

NATIVE LANGUAGE TYPOGRAPHY

SELECTED TOPICS

APOSTROPHES AND APOSTROPHE-LIKE SYMBOLS

CAPITALISATION IN NATIVE LANGUAGES

DIACRITICS IN NATIVE LANGUAGES

TYPOGRAPHY AND CANADIAN SYLLABICS

All scripts and orthographies have a system of rules and guidelines which help writers and designers produce documents which are attractive to the eye, legible, readable, and without unexpected and eye-distracting elements. Such formalised rules range from punctuation usage to page layout to the shapes of the letters in typefaces. These all fall under the subject of typography. There is a wide selection of accessible books and manuals about typography for English and other global languages, but very little, if anything, for the indigenous languages of the world. Many of these languages have not had a long history of literacy, and have not yet developed unique typographic practices – usually writers have adopted the punctuation rules of a neighbouring global language and left other elements of typography to non-Native publishers.

Today, with so many people self-publishing in Native languages, both in print and on-line, it is important to take a close look at some issues in typography which affect these languages. Consistent usage of Unicode characters is vital for internet searches and databases; it is important that in Kwakwaka'wakw, for example, the same underline accent character is used across the board. Good typography does *not* necessarily promote standardising an orthography, nor should current limitations in computer technology dictate how a writing system should or should not look. Instead, the guidelines on these pages discuss how to produce legible and consistently encoded text in whatever orthographies are preferred in a given community.

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