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LORI-ANNE CHARLTON/eVent photo

UBC Okanagan students will be touring a theatre production to Kelowna elementary schools this year.

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# Back to school

## UBC students bring theatre to Valley elementary schools

By LORI-ANNE CHARLTON

A group of UBC Okanagan students are going back to elementary school this month – part of a project by professor Denise Kenney to encourage students to create new works, and an attempt to bring live theatre to children.

Students of a second-year theatre class, part of the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Performance program, are visiting Ellison Elementary, Raymer Elementary and A.S. Matheson Elementary, as well as the Kelowna Public Library, to perform a program that they put together this term.

"The program is training people to be theatre makers, not just actors," Kenney told *eVent*.

The three-part presentation includes a dramatization of a story, an exploration of colour, poetry and movement, and some scene work with character masks.

The 14 students that make up the class were given a stimulus, in this case colour, and required to use the process of observation, paying attention to colour and then improvising and exploring dramatic ideas around it. Once they got the ideas flowing, they fixed a performance around it and started rehearsing.

"It's always observation, then exploration, then translation into theatrical language, and that is communicated," Kenney said.

Not your typical drama class, the brand new class isn't actually geared toward drama students. Made up of a cross section of manage-

ment students, creative writing students, education students and even social work students, the idea is to inspire creative approaches to doing a job.

Being theatrical in nature, however, Kenney stressed that that makes it a community art form, and therefore it should be shared.

"It's live and it's meant to be shared with a community," the assistant professor of per-

formance and theatre said.

For the course's first year, Kenney chose to make young students, between kindergarten and Grade 2, the audience. Another year, she thought, that could change and groups of adults could be the audience.

Kenney picked the young students for the project, however, because she feels there is a real need for young kids to see live theatre. As herself the mother of a two-year-old, she fears that many kids today have much less exposure to television, movies and concerts. They lack the spontaneous, interactive features that makes theatre so exciting.

"The objective is to have a fun, visceral experience — to have sort of an adventure with a live work," she said.

Each of the participating schools was given a resource package, including a study guide so teachers could help their students prepare for the visit, and help them write their own colour poems. Following the performance by the university students, the elementary school students will have a chance to share their work.

"It's good for all the students," Kenney said.

Kenney is excited about partnering with elementary schools, giving the mature students an opportunity to share their work with their young counterparts.

Judging by the response, the elementary schools were keen to partner, too.

After sending emails out to elementary schools around the school district, Kenney got an overwhelming response back.

"Unfortunately, we couldn't go to all of them because this is a class, and we have other commitments, so it's not like they can do an extended performance," she explained.



Denise Kenney