

# Akwesasne Mohawk Police Services

## *"Peace, Unity & Justice"*



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

### ***GIFT CARD SCAMMERS POSING AS FIBRE-TO-THE-HOME REPS***

Gift card scams are becoming increasingly common. In the latest scam to hit Akwesasne, callers are claiming to be representatives from the Fibre-to-the-Home Project. They advise the homeowner that their fibre hookups are almost complete and the last step is to purchase \$1,000 (in gift cards) and call the scammer back. The scammer will then ask for the gift card information and steal the funds that way. Please share this information with those in your life, especially the vulnerable and elderly.

Whether it's a fraudster posing as your distressed grandchild, as an employee from the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA), or as someone from your financial institution, there are many ways a fraudster can steal your money.

It's a good idea to understand the different types of gift card scams happening right now and learn how to spot some of the warning signs and what you should know about gift card scams and how you can protect yourself and your loved ones from falling victim to this kind of fraud.

The reason why scammers request funds via gift cards is because they are incredibly hard to track. Once a gift card number and PIN is shared with a fraudster, they can access the funds on the card and it's difficult to know the identity of who cashed it.

The first step towards avoiding falling victim to a gift card scam is understanding some of the various types of cons circulating.

**Bank investigator gift card scams:** You might receive a phone call from a fraudster posing as an employee of your bank saying your account has been compromised and that

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they need your help with the investigation. To encourage your participation, the scammer will ask for your personal banking information and say you will be compensated for the incident. Then, they might make deposits into your account through fraudulent cheques or cash advances from your own credit card without you knowing. The fraudster will then ask for the money to be sent back to them, claiming it will be inspected as evidence in their investigation. In some cases, the scammer will ask you to buy gift cards using the money they put into your account and ask that you give them the numbers on the back of the gift card. Once the scammer has the gift card numbers, they can access the funds on the card.

**Grandparent gift card scams:** The grandparent scam involves the fraudster calling a senior and pretending to be that person's grandchild. When the grandparent receives the phone call from the fraudster posing as the "grandchild," the fraudster ensures they sound like they are in distress, claiming they need money for some type of emergency. The scammer will often ask the grandparent not to tell anyone about the trouble they're in, and to send money via gift card or other means.

**Lottery gift card scams:** You might receive a call saying you've won a lottery prize, but to receive that prize, you need to pay a fee. Fraudsters might say this fee covers "taxes," or "shipping and handling" charges, and ask for the fee to be paid via gift card. Once the "fee" is paid, the victim never receives their prize.

**Romance gift card scams:** There are many forms of romance scams, but they often all include a fraudster posing as a romantic partner or love interest, before eventually asking their target for money. These scammers often build relationships over time, either via social media, the phone or email, and play on emotions. Then, once they feel confident, they tell their victim they're experiencing an emergency and need money in the form of gift cards.

**Barcode gift card scams:** Some fraudsters buy gift cards from retailers to take them home and put their own, phony barcodes on them, and then return to the retailer or go to another store and hang them back up, ready for purchase by an unsuspecting victim. When the victim pays for the card in-store, the funds are activated on the scammer's card and the victim has purchased an empty card.

**CRA gift card scams:** There are many ways fraudsters impersonate employees of the CRA and try to extract funds from unknowing victims. But one scam is the CRA gift card scam

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where fraudsters call and pretend to be an agent from the CRA, often calling from a fake number. The fraudster might tell you that you owe money to the tax agency and demand your social insurance number and a payment in the form of gift cards.

Many people may feel embarrassed if they think they've been scammed, especially if they've sent a scammer a large sum of money via gift cards. But it's important to report the suspected scam as soon as possible for a chance at getting reimbursed, and to help prevent other people from falling victim to a similar scam.

In the chance the money hasn't been cashed yet, they might be able to freeze the funds on the card provided the fraudster has not already cashed the card which they usually do immediately upon receipt of the cards. It's also critical to alert your financial institution, and local law enforcement.

The [Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre](#) tracks the scams that are happening across Canada and encourages people to report any suspected fraud. In 2023, the Centre estimates that Canadians lost \$554 million to fraud.

If you believe that you were the target of a scam, please report it to the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service at 613-575-2000.