

Karen Amirault performs in
To Thine Own Self Be True.



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Bard goes **NATIVE**

*Aboriginals find
insight
staging
Shakespeare's
writings*

By Kevin Prokosh
Theatre Critic

BY SPEAKING the words of William Shakespeare, aboriginal people are discovering that the Bard speaks for them, too.

To Thine Own Self Be True is the title of a three-night showcase in which native people perform Shakespearean scenes and soliloquies as an expression of being aboriginal in Canada.

"We wanted to select pieces from Shakespeare's canon which reflected somewhat our own experiences as native people," says director Susan Olson. "We wanted to experience the text like an aboriginal person."

A mostly non-professional cast of local actors will stage about 14 familiar stage pieces during the 90-minute show to be performed tonight through Saturday at Prairie Theatre Exchange's Colin Jackson Studio.

To Thine Own Self Be True is a presentation of the fledgling Shakespeare in the Red, a troupe leaderless since the recent departure of artistic director Libby Mason to Victoria. A re-organization of the group is in the works.

Since mounting a full-length Shakespearean play would have been an overwhelming undertaking for such a young, resource-poor organization, the idea of a showcase of speeches and scenes from plays such as *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seemed to make more sense.

David McLeod will deliver Hamlet's *To Be or Not to Be* speech, which he thinks says a lot about aboriginal peoples' internal struggle.

"In the speech, you are asking yourself some hard questions," says the 35-year-old program director of the aboriginal radio station NCI-FM. "As native people, we have to ask ourselves some hard questions to define our identity."

For the audience, the showcase presents an opportunity to hear these familiar words re-interpreted and given a fresh perspective.

"The audience will get to experience the text in a different way," says Olson, 27, who has been rehearsing her cast since February.

Tickets for the three shows, all beginning at 8 p.m., are \$10 at the door.