



The Wâwiyiyaw

National Circle Newsletter For Indigenous Agriculture & Food

NEWS

UPDATE



NCIAF Hits the Trail at Calgary Stampede: Leadership Strengthens Partnerships on the Prairies

The NCIAF President & CEO Kallie Wood and Senior Vice President of Business Development Chris McKee, recently took part in The Calgary Stampede — “The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth” — for a week of high-impact networking, cultural connection, and nation-to-nation dialogue.

From the powerful energy of the Powwow to meetings with community leaders, innovators, and policymakers, the Stampede was an opportunity to spotlight Indigenous leadership in agriculture and deepen relationships across sectors.

A few of the events included the International Livestock Conference, the Calgary Stampede President’s Reception, multiple networking events with a couple of our partners FCC, MNP and Tsuut’ina Nation to name a few. The team was also honoured to spend time with Federal Agriculture Minister the Honourable Heath Macdonald and well as other Deputy Ministers and honoured guests.



Photo: (L to R) Keith Currie, Canadian Federation of Agriculture President; Kallie Wood; Minister Heath MacDonald Federal Agriculture Minister

The NCIAF is grateful to the Treaty 7 Nations and Métis Region 3 for their warm welcome and stewardship of the land, and to the many partners and organizers who made this iconic gathering possible. Conversations throughout the week focused on shared goals — from food sovereignty and community-led agriculture to regenerative practices, investment, and supply chain readiness.

As Kallie Wood noted, “Fragmented advocacy gets ignored. Coordinated leadership gets results.” The NCIAF remains committed to advancing reconciliation through action — and the connections made at the Calgary Stampede are already helping shape what’s next.



Photo: Paskwa Garden Sign, "Home of Paskwa Garden. Everyone Welcome!"

The Launch of Paskwa Garden

On July 11, 2025, the NCIAF team had the privilege of attending the grand opening of Paskwa Garden on Pasqua First Nation #79, located just west of Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. The launch of the garden marked a meaningful step toward addressing the community's food insecurity, revitalizing traditional knowledge, and creating opportunities for community members — especially youth — to engage in hands-on, land-based learning.

The event was a celebration of the collective effort poured into the project, from Garden Leads to youth garden volunteers carrying water jugs across the field. All the planning, hard work, and vision has come to life. Guests were given a tour of the garden, which includes a pumpkin patch, a Three Sisters area, potatoes, zucchini, various fruits and vegetables, an herb garden, perennials, and a beautifully designed Medicine Wheel garden. The garden proudly showcases traditional plants like tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweetgrass, reinforcing the deep cultural connection to the land. Students from the community were invited to paint rocks that surround the Medicine Wheel garden — a creative and symbolic touch.

"What started as an idea has blossomed into a place of learning and nourishment," shared Garden Supervisor Heather Brailean. "Over the past year, I've had the privilege of working at the school as a substitute teacher. Through that work, I've come to believe deeply in the importance of land-based education — especially teachings around gardening, gathering, and hunting. These are skills that many of us have lost over the years. But this is part of who we are, so we need those skills back."

Looking ahead, the vision for Paskwa Garden continues to grow. Plans are underway to involve more students in the next planting season and to expand the garden to include even more traditional foods and medicinal plants. What began as a simple idea is now a thriving space where culture, community, and learning come together — not only to grow food, but to nourish identity, restore connection to the land, and build a stronger future for generations to come.

A huge congratulations to Candace, Heather, the entire garden team — including Ozzie, Marsha, Shawna, Aidan, Ron, and Isaac — and the community of Pasqua First Nation on the successful launch of Paskwa Garden and this incredible step toward food sovereignty and cultural restoration.



Photo: Jordyn (Left) with fellow camp participants and leaders.

A Summer of Language, Land, and Learning

From May 12 to May 30, 2025, Jordyn Lovas, Capacity Development Associate, attended a three-week Michif immersion camp at Camp Monahan—located on the south shores of Lake Katepwa in the Qu'Appelle Valley of Saskatchewan. Jordyn had the honor of being instructed not only by one of her university professors, but also by several Michif-speaking Old Ones, many of whom were related to her instructor and connected to Métis communities in the area.

The weeks were filled with relationship building between Old Ones and classmates, and with constant land-based learning. Jordyn and her classmates explored the land, created skits in Michif, and students were encouraged—and often challenged—to step out of their comfort zones, particularly when required to speak in Michif frequently and publicly.

The curriculum was divided into five modules covering relevant and standard Michif usage. The first module focused on introductions and visiting. In Métis culture, acceptance into the community comes through involvement, blood connection, and especially recognition. People in the community will often ask, “Wayna ki mama/papa?” meaning, “Who is your mom/dad?” Connection to and recognition within the community is deeply important to the Métis and helps define who is Métis.

By the end of the first week, participants ventured into the kitchen, where students were placed into groups, each led by an Old One. In their respective groups, students learned different methods for making baked bannock and bullet soup. Each recipe was unique, and it was exciting to experience the same foods prepared in different ways, while also learning how each Old One’s childhood and experiences shaped their approach. Participants created their own written recipe in Michif, using ingredients, food vocabulary, and cooking instructions.

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A Summer of Language, Land, and Learning (Con't)

The second week introduced vocabulary and conversations related to employment. Students learned terminology for tools, commands, and workplace roles. In teams, they created comedic skits using their new vocabulary—one group performed an Uber driver scene, while another re-enacted a day at a CO-OP gas bar. Though not everyone's favorite module, the laughter and creativity made it a highlight.

Toward the end of the second week, the focus shifted to land and traditional knowledge. Participants, accompanied by Old Ones, searched for medicinal plants and discussed harvesting techniques and seasonal changes. They also visited old Road Allowance houses near Lebret—many of which were built using Brikawood, an interlocking method unique to the Métis that allows structures to endure without nails or screws. These buildings, steeped in history, still stand as testaments to Métis resilience and ingenuity.

The final week was devoted to celebration. Students learned traditional songs in Michif, along with the Red River Jig and a square dance. The camp concluded with a community gathering, where friends and family were invited to watch performances and share a meal. Jordyn wore a ribbon skirt and jigged for the first time, describing the experience as both joyful and unforgettable.

Despite the academic requirements and graded assignments, the Michif immersion camp was, for Jordyn an invaluable journey of connection, language revitalization, and cultural awakening. It offered insights and experiences—particularly around land, identity, and community—that classroom learning alone could not provide.

Shape the Future of Food: Join Us at the 2025 Food Leadership Summit

Canada's agriculture and food sectors contribute over \$150 billion to our national GDP* — and the world is watching. As Indigenous food leaders, producers, and innovators, we are not just part of this industry — we are the future of it.

The NCIAF is proud to share details about the upcoming Food Leadership Summit, hosted by GLOBE Series, taking place October 7–8, 2025, in Calgary, Alberta. This annual event brings together leaders across agri-food, policy, and business to accelerate a more competitive, secure, and resilient food system for all.

This is more than a conference. It's a call to action. By coming together, we can align our strengths, share knowledge, and create future-ready solutions that support healthy land, strong supply chains, Indigenous food sovereignty, and adaptable workforces.

Save the Date: October 7–8, 2025

Location: Calgary, Alberta

Learn more and register: www.globeseries.com

Let's lead together. The future of food depends on it.

* Source: [*Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Agriculture meet to discuss Canada-United States trading relationship*](#)

Planting Seeds for the Future: The Sustainability Project Inc. Wins Big for Community Innovation



Photo: Sign for The Sustainability Project Inc. "Community Gardens, Tiny Homes"

The Sustainability Project Inc., based in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, is proving that when sustainability, education, and cultural wisdom work together, communities thrive. Recently recognized with the 2022 ChooseWell Healthy Community Inspiration Award for Most Significant Change, the Project has become a beacon for how grassroots innovation can inspire lasting impact.

At the heart of their success is a powerful trifecta of initiatives: the Tiny Homes and Community Gardens, the Education Hub featuring a 10-credit Cyber Sustainability Project Program course, and the Elder Chronicles—a cultural preservation project rooted in Indigenous knowledge and storytelling.

Tiny Homes & Community Gardens

The foundation of the Sustainability Project lies in its off-grid Tiny Home Community and thriving Community Gardens. Built with a vision for food security and accessible living, the community features raised-bed gardens, a greenhouse with a water catchment system, and solar-powered infrastructure that showcases what's possible through low-impact design. Now in its ninth season, the garden continues to bring fresh produce to residents and visitors alike, while nurturing community connection through shared work, harvest, and learning.

What started as a few garden beds has blossomed into a vibrant teaching ground where visitors and local residents can learn about permaculture, water conservation, composting, and sustainable design—turning theory into practice, one planting bed at a time.



Photo: A tiny home by the Sustainability Project.

Education Hub & SCcyber Sustainability Course

In 2023, the team launched the Education Hub—a physical and virtual space offering practical, hands-on sustainability learning. Its flagship offering is an online sustainability course titled The Sustainability Project Program offered through SCcyber E-learning (www.sccyber.net) that provides students with ten academic credits. The online program is designed for high school learners and adults alike, offering a deep dive into climate action, renewable energy, environmental ethics, and green technology.

The hybrid format of the Hub combines digital literacy with on-the-ground application. Students are encouraged to engage with real-world sustainability issues while being mentored by community leaders and educators. It's a dynamic, forward-thinking model that prepares the next generation of environmental stewards.

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Planting Seeds for the Future: The Sustainability Project Inc. Wins Big for Community Innovation



Photo: The Sustainability Project's halfway house and the backyard.

Elder Chronicles: Teaching Through Story

The third component, the **Elder Chronicles**, is a video series developed through SCcyber and Sunchild First Nation that honours and preserves culturally significant teachings from community Elders.

These recorded and written narratives are shared within educational programming and community events, embedding ancestral wisdom into the Project's daily operations. From traditional knowledge about plant medicines to lessons about respect, resilience, and responsibility, the Chronicles ensure that sustainability is not just technical—it's cultural.

By anchoring their education and land-based learning in storytelling, the Sustainability Project weaves together past, present, and future in a powerful and respectful way.

Award-Winning Impact

This innovative approach to sustainability and community wellness was what captured the attention of the ChooseWell Awards committee. Judges commended the Project for “creating lasting systems for healthy living, learning, and cultural continuity.” The award recognizes not just the outcomes, but the values that drive the work—respect for the land, knowledge sharing, and a commitment to community-led change. This project won an award for “Most Significant Community Change” due to its scope and quality.

Watch the award video: [2022 ChooseWell Award – Most Significant Change](#)

Looking Ahead

With plans to expand its digital course offerings, deepen intergenerational engagement, and share its model with other communities, the Sustainability Project Inc. continues to grow—literally and figuratively. It is a living example of what's possible when we nurture both the earth and each other.

To learn more, visit: www.thesustainabilityprojectinc.com

Empowering Indigenous Growth Through Business & Food Sovereignty

Meet Tianna Peepeetch, one of our incredible summer students and a Business Development Associate at the NCI AF. Tianna brings a strong background in communications, policy, and community development to her role.

Currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration at First Nations University of Canada, she's passionate about advancing Indigenous food sovereignty and supporting sustainable growth in our communities. We're proud to have Tianna return to our team for a second summer as she helps move our mission forward with purpose and heart.

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

My name is Tianna Peepeetch. I am a Saulteaux mother and student from Zagime Anishinabek on Treaty 4 Territory. My job is a mixture of a few things. I support the advancement of all Indigenous communities, businesses, and entrepreneurs that invite the NCI AF to contribute to their work. I communicate with clients to identify their needs and challenges, while also strategizing solutions and ways to move forward. Another part of my role involves contributing to the NCI AF Web Hub and creating helpful toolkits and guides. Overall, each day looks a little different—but I'm always working toward the same shared goal of achieving food sovereignty and food security within our communities.

What inspired you to join the NCI AF?

I originally joined the NCI AF in January 2024 as an intern, after being recruited by our President and CEO, Kallie Wood. During that tenure, I learned a lot about launching a business, and worked alongside our specialists, and leadership team. Upon my return, I've seen just how far we've come since my departure in August. I made the decision to return to the NCI AF for the summer after some self-reflection. I had already received job offers from other organizations, but what really drew me back was our mission. I want to be part of accelerating and uplifting Indigenous businesses, and work toward a future where every community—especially those in hard-to-reach places—won't have to worry about food insecurity. Instead, they'll have flourishing gardens, greenhouses, and more that provide fresh, local produce year-round. You can't find another organization like this one.

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

The educational aspect—learning directly from the people who seek our support. These individuals, communities, and businesses have so much knowledge to share, and I'm here to listen and support them the best way I can. Since my educational background and experience is in business, that's where you'll usually find me.



Photo: Tianna (right) with her son.



Events We're Attending

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

Yukon Food Security Conference 2025: Diversifying Food Systems - Aug 12-14, 2025

Location: Dawson City and Mayo, YT

Food Leadership Summit - Oct 7-8, 2025

Location: Calgary, AB

Indigenous Ag Summit, presented by FCC - Nov 27-28, 2025

Location: Regina, SK



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

Events We're Sharing

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

Canadian Beef Cattle Industry Conference - Aug 19-22, 2025

Location: Saskatoon, SK

2025 Pulse & Special Crops Convention - Sept 9-11, 2025

Location: Whistler, BC

Indigenous Food & Farm Festival - Sept 23-25, 2025

Location: Batoche, SK

Funding Opportunity

TELUS Indigenous Communities Fund

TELUS is offering funding to support Indigenous-led initiatives that strengthen community well-being across Canada. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$25,000. Applications are open from September 10 to October 9, 2025.

Who Can Apply:

- Indigenous-led organizations (e.g., Band Councils, non-profits, community groups)
- Non-Indigenous groups with documented Indigenous partnerships
- Must not have received TELUS Indigenous funding in the past 2 years

What's Required:

- Projects must support First Nations, Métis, or Inuit communities in Canada
- Must show measurable community benefits
- Should address a key social or well-being need

To learn more, check out the [TELUS Website](https://www.telus.com/en/indigenous).

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