

# Driving Inclusive Innovation

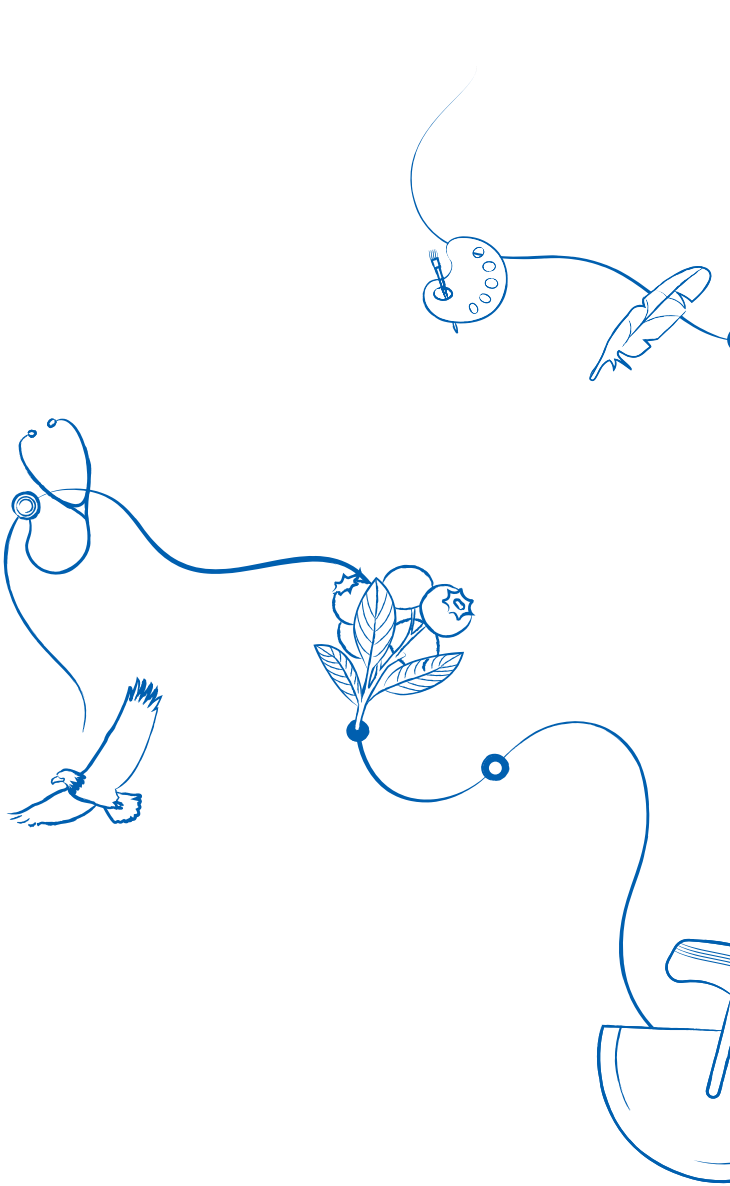
2024–2025 Annual Progress Report





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# Introduction

## Inclusive Innovation Action Plan Goals



Enhance Access and Support for Equity-Deserving Students



Expand Inclusive Innovation Ecosystem through Partnerships



Embed Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Internal Systems, Policies and Practices

Canada thrives when innovation reflects the full diversity of this country. Yet many communities remain underserved by the status quo.

Launched in 2023, the **Inclusive Innovation Action Plan (IIAP)** is Mitacs's three-year roadmap to change that reality, by embedding equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) into every aspect of the organization's work.

### The plan centres on three goals:

1. Enhance Access and Support for Equity-Deserving Students
2. Expand Inclusive Innovation Ecosystem through Partnerships
3. Embed Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in Internal Systems, Policies and Practices

The IIAP works to guide Mitacs in all its actions, decisions, and strategic priorities. The plan centres on five equity-deserving groups: Indigenous peoples, women and gender-diverse individuals, racialized groups, persons with disabilities and LGBTQ2S+ communities.

At the heart of inclusive innovation is the principle that access must be equitable, not just available. Through meaningful programs and strategic partnerships, the IIAP lays the groundwork for a more inclusive and responsive innovation ecosystem in Canada.



## A Message from the CEO



At Mitacs, we believe that inclusive innovation is the smart approach to unlocking the potential of every community and ensuring that research opportunities are open, accessible and equitable.

Now in its second year, the IIAP shows what's possible when commitment turns into action. Over the past year, we have expanded opportunities for students from equity-deserving groups, deepened our collaboration with partners across the country, celebrated innovators changing our country for the better and made strides towards building a more inclusive workplace.

Our work is far from over. Building a truly inclusive innovation economy requires sustained effort, honest reflection and a willingness to adapt. As CEO, I am committed to listening, learning and putting in the work required to remove barriers and build pathways for Canadians from all backgrounds and walks of life to become leaders in innovation.

Dr. Stephen Lucas, CM  
Chief Executive Officer, Mitacs



# Executive Summary

## Highlights of the year

### Expanding access for equity-deserving students and researchers

Launched the Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Program

Increased Indigenous Pathways internships by 56%

Implemented an accessibility request process and enhanced the Mitacs website

### Recognizing leadership

Awarded the Inclusive Innovator of the Year to Dr. Paul Onkundi Nyangaresi for his UV-LED water disinfection system, with potential applications in Indigenous communities in Canada

In 2024–25, Mitacs advanced its inclusive innovation agenda through initiatives that significantly improved access to its programs, deepened external partnerships, and elevated voices from equity-deserving communities.

### Strengthening partnerships for inclusive innovation

Expanded collaboration with the Canadian Black Scientists Network (CBSN) and supported Black Women Talk Tech's inaugural Canadian conference

Engaged with more than 12 Indigenous economic and educational partners at the Arctic Indigenous Investment Conference

Renewed and expanded the Indigenous and Black Engineering and Technology (IBET) partnership

Updated the Corporate Financial Policy to promote supplier diversity and introduced a new definition of social innovation

### Strengthening internal foundations

Delivered four all-staff EDI learning sessions

Achieved a 92% completion rate for AODA accessibility training across the organization

Provided targeted inclusive leadership coaching for 11 senior leaders

Updated internal policies to strengthen reconciliation commitments, improve accessibility and advance supplier diversity

As the IIAP enters its final year, Mitacs will focus on scaling successful initiatives, broadening its partnerships and embedding inclusive innovation as a feature of Canada's innovation economy.



# Enhancing Access and Support for Equity-Deserving Students and Researchers

## Intended Outcomes

**Empower** equity-deserving groups to thrive in Mitacs programs

**Reduce barriers** for equity-deserving students to participate in Mitacs programs

**Minimize barriers** for Indigenous students to access Mitacs programs

Ensure external-facing materials are **accessible** and incorporate EDI values and Reconciliation principles

Inclusive innovation starts with equitable access. Mitacs is committed to ensuring that more students and researchers from equity-deserving communities can access its programs, build skills, and contribute to Canada's innovation ecosystem. This requires targeted support, barrier removal, and culturally relevant program design.

## Achievements

Launched the **Women in STEM Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Program** with four cohorts and 32 matched participants. The Accelerate Peer Mentorship Program creates opportunities for women in STEM interns to network, learning from one another and gain valuable insight. 88% of participants were satisfied with their peer mentorship experience.

Grew **Indigenous Pathways internships** by 56% to 747 units across nine provinces.

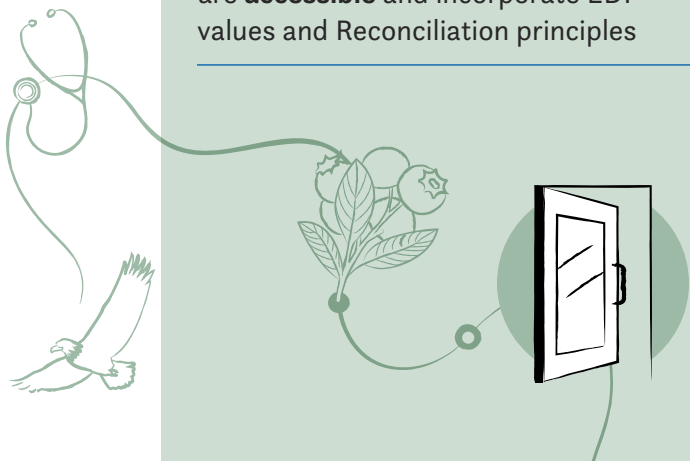
Began redesigning **the Indigenous Research Award (INDRA)** into a cohort-based, culturally relevant model, with a planned launch in 2025–2026.

Developed and implemented an **accessibility request process** for all program participants.

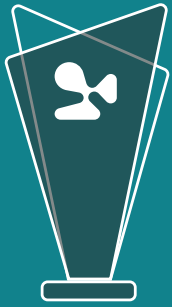
Improved **website accessibility** with more than 5,000 alternative image descriptions, enhanced colour contrast and direct accessibility feedback mechanisms.

“I cannot imagine my life without my current mentor. She has greatly helped me take action and improve my internship experience, life as a PhD student and my mental health.”

**Rezvan Mohammad Rezaee**  
PhD Program in Electrical Engineering  
McGill University







### Inclusive Innovation Award Winner

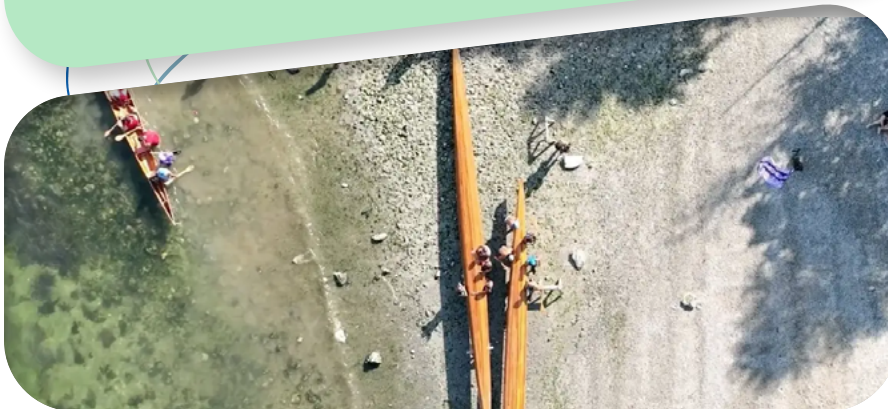
**Dr. Paul Onkundi Nyangaresi** was recognized for developing a low-cost UV-LED water disinfection system used in a Kenyan school. The technology's potential applications in remote and Indigenous Canadian communities demonstrate how inclusive innovation meets community needs with sustainable solutions.



Photo by CIRA/.CA

### Clear Seas Indigenous Internship Program

Since 2021, this program has supported 17 Indigenous interns conducting community-led marine research, from whale strike mitigation to sustainable harvesting. The 2025 cohort, funded in part through the Mitacs Accelerate Indigenous Program, will be the largest yet.



### PLATO Apprenticeship Program – Diversity and Inclusion at the Heart of Tech

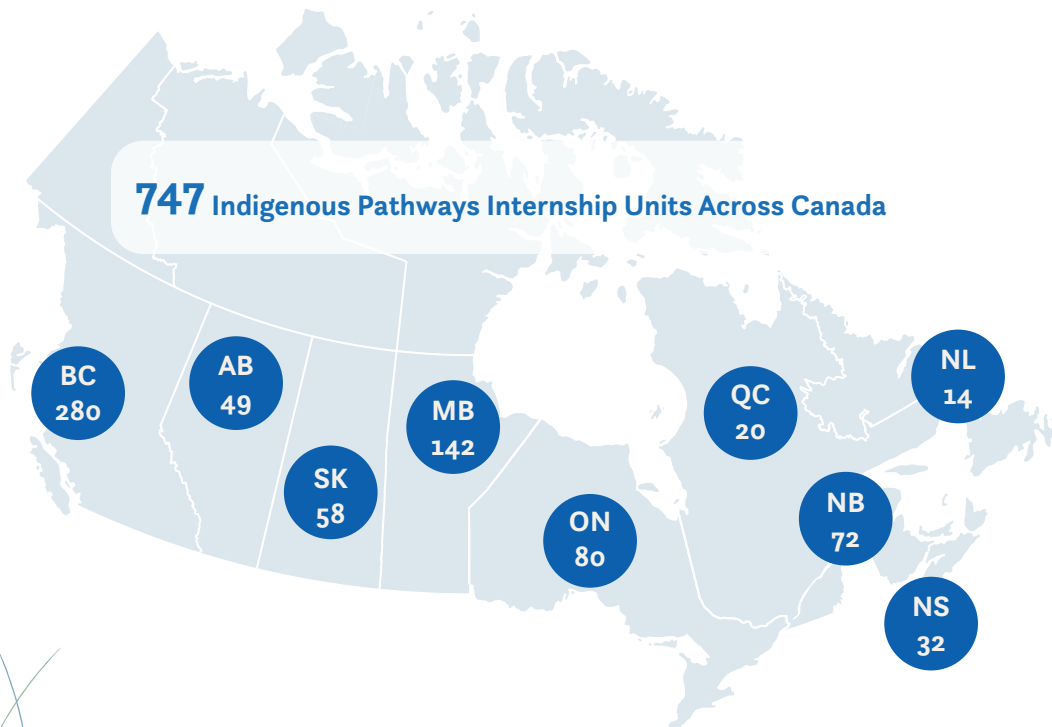
Mitacs began collaborating with PLATO, a New Brunswick-based social enterprise that has trained over 350 Indigenous software testers through its train-and-employ model. Mitacs funding through the Indigenous Pathways program has helped participants like Whit Finlayson transition into successful careers in tech.



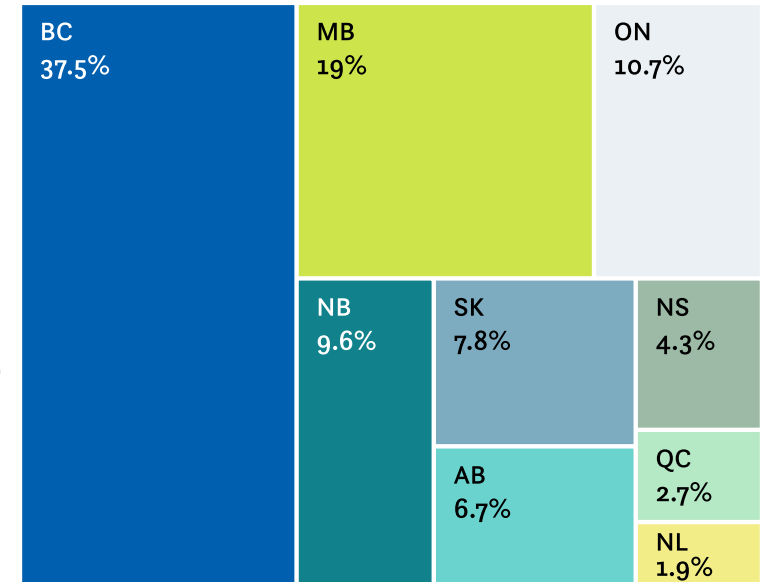


## Indigenous Initiatives and Capacity Building

Mitacs Indigenous Pathways continues to expand and grow with a stellar year of delivering **747 internship units**, a **56% increase** from the previous year.



Distribution of internship units by province



Data extracted from Mitacs Administrative Systems on April 23, 2025, and covers the period April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025. The data is subject to correction with project cancellations and adjustments due to unforeseen circumstances after March 31, 2025. In the event of any discrepancies between annual reports and audited data, the final year-end audited figures will be considered the most accurate and authoritative.





# Expanding the Inclusive Innovation Ecosystem Through Partnerships

Inclusive innovation depends on collaboration. Mitacs builds strategic partnerships that connect diverse talent with opportunities, strengthen representation in STEM, and foster innovative solutions to systemic challenges.

## Intended Outcomes

**Broaden** Mitacs’s collaborative network to increase engagement in inclusive innovation

**Develop strategy** to position Mitacs in a convenor role to advance inclusive innovation across institutions and sectors

**Enhance economic opportunities** for small to medium enterprises owned by equity-deserving groups

## Achievements and Partnership Details

### Canadian Black Scientists Network (CBSN)

Mitacs expanded its collaboration with CBSN, deepening the two organizations’ commitment to inclusive innovation. The initiative, now anchored by a network of 37 participating organizations, aims to connect members with diverse and inclusive opportunities.

### Black Women Talk Tech

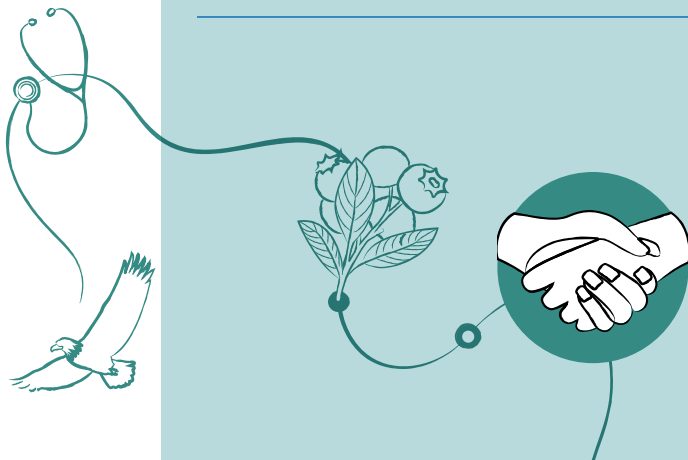
At the inaugural Canadian “Roadmap to Billions” conference in Toronto, Mitacs hosted a booth to meet participants and joined a panel on the state of Canada’s Black technology ecosystem, sharing perspectives on building an inclusive tech sector.

### Arctic Indigenous Investment Conference

At the Arctic Indigenous Investment Conference in Whitehorse, an event supporting the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce, Mitacs met with more than 12 key partners, including Indigenous economic development corporations, investment organizations and Yukon University. Discussions focused on Indigenous youth in STEM, land-based learning and potential collaborations between government and industry.

### Supplier Diversity and Social Innovation Definition

Mitacs updated its Corporate Financial Policy to include supplier diversity criteria and adopted a standard definition of social innovation, focusing on solutions to defined social challenges and improved access to essential services.



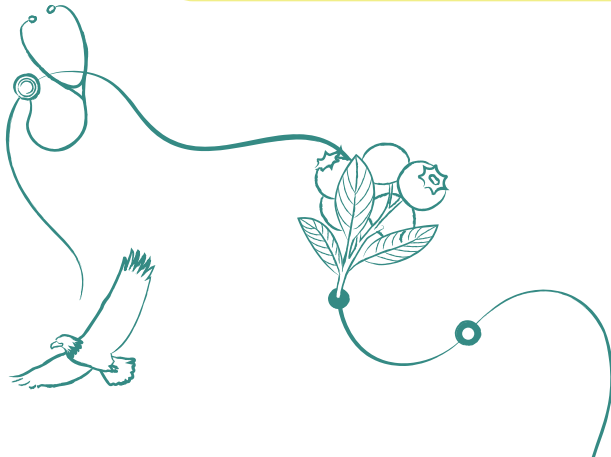


## IBET Partnership Expansion

Mitacs renewed and expanded its commitment to the Indigenous and Black Engineering and Technology (IBET) partnership through a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The IBET Connect Award has grown to support 52 fellows across 18 institutions, with a total of five projects submitted under the IBET-Mitacs agreement last year.

### Capacity Building at IBET conference

The annual IBET conference was held in November 2024 at York University's Markham campus. Many fellows attended and shared their research through talks, poster sharing and networking.





# Strengthening Mitacs's Internal Foundations for Inclusive Innovation

To deliver on its external commitments, Mitacs continues to strengthen its internal systems, workforce diversity, and organizational culture. These investments ensure the IIAP is sustainable and scalable.

## Intended Outcomes

**Maintain** a diverse workforce representation of talent

**Cultivate** a more inclusive culture at Mitacs

**Broaden innovation impact** and increase social and economic benefits for all people in Canada

**Advance reconciliation** by creating more opportunities for Indigenous peoples to participate in Mitacs's innovation ecosystem

## Achievements

Workforce diversity **exceeds national averages** for women, racialized individuals, and LGBTQ2S+ employees.

Held **four EDI-centered learning sessions** with an average attendance of 50%.

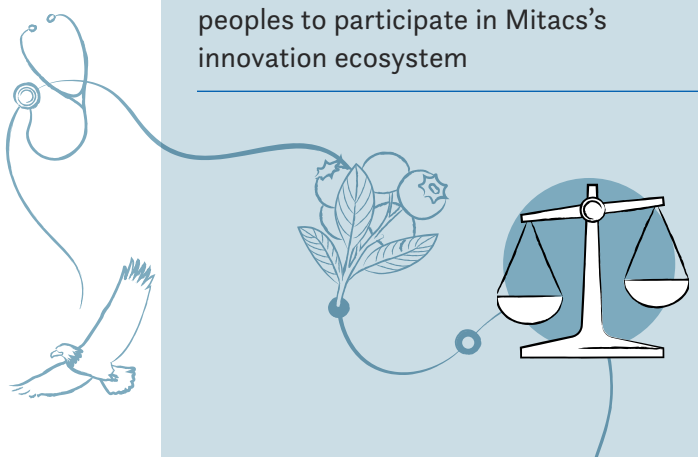
92% completion rate for **AODA accessibility training** across the organization.

Inclusive leadership coaching provided to **11 members of executive and senior leadership teams**.

Updated the Internal EDI Policy to **reflect the commitment to the 50-30 Challenge** and expand the section on reconciliation.

## 2024 Workplace Impact Award Winner

Mitacs was recognized by Diversio – the leading global platform for workplace inclusion – for its integrated, organization-wide approach to inclusion, setting a benchmark for representation, accountability and impact. Mitacs was selected following a competitive process that included submissions from Diversio clients across Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

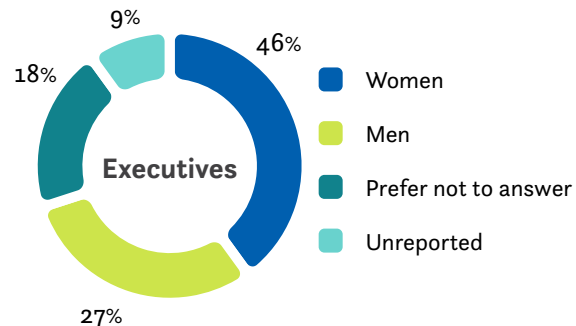
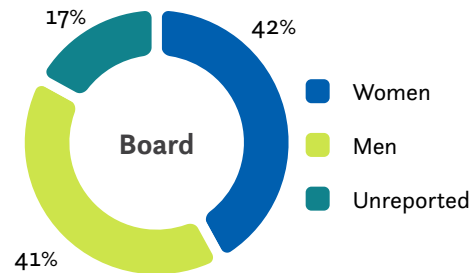




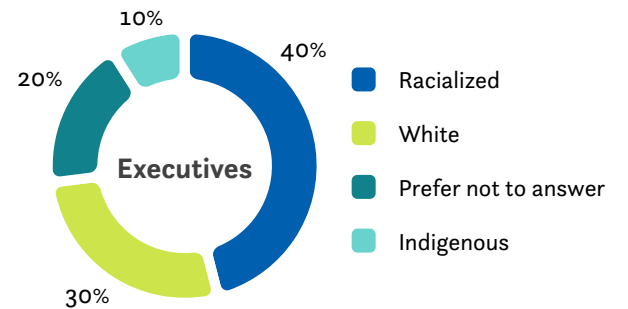
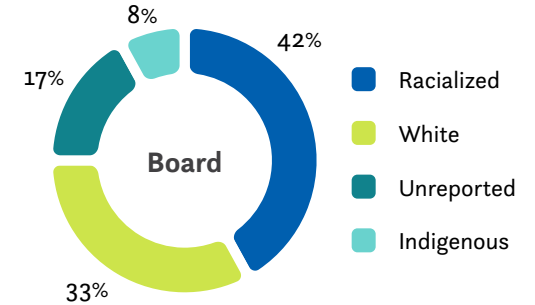
## 50–30 Challenge Progress

Mitacs continues to strive for the ideals set out in the Government of Canada’s 50–30 challenge, with the goal of the program to **encourage organizations to meet gender parity (50% representation)** and **significant representation (30%) of members of equity deserving groups** on Canadian boards and within senior leadership. [Here’s a glimpse into how we’re doing with our representation of diverse Board Members and Mitacs Executive Leaders:](#)

### Gender



### Ethnicity





# mitacs

Bringing innovation into reach 🇨🇦

