

# 'Love letters to the world' etched into community's sidewalks

SCOTT LEITCH Updated: June 26, 2017

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Kendra Black calls the poems etched into her neighbourhood's sidewalks "little love letters to the world."

The Meadows Community League, which encompasses Wild Rose, Larkspur and Silverberry, finished the third instalment of Poetry Pathways in the Meadows, a four-part public art initiative, over the weekend. The project sandblasts poems written by local residents into the sidewalks around the neighbourhood.

The newest poems are etched into the sidewalk along 34 Avenue at Mill Creek Ravine. Previous instalments were at Father Michael Troy Junior High School and Velma E. Baker Elementary School. The final instalment, expected to begin later in the summer, will be at Silverberry Park.

"It created such a joy to each of the schools and the residents and everyone was really excited to be a part of it," said Black, the former president of the community league.

Residents surprised by the new art also seem excited, stopping to ask questions.

The poems are sandblasted into the sidewalk and painted over by Vladimir Varbanov, a memorial engraver.

"I am a puzzle piece. Alone I'm nothing. But put me together with the other pieces, I am a beautiful picture," reads one new poem Varbanov was finishing Sunday. Now carved into stone, it will likely last until the sidewalk is replaced.



Vladimir Varbanov was sandblasting poetry into the sidewalks bordering Mill Creek as part of a community art project in the Meadows on June 25, 2017. The poetry was submitted by school children and residents of the area. **SHAUGHN BUTTS / POSTMEDIA**

Over the last two years, the poems were submitted by community members and picked by a panel of judges. There were over 2,000 submissions. Authors ranged from Grade 2 students to seniors.

The art project was first envisioned by Jannie Edwards and Agnieszka Matejko, two local artists. Edwards led 52 school poetry workshops for students while gathering all the submissions.

"It really represents a cross-section of this area," said Black, noting the neighborhood's multicultural demographics.

The street art was paid for by funds from the community league, a Community Initiatives Program grant from Alberta Culture and Tourism and a donation from ATB Financial.

The community league is hosting an unveiling of the second and third phases Monday at Velma E. Baker School at 10:15 a.m. and Mill Creek Ravine at 1:15 p.m. Local MLA Denise Woppard was expected to attend the morning unveiling and Coun. Moe Banga the afternoon unveiling.

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