

Artistic Associate, Courtenay Dobbie writes about the exciting upcoming project The Edge that will launch September 2009.

THE EDGE PROJECT- Fall 2009

The Edge Project was born out of my desire to bring together like minded young individuals from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. I want these youth to have a safe, creative, and mature project to create collectively, artistically guided by a professional theatre company. The work will be led by me on behalf of Green Thumb Theatre, and the teachers of the four respective schools involved. The end product, created over four months this September to December 2009, will be a live theatre show publically performed and entirely created by these young, highly informed, intelligent, and current youthful minds. Their energy and enthusiasm will only make this experience authentic, inspired, and ultimately their own.

The drive behind creating a project that involved many different schools came from my own high school theatre experience that I credit to being an influential force in my decision to enter into the theatre as my chosen career. Growing up in Calgary Alberta, I was part of a high school playwrighting collective group headed by Alberta Theatre Projects called *Theatre Blitz!*. It was a contingent of enthusiastic students from different high schools all over the city of Calgary and surrounding areas. We met every Saturday for six months, writing and then reading our work to each other. Our shows were then publically performed by high school actors as part of the *Theatre Blitz! Festival*. This project brought together over 200 high school students including playwrights, designers, and actors and was an amazing for me as an inspired youth desperately searching for some sort of creative outlet besides my drama classes in school. It boosted my confidence and I found new theatrical skills gained from working with other students and industry professionals. It gave me a reason to apply myself personally to the project as I had a responsibility to Alberta Theatre Projects, as well as to the acting students and my fellow playwrights. Most importantly it provided me with the opportunity to work with a professional theatre company, of whom I regarded with high esteem, in turn gaining practical and artistic knowledge of the professional theatre practitioner's life and how to pursue a healthy career in the field.

My work in the theatre has been personally satisfying and inspired, which has driven me to want to give back to youth something similar to my high school theatre experience; a guided, professional, and

challenging project to work on, being treated creatively as a young professional, and the opportunity to meet other high school students forging lasting personal and working relationships.

The Edge Project is not only creatively but economically important as well. The four schools involved are from varying and vastly different cultural and economic make up. I chose these schools in particular to bring together youth who might now otherwise interact with other youth of these regions. I want the project to help bridge the gap between the youth of these vastly different communities of the Lower Mainland. By working together collectively, Green Thumb Theatre and the teachers of Lord Byng Secondary (West Side Vancouver), Tamanawis Secondary (Surrey), Burnett Secondary (Richmond), and David Thompson Secondary (East Vancouver), will help the students and their audiences to let go of pre determined cultural and economic prejudices and guide them to create, inspire, and work together as a unified artistic team.

The Edge Project will be performed **December 8, 9, and 10th** at The Roundhouse Community Centre with 90 students involved in the production.