



Art on Main Street—Ninja Monkey Tattoo

Main Street Cheboygan features all types of art. There are shops that sell art, shops that are decorated with art, and there are pop-up shops that display and sell a wide variety of art for a limited time. There is one shop on Main Street that designs and creates art all day, every day, year-round—Ninja Monkey Tattoo.

Tattooing is one of the oldest art forms. The earliest documenting of tattoos dates to Bronze-Age man around 3300 BCE. “Otzi the Iceman,” was found in a glacier of the Oetztal Alps, near the border between Austria and Italy. He had 57 tattoos.

Ninja Monkey Tattoo, in business since 2014, relocated from outside Cheboygan to a Main Street location in 2016. Their reputation has grown steadily and is a destination for clients from all over the state. Reviews emphasize the creativity, comfort-level, and cleanliness of the business. Owner, Ben Dratnol, who has been tattooing for 18 years, is an award-winning artist, having participated in many tattoo festivals throughout the country. Mari Hesselink, called the “creator,” is part of the team, having taught Dratnol the art of tattooing years ago.

Several of the other artists on the Ninja Monkey team specialize in different aspects of tattoo art. Trent Jackson is the expert in neotraditional and colorful tattoos. Gene Fradette is the artist for black and grey, while Jimmy Six, the newest Ninja Monkey addition, specializes in anything color. Up and coming artist Ivy Rose, an apprentice of Ben Dratnol, is now taking appointments. Brandon McCarthy manages Ninja Monkey Tattoo and is the piercing specialist.

Besides tattooing, Ninja Monkey is proud to be a business that supports and contributes positive energy to the Cheboygan community. Whether it involves sports teams, a local family in crisis, highway cleanup, or community needs, Ninja Monkey contributes. McCarthy’s Marine Corps background spurred the shop’s successful Marine Toys for Tots program; at the recent Opera House fundraiser, Dratnol was a featured performer. McCarthy says, “We are very pleased to be part of Cheboygan’s amazing atmosphere and to put our signature art out there for everyone to enjoy.”

Ninja Monkey Tattoo is on Facebook and Instagram. Reach them at ninjamonkeytattoos@gmail.com or (231) 268-3387. To learn more about the Cheboygan Main Street program, visit cheboyganmainstreet.org.

Brandon McCarthy served in the United States Marine Corps as an infantryman for 10 years, fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. He received a Purple Heart for wounds received in combat in Iraq. He has been piercing since 2016 and was featured on the cover of a national jewelry supply magazine. Brandon lives in Cheboygan and has 4 children. When he’s not in the shop, Brandon is usually outdoors hiking and fishing—and trying to complete the Appalachian Trail piece by piece with his best friend Ben Dratnol as time allows.