

Beat: Technology

Amanda Todd: Canadian police investigate teen's suicide after cyberbullying

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USPA News - Police in British Columbia on Friday launched a full investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of a 15-year-old girl who posted a heartbreaking video describing how she suffered from years of bullying at school and on the Internet. Amanda Todd, 15, was found dead just before 6 p.m. local time on Wednesday at her home in Port Coquitlam, a city about 25 kilometers (15 miles) east of Vancouver on the mainland of British Columbia.

The exact cause of her death was not immediately released, but authorities have ruled out foul play. Sergeant Peter Thiessen, a spokesman for the Lower Mainland District RCMP Regional Police Service, on late Friday said a full investigation has been launched into the girl's suicide. The case attracted significant media coverage in Canada and around the world after a YouTube video emerged which shows Amanda telling her story. In the 9-minute video (<http://tinyurl.com/939g5nk>), which was uploaded on September 7 and entitled "My story: Struggling, bullying, suicide, self harm", the girl flashes more than 70 cards in which she describes being relentlessly bullied and harassed after showing her breasts during a webcam chat when she was just 12 years old. "In 7th grade I would go with friends on webcam, meet and talk to new people .. then got called stunning, beautiful, perfect, etc .. then wanted me to flash .. so I did," Amanda said through her cards. "1 year later .. I got a msg (message) on Facebook .. from him .. don't know how he knew me. It said, 'if you don't put on a show for me I will send ur (your) boobs.' He knew my adress (sic), school, relatives, friends, family names." Amanda did not give in to the threats but later discovered a photo showing her breasts had been sent to other people, leading police to show up at her house. "I then got really sick and got anxiety, major depression and panic disorder," she said. "I then moved and got into drugs + alcohol .. my anxiety got worse .. couldn't go out." But the person who took her picture continued to follow her online. "A year past (passed) and the guy came back with my new list of friends and school. But (he) made a Facebook page, my boobs were his profile pic," Amanda explained. "(I) cried every night, lost all my friends and respect people had for me, again .. then nobody liked me .. name calling, judged .. I can never get that photo back. It's out there forever." After that incident, Amanda said, she started cutting herself, had no friends left and would sit alone during lunch at school. "So I moved schools again. Everything was better even though I sat still alone, at lunch in the library everyday," the cards read as the song "Hear You Me" from American band Jimmy Eat World plays in the background. About a month later, Amanda said, she started texting with an old friend. "He started to say he liked me .. led me on .. he had a girlfriend," the cards continue. "Then he said come over my gf's (girlfriend is) on vacation. So I did .. huge mistake .. he hooked up with me. I thought he liked me." A week later, Amanda received a text message to get out in front of her school. "His girlfriend and 15 others came including hi(m)self. The girl and 2 others just said 'look around nobody likes you' in front of my new school (50) people," the cards read. "A guy then yelled 'just punch her already' .. so she did. She threw me to the ground (and) punched me several times. Kids filmed it. I was all alone and left on the ground. I felt like a joke in this world... I thought nobody deserves this :/" Amanda continues: "I was alone.. I lied and said it was my fault and my idea .. I didn't want him getting hurt. I thought he really liked me, but he just wanted the sex. ... Teachers ran over but I just went and layed (sic) in a ditch and my dad found me. I wanted to die so bad, when he brought me home I drank bleach. It killed me inside and I thought I was gonna actually die." But Amanda was rushed to a hospital where she was treated and later released, only to discover more hateful messages on the social networking website. "After I got home all I saw was on Facebook: 'She deserved it', 'did you wash the mud out of your hair'" "I hope shes (sic) dead. Nobody cared." The incident led Amanda to move to Port Coquitlam where she attended CABC Secondary School. But the cyber bullying continued, with people posting pictures of bleach, clorox, and ditches. "They said, 'she should try a different bleach. I hope she dies this time and isn't so stupid.' They said, 'I hope she sees this and kills herself.' Why do I get this? I messed up but why follow me," Amanda asked. "I left your city guys, I'm constantly crying now. Everyday I think, why am I still here? My anxiety is horrible now. (I) never went out this summer." Despite being on antidepressants and receiving counseling, Amanda's last failed suicide attempt took place in August when she overdosed and spent two days in hospital. She wrote on her final cards: "All from my past, life's never getting better .. can't go to school, meet or be with people .. (I'm) constantly cutting (myself). I'm really depressed. .. I'm stuck .. what's left of me now .. nothing stops .. I have nobody .. I need someone =" Wednesday's suicide took place about a month after her cry for help was uploaded to YouTube, where it went unnoticed until she died. "Serious crime teams in Coquitlam and Ridge Meadows are working together, conducting interviews and reviewing any potential contributing factors to her death," Thiessen said, adding that investigators are also monitoring social media. "This is a devastating tragedy, which impacts the community as a whole." The teen's mother, Carol Todd, told the Vancouver Sun on late Friday that the Internet stalker she showed her breasts to would use fake Facebook profiles to find Amanda. "What the guy did was he went online to the kids who went to (the new school) and said that he was going to be a new student," Carol Todd said. "He eventually gathered people's names and sent Amanda's video to her new school." The video and photos were not only sent to students, but also to teachers, parents, and other Facebook friends, leading to bullying and

people calling Amanda a porn star. "It increased her anxiety and she couldn't go to class," Carol Todd told the newspaper in the first interview since her daughter's death. Carol Todd said police were unable to track down Amanda's stalker despite several investigations. "The police investigated and investigated, it got traced to somebody in the United States," she said. "But they never found him. Those people are very good at hiding their tracks." But the mother believed Amanda's life was starting to return to normal in the weeks after her failed suicide attempt in August. "She went out with friends, she went to the mall, she said to me, 'Mom, this is the first time that I feel normal again. I have had the best day ever.'" Carol Todd told The Vancouver Sun. Something happened earlier this week which shattered Amanda's fragile recovery, but Carol Todd said she is not ready yet to look at a message in which Amanda explains what happened. "She left me a video message on her phone. I'm not ready to look at it yet," she said. "The coroner has told me it will provide closure for me but I can't look at it yet." Meanwhile, as Amanda's video approached 2 million views on YouTube on Saturday, there have been increasing calls in Canada to establish stricter laws against cyber bullying. "No one deserves to be bullied. No one earns it, no one asks for it," British Columbia Premier Christy Clark said. "It isn't a rite of passage, bullying has to stop. Every child, everyone, needs to be able to feel safe at school. And when we send our kids to school, we need to know that they're going to come home safe." Carol Todd said her daughter's heart-wrenching video was also meant as a learning tool for others, and the mother now hopes the video will be able to be just that. "I believe that the video should be shared as a learning tool for anti-bullying. That is what my daughter would have wanted," she wrote on her Twitter account.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-66/amanda-todd-canadian-police-investigate-teens-suicide-after-cyberbullying.html>

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