



Mount Mayon 📍 is in the Bicol region of the Philippines. It is named after Magayon, which means "beautiful woman" in the Bicol language. The volcano is part of the lives of the people there, including these students standing around a papier-mâché model of Mayon 📍. The actual volcano is less than 10 km away from their school, Bonga Elementary.

The princess and the volcano

A documentary looks at the legend and the science behind mighty Mount Mayon.

When Isaac Kerlow was a child in Mexico, he heard a legend about one of the country's volcanoes. It told the story of a sleeping princess whose father didn't allow her to marry the prince she loved.

Many years later, when Mr Kerlow came to Singapore to work, he was surprised to hear a similar tale about a volcano in the Philippines named Mount Mayon. "The legend is somewhat similar: it's a tragic love story," he told *What's Up*. He was so fascinated that he ended up making a film about the volcano. "I really fell in love with Mayon."

An awesome volcano

Mount Mayon is not just a harmless fairy tale. It is one of the most active volcanoes in the world. It first erupted in 1616, and has erupted 49 times since then. Over the last four centuries, the eruptions have caused the loss of thousands of lives and homes.

Many scientists have been studying Mount Mayon to try to understand it better. However, it's not just scientists who are drawn to this fearsome natural wonder. Professor Kerlow, an artist at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), decided to create an hour-long documentary titled, *Mayon The Volcano Princess*.

He wanted to teach viewers

THE LEGEND



A volcano formed by overflowing love. A kind and beautiful princess named Daragang Magayon was greatly admired by many men. Her father, the king, was curious about whom she would pick to marry. Many men tried to win her heart, but she rejected all of them, particularly Pagdula, a powerful chief who showered her with plenty of gifts. News of her beauty travelled so far that Ulap, the son of Chief Kaliraya, decided to see her for himself. One day, he stood by the river where she usually took her bath and watched her. While she was bathing, she slipped and fell. Ulap jumped into the water and rescued her. They fell in love, much to Pagdula's unhappiness. Pagdula and his men killed the princess and Ulap. Magayon's father dug a single grave for Ulap and Magayon to rest in peace together. Over the next few days, the graves rose higher and higher, followed by rumblings, earthquakes and hot red boulders, causing the formation of Mount Mayon.

about the dangers of the volcano by interviewing people who live near it. He also used the magic of animation to make the movie more appealing.

Why Mayon?

Professor Kerlow told *What's Up* that

there are many similarities between the Philippines and his home. Both the Philippines and Mexico were Spanish colonies. Both have populations that mainly follow the Catholic religion. And, both have volcanoes.

"Mexico has a huge chain of volcanoes that runs through the

country and Philippines has the same thing," he said. "I grew up as a kid with earthquakes, just like in this region of Philippines."

Science and art

To make the film, he spent many hours researching Mayon. He was guided by another NTU professor, Chris Newhall, a volcano expert.

"I tried to learn as much as I could about the science, and to incorporate it into the documentary," he said. However, he wanted his film to be different from the usual scientific documentary or science lesson. That's why he decided to include the legend of Mount Mayon, using his animation skills.

"I was fascinated with the story, and I had read many versions of the story, because it's a legend," he said. "I chose to tell the first half of the story in a Disney-like style but when the villain decides to kidnap her father, it switches to an Anime style."

He and his team from NTU took a year to complete the project. Most of the team members had to juggle the project and their other schoolwork. Their hard work is paying off. *Mayon The Volcano Princess* picked up Best Concept Prize at the Summit of Environmental Cinema. The summit was part of the United Nations climate change meeting held recently.