

# The Wâwiyiyaw

National Circle Newsletter For Indigenous Agriculture & Food

NEWS

UPDATE

## Honouring Truth and Reconciliation: Reflections on National Truth and Reconciliation Day

On September 30, we observe National Truth and Reconciliation Day, a vital occasion for reflection and action. This day is not only about recognizing the history and impact of residential schools, but also reaffirming our commitment to healing and building respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Truth and Reconciliation is a process to encourage us to confront the painful truths of the past while striving for a more just and equitable future. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada provided us with important recommendations to guide our efforts. Among these are calls to action emphasizing the need for understanding, respect, and collaboration in all areas, including agriculture and food systems.

In the realm of agriculture, reconciliation is about more than acknowledging past injustices; it's about actively working to restore Indigenous knowledge and practices in our food systems. Indigenous agricultural traditions have long been rooted in sustainable practices and deep connections to the land. By integrating these traditions into contemporary food systems, we can foster a more resilient and equitable agricultural landscape.

### How You Can Stand with Indigenous Communities

This National Truth and Reconciliation Day, and every other day of the year, the NCIAF calls on all individuals, organizations, and communities to engage in meaningful actions. Here are some ways to contribute:

- **Educate Yourself and Others:** Take time to learn about the history of residential schools and the ongoing impacts on Indigenous communities. Share this knowledge with friends, family, and colleagues to promote understanding.
- **Support Indigenous Initiatives:** Invest in Indigenous-led agriculture and food projects. By supporting these initiatives, we can help revitalize traditional practices and promote food sovereignty.
- **Engage in Dialogue:** Create spaces for open conversations about reconciliation. Listening to Indigenous voices and sharing experiences can foster deeper connections and mutual respect.
- **Participate in Local Events:** Many communities host events on National Truth and Reconciliation Day. Participate in ceremonies, workshops, or discussions to honour the day and learn from Indigenous leaders.
- **Reflect on Your Role:** Consider how you can contribute to reconciliation in your personal and professional life. Whether through advocacy, education, or simply being a supportive ally, every action counts.

As we observe National Truth and Reconciliation Day, remember reconciliation is an ongoing journey, requiring dedication, humility, and a willingness to learn from one another. The NCIAF is committed to this journey, working alongside Indigenous communities and peoples to cultivate a future honouring our histories, respects our traditions, and nurtures our connections to the land.



# Advancing Indigenous Agriculture and Community Health

The NCIAF is thrilled to announce a groundbreaking collaboration with [Bridges Health Services](#) aimed at enhancing Indigenous agriculture and food systems through integrated mental health support. This partnership recognizes the essential link between mental wellness and the resilience of our agricultural communities, fostering a holistic approach to well-being that nurtures both the land and the spirit.

At the heart of this collaboration is Bridges Health Services' innovative platform, [Avail](#). Designed to offer a comprehensive array of resources, Avail provides access to counseling services, mental wellness tools, and community support tailored to the unique needs of Indigenous peoples. By integrating these vital mental health resources into the framework of Indigenous agriculture, we are paving the way for a more sustainable and empowered food system.

Indigenous farmers often face significant challenges, from economic pressures to climate change impacts. These stressors can take a toll on mental health, creating a cycle that can affect both personal well-being and agricultural productivity. The NCIAF and Bridges Health Services recognize nurturing the mental health of our farmers is crucial to the overall health of our communities and the success of our food systems.

Together, the NCIAF and Bridges Health Services are committed to supporting Indigenous farmers and communities in their journeys towards health, sustainability, and empowerment. This collaboration marks a significant step forward in redefining how we approach agriculture and mental health, ensuring both thrive in harmony.

## NCIAF Partners with Bayer Crop Science Canada to Empower Indigenous Agriculture

NCIAF and Bayer Crop Science Canada are partnering to work towards advancing reconciliation in the Canadian agriculture industry by fostering meaningful engagement between Indigenous communities and agriculture.

As part of this initiative, Bayer is contributing \$25,000 to support NCIAF's mission of revitalizing Indigenous involvement in agriculture. Together, we aim to create opportunities that empower Indigenous Peoples to reconnect with the land and promote food sovereignty.

One of the exciting projects under this partnership is the support for NCIAF's Community Garden in Saskatchewan, which will provide Indigenous communities with the space to seed, grow, and harvest their own produce.

This partnership represents a step towards healing and rebuilding relationships with the land, ensuring that Indigenous knowledge and voices thrive in agriculture for generations to come.

Stay tuned for more updates as we continue to work together on initiatives that prioritize sustainability, equity, and Indigenous leadership in agriculture.

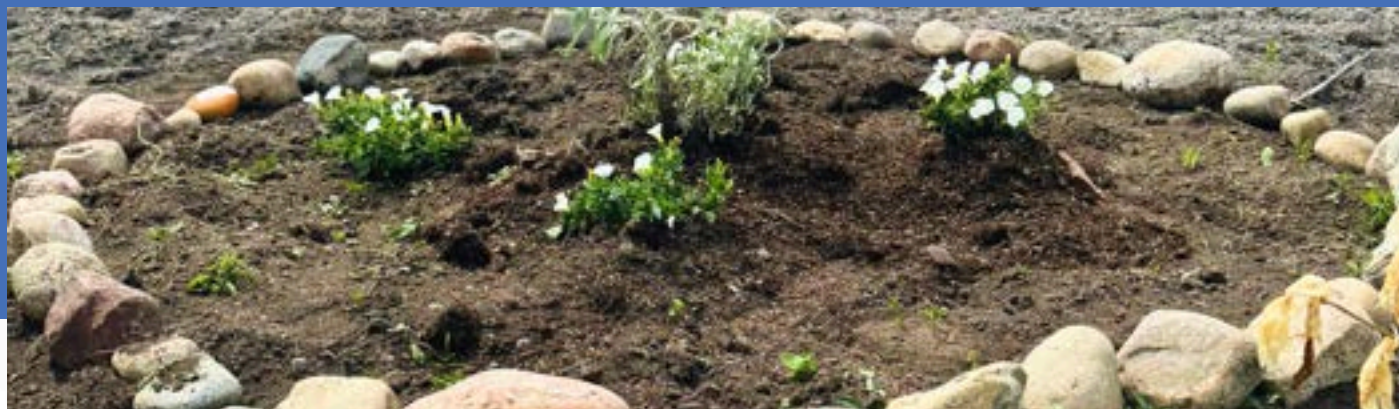
---

To read more about Truth and Reconciliation, visit the National Centre Truth and Reconciliation's [website](#). The website provides a variety of resources and information regarding Truth and Reconciliation.

If you are a Survivor and need emotional support, a national crisis line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

Residential School Survivor Support Line: **1-866-925-4419**

# Exciting Launch: NCIAF's New Podcast!



The NCIAF is thrilled to announce the launch of our brand-new [podcast](#), hosted by Chris McKee, our Vice President of Business Development! This engaging series will explore the vibrant world of Indigenous agriculture and food systems, featuring insightful conversations with community leaders, farmers, and advocates.

Join Chris as he delves into topics such as food sovereignty, sustainable practices, and the success stories of Indigenous initiatives across the country. Each episode aims to inspire, inform, and empower listeners to take action in their own communities.

Tune in to gain valuable insights and connect with the growing movement for Indigenous food resilience. Don't miss out – follow our playlist on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcast](#), or subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#) today and be part of the conversation!



## Funding Opportunities

### **New Funding available to improve access to food for Indigenous Communities – Closes October 31st**

*Local Food Infrastructure Fund (Small Projects Stream)* \$42.7 million to help increase food security in communities across Canada. If you're looking to improve food systems and security in your community, this program provides funding for local food infrastructure projects. Eligible projects must be for the purchase of one or a few pieces of equipment for production-focused projects that address local food security; funding requests between \$25,000 and \$100,000; and completed by March 31, 2026. [Find out more.](#)

**Local Food Infrastructure Fund (Large Projects Stream) will open in January 2025 for projects \$150,000 to \$500,000.** Contact us to find out how the NCIAF can fill the requirement of project partner on your application.

### **Funding opportunities for Conservation Efforts**

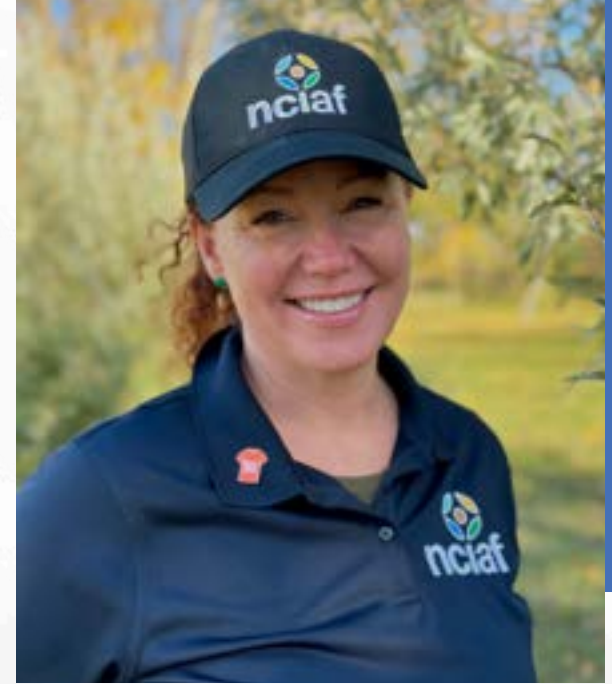
*Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk – Closes October 30, 2024.* The Government of Canada has announced \$6.2 million in funding through the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk. Eligible activities include habitat protection and securement; habitat improvement; species and habitat threat abatement; conservation planning; surveys, inventories and monitoring; outreach and education; and project evaluation. [More details.](#)

*Indigenous Partnerships for Species at Risk.* This program offers up to \$6 million for projects that conserve and protect species at risk, focusing on habitats and ecosystems that are vital to their survival. Eligible activities include project activities include one or more of the following: habitat protection and procurement; habitat improvements; species management; conservation planning; surveys, inventories and monitoring; project or program results evaluations; Indigenous knowledge gathering or use; outreach and communications; education and training. [Learn more.](#)

# Passionate Advocate for Indigenous Agriculture: Get to know our Director of Business Development

This month, we're excited to shine a light on Michelle, a dedicated member of our business development team. Michelle has the unique opportunity to work directly with Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs, helping them overcome barriers and find pathways to success. Whether it's supporting a buffalo herd startup, assisting a fry bread mix manufacturer, or collaborating with a fisherman, Michelle plays a pivotal role in connecting Indigenous businesses with the resources, mentorship, and programming they need to thrive.

She describes her work as being in the "ultimate sweet spot"—one where the team is either rolling up their sleeves to solve problems on the ground or spotlighting gaps in support systems. From there, they engage with industry, government, academia, and other organizations to bridge those gaps, ensuring Indigenous entrepreneurs have every opportunity to succeed. Michelle's passion and hands-on approach make her an invaluable part of our mission to empower Indigenous agriculture and food enterprises.



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

I'm a third-generation uninvited settler raised on a family farm in the southeast of Saskatchewan. I love agriculture and this great industry. In my position with NCI AF, I get the distinct pleasure of working directly with Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs to help overcome barriers they face in either starting up or growing their food related business; be it a buffalo herd, a commercial food manufacturer or a fisherman. I help to connect and accelerate Indigenous businesses with resources, programming, mentorship and knowledge. Outside of my time at the Circle, my husband and I have three wonderful children who keep us busy.

## **What inspired you to join the NCI AF?**

Joining the Circle felt like a natural decision because this work embodies true reconciliation. Every day, I have the privilege of contributing to positive, sustainable change. Working with Indigenous Peoples and communities has been a humbling and purposeful journey, teaching me more than I could have imagined. Despite growing up near reservations, I've learned so much through listening and engaging. Those close to me know I thrive on creativity, and I love that our team constantly turns roadblocks into opportunities for those who need it most. It's been an honor to walk alongside our cousins as they reclaim their role as the first farmers of this land.

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

Agriculture and producing food are incredibly noble pursuits and you can't beat the people you'll encounter along the way, and I feel the NCI AF makes this sector even better. We get to occupy a very sweet spot where we connect Indigenous Peoples and communities with the experts, mentors, programs and resources they need and where we can't, we shine a brighter light on the gaps and barriers inviting industry, government, academia or other likeminded nonprofits to collaborate and address these with us. We like to say we charge no commission; we exist to advocate for those who have long been oppressed and exploited and our goal is only to offer help and walk beside these amazing people as they heal and move forward.

# What OUR COMMUNITY SAYS ABOUT US



“

*“At Bridges Health, we are deeply honored to join forces with the National Circle for Indigenous Agriculture and Food in this meaningful partnership. Through the integration of our Avail platform, we aim to provide essential mental health support to Indigenous farmers, food producers, and their communities. By blending our innovative mental wellness tools with the rich traditions of Indigenous agriculture, we are committed to fostering not only agricultural success but also the mental resilience that sustains these vital communities. Together, we are championing a holistic approach to well-being, rooted in respect, collaboration, and a shared vision for a brighter, healthier future.”*

**-Garry Derenoski, President and CEO, Bridges Health**

”

“

*“Objectives of the new National Circle for Indigenous Agriculture and Food include building relationships and sharing knowledge. I was thrilled to be invited to attend NCI AF’s Indigenous Agriculture Field Day. My colleague Breanna and I shared some knowledge about canola, and picked up some knowledge about tree research at Indian Head and farming at Cowessess First Nation. I also got to build relationships with NCI AF staff and with farmer Terry Lerat, who operates 4C Farms at Cowessess. I look forward to continuing this journey together at future NCI AF events.”*

**-Jay Whetter, Communications Manager**  
[Canola Council of Canada](#)

”





## Event Highlights

### [Tri-National Agriculture Accord Oct 21-23](#)

Location: USA

### [AWC East 2024 Conference Nov 17-20](#)

Location: Niagara Falls, ON

### [Canadian Western Agribition Nov 25-30](#)

Location: Regina, SK

### [Indigenous Seafood Farming Celebration Nov 26](#)

Location: Ottawa, ON

Please reach out to [info@nciaf.ca](mailto:info@nciaf.ca) if you would like to list an event.

## Stay Informed



Website: [nciaf.ca](http://nciaf.ca)

Address: Atoskewin Business Center

Regina, SK S4S 7K3

Phone: 306-559-6098



## Featured Partner

HERE IS OUR FEATURED  
PARTNER OF THE MONTH

*“We look forward building meaningful relationships with NCI AF, and supporting their creative and innovative projects that empower Indigenous agriculture and support Canada’s food sector.”*

**Antoine Bernet**, Crop Science Canada Country Division Head

