



Edmonton

Students offer hope, inspiration on High Level Bridge



"I listen to your tears," reads one.

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Words matter.

And that's especially so when they're carved in stone, high above the North Saskatchewan River on a bridge known for its high suicide rate.

The weighty decision of what to write on the concrete walkway of the High Level Bridge was given to a group of students at Edmonton's Braemar school, whose students include pregnant and parenting teens.

"I listen to your tears," reads one message.

"I think of you when I see a baby laugh, so innocent and free," says another.

Dappled by sunlight, another states: "as I walk this bridge I see lights of hope."

As people walk, cycle or run across the bridge they'll see the messages. One after another. Inspirational, moving, from the heart.

"This meant a lot to me because I wanted to change somebody's life before it was too late," said Amanda Yuill, a Grade 12 student at Braemar.

Yuill lost a good friend to suicide when she was 17. He was 15 when he ended his life -- by jumping off a bridge.

"Hope, thank you for always being there," is what Yuill wrote.

"I'm really honoured that mine got picked to be put on the bridge," she said.

Like many of the students at Braemar, Yuill knows about struggles, how difficult it can be to juggle work, life, raising a baby as a young parent.

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"For them to realize that I'm not alone -- and that's the biggest message they're sending -- is saying we care about you, and you're not alone and we want you to know that there is support there for you."

According to the city's medical examiner, there were 14 suicide deaths on or near the bridge in 2012.

The city has committed to spending \$3 million to erect a suicide prevention barrier. Distress line telephones have been installed on the bridge.

The idea to engrave the messages on the walkway came from an Edmonton-area artist.

But these authors are more likely familiar with the fleeting attention from social media, say a 140-character tweet. The legacy of this school project should remain intact for years.

Yuill hasn't yet crossed the bridge to see her words etched in stone.

She plans to, though, and says she'll take her son along.

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