

## Smoking room a hit at bingo hall

By PATRICK MALONEY, SUN MEDIA

MUNSEE DELAWARE FIRST NATION -- A cigarette in one hand, a dauber in the other.

That's how bingo should be played, say those who drove as long as an hour last night to this London-area reserve where Ontario's aggressive anti-smoking rules don't apply and a new hall lets visitors light up while playing.

"It's at least 95 per cent more enjoyable (than) playing in London or St. Thomas," said Londoner Susan Degg, who drove to the grand opening of Paradise Bingo.

"I know it's not (healthy) to smoke but all smokers know that. It's nice to have the choice."

Organizers said only about 10 per cent of the 200 people playing during yesterday's debut afternoon session were from the reserve. Many who drove there cited the smoking room as one of the main attractions.

Mike Duval, the Windsor bingo businessperson who's running the new Munsee Delaware hall, admitted much of his business's potential would be up in smoke without cigarettes.

"I don't think it's skirting the (provincial) rules. It's taking advantage of the rules that are there," Duval said while puffing on a cigarette. "You're on federal land, you can smoke" indoors.

"I haven't had a single person criticize me. They're patting me on the back -- these bingo players haven't been able to smoke, so they're in their glory."

Paradise Bingo will operate seven days a week.

It's been about a year since Ontario banned smoking in all indoor places, a law that affected few businesses more seriously than the bingo halls where cigarette smoke and overflowing ashtrays were a common sight.

Duval estimates his Windsor business dropped by nearly half when it was forced to go smoke-free. The reserve doesn't have to abide by those same rules and the local health unit has admitted it's powerless to stop the indoor smoking.

So a thin haze of smoke hung in the air inside the glassed-in smoking room last night while the announcer calmly called numbers and players dotted their cards.

The smoky smell was distinct but faint, the room's air-exchange system apparently working.

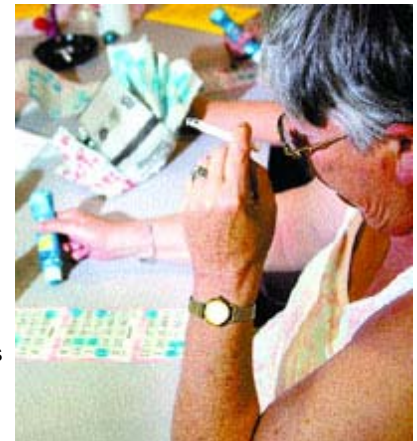
Not every smoker, however, was enjoying the reunion of cigarettes and bingo.

"Now that I'm kind of used to not smoking, it's bothering me," said 32-year-old Barbara Crafts of Rodney.

"I might actually sit in the non-smoking (area)."

To Duval, who's spent 30 years running bingos, that kind of reaction won't be common.

"When a big prize is (up for grabs), it's like a big cloud of smoke that goes up. The bigger the money, the more they smoke. It's amazing."



Irene Layne from Lyons smokes a cigarette while playing bingo yesterday at the Paradise Bingo on the Muncey Reserve. (Derek Ruttan, Sun Media)