



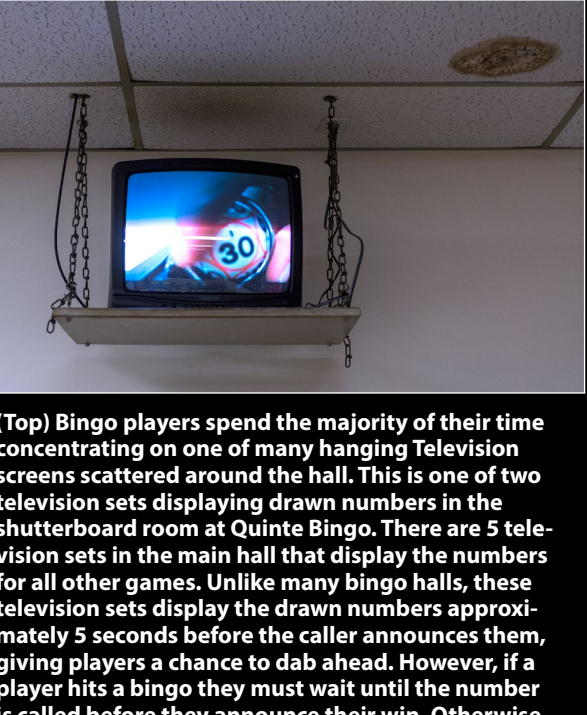
# CHARMED



(Top) The main hall of Quinte Bingo seen in the reflection of the automatic bingo ball draw machine.

(Left) Entranceway to Quinte Bingo at the Quinte Entertainment Centre on Roy Blvd. just off North Front Street in Belleville, Ont.

(Right) Tina Burness eats onion rings and chicken fingers from the canteen while dabbing away at a game of full-card bingo. Forty-five percent of the proceeds from the canteen go towards the charity groups that donate their time to help run the bingo. The game of full card requires the players to hit every number before a certain amount of balls (usually between 50-60) are drawn.



(Top) Bingo players spend the majority of their time concentrating on one of many hanging television screens scattered around the hall. This is one of two television sets displaying drawn numbers in the shutterboard room at Quinte Bingo. There are 5 television sets in the main hall that display the numbers for all other games. Unlike many bingo halls, these television sets display the drawn numbers approximately 5 seconds before the caller announces them, giving players a chance to dab ahead. However, if a player hits a bingo they must wait until the number is called before they announce their win. Otherwise their bingo is nullified.

(Below) It is very common for bingo players to use a variety of dabbers during one session. Some players prefer to match the colour of their sheets to their dabbers while others have a roster of lucky markers with a variety of significance. Quinte Bingo hands out themed dabbers on special occasions. A variety of dabbers are also available for \$3 at the canteen-shop.



(Left) Tina Burness closes a shutter after her number is drawn during a round of shutterboard at Quinte Bingo.

(Right) Seven individual prizes of \$7 are lined up on the median of the shutterboard room in the old non-smoking section of Quinte Bingo. 10 rounds of shutterboard are played during the main hall intermission with an entrance fee of \$1 per game. The prize values vary but on this particular day, as the jackpots were low, one would have to win two of the 10 games in order to turn a profit. Some players prefer to spend their intermission smoking and others feel that shutterboard is too fast.



The photographs on this page were taken at the independently-run Quinte Bingo hall in Belleville, Ont. one of the two remaining options for local bingo players.

It is in a nondescript concrete brick building that sits on the corner of the often-overlooked Quinte Entertainment Centre near the northern edge of the city.

The current boss once owned and operated seven halls scattered around southern Ontario but has been left with just one. Trends in attendance would suggest that Quinte Bingo's days are numbered.

In general, attendance is slipping among independent bingo halls. Part of this can be attributed to the growth of chains like Delta Bingo as well as the allure of large casinos.

For the shrinking group of loyal patrons at Quinte Bingo, there are a variety of motivations that keep them coming back. Some drop by to have fun, some are looking for a chance to socialize and some are strictly after the cash, chasing jackpots from hall to hall.

Despite differing incentives, one thing that exists among all of these groups is superstition.

This superstition may become a strategic practice for players who arrive early to get their favourite seat, request that their cards come from the middle of the stack or that they contain specific numbers.

It may also take a physical form in the presence of lucky items positioned among a players office-like space.

Contrary to what many believe, these items are quite common and are not only used by the truly convinced but also by those with a "just in case" approach. They range from traditional good luck charms like pennies, horseshoes and elephants to more personal trinkets, photos of loved ones and even Danish troll dolls.

Whether it's the hours spent staring at fuzzy television sets or the presence of their lucky items, the players at this almost-forgotten place have become charmed.

Joan Rankin (left top) wife and mother of five, lives in Stirling, Ont. and attends Quinte Bingo on a regular basis. She brings her son's Grade 12 graduation photo to her bingo nights, he is now 36 years old. It is expensive to participate in all rounds of bingo so some players opt out on low jackpots and find other ways to entertain themselves. Rankin who likes to do crosswords and read her horoscope said that she can get three magazines for \$10 at Wal-Mart.

Tammy (left bottom) (preferred her last name not be used) is one of many players at Quinte Bingo who believes in the luck of elephants. She brings two small elephants, one wood, one stone, that she places near her card. In addition to these trinkets, Tammy brings along her grandson's shoe for added good luck. Rentable electronic bingo machines have become popular as they allow participants to play extra cards but Tammy believes that they take the fun out of it.

Tina Burness (right top) and her husband Rick Burness attend Quinte Bingo on a regular basis and volunteer periodically. They have a lot of friends at the hall and it is a social experience for them. Tina's charms include a lucky elephant that she insists must be facing east and a few horseshoes. Tina and her husband Rick acquired their luckiest horseshoe after it flew off a horse's hoof at a track in Prince Edward Island (PEI). The couple enjoys gambling at the races and visits PEI for a month every summer.

Joy Osterhout (right middle) is a regular Bingo player and also attends the Lions Bingo Hall in Belleville where she won a Don Cherry dress-up competition in 2008. Joy was given a cardholder with her name on it for Christmas in a recent year and now brings it to bingo where she uses it to hold her winnings. She also brings along a lucky elephant that she places on the code of cards that are close to winning. Osterhout's set up includes a lot of common items like a pen, multiple dabbers, a roll of tape and a book, she is currently reading, a vampire novel by Michele Hauf called "Beautiful Danger".

Mary Jeffreys (right bottom) also known as "Marie" by some of her French friends, is a regular at Quinte Bingo who can usually be seen sitting at the halls first table with a selection of lucky items. Jeffreys rubs her horseshoes and the trunks of her elephant's charms with her thumb before dabbing her cards. She plays a lot of cards and her technique includes sliding the cards from side-to-side as her eyes canvas the numbers. Some players have set-up where two layers of cards are taped on top of each other in a flappable fashion for maximum dabbing efficiency.



# PHOTOS AND TEXT BY DILLAN COOLS

For the full photo story and more in-depth accounts of more players, visit [www.dillancools.com/charmed](http://www.dillancools.com/charmed)