

Only in America! More weird & wacky credit card deals

Contributed by Peter James
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In this second half of a two-part series on unusual credit card offers for Americans, we look at five more trends that might be coming to Canadian credit cards in the near future:

6. ClayCards for ClayMates

Clay Aiken fans will be thrilled to know their American Idol is now featured on MyPlash, a MasterCard debit card issued by South Dakota-based First Premier Bank. This is a prepaid card that targets teenagers. The pitch: By giving your child a prepaid card, they can learn to stick to a budget while getting the benefits of a MasterCard-branded card. Hmm, now can you name a single Canadian Idol you would want on your credit card? Wayne Gretzky maybe, but Ben Mulroney not so much.

7. I Heard It Through the Grapevine

How about a prepaid card that combines a cash-back rewards program with a multi-level marketing structure? Here's how the scheme works: The First Vineyard card gives you 1% cash back for every dollar you spend. You also get a one-time \$25 bonus for every person you refer who signs up for and uses the card. Once you refer three friends and your total spending exceeds \$1,000, you start receiving cash-back for your friends' spending as well. The more people you refer, the higher-level cash back you get on their spending. According to the card's issuer, South Dakota-based BankFirst, if you have five referrals and an average spending of \$300 from each referral, you would earn \$820 a month in cash-back rewards.

But while many consumers were initially a bit suspicious, as one would be with any multi-level marketing business, this pre-paid card does carry the MasterCard logo and has received positive reviews at Cardratings.com. So it might actually be a MLM worth considering!

(One caveat, as a pre paid card, transactions on it are not reported the credit bureaus. Prepaid cards typically target people with bad or no credit history who are unable to get a secured credit card. Secured cards are also prepaid, but are reported to the credit bureaus and help consumers rebuild credit).

8. A PrePaid Card that Rebuilds Credit

Another prepaid credit card has very unusual features. It gives Americans the option to have their billing activity reported to a

national credit bureau, something no other prepaid card offers.

The Eufora prepaid card comes in three flavors: associate (annual fee: \$29.95), preferred (\$59.95) and elite (\$99.95). The preferred and elite levels carry additional MasterCard benefits, such as auto and travel accident insurance. They also give cardholders the option to enroll in Eufora's CreditBuilder program, which will report card activity to TransUnion, one of the three major credit bureaus in the United States. The card issuer is currently working on setting up a relationship with the other two bureaus, Equifax and Experian.

(For Canadians, Equifax Canada and Trans Union Canada are the two national credit agencies that track and report on Canadian credit ratings).

Now, the fun part. Instead of offering a traditional rewards program, the card offers a sweepstakes: For each \$100 you spend on the card, you receive one entry in a monthly sweepstakes to win a car worth roughly \$30,000. The winner has a choice of 30 vehicles. Each month's drawing takes place with a six-month delay (so the drawing in June is for spending for the month of January).

9. It's a Zoo Out There ...

... So why not carry a credit card that supports it? With the San Diego Zoo Visa card, issued by Bank One and Chase, a percentage of the cardholder's purchases goes to support the Zoological Society's conservation education programs. You have the option to add Bank One's Flexible Rewards program for a \$59 annual fee. For the card's image, choose a panda or a baby cheetah. Any particular unique features for this card? Nope. But the offspring of my favourite animal - the cheetah - are awfully cute.

10. If It Quacks Like a Duck...

Well, it doesn't really quack, but each time you swipe this branded credit card at the cash register, this Ducks Unlimited MasterCard issued by MBNA will donate part of the purchase to the Ducks Unlimited wetlands conservation organization. It also offers an introductory low APR on purchases and balance transfers for the first six months. Choose between pintails, mallards, Canada geese and wood ducks for your card's picture.

Actually this is one credit card promotion actually available in Canada. Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) says its affinity MasterCard

program offered through MBNA Canada Bank has produced real dividends for wetland conservation, generating over \$1 million for DUC over the past eight years. The DUC MasterCard was MBNA Canada Bank's first affinity credit card program in Canada. Each time a DUC MasterCard holder makes a purchase with the card, MBNA Canada Bank makes a financial contribution to DUC. Use of the DUC MasterCard also helps to promote the DUC name and organization. To learn more visit, Ducks Unlimited Canada's website.

And that concludes my two-part look at the ten of the more unusual credit card deals being offered to Americans. Look for these type of promotions to come to Canadian credit cards in Canada sometime in the near future.