



PRESS RELEASE MAY 2024

Our Flag, Our Story: The Torres Strait Islander Flag

by Bernard Namok Jnr and Thomas Mayo,

illustrated by Tori-Jay Mordey

**Children's picture book shares origin
story of the Torres Strait Islander Flag**

The story of the Torres Strait Islander flag is shared in a children's picture book through the words of Bernard Namok Jnr and Thomas Mayo, featuring illustrations by award-winning artist Tori-Jay Mordey, released by Magabala Books 1 May 2024.

Our Flag, Our Story is a tale of the Torres Strait Islander flag, a symbol of unity, shared identity and pride for all Torres Strait Islanders. Bernard Namok Jnr is the son of the late Bernard Namok, designer of the Torres Strait Islander Flag.

When asked how it feels to share the legacy of his father, Bernard Namok Jnr says: "To quote my mum (Bakoi Namok) in the film documentary *Carry the Flag* – 'Carry on the legacy, where your dad left off...' I feel very honoured and privileged to be able to continue on the legacy."

Our Flag, Our Story shares an essential piece of Australian and Torres Strait Islander history, accessible to all and told by Torres Strait Islander creators.

"Working with Bernard Namok Jr to tell his father's story gave me a new connection to the Torres Strait Islander Flag," says Thomas Mayo. "We love the flag and all it represents and we are proud to share it with all Australians."

"We are natural born storytellers and it's important to share our stories," says Bernard. "I believe if we start educating our younger generations, they will grow up knowing and understanding our way of life."

Each page is filled with the bright illustrations of Torres Strait Islander artist Tori-Jay Mordey, through which she shares connection to the Islands through colour and symbolism like the 'Dhari' for readers to learn from.

"With every story an Indigenous writer shares with Australia, the nation becomes a little more accepting, a little more connected, and increasingly ready to embrace our culture. Indigenous stories are one of the ways we will finally see justice," says Thomas.

"*Our Flag, Our Story* tells a piece of Australian history that is long overdue," says Melena Coleman, Editor at Magabala Books. "We felt it was important for this story to be told by Torres Strait Islanders, it's about their values and their culture. It's their story to tell that all Australian's should listen to."

Our Flag Our Story will include teacher support material linked to the Australian curriculum for those wishing to use the text as a learning tool.

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The Authors

Bernard Namok Junior is a Torres Strait Islander man from Thursday Island. He is the son of the late Bernard Namok, designer of the Torres Strait Islander Flag. He co-wrote and co-produced the Screen Australia documentary *Carry the Flag* (2017) which celebrated the 25th anniversary of the flag's creation. He also worked on a radio documentary for the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia called *Let it Fly: The Namok's Legacy* (2019), that explores the copyright issues surrounding the flag.



Thomas Mayo is a Kaurareg Aboriginal and Kalkalgal, Erubamle Torres Strait Islander man. He is a signatory and advocate of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. He is the author of six books and has many articles and essays published. His latest book is co-authored by Kerry O'Brien: *The Voice to Parliament Handbook - All the detail you need* (2023).



The Illustrator

Tori-Jay Mordey is an established illustrator and artist based in Meanjin/Brisbane. Born on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait, she is descended from the Meriam and Maluyigal clans. Her published works include *Bakir & Bi* co-written with Jillian Boyd (2013), and *In the City I see* (2018). Her other works include illustrating the portrait of Cathy Freeman in *Shout Out to the Girls* (2018) and the Children's Picture Book *A Blue Kind of Day* (2022, Kokila).

Available May in all good bookshops and online from Magabala Books — RRP \$27.99

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