Style Manual for Syllabics

Charles Fiero

with introduction by Mary Mitchell

Introduction

In the summer of 1975 a group of Native people representing most of the reserves in far northern Ontario met for three weeks of consultation and study in Big Trout Lake. Their purpose was to search out the best ways to produce syllabic reading material for the children of their communities.

Assisting the consultants were several linguists experienced in Cree and Ojibwe studies. Together the team addressed the questions of:

- degree and pattern of mutual intelligibility among the network of reserves,
- standards and preferences with regard to a wide variety of syllabic styles.

The final question to which all other questions led was: what "literacy areas" ought we to think of in the production of Native language readers and books for our children?

From the serious and competent work of the consultants came a division of northwestern Ontario into four "literacy areas", which to this day have continued to offer a helpful guide to writers and translators. As a follow-up to the project, one of the team linguists prepared this article, the purpose of which is to provide some terms of reference to writers and editors of syllabic materials. While much of the material refers specifically to communities in Ontario and Manitoba, it is included because of its general importance to all users of syllabics. The section on Punctuation is of particular interest. Charles Fiero, of Cass Lake, Minnesota, has worked in several communities in northwestern Ontario and northern Manitoba and has had extensive experience with syllabics.

Style Manual

In this article we will consider ways of writing Native language materials in syllabics for publication, so as to be acceptable and legible to the largest number of readers. Some things we need to consider are: the spelling of the sounds of the language, word spacing, and punctuation.

We need to keep in mind that the Native languages are languages in their own right, with their own spoken literary forms and established writing practices. In developing written literary standards, the character and resources of the spoken and written language must be respected: you do not have to make it conform to some other language (say, English) at some point just because the latter's written form has prestige and tradition on its side. Still, there may be definite advantage to be gained by borrowing orthographic usages from another language, provided that the character of the Native language is not violated by woodenly applying the mechanics of a foreign system.

The first two sections, Sounds and Spellings and Regional Orthographic Standards may be considered as background and reference material for section 3: Summary of Spelling Conventions. The latter constitutes a set of rules for editing or standardizing materials for publication. It may also be used as a guideline for writers who wish to standardize their own work. The section Foreign Words and Sounds offers some ideas about spelling words borrowed from English and French. The section on Punctuation has to do with rules for word-spacing, punctuation marks, hyphenating and paragraphing.

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PROMOTING NATIVE WRITING SYSTEMS

Sounds and Spellings

The Northern Ojibwe and Cree dialects of north-western Ontario have some 17 to 19 significant sounds or "phonemes". The sounds which are shared by all dialects of both languages in the area are these: the short or quickly spoken vowel sounds represented by the letters /i o a/ \(^{113}\), the long or slowly spoken vowels /e i io aa/ \(^{114}\) and the consonant sounds /p t c k s h m n y w/. \(^{115}\) Sounds occurring in some dialects and not in others are the consonants /s/ and /r/. \(^{116}\)

Dialect Groups

At an orthography seminar held in Big Trout Lake, Ontario, in August 1975, the delegates were asked to sort themselves into groups of closely related language communities. While every community was slightly different in its language from every other community, it was easy for all delegates to recognize those language communities with which they had the most in common, and those with which they had less or very little in common. On the basis of this sorting out, the delegates decided on four language and dialect regions in north-western Ontario (that is, north of the C.N.R. line). Each region except "Cree" was named after a central or prominent community within that region.

Cree includes the communities of Fort Albany, Attawapiskat, Kashechewan, Winisk and Fort Severn.

Lac Seul Ojibwe includes the central communities of Lac Seul, Cat Lake and Osnaburg, and outlying communities: on the west, Pikangikum and Poplar Hill; on the east, Fort Hope, Lansdowne House and Webique. \(^{117}\)

Sandy Lake Ojibwe includes Sandy Lake, North Spirit Lake, and Deer Lake.

Big Trout Lake Ojibwe includes Big Trout Lake, Kingfisher Lake, Bearskin Lake, Round Lake, Muskrat Dam, Angling Lake, Wunnumin Lake, Kasabonica and Satchigo. \(^{118}\)

Phonological Distinctives

The dialect communities listed above have in their sound systems some distinctive features which relate to orthography.

1. Glottal stop. In the Lac Seul group, a glottal stop /ʔ/ may occur between vowels, between a vowel and /m/, /n/, or /w/, or at the end of words. For example, maʔiinkan "wolf", weʔwe "snow goose", oteʔ "heart". In other groups, including some in the Fort Hope-Webique subgroup, /ʔ/ occurs rather than /ʔ/ between vowels and between a vowel and /m n w/: mahiinkan, wehwe.

2. /s/ and /ʃ/ distinction. Cree, Lac Seul and Sandy Lake distinguish consistently between /s/

\(^{113}\)The sounds written in syllabics △ □ □ . The slant lines / / are used to indicate that significant sound units of particular languages are being discussed, not the letters used to write those sounds.

\(^{114}\)The vowel sounds in the Ojibwe and Cree words oo "yes", oor or oor, I, dor "snow", b or b "porcupine".

\(^{115}\)/c/ stands for the initial sound in oc "canoe".

\(^{116}\)/ʔ/ stand for the initial "sh" sound in oc "duck"; /ʔ/ for glottal stop, the final consonant in Ojibwe bu "his heart".

\(^{117}\)The last three communities named have sound and grammatical features not common to other dialects in the group. These will be treated as a special subgroup.

\(^{118}\)Speakers of dialects in the Sandy Lake and Big Trout groups may prefer not to be listed as "Ojibwe". The word is used here as opposed to "Cree" as defined above.
and /w/. Some communities within the Big Trout group do not distinguish consistently.

3. /hs hws/ and /s/ distinction. In Lac Seul, Sandy Lake and Big Trout, a distinction is maintained between plain /s/ or /s/ and a strong or aspirated /hs/ or /hws/. Cree appears to make no significant distinction.

4. In such test words as "wolf" and "he sees it", Lac Saul and Sandy Lake have consonant clusters with /n/: mahiinkan/mahiinkan, waapantak; some Big Trout dialects have mahiikan, waapatak with only /n/, /n/; Cree has mahiihan, waapahtahk, with the clusters /hik/, /hws/.

These distinctions are not terribly important with regard to orthography, since many writers ignore them; but being aware of them and how they operate can help us give such distinctions the attention they deserve and no more.

Regional Orthographic Standards

Generally speaking, there are two syllabic orthographies for Ojibwe and Cree; the Plains Cree or "Western" syllabary, and the Moose Cree or "Eastern". The Western syllabary has accent-like final characters and, for consonant-plus-/w/ clusters and /w/-plus-vowel, places a dot to the right of the syllabic. The Eastern syllabary has for its finals ordinary syllabic characters reduced in size, and places the /w/ dot to the left of the syllabic.119 The chart on the following page compares the two basic syllabaries. While using basically one or the other orthography, the regional language groups have certain distinctions in writing, and standards were established for each group. In some cases, strong local and individual preferences were compromised in the interest of maintaining unity of orthography for the larger group.

Cree dialects adopted the Eastern syllabary as a whole.120 Consonant clusters with /n/ (/nt nc nk/) are written out as in the words *L~J~ "insect", and *~.~ "nine". Aspiration (') and vowel length mark (.) are used where necessary to clear up ambiguities, as in the following examples:

- mbmb 'screw'
- mbmb 'lake'
- d~b~ 'leaf'
- s~b~ 'willow'
- ~,j~ 'he walks'
- ~,j~ 'she throws something at him'

The following quotation from a story by Mary Solomon of Kashechewan illustrates how the Eastern Cree standard works.

The Lac Seul Ojibwe group also use the Eastern syllabary, with certain variables:

1. The standard Eastern a-series finals <~~~ are paralleled by an i-series set commonly used in handwriting ~~~~

2. The clusters /mp nt nc nk ns/ may be written out or abbreviated:

- dp or dp 'his hand'

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119 This generalization refers to typewritten or printed literature. Handwritten literature, such as personal letters, often shows combinations of both systems as well as some innovations.

120 At present, the Eastern syllabary is standard only for Kashechewan or the Cree-speaking communities in Ontario. For the other communities in the Cree group, the Western syllabary is standard, but with the w-dot to the left of the syllabic.
### Chart 1. Eastern and Western Syllabaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>Vowels</th>
<th>Finals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none/h/²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w (West)</td>
<td>²/⁴</td>
<td>⁵/⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(East)</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>⁵/⁶</td>
<td>&gt;/²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>š</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r (West)</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(East)</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
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<tr>
<td>l (West)</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(East)</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sk</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hk</td>
<td>¹/²</td>
<td>³/⁴</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Aspiration (’“) and vowel length mark (‘) may be used or omitted according to local and individual preference, but most writers omit them in casual writing.

\[\text{I” or i’m ‘he is big}\]

\[\text{“ or “ ‘I come}\]

\[\text{“ or “ ‘pail}\]

\[\text{“ or “ ‘tree}\]

\[\text{“ or “ ‘lake}\]

\[\text{“ or “ ‘meat}\]

The \textit{Sandy Lake} group uses the Western syllabary with the following modifications.

1. The syllables /e i ii o oo a aa/ and /ye yi yii yo yoo ya yaa/ are represented by a single set:

\[\text{isaayek ‘if you go}\]

\[\text{piisaayohk ‘come}\]

\[\text{ayaa ‘there is}\]

\[\text{/we wi wii wo woo wa waa/ follow the standard Western syllabary: \text{n, n, n, n, n, n.}\}

2. Final -/k hk nk/ are written ‘/ (with ‘/ as a possible substitute).

3. Final -/p hp/ are written (‘), as in \text{pit, pit, net’.}

4. The clusters /hs h~1 are often distinguished from /s sl by writing an ‘s’-final (‘/) before the syllabic ‘s’. Final /hs/ is written the same as final /s/ (‘/).

\[\text{‘two}\]

\[\text{‘three}\]

5. Both /s/ and /?/ are written with ‘/’

\[\text{siipi ‘river}\]

\[\text{?iih?ip ‘duck}\]

6. Clusters with /m/ and /n/ may be abbreviated with just the last member of the cluster written: \text{sa?‘} or \text{sa? /niinawint/‘we’.}

The \textit{Big Trout Lake} group uses Western Cree syllabary.\textsuperscript{121} There are the following qualifications:

\textsuperscript{121}Some of the Big Trout group communities are familiar with the Eastern syllabic set ‘/’ and like to use it, the only limitation being that some Western Cree typewriters do not have this set.
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1. The full series of vowel and Y-syllabics are used.
2. Some writers insert the 'h'-final sign ('\') before a word-medial syllabic: $\&\& + 'wolf'; $\&\& 'that one'. ('\') is also used by some writers to indicate the consonant clusters /hp ht he/hk/: $\&\& 'earth'. Final 's' ('\') may be used to distinguish /hs h$ from /s $, as in the Sandy Lake orthography.
3. Some writers dot the syllabic for vowel length: $\&\& 'river', $\&\& 'mink'.

Summary of Spelling Conventions

Under some of the headings below, options are offered to allow for local or individual preferences within a regional orthographic standard. Such options are (for the most part) choices between more abbreviated spellings and more exacting or precise spellings.

In preparing materials for publication, the editor, if bilingual, should examine the material submitted, to find out which set of options the writer most nearly follows. The editor may then standardize, taking care not to violate the writer's style as long as it is in accord with the regional standard for the writer's language community.

Occasionally a writer will be overparticular, putting in vowel length marks, aspirations or other marks where they do not belong. These of course should be quietly omitted, and the writer's intentions for precise spelling honoured by allowing such marks to stand where they really belong.

1. Vowel syllabics for /e i ii o oo a aa/.
   - Lac Seul, Big Trout and Cree standards: \& \& \&
   - Sandy Lake standard: \& \& \&

2. 'Y'-syllabics /ye yi yii yo yoo ya yaa/.
   - Lac Seul, Big Trout and Cree: \& \& \&
   - Sandy Lake: \& \& \&

3. 'W'-syllabics /we wi wii wo woo wa waa/.
   - Lac Seul and Cree: \& \& \&
   - Big Trout and Sandy Lake: \& \& \&

4. Vowel length dot over the syllabic (').  
   - Options: 1. leave unmarked; 2. mark words and grammatical forms which would be ambiguous\footnote{Examples of word ambiguity are $\&\& 'he works' and $\&\& 'he hires'. Examples of grammatical ambiguity are \&\& 'I go' and \&\& 'you go'; \&\& 'you see him' and \&\& 'he sees him'.} even within context; 3. mark all long vowels.  
   Sandy Lake: 1; Cree, Big Trout and Lac Seul: 1, 2, or 3.

5. Finals.
   - Cree: Eastern a-series finals\footnote{Listed under Finals, East, a-series, Syllabics Chart; presently applies only to Kashechiwan. Other Ontario Cree communities use Western finals.}
   - Lac Seul: either a-series or i-series\footnote{Listed under Finals, East, Syllabics Chart.}
   - Big Trout: Western standard
   - Sandy Lake: Western standard with optional use of -p and -k +.

6. Aspiration (/h/-plus-consonant clusters).
   - Options: 1. leave unmarked; 2. mark only where ambiguity would occur in context; 3. mark all occurrences.  
   - Sandy Lake (1); Cree (2); Big Trout and Lac Seul; (1), (2) or (3) according to writers' and editors' preference.

\footnote{Listed under Finals, East, Syllabics Chart.}
7. /s ɡ/ contrast.
   - Cree and Lac Seul: always write contrast.
   - Big Trout standard: no contrast, but individuals may opt for the /ɡ/ set.
   - Sandy Lake do not write contrast: 's'-syllabics only.

8. Consonant clusters with /n/ or /m/.
   - Options: 1. write only last consonant; 2. write fully where ambiguity would
     otherwise occur; 3. write fully in all instances.
   - Cree: (3); Big Trout and Lac Seul: (1) or (3); Sandy Lake: (1).

   - All groups write fully except that Big Trout and Sandy Lake write (*) for /ɡ/.

10. Contrast between /s ɡ/ and /hs hs/.
    - Options: 1. do not write contrast; 2. write contrast where necessary to avoid
      ambiguity; 3. write in all instances.
    - Sandy Lake: (2) using (*) to indicate the cluster.
    - Big Trout: (1); or (2) using (*) or ();
    - Lac Seul: (1);
    - Cree: no actual contrast.

Foreign Words and Sounds

A language does one of two things with foreign words it borrows: it adopts them pretty much
as they are; or it changes the borrowed words to agree with the sound and grammar of the adopting
language. (In some instances place names are translated in the receiving language.)

For example, the name 'Sioux Lookout' has been taken into Ojibwe with various degrees of
doctoring, and may be used as much or more than the Ojibwe place name. Some speakers pronounce it
'in English'. Some change the vowels and add an Ojibwe suffix: Soolokaawatink. Some go farther and
substitute an /n/ for the English 't': Soonokaawatink. All these ways are acceptable: they are used and
understood.

Native speakers will probably need no rules for adapting or adopting English words into
Ojibwe. The suggestions given here are just to facilitate writing of borrowed words.

1. In respelling borrowed foreign words, pronounce the word in Ojibwe (or Cree) first, and
then spell it in syllabics. This should help avoid the hazard of tying the syllabic spelling to
the English or French spelling instead of to the Native pronunciation. For example, one
could reason that Kenora would be respelled ke ɡ no a ra ɡd , ɡd but quite a few
Ojibwes neither write it nor pronounce it that way. They hear the first syllable as ki ɡ and
the second as nwa a ɡ, and spell accordingly ɡd. Similarly, 'John' is neither
nor ɡ, but ɡ (Cwaan). This is because both the 'ah' sound in John and the 'o' sound
in Kenora are closer to Ojibwaa ɡaa/ than they are to Ojibwe ɡa/ or ɡo/.

2. In writing syllables with 'r' and 'l', many Ojibwes write an 'N'-syllabic with the 'r' or 'l'
 sign above it. For typing, it might be better to stick to either a straight 'l', 'r', or
'N'-syllabic. If a combination is necessary write in on the line rather than combining the
syllabics one above the other. For example, ɡ is easier to type than ɡ , 'Rae'.

3. While many people are familiar with the 'L'-syllabics used in Moose Cree publications, the
'R'-syllabics set ɡ is less well known and can easily be confused with the 's' series
ɡ, ɡ .

Options:

a. use both the Eastern 'L' and 'R' sets; 125

125 The 'L' and 'R' syllabics are included in the Eastern syllabary because of Cree dialects where /l/ or /r/ are actual sounds in
the language. On the other hand, the 'L' and 'R' finals in the Western syllabary were evidently devised to handle borrowed
foreign words.
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b. use the 'L' set for both 'L' and 'R';
c. use only Eastern finals (L) and (R);
d. use only Western finals (L) and (R).

4. In foreign words containing v, f, or th, the usual practice is to substitute Ojibwe/Cree p for f and v, and t for th:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>i/ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>o/oo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L)</td>
<td>a/aa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(R)</td>
<td>final</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A set of characters for these sounds is in use and is available on some syllabic typewriters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Sound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i/ii</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o/oo</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a/aa</td>
<td>(L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>final</td>
<td>(R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Punctuation

In general, the purpose of punctuation is to indicate things we cannot indicate with the letters of the alphabet (or syllabic letters), such as, where one word ends and another begins, the beginning and ending of phrases and sentences, pauses, intonations (in some languages), and identifying quoted words or words with a special meaning.

1. Word space is included here as a kind of punctuation. Usually, single words should be separated from other single words by spaces without letters or other marks. Not all writers and not all written languages do this, but it can be very helpful to the reader to have word spacing used consistently.

a. What can be spoken and understood as a single word should be written as a single word, whether short like 'I' or long like 'he pretended to be a stump'.

b. It is probably better not to separate prefixes as if they were separate words. A person reading his own language ordinarily takes the prefixes for part of the word, and doesn't require special help with which is the prefix and which the main part of the word.

Unnecessary: b Al'Ll.', L Better: bMLl.~L

c. In cases where a word is interrupted after the prefix, and another word put in, it is all right to separate the prefix: bAS b 0 P 9CL

d. Possessive or personal prefixes should not be separated from the main word (and especially never in the case of kinship terms or words denoting body parts).

Unnecessary: 0 0' bL, 0 <J'6bL, t>LLL, IJr'(L

Better: 0 bL, 0 <J'6b 'bL, t>LLL, IJr'(L

e. Occasionally two or three short words in a phrase are treated as one word, and may be written together without wordspace. b Vord, b 0 P 9CL

f. The short form 0 e for 0 e is sometimes treated as a prefix to the word following it. In this case it may be written as part of the following word without wordspace. b A bL, b 0 P 9CL, b 0 P 9CL

g. Compound words that are made up of two Ojibwe words strung together should be written as one word if there is a 'joining syllable': b 0 P 9CL 'Pickle Lake'. Otherwise they should be written separately: b P 9CL 'Bearskin Lake'. Foreign words made up of an English place-name plus an Ojibwe classifier such as 'river' or 'lake' should probably be written separately.

2. Periods and commas are 'pause markers' used to indicate actual or possible stopping places. The period (.) or comma (,) stands for a 'final pause' -- the place where you can stop speaking and not say any more, the pause where you start a new sentence. The comma (,) is used to mark non-final pauses -- places where there may be a change in intonation, or a momentary silence, or just a feeling that two phrases ought to be separated somehow, before going on to finish the sentence. Commas can also be used to separate items in a
Examples:

Here are a couple of examples of the use of period and comma.

The need for at least a second kind of non-final pause marker in Ojibwe and Cree isn't well established, but if one were needed, either semicolon (:) or dash (-) would probably fit. In the following example, the dash has been used.

3. Question mark. Most questions in Ojibwe and Cree are marked lexically: yes-or-no questions are indicated by the particle 'na' = 'no', and information type questions by such words as 'how? 'who? 'what?' For this reason, many feel that a special punctuation mark for questions isn't necessary, and few Native writers use a question mark. However, this is a matter of individual preference.

4. Exclamation points (!) can be used effectively to indicate special stress, strong feeling, or loudness.

5. Quotation marks. Quotations are usually set off by special words in Ojibwe and Cree -- phrases such as 'he spoke to him', 'he said', and the like. In ordinary correspondence, when there is quoted material, the Native writer puts in the quotation-marking words as a matter of course. Sometimes though, in story material, especially stories copied from a recording, quotations aren't as clearly marked as they should be for reading, and punctuation may help. If you do use quotation marks use the curved kind (" ") as the straight quotes (" ") are nearly identical with the aspiration marker in the syllabary. Some experimenting has been done with the colon (:) as a quote marker. Example:

6. Hyphenisation. The ends of written words do not always coincide with the edge of a printed column, so it is frequently necessary to break a word off at the right hand margin and finish it on the next line. The hyphen (-) is the punctuation mark which says: 'This word is finished on the next line.' A ragged (uneven) right hand margin is now quite acceptable in printed publications, so that words do not have to be hyphenated quite so often. But you will have to hyphenate sometimes, and here are some rules for consistency's sake:

a. Use a symbol that won't be confused with finals in the syllabary. (=) is better than (-) because it won't be confused with the final (-) for 'ch'.

b. When you hyphenate a word, try to keep meaningful parts of the word intact. Avoid making cuts in the middle of a prefix. For example, στισ = στις <στις <στις is a poor division. στις = στις <στις is better.

c. Single-syllable personal prefixes shouldn't stand alone. As a rule of thumb, try to have at least two syllables on either side of the 'cut'. This also means do not hyphenate a three-syllable word if you can help it.

Poor: στισ = στις <στις

Better: στισ = στις <στις

d. You may prefer to omit the hyphen if you are cutting between a frequently used prefix and the main body of the word. But you should decide in advance which prefixes to treat this way. For a rule of thumb, a prefix ending in a vowel, which can be followed by a word form beginning with a vowel, could receive this treatment without causing too much confusion. For example, the στις in στις <στις can be cut off without a hyphen, but if you break the word στις after the στις, you should use
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a hyphen: r6' = r9

e. Single-syllable verb prefixes such as b, P r C seem to be an exception and can be separated with or without a hyphen. Example: b P r9,-, P A r9,-

f. Never hyphenate so that finals stand alone at the beginning of a line. If you must, squeeze the other letters together to make room for the final and any punctuation that follows it at the end of the line; or else waste some space and put the whole word or a larger part of it on the next line.
Poor: b \ b 6 r6 6 ba-
Better: b \ b 6 r6 6 ba-

7. Indenting for new paragraph. Indenting the first line of a paragraph is a device meant to help the reader. Another widely used device is not to indent, but to leave a line of white space between paragraphs. If you can afford the space in your publication, it may be a big help to readers to do both: space and indent. For syllabics, indent at least two spaces for a narrow column, to not more than five for a wide column.

8. When to start a new paragraph. It is good to paragraph frequently. Long columns without some kind of white space break tend to make reading more difficult and detract from the printed message. The point at which to start a new paragraph will have to be guessed by the Native writer, or the Native-speaking editor. People probably speak in paragraphs, and there are words which seem to indicate that one is finished with one chunk of sentences and going on to another one: phrases such as, 'and another time...'; 'and also...'; or the subject matter, or a change in the grammatical form of certain words may be the cue. One may also want to make a new paragraph following a long quotation, or where a change of speaker or actor is indicated.

The following composition by Jeremiah Duncan gives some idea of possibilities in paragraphing.

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    L6ba \ L6ba \ L6ba \ L6ba \ L6ba \ L6ba
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
    g3 \ ge \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b \ 9b
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