

Indigenous Travellers Information Fact Sheet

Travelling with sacred and spiritual items

CATSA is committed to providing a positive security screening experience to all travellers.

We recognize that persons wearing or carrying [sacred or spiritual items](#) may have preferences on how their items are treated during the screening process. While all persons and their belongings must be screened and cleared, screening officers are instructed to treat items with the utmost respect and care.

The following are tips to help you prepare for the screening of your sacred or spiritual items.

Checked baggage

We do not recommend packing delicate or fragile items in your checked baggage. While most checked baggage can be screened without the need to open the bag, there are situations where CATSA may need to physically inspect the items in your checked baggage. Make sure you consult your airline regarding their policies for travelling with large, delicate/fragile items.

Going through pre-board security screening with sacred or spiritual items

At Canada's 16 largest airports, Facilitators are available to assist passengers who need additional help navigating the screening process. If a Facilitator is available at your departing airport, you may consider asking them to assist you. Facilitators can accompany you through the screening process and answer questions in real time.

All items must be screened and cleared before entering the sterile area. Facilitators and screening officers have received cultural awareness training with a focus on screening Indigenous sacred and spiritual items. They are familiar with screening sacred items that have specific handling requirements. Before the screening process begins, let the screening officer know that you have a sacred or spiritual item in your possession and advise the officer if:

- you need assistance with the screening process;
- your sacred or spiritual item cannot be physically touched;

- there is a specific protocol for handling your sacred or spiritual item;
- an item cannot go through X-ray screening;
- an item must be screened by a screening officer of a particular gender;
- you must keep wearing the sacred or spiritual item during screening.

The screening officer will provide you with screening options based on the nature of the item and your preference. Note that screening officers have been trained to screen spiritual and sacred items without needing to hold or touch them. Additionally, you can request that the item be screened in a private search area if you feel more comfortable. All items must be screened and cleared before being allowed into the sterile area.

If flying within Canada or to an international (non-U.S.) destination, ceremonial knives (e.g. ulu knife) with a blade 6 cm or less in length are permitted through the pre-board screening checkpoint. Blades longer than 6 cm must be packed in your checked baggage. Blades of any type or length are not permitted in your carry-on baggage on flights to the U.S. Transport Canada offers a detailed list of [prohibited items for passengers on all flights](#).