

# The Wâwiyiyaw

National Circle Newsletter For Indigenous Agriculture & Food

NEWS

UPDATE

## Celebrating Ribbon Skirt Day: Honouring Culture, Resilience, and Identity

On January 4, Canadians came together to celebrate [Ribbon Skirt Day](#), a time to honour the beauty, resilience, and rich traditions of Indigenous cultures across the country. This special day highlighted the ribbon skirt as a powerful symbol of identity, pride, and connection to heritage.

Ribbon skirts are deeply meaningful expressions of culture and history. Each ribbon, colour, and design tells a unique story, often passed down through generations. They embody the strength of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit individuals, and communities, serving as a reminder of their enduring presence and contributions to society.

The origins of Ribbon Skirt Day stem from a powerful story of resistance and pride. In 2020, Isabella Kulak, a young member of Cote First Nation in Saskatchewan, faced discrimination for wearing her ribbon skirt at a school event. Her courage sparked a national conversation about cultural expression and respect, ultimately leading to the establishment of this important day. In 2022, the Canadian Parliament officially recognized January 4 as National Ribbon Skirt Day, underscoring the importance of Indigenous culture and traditions in our shared history.

At the NCIAF, we view Ribbon Skirt Day as an opportunity to celebrate Indigenous artisanship, traditional knowledge, and the profound connections between culture and the land. Many vibrant designs on ribbon skirts reflect the natural world, with patterns inspired by plants, animals, and landscapes. This connection underscores the deep respect Indigenous Peoples hold for the Earth and the sustainable practices they champion.

This year's celebrations invited everyone to embrace the spirit of Ribbon Skirt Day by wearing ribbon skirts or shirts with pride, attending community events, and learning about the traditions and stories behind these beautiful garments. For those without ribbon skirts, it was an opportunity to support Indigenous artists and engage in meaningful conversations to promote understanding and allyship.

Ribbon Skirt Day reminds us of the importance of standing in solidarity, celebrating diversity, and reaffirming our commitment to preserving and uplifting Indigenous cultures. As we reflect on this year's celebration, let us continue to honour the spirit of Ribbon Skirt Day and work toward a future rooted in respect, reconciliation & shared prosperity.



# WO ININA 2025



## Shaping the Future of Indigenous Food Sovereignty

We are proud and excited to present [wo inina 2025](#), a one-day event dedicated to advancing Indigenous food sovereignty and eliminating food insecurity. This inspiring gathering will take place on February 12, 2025, at the Westin Hotel in Ottawa, Ontario, and will bring together leaders in Indigenous agriculture and food systems, advocates, and stakeholders from across Canada.

wo inina 2025 will focus on empowering Indigenous voices while celebrating the resilience and innovation of Indigenous businesses and communities. Attendees will hear from inspiring guest speakers, view powerful video presentations, and engage with discussions highlighting key milestones and successes in tackling food insecurity faced by Indigenous Peoples across Canada.

### Featured Guest Speakers



VAL KINISTINO

Community Garden Motivator  
Ochapowace Nation



NISHIN MEAWASIGE

Co-Owner  
Manitoulin Brewing Co.



ADAM SUBJECT

Lands Director  
Sioux Valley Dakota Nation



MICHAEL JOHNS

Owner  
Navajo Mike's



ISAIAH ROBINSON

Deputy Chief Councilor  
Xai'xais Nation



KRISTJAN HEBERT

President  
Hebert Group



JUSTINE HENDRICKS

President & CEO  
Farm Credit Canada



## Honouring the Spirit of the Buffalo

On December 3rd, the NCIAF attended a meaningful event to honour the spirit of the buffalo and its profound significance in Indigenous culture. NCIAF President and CEO, Kallie Wood, shared moving insights into the importance of the buffalo, its history, and its sacred role in representing respect within the seven grandfather teachings. The buffalo is not just a symbol; it is a teacher of resilience, unity, and harmony with the land.

Together, we unveiled a bison shoulder mount—a sacred symbol of strength, interconnectedness, and life within Indigenous culture. This mount stands as a tribute to the bison's essential role in shaping Indigenous food systems and its enduring lessons for all of us. It is a reminder of the deep relationship between humanity, the animal world, and the land, inspiring reflection and a renewed commitment to caring for each other and the Earth.

At the NCIAF, we are honoured to support initiatives that celebrate Indigenous traditions while championing food sovereignty and sustainability. May this bison shoulder mount serve as a beacon of resilience and a call to action for unity and respect.

We extend heartfelt thanks to Larry Oakes, our esteemed pipe carrier, for leading us in ceremony, and to the Lone Creek Drum Group for their powerful performance that filled the space with energy and connection. Our gratitude also goes to Murray Feist from the Ministry of Agriculture for emceeding the event and to Merek Wigness from the Saskatchewan Bison Association for his invaluable support in bringing this event to life.

Special thanks to Minister of Agriculture Hon. Daryl Harrison, Minister of Government Relations Hon. Eric Schmalz, Minister of Environment Hon. Travis Keisig, and the Premier of Saskatchewan Hon. Scott Moe for their presence and commitment to this important work.



# NCIAF Partners with NAAAN to Strengthen Agricultural Collaboration Across North America

The NCIAF and the [North American Agricultural Advisory Network \(NAAAN\)](#) are proud to announce a transformative new partnership to advance collaboration in agriculture throughout Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Through this partnership, the NCIAF and NAAAN aim to tackle critical challenges and seize opportunities in the agricultural sector.



The collaboration will focus on:

- **Providing Technical Assistance:** Supporting agricultural communities to enhance capacity and productivity.
- **Advocating for Shared Priorities:** Amplifying voices of Indigenous and rural agricultural leaders in policy discussions.
- **Sharing Resources:** Facilitating the exchange of knowledge and tools to strengthen community initiatives.
- **Improving Funding Access:** Working together to unlock funding opportunities for agriculture development projects.
- **Mentoring Future Leaders:** Inspiring and equipping the next generation of agricultural innovators.

This groundbreaking alliance, formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding, reflects the shared dedication of both organizations to fostering food sovereignty and empowering agricultural communities across the continent.

## Our Circle of Success

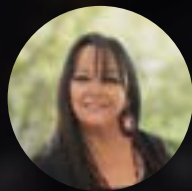
### 2024 Highlights and 2025 Hopes

As we prepare to close another year, I am filled with gratitude and pride for all we have accomplished together in 2024. This year has been one of tremendous growth and collaboration for the NCIAF.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our partners, contributors, and especially our communities, whose voices and traditions are at the heart of our work. Your trust and dedication allow us to continue building sustainable food systems rooted in Indigenous values.

As we look to 2025, our vision remains steadfast. We will continue to honour our ancestors' teachings, empower Indigenous food producers, and advocate for food sovereignty. Together, we are fostering a future where our people and lands thrive in harmony.

On behalf of the NCIAF, I wish you & your loved ones a new year filled with prosperity & wellness. hiy hiy.



**Kallie Wood**  
President & CEO

# 2024 Highlights and 2025 Hopes

There have been so many **highlights** throughout 2024 it truly is hard to pick just one! One key highlight I would say would be the NCIAF's inaugural Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in June. It marked a significant step in fostering Indigenous leadership in agriculture and advancing reconciliation within Canada's food systems. The AGM also underscored NCIAF's commitment to empowering Indigenous communities and creating a more inclusive agriculture landscape across Canada and beyond.



When I envision **hopes** for the NCIAF, they would for sure include: deeper community impacts, visible impact, cultural celebration, youth involvement, partnership growth, along with environmental stewardship. Ultimately for the NCIAF to continue thriving as a catalyst for positive change, empowering Indigenous communities, and contributing to a more equitable and sustainable agriculture future!

**Chris McKee**

*Senior Vice President of Business Development*



Looking back on 2024, the NCIAF has come so far in our first year of operations and our small but mighty team accomplished a superhuman level of activity. The **highlight** for me is the relationships and friendships forged through direct work with communities and businesses. Each individual and community that requested our support offered us their trust to be a part of their deeply personal work and I've never gotten over what an honour and privilege that is.

**Hope:** In 2025, I'm most excited to expand our reach and to work with more communities and individuals; adding new partners, growing our team, and expanding our business development offering through collaboration and building – its going to be an exciting year!

**Michelle Sandercock**

*Director of Business Development*

**Highlight:** Reflecting on 2024, my standout moment has been witnessing what our team has accomplished together. A particular highlight was hosting our first annual Indigenous Field Day. I'm excited to build on this momentum as we prepare to grow the next Indigenous Field Day in summer 2025. Most of all, it has been the relationships, friendships, and people I have met throughout the year that have truly been the biggest highlight for me. These connections have inspired and motivated me.



Looking ahead, my **hope** for 2025 is that the NCIAF will provide even more meaningful programs and partnerships to help Indigenous Peoples, communities, and entrepreneurs reach their agricultural goals. I am very excited to launch our youth programming to engage youth in their local food systems!

**Kate Fraser**

*Director of Capacity Development*



**Highlight:** 2024 has been an incredible year for me - I am so grateful to be part of a passionate, supportive team that works tirelessly to support Indigenous agricultural businesses, farmers and promote food sovereignty. The relationships I've built and the meaningful work we've done together have made this year truly special.

**Hope:** I look forward to continuing this amazing journey with NCIAF, deepening our connections with communities & expanding our impact. I'm excited to see what we can achieve together as we continue to empower Indigenous food producers & advocate for sustainable agriculture. I'm grateful to be part of such an inspiring & dedicated team.

**Tamara Machiskinic**

*Executive Assistant*

# 2021 Highlights and 2025 Hopes

**Highlight:** Joining the team - I'm incredibly grateful to be part of a supportive & thoughtful group. I'm truly honoured to contribute to an organization with important values and aspirations. Seeing the incredible work already accomplished has been both inspiring and motivating for the road ahead.

**Hope:** Continuing to amplify the inspiring work of Indigenous farmers through engaging storytelling, content, and events. I'm excited to grow our reach, share progress & connect with more communities as we support food sovereignty & empower future generations.

**Justice Acoose**

*Communications Specialist*



My **highlight** of 2024 is joining the NCIAT in November. It's been an incredible experience. I've felt so grateful to become part of a team with such a positive and supportive work culture—unlike anything I've encountered before. One of the biggest highlights has been working with my amazing coworkers to prepare for wo inina 2025, an Indigenous agriculture event happening in Ottawa this February. Along the way, I've had so much fun learning and helping launch exciting new projects supporting NCIAT's mission.

**Hopes** for 2025: Looking ahead, I'm eager to keep learning from my talented colleagues and deepen my understanding of Indigenous agriculture. I'm excited to see the ideas we're working on take shape and to contribute to new initiatives that will help grow and strengthen this vital sector. Most of all, I look forward to continuing to be part of an inspiring team & playing a role in the incredible work we are doing.

**Sarah Adams**

*Business Development Specialist*

**Highlight:** Completing my Master of Science from the University of Guelph, which focused on Indigenous food security! This education equipped me with a solid knowledge base and understanding I now bring to the NCIAT as the new Program Specialist. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to continue learning and working alongside Indigenous Peoples and communities!

**Hope:** In 2025, I'm looking forward to settling into the prairies, trying new foods like bison, meeting likeminded people, and developing my skills thanks to the fantastic team at the NCIAT!

**Dakota Cherry**

*Program Specialist*



**Highlight:** Looking back on 2024, I really value the opportunity I had to work alongside Lands Director Adam Subject and the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation community to organize the Youth Food Agriculture, Climate Change and Traditional Knowledge (FACCTS) camp. Working with and learning from community and youth is incredibly impactful and helps create synergies and innovative ideas for future paths forward. I am so thrilled to be a part of this work.

**Hope:** Continuing to serve as a connector in building respectful relationships between industry, academia, government partners, and Indigenous peoples to accelerate the sustainable growth of self-determined Indigenous led food systems. I am keen to work with communities and support opportunities to engage youth in food systems, both in the agriculture sector and the revitalization of traditional food economies.

**Wendy Carnegie**

*Program Advisor*



**Stay tuned for Terry Lerat's highlights next month as he enjoys some much deserved down time.**



## Event Highlights

### [Future of Food Conference - February 11, 2024](#)

Location: Ottawa, ON

### [wo inina 2025 - February 12, 2024](#)

Location: Ottawa, ON

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

## Funding Opportunities

**Local Food Infrastructure Fund (Large Projects Stream) will open in January 2025 for projects \$150,000 to \$500,000.**

[More info.](#)

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

## Stay Informed



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

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**Phone:** 306-559-6098

## Featured Quote

HERE IS OUR FEATURED  
QUOTE OF THE MONTH



*“Together we aim to inspire the next generation of leaders in agriculture.”*



*Kerri Conway*

*Director of the NAAAN Secretariat*

