East Coast through a series of farm tours hosted by the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.

NCI AF President and CEO, Kallie Wood, and Senior Vice President of Business Development, Chris McKee, spent the day visiting a diverse range of agricultural operations across Nova Scotia. The tour provided valuable opportunities to connect with producers and industry leaders, learn about innovative farming practices, and exchange knowledge while strengthening relationships that support Indigenous agriculture and collaboration across Canada.

The first stop was Webster Farms, a Mi'kmaq-owned farm, where Kallie and Chris had the opportunity to learn from Indigenous agricultural leadership and gain insight into the farm's operations. The visit highlighted the importance of creating opportunities to connect, share knowledge, and learn from the diverse experiences and leadership found within Indigenous agriculture.

The tour continued at CAP Farms, where they explored another unique agricultural operation and connected with local producers. Following the visit, the group gathered for lunch at Red Fox Cider Distillery, offering another opportunity to experience Nova Scotia's vibrant agri-food sector and continue conversations with producers and industry representatives.

The final stop of the day was Lockett Vineyards, where the tour wrapped up with further opportunities to learn about the diversity of agricultural operations in the region and connect with those helping shape Nova Scotia's agriculture and food sector.

From Indigenous-owned agriculture to innovative farm operations and local agri-food businesses, each stop offered a unique perspective on the people, knowledge, and innovation driving agriculture in Nova Scotia. These conversations and connections are an important part of building relationships across regions and creating opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and growth.

The NCI AF extends a heartfelt thank you to the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture and all of the hosts who welcomed Kallie and Chris throughout the tour. We are grateful for the warm hospitality and for the opportunity to learn from the experiences, expertise, and innovation of agricultural leaders on Canada's East Coast.

As NCI AF continues to build connections from coast to coast to coast, opportunities like these help strengthen relationships and foster collaboration in support of a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agricultural future—one that recognizes and elevates Indigenous leadership, knowledge, and contributions across Canada.





Events We're Attending

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

Indigenous Farm & Food Fest - Aug 18-20, 2026

Location: One Arrow Cultural Lodge & Field Tours, SK

Indigenous Field Day - August 26-27, 2026

Location: Saskatchewan

Events We're Sharing

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

Rezolution Summit - August 11-13, 2026

Location: Toronto, ON

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

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

Berry Bannock Bread Pudding

Ingredients:

- 5 cups cubed day-old bannock
- ½ cup milk
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup granulated sugar + 2 tsp for top
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 1 cup berries (fresh or frozen)
- 2 Tbsp shredded unsweetened coconut

Preparation

1. Lightly grease 8-inch round oven-safe dish; scatter half of the bannock cubes into dish.
2. In bowl, whisk together milk, egg, ¼ cup sugar, vanilla, and nutmeg. Pour about half of the mixture over the bread, pressing with back of spoon so that liquid gets absorbed into bannock. Spoon half of the berries over top.
3. Repeat with remaining bannock, egg mixture, and berries.
4. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tsp sugar.
5. Bake in 350°F oven until top is light golden, about 25 minutes. Sprinkle with coconut.
6. Bake until coconut starts to turn golden, 10-15 minutes.

Recipe courtesy of Algonquins of **Greater Golden Lake First Nation**.

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Stay Informed

