



The Wâwiyiyaw

National Circle Newsletter For Indigenous Agriculture & Food
May 2026

NEWS

UPDATE



Honouring National Day of Awareness for MMIWG (Red Dress Day)

On May 5, we observe the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S), often known as Red Dress Day. This day is a time to honour the lives lost, acknowledge the families and communities who continue to carry this grief, and reflect on the ongoing impacts of colonial violence faced by Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island.

Red dresses, displayed in homes, workplaces, and public spaces, serve as a powerful visual reminder of those who are missing and those who have been taken. They symbolize both presence and absence—calling attention to the systemic injustices that continue to put Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people at disproportionate risk.

This day also invites collective responsibility. It reminds us that awareness must be paired with action—listening to survivors and families, supporting Indigenous-led solutions, and challenging the systems that allow violence to persist. Meaningful change requires sustained commitment, accountability, and a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths while centering Indigenous voices and lived experiences.

At the NCI AF, we recognize that food systems, land, culture, and community well-being are deeply interconnected. Advancing Indigenous agriculture and food sovereignty must also include acknowledging the broader social realities that affect Indigenous families and communities. Safety, dignity, and respect for Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people are foundational to strong, thriving food systems.

On this day, we encourage our network to take time to learn, reflect, and show solidarity—whether by wearing red, engaging in conversation, or supporting Indigenous-led efforts that call for justice, accountability, and meaningful change.

We remember. We honour. We continue to work toward a future rooted in respect, equity, and care for one another.

Tatanka Wichohan: Learning, Culture, and Connection

Tatanka Wichohan, hosted by the NCI AF, brought together community leaders, Knowledge Keepers, industry partners, and practitioners for two days of learning, reflection, and connection rooted in Indigenous values. The gathering created space for meaningful conversations about buffalo restoration, food sovereignty, and the relationships that sustain this work.

The event opened in a welcoming and relational way, grounded in song, prayer, and shared purpose. Throughout the gathering, cultural teachings and personal stories highlighted the deep connections between buffalo, land, identity, and community wellness. These moments served as powerful reminders that this work reaches far beyond production—it is about healing, responsibility, and strengthening future generations.

Industry perspectives and shared experiences added valuable insight, emphasizing thoughtful growth, patience, and the importance of approaches shaped by each Nation's unique goals and lands. A consistent message emerged: there is no single path forward, and success looks different for every community. Collaboration, trust, and learning from one another were highlighted as essential to building a strong and resilient Indigenous buffalo sector.

The second day balanced reflection with forward-looking dialogue, including time to honour Red Dress Day. Conversations focused on youth engagement, community-driven solutions, and the strength that comes from combining traditional knowledge with modern tools. Participants were encouraged to recognize the knowledge and leadership that already exist within their own communities.



Photo: Room full of attendees at Tatanka Wichohan.



Photo: Panel at Tatanka Wichohan (from L to R) Doug Griller, Robert Johnson, Allan Bird & Chris McKee.

As the gathering concluded, discussions returned to long-term opportunity, land stewardship, and the foundational role of water in sustainable buffalo operations. More than a conference, Tatanka Wichohan reflected the growing momentum behind Indigenous-led buffalo restoration. Participants left with renewed inspiration, strengthened relationships, and a shared sense of purpose to carry this work forward in their own communities.

Beyond the Ice: Building Stronger Indigenous Futures Together

The Hockey Canada Indigenous Advisory Circle (HCIAC) recently gathered for its second meeting to continue important work around reconciliation, Indigenous leadership, and the future of hockey in Canada.

The NCIAF was honoured to facilitate two impactful half-day planning sessions for the IAC, led by Chair Dr. Wilton Littlechild. At first glance, hockey and Indigenous agriculture may seem like different worlds but both Hockey Canada and the NCIAF share a deep commitment to community, youth development, leadership, wellness, and creating accessible opportunities for future generations. Both organizations understand the importance of culture, identity, and building strong foundations that allow Indigenous youth to thrive.

The partnership is also rooted in a history of shared leadership. NCIAF President and CEO Kallie Wood previously served two terms on the Hockey Canada Board Nominating Committee, helping advance policy change and strengthen governance within the organization. When Hockey Canada approached NCIAF to help facilitate conversations with the Indigenous Advisory Circle, the answer was an immediate yes.

Formed in 2025, the IAC was created to help guide Hockey Canada's reconciliation journey and advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action in sport. More than an advisory body, the IAC is a circle focused on relationship building, healing, accountability, and creating safer and more inclusive pathways for Indigenous youth in hockey.

One of the first areas of discussion was what helps Indigenous youth succeed in the game. Representatives emphasized that Indigenous youth should never feel forced to compromise their identity to belong in hockey, highlighting the importance of trust, mentorship, cultural safety, belonging, accessibility, and meaningful Indigenous representation across all levels of the game, from players and coaches to leadership and governance. The group also spoke openly about the barriers that continue to push Indigenous youth away from the sport, addressing systemic racism, unsafe environments, lack of representation, and limited access to opportunities and support. It was reinforced that reconciliation must go beyond symbolic gestures and lead to measurable change across the hockey world.

The meeting then turned toward action and accountability. Ideas included increased Indigenous mentorship and leadership opportunities, stronger anti-racism and incident reporting protocols, culturally grounded education and training, and better support pathways for Indigenous girls, coaches, officials, and athletes. Participants emphasized the importance of storytelling, visibility, and creating spaces where Indigenous youth can see themselves reflected in the game and feel empowered to dream big.

A recurring message throughout the gathering was that hockey has the power to heal, connect communities, and create belonging when done in a good way. Creating safe, supportive, and culturally grounded spaces is essential to making that vision a reality. Representatives described reconciliation in hockey as creating environments where Indigenous youth can simply be kids — without constantly needing to be resilient in unsafe systems.

The energy and relationships built throughout the two days extended well beyond hockey. As a direct result of the gathering, several representatives and their communities have already reached out to NCIAF to explore food security and food sovereignty initiatives. The NCIAF looks forward to continued collaboration with Hockey Canada and the Indigenous Advisory Circle in support of stronger, healthier futures for Indigenous youth and communities across Canada.

Wâhkôhtowin in Action: Indigenous Leadership in School Food Programs

The NCIAF was honoured to speak at the Assembly of First Nations National School Food Summit, held May 27–28 at Wanuskewin Heritage Park near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Home to a bison jump, tipi rings, petroglyphs, and a medicine wheel, Wanuskewin is currently being considered for UNESCO World Heritage designation, placing it alongside globally significant sites such as the Great Wall of China and the Egyptian pyramids. It was inspiring to gather in a place where Indigenous history and heritage are being recognized at this level.



We heard powerful stories from across Canada highlighting Indigenous-led school food programs. A consistent theme was that communities are leading this work and that these programs play a vital role in improving social and emotional well-being. They strengthen behaviour, engagement, and school attendance while actively involving students. Many programs emphasize family-style, intergenerational meals rooted in the Cree concept of wâhkôhtowin—the spirit of kinship—which fosters connection, establishes lifelong healthy eating habits, and supports learning through improved attention, memory, and problem-solving.

As one presenter shared, “When we feed a child, we’re filling both their belly and their spirit.” Indigenous communities across Canada are leading impactful school food programs, and continued support for this work is essential to the well-being of the next seven generations.

Indigenous Buffalo Engagement Workshop Brings First Nations Together to Share Knowledge & Build Connections

On May 21, the NCIAF was proud to serve as a partner host for an Indigenous Bison Gathering that brought together First Nations producers, community leaders, and industry partners from across Saskatchewan. The event created space to share experiences, strengthen relationships, and discuss the growing role of bison in Indigenous communities.

Participants heard firsthand stories from First Nations leading efforts to restore buffalo to their traditional territories while creating long-term opportunities for future generations. Panel discussions featured speakers from Zagime

Anishinabek, Mosquito Grizzly Bear’s Head Lean Man First Nation, Star Blanket Cree Nation, One Arrow First Nation, Flying Dust First Nation, and George Gordon First Nation. Presenters shared their journeys of establishing and growing herds, overcoming challenges, and developing sustainable operations that support cultural revitalization, food sovereignty, and economic development.

The NCIAF was honoured to support this gathering and remains committed to advancing opportunities that strengthen Indigenous agriculture, food systems, and community prosperity across Canada.



Noble Bison Spotlight: Building Partnerships for the Future of Buffalo

The conversations and connections fostered during Tatanka Wichohan highlighted the growing momentum behind Indigenous-led buffalo restoration and economic development. Among the organizations contributing to those discussions was [Noble Premium Bison](#), a Canadian-owned company committed to sustainable bison production, responsible land stewardship, and supporting the long-term growth of the buffalo industry. Working with ranchers across the Prairies, Noble Premium Bison supplies bison products to markets across Canada and internationally, helping increase awareness and demand for bison while supporting the continued growth of the sector.

During the gathering, participants heard from Noble Premium Bison Chief Operating Officer Mike Jacobson, who shared insights into the evolution of the bison industry and the opportunities emerging for Indigenous communities. Drawing on his experience within the sector, Mike spoke about growing international demand for bison products and the importance of building strong partnerships that create long-term opportunities for producers and communities alike.

A key theme throughout his presentation was the role buffalo can play beyond economic development. Discussions highlighted how buffalo restoration can contribute to food sovereignty, community wellness, and future generations, while remaining rooted in the cultural significance and stewardship values that have guided Indigenous relationships with buffalo for centuries.

The conversation also reflected the work of producers such as Doug Griller of [Quill Creek Farms](#), who works alongside Noble Premium Bison and champions sustainable and regenerative agriculture practices. By prioritizing soil health, biodiversity, animal welfare, and environmental stewardship, Doug's approach demonstrates how responsible production and long-term land care can work together to support a healthy and resilient buffalo industry.

Throughout the discussions, a recurring message emerged: the future of the buffalo sector will be built through collaboration. Participants explored the importance of transparency, knowledge sharing, and partnerships that support Indigenous communities in pursuing their own goals and visions for buffalo stewardship and economic development.

As interest in buffalo restoration and Indigenous food systems continues to grow, organizations such as Noble Premium Bison play an important role in helping create connections between industry and community. Their participation at Tatanka Wichohan reflected a shared commitment to stewardship, relationship-building, and supporting a strong future for buffalo across the Prairies.

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





Events We're Attending

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

First Nations Rodeo & Relay - June 13

Location: Calgary, AB

Calgary Stampede - July 3-12

Location: Calgary, AB

Events We're Sharing

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

Calgary Stampede Powwow - July 6-7

Location: Calgary, AB

Ag in Motion - July 21-23

Location: Langham, SK

Indigenous Farm & Food Festival - August 18-20

Location: One Arrow Cultural Lodge, SK

Learn More about MMIWG

Learn more about the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and explore the Reclaiming Power and Place Final Report, which shares the truths of survivors, families, and Knowledge Keepers while outlining 231 Calls for Justice to help end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Visit the official website to access the report, educational resources, and learn how you can support meaningful change. [MMIWG Final Report Website](https://www.mmiwg.com)

Buffalo Beef Stew

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup canola oil or olive oil
- ¼ cup butter
- 2 lb(s) buffalo stew meat, cubed
- 1 splash red wine
- 2 onions, chunky slices
- 2 clove garlic, diced
- 4 cups beef broth
- 1 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 2 Tbsp steak spice
- Few sprigs fresh thyme and rosemary
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced
- 4 medium potatoes, peeled and diced chunky
- 4 stalks celery, diced
- 2 cup corn
- 2 cup peas
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

1. Using a large pan, heat oil and butter.
2. Add the buffalo meat and brown the meat on all sides.
3. Add red wine, onions and garlic and cook until translucent.
4. Add beef broth, Worcestershire sauce, steak spice, thyme, rosemary, bay leaf and bring to a boil.
5. Add carrots, potatoes, celery, corn and peas.
6. Continue to simmer until vegetables are tender, approximately 2 hours.
7. Remove bay leaf.
8. Serve with fresh hot baked bannock or buns of your choice!

Recipe courtesy of [Flavour Network](https://flavournetwork.ca)

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Stay Informed



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