



The Wâwiyaw

National Circle Newsletter For Indigenous Agriculture & Food

NEWS

UPDATE



Powering Sovereignty: NCIAF and FNPA Partner to Advance Indigenous Food and Energy Systems



The NCIAF is proud to announce a new partnership with the First Nations Power Authority (FNPA) through a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

This partnership marks an exciting step forward in our shared commitment to Indigenous food sovereignty and clean energy development. By joining forces, the NCIAF and FNPA are working to create innovative, community-led solutions that strengthen Indigenous food systems while promoting renewable energy technologies.

At the heart of this collaboration is the understanding that sustainable agriculture and clean energy go hand-in-hand. Access to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydro power can play a key role in supporting essential infrastructure for food systems — including greenhouses, irrigation systems, and cold storage — especially in remote and northern communities.

Through this MOU, both organizations will focus on:

- Advancing Indigenous food sovereignty by providing training, tools, and resources to reclaim and revitalize traditional food systems.
- Promoting clean energy integration into agriculture to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and enhance sustainability.
- Supporting capacity building through community workshops, educational programming, and project development.
- Advocating for supportive policy and funding opportunities to back Indigenous-led initiatives.

This partnership also aims to foster knowledge-sharing between traditional Indigenous practices and modern innovations — offering communities the opportunity to lead the way in sustainable development. The NCIAF will leverage its deep connections within Indigenous agriculture to support food-based initiatives, while FNPA will provide the technical expertise to integrate clean energy solutions tailored to each community's needs.

Together, we will identify priority communities, co-develop funding proposals, and provide the tools needed to scale up these efforts nationwide.

Food and energy sovereignty are pillars of Indigenous self-determination. This partnership reaffirms our collective vision for thriving, resilient Indigenous communities grounded in cultural knowledge, innovation, and sustainability.



The NCIAF Highlights Indigenous Agriculture at the Americas Agriculture and Food Security Forum

While world leaders gathered in Kananaskis for the 2025 G7 Summit, a parallel and powerful gathering took place just a few hours away in Olds, Alberta: the Americas Agriculture and Food Security Forum. This timely event was created in direct response to agriculture being left off the G7 agenda—despite its central role in climate resilience, global security, and economic stability.

The NCIAF was honoured to be invited to the Forum, which brought together agricultural leaders from across the Western Hemisphere to elevate food systems as a global priority. President and CEO Kallie Wood joined a high-profile panel titled "Voice of Farming", where she shared insights from the Indigenous agriculture landscape and emphasized the urgent need to focus on Indigenous voices in shaping food policy and practice.



Kallie represented the NCIAF and Indigenous producers across Turtle Island with clarity and strength, calling attention to the interconnection between land, culture, and food; as well as advocating for investment in Indigenous food sovereignty and Indigenous-led innovation.

Also attending on behalf of the NCIAF were Michelle Sandercock, Director of Business Development, Chris McKee, Senior Vice-President of Business Development, and Justice Acoose, Communications Specialist. The team participated in a series of discussions and networking sessions, building relationships with global partners and policy leaders to ensure Indigenous agriculture remains front and centre in food security conversations.

The Forum—organized in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), which plays a vital role in promoting agricultural development and rural well-being across the Americas. As a key convener of the Americas Agriculture and Food Security Forum, IICA brings together governments, producers, and organizations to advance inclusive, climate-resilient food systems. Its work supports knowledge exchange, policy development, and partnerships that strengthen agriculture and food security throughout the hemisphere. The NCIAF extends gratitude to the organizers for making space for Indigenous leadership and is proud to stand with global farming communities working to nourish nations and empower future generations.



Capturing the Spirit of Cowessess: A Journey Through Land, Culture, and 4C Farms



On June 24, staff from the NCIAC—including Communications Specialist Justice Acoose, Business Development Associate, Michael Burechailo, and videographer, Robert Maxwell of Digital Peasant Media, had the opportunity to tour and document the breathtaking landscape of Cowessess First Nation and the inspiring work taking place at 4C Farms.

Guided by the NCIAC's ReconciliAG Advisor and Councilor for Cowessess First Nation, Terry Lerat, the tour began at one of Cowessess' emerging initiatives: Cowessess Cultural Grounds, an area where sweats, cultural guidance, and talks will take place. As the group made their way through the trees, the site opened into a beautiful clearing where tents, tipis, and winter sweats are under construction. Designed as a space for cultural gatherings and community connection, the Cultural Grounds reflect a vision rooted in tradition and self-determination.

The visit continued to the 4C Farms bin yard, where rows of agricultural equipment stand as symbols of Indigenous innovation and food sovereignty. Throughout the day, Maxwell and the NCIAC team captured striking visuals and conducted in-depth interviews with workers, highlighting the connection between land, labour, and community.

Robert Maxwell, who has worked closely with the NCIAC on multiple video projects, brings a unique storytelling perspective through his lens. His use of drone footage and dynamic camera work offers a cinematic portrayal of Indigenous agriculture, cultural revitalization, and land stewardship—bringing to life both the beauty of the land and the resilience of the communities rooted in it.

On the following day, June 25, additional NCIAC staff joined the effort to support the ongoing filming and further explore the work being done across Cowessess First Nation and 4C Farms. The day was filled with meaningful dialogue, thoughtful interviews, and a shared appreciation for the land and the people caring for it.

Robert Maxwell expressed gratitude for the opportunity to help capture the essence of Cowessess First Nation and 4C Farms. A video documenting this visit will be released soon offering an intimate glimpse into the strength, vision, and cultural spirit guiding this remarkable community.



Rooted in Innovation: Highlights from Our Second Annual Indigenous Field Day



Our team at the NCI AF is proud to share that we successfully completed our Second Annual Indigenous Field Day on June 17th, 2025. We were honored to receive a tour of the Flying Dust Market Garden, and we extend our sincere thanks to Market Garden Manager Jason Cardinal. The day was filled with learning, meaningful connections, and valuable insights into the agricultural achievements of both Flying Dust and other Indigenous communities.

Elder Gary, a self-taught bison herder, guided us through the bison pasture, where youth and school groups—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—visit regularly. These tours provide a unique opportunity for hands-on learning and the passing of knowledge, which is why we take great pride in hosting these Field Days. We believe they offer meaningful benefits to youth, Elders, and future generations alike.

Flying Dust Market Garden stands as a powerful example of what hard work, dedication, and innovation can achieve. When their new potato harvester began damaging some of the crops, the team responded by turning those potatoes into value-added products like potato starch. This adaptability—alongside their near-complete meat processing facility for wild game and buffalo—highlights both the successes and challenges of agricultural development, and the creative solutions that emerge from them.

The success of our Second Annual Field Day and the ongoing innovation at Flying Dust Market Garden represent important steps forward in Indigenous agricultural development. Through the sharing of knowledge, strengthening of relationships, and community-led solutions, we continue to support food sovereignty and long-term success in agriculture for Indigenous communities.

Supporting the Future of Wild Rice: NCI AF Attends 38th AGM

On May 31, the NCI AF attended the 38th Annual General Meeting of the Saskatchewan Wild Rice Council Inc. Held in Prince Albert, SK, President & CEO, Kallie Wood along with Vice President, Chris McKee, Director of Business Development, Michelle Sandercock, and Business Development Associate, Michael Burechailo were in attendance. The meeting brought together representatives from government, Indigenous communities, industry, academia, and non-profits—all of which are focused on long-term, sustainable strategies for the longevity of the wild rice sector.

The AGM highlighted the need to support Indigenous wild rice harvesters and processors by improving access to resources, training, and fair market opportunities. There was also a focus on using pest control methods that protect the environment and respect cultural practices, helping to keep wild rice ecosystems healthy. Protecting the organic quality and nutritional value of Canadian wild rice remains a top priority for the sector, both for its health benefits and global reputation. Increasing production and providing more export opportunities were key goals, aiming to grow wild rice as a strong and competitive Indigenous agricultural product.

Since the AGM, conversations have sparked among our organization, wild rice harvesters, and many more eager organizations and people. We are so excited to continue to work alongside the numerous other passionate individuals, communities, and organizations who share a commitment to strengthening and growing the wild rice sector together. If your organization is interested in supporting the wild rice sector, reach out to the NCI AF at info@nciaf.ca.





NCIAF Annual General Meeting: Strengthening Our Roots, Growing Together

On June 23, 2025 - The NCI AF proudly hosted its second Annual General Meeting in Regina, bringing together Indigenous leaders, agricultural professionals, and community allies from across Canada. The event was a powerful opportunity to reflect on the past year's accomplishments, build meaningful connections, and reaffirm the NCI AF's commitment to Indigenous-led food sovereignty and economic development.

This year's AGM showcased updates on major initiatives including the Indigenous Micro Farm Initiative and the Lights On campaign, along with highlights from more than 50 agriculture and food projects supported by the NCI AF. With 47 First Nations represented and 23 communities directly engaged, the NCI AF continues to be a catalyst for Indigenous entrepreneurship—54% of which are start-ups. Over \$2.1 million in funding has been secured to date, alongside 60+ mentorships, training sessions, and business development opportunities.

"Our AGM is more than a meeting—it's a time to reconnect with community and recommit to our shared vision," said Kallie Wood, President and CEO of the NCI AF. "We're proud of what we've accomplished with our partners and communities, and we're even more excited about the future we're building together—where Indigenous knowledge leads the way in shaping sustainable, sovereign food systems across Turtle Island."

Indigenous Voices in Agriculture: Bridging Knowledge and Innovation

On June 5, 2024, the NCI AF and the North American Agricultural Advisory Network (NAAAN) hosted a powerful webinar exploring the intersection of Indigenous knowledge, agriculture, and food sovereignty. This online event featured insightful discussions on mentorship, the role of youth, and the integration of traditional knowledge in modern agriculture.

To read the full article: [click here](#)





Not Your Average Day at Work: A Holistic Approach to Community Support

Our summer students quickly learned that working with the NCIAC is unlike any other organization. We don't just provide services — we take a holistic approach to everything we do, ensuring that we work alongside communities to help them thrive.

This summer, Ochapowace Nation's community garden faced unexpected challenges. Lead gardener Val Kinistino had recently suffered an injury, preventing her from operating at full capacity. Along with her dedicated team of two urban youth members, Val was working hard to get the garden ready for its second year. However, due to recent weather delays and concerns about soil quality, they were falling behind schedule — and planting season was fast expiring. Val and her team reached out to the NCIAC, explaining the situation and asking for support before the planting season was over.

Without hesitation, our business development team sprang into action. We immediately got on the phone, researching solutions and gathering the necessary information to help Ochapowace get back on track. From soil testing to equipment logistics, we were ready to roll up our sleeves and pitch in.

On June 12, four members of our team — Sarah Adams, Business Development Specialist, along with the NCIAC summer students, Michael Burechailo, Tianna Peepeetch, and Jordyn Lovas — traveled to Ochapowace to assist in person. They worked alongside Val, Lester Henry, and two Ochapowace youth members to spread and till the soil, prepare the garden, and plant the selected crops. It was a true team effort, and together, we made sure the garden was ready for the season.

This is the NCIAC way — working hand in hand with communities to overcome obstacles and grow together. We're proud to be part of Ochapowace's journey and can't wait to see the fruits of their labor this season.

Empowering Through Education: Meet Jordyn Lovas



Photo: Jordyn (pictured on the right) and her sister.

Jordyn Lovas is our dedicated Capacity Development Associate this summer, bringing curiosity, creativity, and a deep commitment to reconciliation to her work at the NCIAF. A proud Métis student in SUNTEP at the University of Regina, Jordyn is passionate about empowering Indigenous youth and communities through education and cultural revitalization. Though new to the agricultural sector, her enthusiasm for learning and her drive to see Indigenous communities thrive make her a valued part of our team.

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

I am a 3rd year university student studying education through the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Program (SUNTEP). My academic focus is primarily on teaching and educating primary and elementary kids and incorporating my knowledge and experiences with being Métis into my lessons. In May, I attended a 3-week land-based Michif—the language of the Métis—immersion camp. This camp acts as a tool for language revitalization by connecting Indigenous University students with the Old Ones and with the land so that we, and the future generations, can keep the language alive. The Old Ones taught us how to speak Michif; they also taught us about its history and its communal ties. I intend to use the knowledge, wisdom, and language given to me in my future classrooms.

At the NCIAF, I work with the capacity development team to support the development of community-led agriculture programs. These are created to promote topics such as nutrition, farming, planting, and various forms of agricultural knowledge within the classroom. Our goal is to engage youth in agriculture and to foster land-based learning and knowledge acquisition within the next generation. These programs are built to uplift, empower, and be led by the traditional ways, lifestyles, and knowledge of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

What inspired you to join the NCIAF?

Interestingly, I was drawn to the NCIAF because I did not know much about it. I researched it and I knew that their focus was on agriculture and food security, but I did not quite understand what that meant. I was driven by curiosity and the desire to obtain new knowledge about the land that I could use in my own life, and in my position as a future educator. While I am not fully knowledgeable about agriculture, seeing the work the NCIAF does is inspiring, and I am excited to be a part of it.

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

The best part has been going to different communities and Nations to help with farming, tour, and to just be present with so many kinds of people. It has been exciting seeing how everyone farms, gardens, or anything else to do with agriculture, so differently. I have loved connecting with people, helping them, and having opportunities for learning constantly.



Events We're Attending

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

Food Leadership Summit - Oct 7-8, 2025

Location: Calgary, AB

Indigenous Ag Summit, presented by FCC - Nov 2025

Location: Regina, SK



Please reach out to info@nci af.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.

Ag In Motion - Jul 15 - 17, 2025

Location: Langham, SK

2nd International Agricultural Conference Canada 2025 - Aug 15, 2025

Location: Langham, SK

Funding Opportunity

FCC AgriSpirit Fund

The FCC AgriSpirit Fund is now open, offering \$10,000 to \$25,000 for capital projects that enrich rural communities under 150,000 people.

Applications are open until July 30 for initiatives supporting agriculture, food recovery, environmental sustainability, accessibility, and community infrastructure.

Examples of Projects Considered

- Projects to support food recovery or reduction of food waste
- Initiatives that support agriculture and food
- Projects that reduce your environmental footprint
- Projects that improve accessibility and inclusion
- Construction of or upgrades to community buildings

To learn more, check out the [FCC Website](#).

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