

## How To Write a Play When You're From An Oral Culture

One of the unique factors of MT7 is that all performances were generated from the communities, beginning with stories shared by Elders and knowledge keepers.



The writers begin with an analysis of all the performance pieces from past shows.

Once these stories were shared with the artists, and the show's vignettes and songs were developed, Elders were again asked for guidance and input to ensure the artists' interpretations honoured the subject matter accurately.

This circular and iterative process, beginning in the communities and coming back to them for input and advice, continues with this year's performance as Elders were brought in to guide and comment.

"Instead of using the western construct of a writer writing a play, with beginning middle and end, and all the artists using the written document as a starting place, we are developing our show out of the stories that came before in a structure that deliberately replicates oral tradition which is never set, finished or final but rather always evolves and changes," explains Justin.

A team of writers, visual artists and performers work collaboratively to construct the new performance, which is based on circular design concepts reflective of the culture.



The performance is structured based on a circular design that looks like a teepee rather than the linear construct of traditional western playwrights.

The four cross poles are the threads of character, setting, plot and conflict/resolution that hold the structure of the play.

Building the play is collaborative, with a number of writers and artists working together. Once the production is mapped out, Elders are invited in to review and comment.