

Publishing Truths from Magabala

The intention of this document is to shed some light on how Magabala approaches First Nations texts and some of the truths and wisdoms around our practice. Its purpose is for industry professionals to take what resonates with them and to embed this into their ethics when working on stories by and with First Nations peoples and communities.

- Publishing is a structure that is informed by colonialism, racism and class privilege. For First Nations creatives and professionals, it is imperative to understand the truths that underpin publishing in general – for our own emotional and spiritual safety and for how we navigate the industry into the future.
- No one story fits the national narrative – identity, Culture, place, Law, language, spirituality.
- Every First Nations story is its own entity with its own truth – lived experience is an authority unto itself, and shouldn't be diminished.
- Not every First Nations story needs to 'educate' – the cultural load to instruct is ongoing and soul-destroying.
- There are many different nations, language groups and geographical and historical truths for First Nations people. History and humanity is complicated, intertwined and part of a continuum. The past is never an untouchable nor unquestionable belief.
- At Magabala we will often use and trust the author's version of voice, their language and its spelling (to them and their community), and this is ok.
- A Magabala approach when publishing a story, text, manuscript, illustrations – it is *always* about context.
- When publishing collaborations (First Nations and non-First Nations creators, communities), we are informed by the integrity of the relationship – of story, its process, its heart, whether the First Nations creator has trusted the scribe, and who ultimately 'owns' the 'truth'.
- It is good to smell bullshit early – we cannot stress this enough – for the integrity of the story.
- To the many and varied cultural gatekeepers in charge, know the First Nations history of the land you are on, so you understand the context of the story in front of you.
- Magabala knows that life is complicated, confronting, unrelenting and unforgiving for many First Nations creatives and communities. For the people in this industry, it is important to be proactive in your listening, reading and examination of First Nations truths as part of your two-way learning. This is a non-negotiable.
- Kindy teachers use the term 'listening ears' – please note this applies to adults. We are never too old to hear and engage with this basic tenet when publishing or when engaging in life in general.
- Publishing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators should be a trauma-informed practice – know your history and know that the editorial and marketing processes are inherently unsafe.
- Please know that the media landscape is a generally unsafe space for mob. Hate is a heavy burden to carry. What can you do to mitigate hate?
- Time is your friend in publishing. It is not the publishing house's friend. Where possible, expand the timeframes and show grace to First Nations creatives through this process.
- Cultural load impacts on First Nations creators, freelancers and in-house staff in all areas of the publishing industry. What can you give in this space and how can you be a friend?
- It is not safe to assume you/your workplace/your publishing house or your organisation is not racist. Being truly anti-racist requires a commitment to constant unlearning and questioning.

- There are many in-house processes that are confronting to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators.
- Consider how relationships with First Nations editors, organisations, consultants/advisors and sensitivity readers can be conducted with reciprocity and for the benefit of the whole community. This is about not being extractive or singling out one 'informant' to validate your work or your cultural curation as a publisher.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are modern, thoughtful, educated, funny, generous, kind and so much more. We have jobs, make financial and emotional decisions and face many battles like everyone else. We carry our knowledges unconsciously and inherently. We are part of this continuum and have been since this Mother you know as Australia birthed us. We ask to be treated with dignity, respect and humanity. It is time for our realities to be heard and for our truths to be acknowledged. Always was. Always will be.