



Squamish's only dedicated tattoo-removal shop opens

Lower-back tattoos most common regret, says owner

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Are you regretting that humming bird feeder you had tattooed on your lower back when you were 19 years old? If so, you may be in luck.

Squamish now has its only dedicated laser tattoo-removal shop.

Shrinking Ink & Associates quietly opened its doors on Tantalus Way about a year ago and many new moms with tattoos they regret have found their way through the doors, says shop owner Germaine Sprauve, who says she is also trained to remove tattoos.

It is difficult to nail down statistics on how many people in Canada have tattoos, but three in 10 in the U.S. have at least one tattoo, according to The Harris Poll in 2015.

Statistics show up to 23 per cent of people who get inked regret the tattoo, according to Sprauve.

"It is a fair amount of people that will ultimately want to remove their tattoos," she said.

Sprauve stressed she is not anti-tattoo.

"I do feel that people have a choice to express themselves in a way that they want and I don't have a judgment about it."

A majority of her clientele so far has been mothers who see the tattoo they got as younger women differently once they are parents.

"The most common right at this moment are the lower-back tattoos on women," she said.

To remove the tattoo, lasers that transmit light create heat within the skin. The light beam heats the pigment just enough to fragment the ink into smaller crystallized molecules that are then removed by the body's own immune system over a period of weeks.

Tattoo removal is slightly more painful than getting the tattoo, but the treatments don't take long – even as short as 10 minutes, according to Shrinking Ink's website.

People can choose to get the tattoo completely removed or lightened for a cover up tattoo.

Men are usually more interested in getting a tattoo covered up than having it completely removed, Sprauve said, while women want their tattoo completely removed.

"The typical [man] line is, 'My mother told me I would regret this tattoo and I told her no I wouldn't and here I am,'" Sprauve said.

Tattoos with spelling errors and people who began getting a tattoo and quickly changed their minds are other examples of those looking

for removal services.

"What I offer them is simply a safe place to deal with it in a respectful way," Sprauve said.

Laser removal is not for everyone, Sprauve said.

"It really depends on what your history has been medically, your skin type, the tattoo itself and many other factors," she said.

Sprauve said that while she is medically trained, the tattoo removal industry is not well regulated, something she said is unfortunate.

"Anyone could really open up a laser spa or studio if they can get their hands on a machine," she said. "Not everyone who is going into it is going into it with the knowledge of healthcare... There are people who are doing it as a business venture." She has even heard of laser tattoo removal parties, which she would not recommend.

She said clients should be leery of shops that charge very little for tattoo removal treatments. A quality laser machine can cost six figures so in order to pay for that and the training required, tattoo removal may cost the same or more than what it cost for the original tattoo. For more information, go to www.shrinkingink.com (<http://www.shrinkingink.com>).

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