



ELEMENTS OF
Indigenous
STYLE

**A Guide for Writing By and About
Indigenous Peoples**

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APPENDIX A

Summary of Indigenous style principles

PRINCIPLE 1: THE PURPOSE OF INDIGENOUS STYLE

The purpose of Indigenous style is to produce works that:

- reflect Indigenous realities as they are perceived by Indigenous Peoples
- are truthful and insightful in their Indigenous content
- are respectful of the cultural integrity of Indigenous Peoples

PRINCIPLE 2: WHEN INDIGENOUS STYLE AND CONVENTIONAL STYLES DISAGREE

Works by Indigenous authors or with Indigenous content should follow standard style references and house styles, except where these disagree with Indigenous style.

In these works, Indigenous style overrules other styles in cases of disagreement.

PRINCIPLE 3: INDIGENOUS LITERATURES AND CANLIT

Indigenous Literatures are their own canon and not a subgroup of CanLit. Contemporary Indigenous authors' works are an extension of Traditional Knowledge systems, Indigenous histories, histories of colonization, and contemporary realities. Indigenous Literatures frame

these experiences for Indigenous readers and provide non-Indigenous readers with context for these realities.

Contemporary Indigenous Literatures connect to and extend Traditional Stories and Oral Traditions that have existed for centuries and millennia, and that long predate CanLit.

PRINCIPLE 4: RECOGNIZING INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

Indigenous style recognizes that Indigenous Peoples view themselves according to the following key principles:

- They are diverse, distinct cultures.
- They exist as part of an ongoing continuum through the generations tracing back to their ancient ancestors.
- They have not been assimilated into mainstream Canadian society, and their national and cultural paradigms have not been fundamentally altered or undermined through colonization.
- They are currently in a process of cultural reclamation and rejuvenation, marked by significant participation from Indigenous youth.
- Natural cultural change and adaptation do not mean that Indigenous Peoples have acquiesced to mainstream Canadian society, nor that Indigenous cultures have been fundamentally altered or undermined.

PRINCIPLE 5: INDIGENOUS CULTURAL PROPERTY

Indigenous style involves publishing practices that recognize and respect Indigenous cultural property.

PRINCIPLE 6: COLLABORATION

Work in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and authors to ensure that Indigenous material is expressed with the highest possible level of cultural authenticity, and in a manner that follows Indigenous Protocols and maintains Indigenous cultural integrity.

PRINCIPLE 7: ELDERS

Indigenous style recognizes the significance of Elders in the cultural integrity of Indigenous Peoples and as authentic sources of Indigenous cultural information.

Indigenous style follows Protocols to observe respect for Elders.

PRINCIPLE 8: WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND ORAL TRADITIONS

Indigenous style recognizes Traditional Knowledge and Oral Traditions as Indigenous cultural property, owned by Indigenous Peoples and over which Indigenous Peoples exert control. This recognition has bearing on permission and copyright, and applies even when non-Indigenous laws do not require it.

Writers, editors, and publishers should make every effort to ensure that Indigenous Protocols are followed in the publication of Traditional Knowledge and Oral Traditions. Where culturally sensitive Indigenous materials are in question, writers, editors, and publishers should make every effort to consult an authoritative member of the particular Indigenous People for confirmation.

PRINCIPLE 9: THE ROLE OF RELATIONSHIP AND TRUST

Indigenous style recognizes the essential role of relationship and trust in producing works with authentic Indigenous content, and the source of relationship and trust in truthfulness, honesty, mindfulness about community impacts, and continuity with history and heritage.

PRINCIPLE 10: COMPENSATION

Indigenous style recognizes the importance of royalties to Indigenous Peoples and authors, and compensation to individual Indigenous contributors, as part of fair and respectful publishing relationships.

PRINCIPLE 11: INAPPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY

Works should avoid inappropriate terminology used in reference to Indigenous Peoples, except when:

- specifically describing or discussing this terminology as terminology
- referring to a proper name, or the name of an institution or document, that contains the terminology
- quoting from a source that contains the terminology (e.g., a historical source)

If a work quotes from a historical source that uses inappropriate terminology, it is important to flag this content. This means discussing

the terminology in a footnote or endnote, or, better yet, in a paragraph in run of text.

PRINCIPLE 12: THE NAMES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Indigenous style uses the names for Indigenous Peoples that Indigenous Peoples use for themselves. It establishes these names through consultation with Indigenous Peoples, and compilations of names done through consultation with Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous style provides notes of explanation about editorial decisions related to names. This is to acknowledge that Indigenous Peoples' names in English have evolved and are evolving.

Exceptions to this principle include:

- specifically describing or discussing another term that has been used as a name for an Indigenous People
- referring to a proper name, or the name of an institution or document, that contains another name
- quoting from a source that contains another name (e.g., a historical source)

PRINCIPLE 13: TERMS THAT SHOULD BE CAPITALIZED

Terms for Indigenous identities; Indigenous governmental, social, spiritual, and religious institutions; and Indigenous collective rights should be capitalized.

PRINCIPLE 14: INDIGENOUS COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH

Indigenous style recognizes Indigenous colloquial English as a legitimate literary device that should not be edited into "proper" English.

PRINCIPLE 15: EDITING AND PUBLISHING INDIGENOUS TRAUMA

Editing and publishing Indigenous trauma requires extreme sensitivity, and is best engaged through the skills of Indigenous editors. It involves the principle of "do no more harm." It also involves taking time with authors, and, as needed, with family, community, and Elders.

PRINCIPLE 16: ENGLISH WORDS OF INDIGENOUS ORIGIN

Indigenous style acknowledges words of Indigenous origin, including

place names, to show respect for the contribution of Indigenous Peoples to the English language and mainstream culture. The recommended acknowledgement is an etymological glossary of Indigenous-origin English words. The glossary should include words specifically used in a work and words related to the language of the Indigenous Peoples at the centre of a work.

PRINCIPLE 17: THE MÉTIS RESISTANCES

The appropriate terms for the events in the history of the Métis and Canada in 1869–70 and 1885 are the *Red River Resistance* and the *Riel Resistance*.

PRINCIPLE 18: INAPPROPRIATE POSSESSIVES

Indigenous Peoples are independent sovereign nations that predate Euro-colonial states and are not "owned" by Euro-colonial states. Indigenous style therefore avoids the use of possessives that imply this, such as "Canada's Indigenous Peoples," "our Indigenous Peoples," and "the Indigenous Peoples of Canada."

PRINCIPLE 19: REUSING CULTURAL MATERIAL IN ARCHIVES OR ALREADY IN PUBLICATION

Indigenous style recognizes that materials contained in archives, or already published in works about Indigenous Peoples, may have violated cultural Protocols. Authors, editors, and publishers need to establish permission to use these materials from the Indigenous Peoples who own them as their cultural property, before these materials appear in new works by or about Indigenous Peoples.

PRINCIPLE 20: HISTORICAL TRANSLATIONS

Update historical translations from Indigenous languages to avoid literal renditions of terms.

PRINCIPLE 21: INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE TRANSLATION

Indigenous style recognizes that Indigenous language translation is an important part of Indigenous Peoples' cultural reclamation and resurgence.

- Proper acknowledgement of, and compensation for, translators is

essential as a sign of respect for their role in Indigenous language revitalization.

- Translations of Traditional Stories should use the language of the source Indigenous Nation.
- Translations of other works should use the Indigenous language of the author, unless there is a good reason not to.

PRINCIPLE 22: THE PAST TENSE

Avoid the past tense in writing about Indigenous Peoples, except when:

- referring to an activity or event that specifically and exclusively took place in the past
- referring to an Indigenous cultural activity that is no longer practised (as this is rarely the case, seek confirmation with an authoritative member of the particular Indigenous People)
- using a quotation that uses the past tense