



Fact Sheet

Introduction of a Machine Readable Zone on the Secure Certificate of Indian Status Cards

What's new?

- In response to the findings of the Minister's Special Representative's (MSR) Report on First Nation Border Crossing Issues, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is introducing a machine readable zone (MRZ) on Secure Certificate of Indian Status (SCIS) cards to help simplify the border crossing process for First Nations individuals using the SCIS as a piece of identification at ports of entry (POE) between Canada and the United States.
- ISC will be making a MRZ a standard feature on all newly issued and renewed SCIS cards in Canada.

What is a Secure Certificate of Indian Status?

- The Secure Certificate of Indian Status (SCIS) and its predecessor, the Certificate of Indian Status (CIS), are issued by the Indian Registrar, currently under the legislative authority of ISC, to serve as documentary evidence confirming that the cardholder is registered as a Status Indian under Canada's *Indian Act*.

What is the purpose of the documents?

- The SCIS and CIS cards can be presented to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) at Canadian POE to determine an individual's right to enter Canada.

What should you expect at a Canadian port of entry?

- All travellers arriving at a Canadian POE are obligated by Canadian law to present themselves to a CBSA officer and respond truthfully to all questions and accurately report any goods they have purchased or acquired. This includes a requirement to report any food, plant and/or animal products in their possession.
- Upon arrival at a POE, travellers must satisfy a CBSA border services officer (BSO) that they meet the requirements for entry into Canada. For Canadian citizens, permanent residents and Registered Indians under the *Indian Act*, this can be done through questioning and verifying documentation such as a Canadian passport, a Canadian birth certificate, a permanent residence card, a citizenship card or a SCIS card.
- The introduction of a MRZ to the SCIS card will facilitate data entry by allowing BSOs to swipe the card to capture the traveller's information instead of manually entering it, thereby simplifying the border crossing process for individuals using the SCIS as a piece of identification at POE between Canada and the United States.
- All travellers are required to report any goods in their possession that they have acquired or purchased while outside of Canada. In addition, travellers are required to answer questions that may be asked about these goods to determine if they qualify as part of a traveller's personal exemption.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q.1 Can I still present my CIS card at a POE?

A.1 Yes. Both cards are identity documents which confirm that the cardholder is registered as a Status Indian under the *Indian Act* and has right of entry to Canada.

Q.2 Once I have presented my SCIS card, will the BSO ask additional questions?

A.2 Yes. While the SCIS card confirms that you have right of entry to Canada, as the CBSA is responsible for administering over 90 Acts of Parliament, the officer may ask additional questions to confirm that the remaining legislative requirements are satisfied.

For example, the BSO can ask the following question: Are you bringing any food, animal or plants or related products with you? The purpose of this question is to preserve the health of Canadians, the economy and the biodiversity of our environment.

Q.3 Is any new information being retrieved from a MRZ-enabled SCIS card?

A.3 No. The same information is retrieved from both the MRZ enabled SCIS card and the CIS card. When a BSO swipes the SCIS card, it retrieves the following information from the MRZ:

- Last Name,

- First Name,
- Date of Birth,
- Gender,
- Citizenship, (Note that Citizenship in the MRZ is identified as “XXX,” which is captured as “Unknown” in CBSA systems)
- Document type, and
- Document Number.

Note: The above information is also manually entered by a BSO when a traveller presents a CIS card.

Q.4 How is this information used by the CBSA?

A.4 The personal information captured creates a passage history and allows the CBSA to initiate real-time queries against previous enforcement actions.

Q.5 How long is the retention period for the information collected at the POE?

A.5 The information is retained for six years plus the current year, and then is destroyed.

Note: The retention of entry data will be modified to align with the 15 year retention period of exit data.

Q.6 Is the information collected by the CBSA shared with any other government departments/agencies or the United States (U.S.) government?

A.6 The information may be disclosed in support of domestic law enforcement and to partner agencies for the purpose of administration and enforcement of Acts of Parliament. For example, if the CBSA is presented with a court order to disclose information on a particular individual.

Q.7 What happens if a traveller is not in possession of their card when crossing at a POE?

A.7 In this type of circumstance, the BSO will ask a few questions about their identity and status. Once the BSO is satisfied that the traveller has status, the traveller will be allowed entry to Canada. To facilitate efficient border processing upon return to Canada, it is always recommended to travel with your SCIS card, as it confirms that the cardholder is registered as a Status Indian under Canada’s *Indian Act*.