What does “First Nation deep roots in the forests” mean? Identification of principles and objectives for promoting forest-based development

Jean-Michel Beaudoin, Luc Bouthillier, Janette Bulkan, Harry Nelson, Ronald Trosper, and Stephen Wyatt

Abstract: We often hear about the resistance of First Nation (FN) communities to the industrial model of forestry, but we hear less about what they wish to achieve. Translating FN perspectives into concepts that are understood by the mainstream society can help inform current and future forest policies. Such translation can support initiatives that seek ways to increase FN participation in the forest sector. This paper documents one process of translation. It identifies the principles and objectives for forest-based development of the Essipit Innu First Nation in Quebec, Canada, reflective of the deep roots that anchor the Essipit to their territory. Based on participatory research carried out between January and July 2013, we identify 34 objectives folded into three core FN principles: Nutshimiu–Aitun (identity–territoriality), Mishkutunam (sharing–exchange), and Pakassitishun (responsibility–autonomy). Our analysis shows that the economic aims of the dominant forestry model are too narrow for FN communities. This paper contributes to expanding FN engagement in forestry through management and economic approaches that are better adapted to their culture and values.

Key words: First Nation, forestry, culture, sustainable development, Quebec.

1. Introduction

“Deep roots in the forests” is a message conveyed by many stories in the Aboriginal world, yet understanding what this message means remains a major challenge for Canadian forestry. On the one hand, First Nations (FNs) have used and stewarded forests for centuries, accumulating valuable knowledge along the way (Trosper et al. 2012). Today, with 80% of FN communities located in forested areas (Gysbers and Lee 2003), standing forests continue to play a central role in the environment, economy, life, and culture of FN communities (Booth and Muir 2013; Tindall et al. 2013; Beaudoin 2014; Smith 2015). On the other hand, forest exploitation on a commercial scale has long been promoted as an instrument for economic development in FN communities (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) 1996; Government of Quebec 2011). Recent reports show that the forest sector plays an increasing role in FN economies across Canada, with FNs holding 6.4% of Canada’s total wood allocation volumes, involving over 1400 FN businesses and 16 000 FN workers (National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA) 2007; Beaudoin et al. 2009; Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC) 2014; Government of Canada 2015). Yet the forest sector creates the potential for conflicts, as explained by Berkes and Davidson-Hunt (2006), where industrial-scale logging practices impact forest ecosystems (e.g., loss of biodiversity and old forests) and, consequently, FN cultural links to the forests. Thus, there are ongoing discussions in FN communities over the trade-offs between the necessity to create jobs versus the responsibility to protect the forests and FN culture (Booth and Skelton 2011; Smith 2015). The dichotomy between the visions of “intact forest landscape” and “forest industry” prompts the following questions. Are these two visions really incompatible, or are the constraints imposed by the industrial development
models limiting the kind of objectives that FN communities can promote?

The Canadian forest sector is built around a dominant model of industrial forestry that emphasizes the economic values of Canada’s forests (Beckley 1998; Howlett and Rayner 2001; Chiasson and Leclerc 2013), while ecological values are treated as constraints and addressed through regulations and the creation of protected areas in which harvesting is excluded. In this model, governments assume that forest companies with long-term timber rights will generate jobs, revenues, and other social benefits in forest communities (Nadeau et al. 2003). This provides a rationale for government to actively seek to increase FN-held concessions or licenses to tackle poverty in FN communities (Nikolakis and Nelson 2015). For example, the last federal strategy, A Vision for Canada’s Forests: 2008 and Beyond, states “Aboriginals and their businesses have a role to play in the forest economy. They are involved in the development of sustainable forest management practices, notably through the application of their knowledge and practices” (Canadian Council of Forest Ministers 2006, p. 12).

Research indicates, however, that such policies have failed to meet the expectations of FN peoples (Parkins et al. 2006; Wyatt et al. 2015). One well-known challenge is that “governance approaches and tools to engage First Nations in natural resource development are too few and limited in scope. Often, they cast First Nations in the narrow role of respondent; that is, of responding to already defined projects as part of regulatory reviews or fixed processes for consultation and accommodation” (Working Group on Natural Resource Development (WGNRD) 2015, p. 14). We know that FN communities expect more than economic benefits from forestry initiatives, and extensive US research on indigenous governance has demonstrated the importance of linking economic development to good governance in ways that are consistent with values and objectives (Jorgensen 2007). However, there is much work to be done to achieve sustainable forest management in First Nation communities or in their territories (Wyatt 2008; Booth and Muir 2013).

There are a number of sources that provide interesting insights into how FN values can be incorporated into existing forest management systems (Wyatt 2008). In particular, FN criteria and indicators (C&I) have been promoted as a tool to incorporate FN rights and values in the sustainable management of forests (NAFA 1995; Kopra and Sevenson 2008). Several examples exist wherein the values of FN community members were identified and translated in the form of principles, criteria, and indicators (Natcher and Hickey 2002; Karjala et al. 2004; Sherry et al. 2005; Shearer et al. 2009; Saint-Arnaud and Papatie 2012). These sets of C&I, generally derived from national frameworks, build a baseline on which trends in the sustainability of forest resources can be measured and monitored to go beyond sustained yield forestry and address the needs of Aboriginal communities (Smith et al. 2010). Previous research highlights that community members’ participation in the development of FN C&I is important to create a local framework that is effective at incorporating Aboriginal peoples in the discussion about forestry (Hickey and Nelson 2005), as well as to take into consideration social heterogeneity within communities. Yet adapting forest management activities to reflect forest values and conditions that respect and integrate Aboriginal rights, needs, and perspectives remains challenging (Adam and Kneeshaw 2008). Before focusing on forest management activities, communities prefer considering a broader land use planning exercise, which foresters are reluctant to do (Smith et al. 2010). In the end, Aboriginal C&I based on the experience and world view of FN peoples provide valuable information on forest conditions and the sustainability of forest practices. However, they do not provide a systematic way to assess the trade-offs involved in the economic development of forest resources or are they necessarily integrated into larger strategic objectives that the FN may have and their decision-making processes in which this development may be evaluated.

The rationale behind current dominant forestry models prompts forest companies to create partnerships with FN communities to secure continued access to timber concession licenses (Hickey and Nelson 2005). However, Boyd and Troper (2010) show that joint venture partnerships do not really give FN communities control over forest management decisions and fail to address the preservation of traditional culture, values, and language. As mentioned previously, a major issue is that FN communities have been working mainly within the constraints of the dominant forestry model (Wyatt 2008), with little flexibility to define a model of their own. This occurs because the management of Canada’s forest is dominated by the decision-making of experts from the state and private forest companies (Beckley 1998; Bouthiller 2001; Chiasson and Leclerc 2013), and tenures and licenses have long been designed to meet the needs of forestry companies rather than the needs of FN or local communities (Ross and Smith 2002). How then, can governments and forest companies rationalize and share the benefits of forest-based development with FN communities? How can they better address the needs of FN communities?

Traditionally, economic development has been defined as the process whereby per capita income increases over a long period of time (Barbier 1987). Porter (2000, p. 19) specifies that economic development is “determined by the productivity of a nation’s economy, which is measured by the value of the goods and services (products) produced per unit of the nation’s human, capital, and physical resources.” Troper (1998) indicates, however, that economic growth may not be the primary goal of FN communities and that it is important to also consider non-economic goals. More specifically, Troper (1995, 2009) and Troper et al (2012)) propose six principles of FN approaches to economic development that could also apply to forest-based development:

1. Identity: distinct cultures of FN peoples are to be protected and enhanced;
2. Connectedness: everything is connected, including the people and their territory;
3. Reciprocity: FN systems of sharing benefits among themselves need to be maintained;
4. Sustainability: maintaining the sustainability of the system;
5. Accountability: FN leaders must be responsible for their actions, especially in relation to land, reciprocity, and sustainability.

Footnotes:
1Forest management is “the process of planning and implementing practices for the stewardship and use of forests and other wooded land to meet specific environmental, economic, social, and cultural objectives” (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 2014). Thus, it focuses on operational aspects for maintaining forest ecosystems and their functions. In comparison, forest governance is “a modus operandi by which officials and institutions (formal or not) acquire and use authority in the management of the [forest] sector to support and improve the well-being and quality of life of stakeholders depending on it” (Chiasson and Leclerc 2013, p. 65). Thus, it focuses on how decisions are made about forests and on the interests of stakeholders.
2Aboriginal world views are eccentric (Parsons and Prest 2003), i.e., humans are part of the natural world and maintain strong connections with the land. Aboriginal world views also convey principles of respectful interactions and relationships with surrounding forests and the world around them.
3In this paper, “state” refers to both federal and provincial levels of government. In Canada, provinces hold administrative jurisdiction over Crown forests and the federal government holds jurisdiction over national parks and Indian reserves.
6. Limits on market economy: FN economic development puts a limit on the logic of market capitalism, notably by not managing forests only for the purposes of wood production and profit accumulation.

While we can find references to these characteristics across several disciplines, including anthropology, political science, and sociology (Hornborg 1994; Holm et al. 2003; Rodon 2003; Simard 2003), no research has spelled out the implication for how these findings might inform FN forest-based development initiatives in Canada. Although we were not testing Troper’s principles in our exercise, they provided useful insights for understanding the Essipit case study.

Research shows that in contrast to goals around maximizing either economic activity or aggregate wealth, some FN economies emphasize elements of egalitarianism, sharing, and communal values. Interviewees identified a model of forestry integrating multiple values and enhancing a stewardship ethic over their territories. “Thus, the question is no longer ‘to log or not to log’ but how to log with respect for FN deep roots in the forests.”

The culture of forestry in Canada is changing (Stevenson and Natcher 2009), with FN communities diversifying their approaches to economic development (Beaudoin 2012). Henceforth, the term “forest-based development” is used in this article to allow for alternative models, rather than simply a timber extraction one, as there probably is no one FN model. This article draws on the results of a research project that identified the linkages between FN values, needs, and objectives for forest-based development and that paid careful attention to the ways in which socioeconomic benefits were recognized beyond the traditionally more narrow economic focus employed in dominant forestry models. In this article, we first contextualize the research topic and explain the methodology. Then, we present our results, discuss them, and offer our conclusions.

2. Methods

The research project employed a participatory approach to advance knowledge on FN objectives for forest-based development. Participatory research provides local communities with a significant role in the research process, grounds research in local perspectives and needs, and distributes research benefits directly to the community (Fortmann 2008; Wilmsen et al. 2008). Wulfhorst et al. (2008, p. 33) clearly state “Community input can help to guard against experts making incorrect assumptions about the values, concerns and goals of a community whom they study, as well as allow their own bias(es) to influence research findings.” Accordingly, we carried out this research in partnership with the Innu First Nation of Essipit in Quebec, Canada. Between fall 2009 and fall 2011, we worked with a team of local collaborators to identify the research objectives and methodology, as well as to pursue funding opportunities. The project received formal approval of the Essipit Band Council and the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

We organized a strategic planning exercise with the Innu First Nation of Essipit, hereafter referred to as “Essipit.” Figure 1 shows the localization of Essipit on the Haute-Côte-Nord region of Quebec (Canada), as well as its traditional territory, the Nitassinan (8403 km²).

Essipit was chosen for this research for two main reasons. First, the community showed a keen interest in participating in the strategic planning exercise as a way to envision development of its Nitassinan. Second, Essipit is characterized by a community development model that has been described as a social and economic success (St-Georges 2009; Proulx and Gauthier 2012). In particular, Essipit has invested considerable resources for the acquisition and management of six outfitters since 1983. Essipit outfitters are businesses that have exclusive rights to manage hunting, fishing, and trapping activities on a defined territory (385 km²), including the provision of accommodation, guides, and services. Thus, understanding the Essipit model of forest-based development will contribute to existing literature, while also supporting the community’s own development efforts.

Essipit participants in all phases of the research were 18 years old or older and had knowledge, experience, or interest regarding community or forest-based development, which is consistent with Creswell’s (1998) definition of key informants. The research project built upon earlier work by Gitane St-Georges (St-Georges 2009; Beaudoin et al. 2012) on Essipit’s preoccupations, values, and aspirations regarding its Nitassinan. Local collaborators for the current study sought out individuals who had participated in the earlier study. The aim was to further develop the reflection already undertaken but to refocus it on objectives regarding forest-based development of Essipit’s Nitassinan.

Focusing on Essipit’s Innu Assi allowed us to move beyond the prevailing model of forestry and develop principles and objectives based on the culture and values of Essipit people. We did not employ the framework of previously reported work on C&I. By doing so, we wanted to focus on FN world views, rather than on the sustainability debate, and how they viewed forestry from the broader, more strategic perspective that informed their choices over whether and how to develop their forest resources.

It is important to mention that Essipit, along with two other Innu First Nation communities, are negotiating a comprehensive land claim settlement with the Quebec and the federal governments. Thus, the Essipit Band Council could become the sole manager (i.e., final decision-maker) over forest-based activities in Essipit Innu Assi. A strategic planning exercise would provide a guide for the rest of the Nitassinan where Essipit must negotiate with other forest stakeholders. In total, we met with 28 key informants (14 women and 14 men), 19 of whom had participated in the research of St-Georges (2009). We stopped adding participants when we reached a point of data saturation; in other words, when we stopped hearing new information. The number of informants represents 14% of the 204 Band members living on reserve.

Data collection relied on focus group meetings (Krueger et Casey 2000), which occurred between January and July 2013 during which the first author lived in the community of Essipit. The seven discussion groups consisted of male elders, female elders, outfitter guardians, land users, women, forest entrepreneurs, and artisans (see Table 1). Groups varied in size from three to eight persons.

We use the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) definition of “objective”: “The basic purpose laid down by the Organization for the forest enterprise, including the decision of policy and the choice of means for attaining the purpose” (Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) 2015, p. 79).

Within the process of treaty negotiations, the Innu Assi is a territorial assignment of full property (communal private land) for Essipit. The Innu Assi is expected to become the base for Essipit’s governmental autonomy and an essential part of its socioeconomic development. The Innu Assi includes four of the six outfitters held by Essipit.
We used a written guide to aid standardization of the focus groups. We started by briefly explaining the context of the Innu Assi, with a map of the territory as a visual support. Before the discussions, we also explained to participants the meaning of the term “objective” and we further clarified that an objective should be specific, measurable (i.e., indicators), realistic, and time-framed (e.g., 10 years). We made a short presentation on existing Essipit community capacity in forest-based development as a way of ensuring that all participants were equally aware of the issues. We asked semi-structured questions to better understand the following issues: (i) their visions and objectives regarding forest-based development, (ii) the expected benefits, and (iii) the indicators for evaluating success of future actions that Essipit might take.

Table 1. Description of focus groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Citation code</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male elders</td>
<td>Men over 55 years</td>
<td>ME</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female elders</td>
<td>Women over 55 years</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outfitter guardians</td>
<td>Members working for Essipit outfitters</td>
<td>OG</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land users</td>
<td>Members occupying the territory significantly, especially for the practice of traditional activities</td>
<td>LU</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Women between 18 and 54 years</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essipit forest entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Members who are forest entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs</td>
<td>EFE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisans</td>
<td>Members working as artisans</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants by gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Published by NRC Research Press

Fig. 1. Location of Essipit Reserve and Nitassinan in Quebec (Source: Essipit Band Council 2013).
Focus groups were conducted in French, as Essipit community members do not use Innu aimun (i.e., Innu language) on a daily basis. All discussions were recorded. Our local partners played an active role during data collection: two of them as interviewers and one as an interviewee. In particular, the Band Council’s professional forester played an important role as a cultural mediator during the focus groups with elders. Additionally, our local partners helped to introduce Innu aimun in this research. This was important to them as a sign of acknowledgment and support of Essipit’s efforts to revive Innu aimun. Moreover, the Essipit community wants to build a forest model that shifts away from the dominant model of industrial forestry and opens space for Aboriginal world views. Using Innu aimun in the research process offered a way to assert the intentions underpinning this new model. Indeed, research participants did appreciate not being forced into western thinking, and in truth, they did appreciate how the results were framed into categories of their own.

Although certain themes were established in advance, we also adopted an open-coding approach based on grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1994) to allow the identification of new themes that better reflected the views of participants (Creswell 1998). We used NVivo 10 software (QSR International Inc.) to analyze the content of the focus group transcripts. Qualitative data analysis first involved open coding to identify objectives and indicators for forest-based development. Then, we grouped the objectives and indicators that emerged into themes, or what Babbie (2010) refers to as axial coding. Next, we organized these groupings into core principles, including key goals and values, in a way that grounded the research in local perspectives. To achieve this, preliminary data analyses were shared and discussed with our local collaborators on a regular basis. Finally, Essipit community members validated the findings during a conference–dinner in November 2013.

### 3. Results

Data analysis identified 34 objectives for forest-based development of Essipit’s Innu Assi. Each objective is associated with at least one indicator to evaluate the success of future actions. These objectives and indicators were grouped into themes. Finally, these themes were folded into three Innu principles (which cover six principles as expressed in English): Nutshimiú–Aitun or identity–territoriality (Table 2), Mishkutunam or sharing–exchange (Table 3), Pakasstitshum or responsibility–autonomy (Table 4). A synthesis of these three principles, as well as key objectives of the research project are presented in the following section. Additional details, including indicators, are presented in Tables 2–4.

#### 3.1. Nutshimiú–Aitun (identity–territoriality)

Nutshimiú–Aitun means the reinforcement and development of Essipit people’s culture and of the link between them and the land. The principle encapsulates two English-language principles, namely identity and territoriality, which were closely linked in the participants’ views, because Essipit community members live their culture within the territory. Research discussions covered the following themes: forest-related knowledge, cultural transmission and awareness, land infrastructure, and land uses. For this principle, results identified 11 objectives for forest-based development (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Essipit Nutshimiú–Aitun (identity–territoriality) objectives for forest-based development: goal 1, maintain a vibrant and strong culture on the land; and goal 2, facilitate access to the land.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutshimiú–Aitun (identity–territoriality)</th>
<th>Knowledge about the forest</th>
<th>Practices and cultural transmission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document knowledge about forest</td>
<td>Allow Innu Aitun practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of ongoing research projects</td>
<td>Establish an accessibility system for hunting, fishing, and trapping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintain cultural trips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of organized trips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fishing trip for primary school children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunting and trapping trip for secondary school youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fishing trip with elders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organize a day of intergenerational exchange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of organized activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organized community activity (e.g. community hunting)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protect traditional and community sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of sites protected by a buffer zone (including Lac Bernier, Lac Mont Grain, and Lac Loup)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Organize a day of intercultural exchange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of organized days</td>
<td>Raise awareness towards respect of the land and of other users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Code of practice for the land</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of land wardens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites and infrastructure on land</td>
<td>Offer Essipit people access to some community sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability period</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of available sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rustic site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developed site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offer Essipit people quality infrastructure in the forest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of camps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting room</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kilometres of managed trails</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintain quality access to land</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of roads in good condition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of intersections with traffic signs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use</td>
<td>Increase land use by implementing policy and program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of implemented policies and programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A policy about land use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A land use assistance program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the principle “Nutshimiú–Aitun” suggests, the participants expressed a sense of a distinct identity and the desire to maintain this unique character, as illustrated by the following participant:

> Innu culture is one thing, but the culture of Essipit people is another. There are things in common and things that are our own. This is what creates our values. I think we also need to transmit it to others; it's not just because you don't speak [the Innu language] that you are not Innu. (W2)

This participant explained that even if Essipit people do not speak their traditional language anymore, they still embody and express a sense of a distinct culture. In particular, the success of the Essipit communal system and outfitters was singled out in the discussions as strong identity markers.

While the Essipit Band Council gives its outfitters priority in the area under license in accordance with its goal of economic development,7 focus group participants discussed various possibilities...

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6We use the FSC definition of “principle”: “An essential rule or element of forest stewardship” (Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) 2015, p. 81).

7Hunting and fishing activities are mainly accessible to the outfitter’s clients.
to allow Innu Aitun practices4 on an individual basis in the same areas, e.g., providing free and unconditional access to the Innu Assi, reserving part of the Innu Assi (e.g., an outfitter’s territory) for use by Band members, and privatizing some specific sectors (e.g., cottages around lakes). At the same time, participants expressed their desire to maintain the economic benefits from outfitters (e.g., jobs and revenues). Thus, these discussions raised three major concerns with individual Innu Aitun practices: economic loss, potential nuisance for outfitters’ clients, and difficulty in managing forest resources. In sum, participants found difficulty in harmonizing the commercial activities of Essipit outfitters and Innu Aitun practices on an individual basis. Notably, participants said that it is unlikely that members will leave their current sites to go on the Innu Assi as most already have access to private cottages or trap lines outside this territory. Still, shared use of the land outside the Innu Assi with non-FN peoples continues to pose its own challenges and that context makes the project of Innu Assi (i.e., territory under sole Essipit authority) attractive to participants.

Participants mentioned, however, that it would be possible for the commercial activities of the outfitters to coexist with Innu Aitun practices on a collective basis. As the following excerpt shows, establishing a community site and quality infrastructure in the forest would promote culture and knowledge transmission, as well as facilitate access to the land for members, in particular, for those who do not presently have access:

This place of gathering would be for community events, but could also serve for knowledge transmission [...]. It would be good for those who want to be introduced among other things to trapping, even too for evenings of myths and old stories from the community. I would like it! After that, it could allow everyone to go in the forest. Not everyone has a cottage or the income to go to an outfitter. (W1)

Additionally, participants wanted to maintain cultural fishing trips that already exist for primary school children and elders, as well as hunting and trapping trips for secondary school youth. However, these yearly five-day trips are not sufficient for cultural transmission, notably because they do not reach community members aged between 18 and 54 years. Therefore, participants suggested organizing a day of intergenerational exchange. Older members of the community hold traditional knowledge relating to the forest. This knowledge is not well understood by younger members and is under threat of disappearing with the aging population. Thus, another objective is to document this knowledge to preserve it and transmit it to young people and future generations. Furthermore, many participants reminded us of the ongoing prejudice toward FN and suggested organizing an intercultural exchange day to raise awareness and teach outsiders about the culture and the achievements of the Essipit community, notably regarding resource management practices by the outfitters.

The notion of respect was present in every discussion group: respect for wildlife, rivers, forest, land, and other users. The following excerpt provides an example:

Respect starts with yourself. If you don’t respect fauna […], you don’t respect yourself. (ME1)

The group of land users provided another example of the importance of respect by explaining that “driving around with a moose head on the hood of one’s car demonstrates a lack of respect for the animal and is prohibited”. Thus, one of the objectives aims to raise awareness about respect for the land and other users, either by hiring land wardens or implementing a code of practice for traditional activities. According to participants, an Essipit code of practice would notably include acceptable methods of practice, as well as monitoring and surveillance measures.

The establishment of a land use policy would address all issues and objectives discussed above in a coordinated manner. Such a policy, internal to the organization of the Band Council, would formalize a planning and management framework for the occupation of the land. More specifically, it would establish rules for using the Innu Assi, establishing FN camps, authorizing and managing land rights, and supporting Innu Aitun practices.

In sum, forest-based development of the Innu Assi has to promote a place of knowledge, meetings, exchanges, and teaching. Participants expressed hope for a vibrant culture through a strong link with the land, as a woman noted:

We need to look at our education. We know very well that the culture, the people, the transmission is rooted in the land, it is alive. It is within the territory that we learn. This is the best education we can give. (W3)

3.2. Mishkutunam (sharing–exchange)

Mishkutunam involves sharing and exchange of benefits from forest-based development of the Innu Assi among Essipit people and with the outside world. The following themes were discussed within focus groups: knowledge, workers, business environment, and levers of development. For this principle, 12 objectives for forest-based development were identified (see Table 3).

Participants mentioned that forestry can have negative impacts on traditional practices and outfitter activities in the short term but also recognized that some impacts are temporary and that harvesting can generate economic benefits. As such, participants suggested the creation of an investment fund to reinvest revenues from forest-based development in the Innu Assi and its peoples.

The revenues from our outfitters are reinvested in our outfitters. They are not reinvested elsewhere or whatever. They are used for job creation, improving our roads, improving the quality of the services we offer to the people who come to hunt and fish in our outfitters. (LUI)

Such a fund could help serve a variety of purposes. For example, the Essipit Band Council might use the money to get through difficult times, improve infrastructure (e.g., roads), acquire additional skills, diversify the local economy or improve quality of life for community members. However, some participants reminded that “reinvesting profits” first requires “making profits”, a real challenge one said, as “the forest sector is dead.”

For many participants, revenue diversification is an important objective to build economic resilience, but also to access the financial resources needed to develop Essipit Innu Assi. To achieve this, many potential business opportunities were discussed: professional forest management services (e.g., planning, photointerpretation, and monitoring), blueberry farms, and community sites rentals to outsiders during vacant periods. Additionally, outfitters are a source of pride and an important lever for economic and cultural development in the minds of all participants, as the following excerpts show.

Basically, it would be to get people to know us through the outfitters. (W1)

At Lac Loup, we have a camp. It’s offering the possibility to go live there. There needs to be guides […] to make our culture known to others. (W3)

Yes! To stop prejudices. (W2)

4Innu Aitun designates “all activities, in their traditional or modern manifestation, relating to the national culture, fundamental values and traditional lifestyle of the Innu associated with the occupation and use of Nitassinan and to the special bond they have with the land. These include in particular all practices, customs and traditions, including hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering activities for subsistence, ritual or social purposes” (Government of Quebec 2004, p. 4).
Table 3. Essipit Mishkutunam (sharing–exchange) objectives for forest-based development: goal 3, offer benefits to Essipit people; and goal 4, offer a promising environment to companies and partnerships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mishkutunam (sharing–exchange)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know customer needs to maintain supply of quality services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow up with customers</td>
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</tbody>
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Levers of development
Promote sustainable forest-based development by reinvesting in the Innu Assi
- Establish and maintain an investment and savings fund
- Percentage (by sector of activities) of revenues reinvested in the land
- Diversify sources of revenue for more economic stability
- Percentage of revenue or contracts by sector of activities
- Maintain benefits at the local level by promoting local businesses
- Percentage of contracts given to local businesses
- Acquire new outfitters
- Number of outfitters bought
- Diversify the activities offered in the outfitters by developing recreation and tourism sectors
- Kilometres of managed trails
- Rent community sites to people or organizations outside the community during non-occupied periods
- Number of days rented or occupied

Workers
Maintain and improve on-land jobs
- Extension of the duration of seasonal jobs
- Maintain or increase number of yearly jobs
- Maintain or increase salaries and workers benefits
- Ensure transfer of expertise
- Number of days of training linked to targeted expertise
- Ensure sufficient recruitment
- Recruitment plan: identify recruitment objectives by sector of activities

Business environment
Offer stability to forest companies
- Wood supply or contracts guaranteed for a certain period (e.g. 5 years)
- Promote social acceptability of forest operations within the population
- Number of information tools (brochures, interpretive signs)
- Train outfitter staff to educate customers
- Activities offered at the outfitters to increase awareness

Thus, many participants suggested the acquisition of more outfitters or diversifying the range of activities offered in outfitters (e.g., snowmobile trails, outdoor activities, or cultural tourism). Of course, market surveys are a prerequisite so as to determine the clients’ needs before making strategic and responsible investments. Participants also discussed the idea of expanding Essipit construction activities, i.e., building infrastructures and cottages for existing outfitters. This is an important socioeconomic activity, because it allows for the extension of seasonal work in the outfitters.

Informants said that a business partnership is an essential approach for forest-based development of the Innu Assi, because it can fill some gaps in expertise (e.g., where local expertise may be lacking), provide important financial support, and avoid the competition that comes with a new business. Moreover, forest-based development of the Innu Assi has to promote local businesses to maximize benefits to the community or the region. Furthermore, it is important to offer interesting conditions to forest companies. One of the objectives aims to ensure a sufficient amount of work, through guaranteed wood supply or contracts, for instance, to raise the interest of companies or to rationalize investments. The Essipit Forest Entrepreneurs group indicated that another objective has to aim for social acceptability of forest operations:

“I’m under the impression that those who don’t agree, it’s because they don’t know.” (EFE2)

To correct misperceptions about forestry, Essipit members and outfitter clients need to be educated and made aware of the various types of logging and the forest replacement that occurs afterward. Participatory management can also contribute to social acceptability of forest operations.

Finally, the predominance of seasonal jobs in Essipit was of great concern to many participants. This is especially so because of the changes made by the federal government to the Employment Insurance (EI) system. Participants explained that “frequent claimants” of employment insurance must accept a job with lower working conditions than if they were “long-tenured workers.” Indeed, the new system sets stricter conditions for receiving EI. At Essipit, economic activity is structured around seasonal jobs in the fishery, tourism, and forestry sectors. Employment insurance provides important financial support during the off-season. The jobs offered by Essipit will be harder to fill because one perverse outcome of recent changes in EI was to make it harder for workers to obtain employment insurance. Essipit workers are more likely to belong to the category of “frequent claimants” and consequently forced to accept undesirable jobs during the off-season. Thus, insecurity would result both for the workers themselves, who could decide to find a year-round job elsewhere, and for the organization of the Band Council business that might lose its workforce. Consequently, participants identified the objective of maintaining and improving jobs. To achieve this, the following possibilities were discussed: (1) extend outfitter’s season with new tourism offers; (2) offer complementary jobs during low season (e.g., construction); (3) offer “year-round”10 jobs, notably forest management related jobs. Another concern for some participants was the imminent retirement of some experienced workers. Thus, one of the objectives was to establish a succession plan that would identify labour needs by sector of activity; another was to implement training to ensure transfer of expertise.

3.3. Pakassitishun (autonomy–responsibility)

This principle implies the reinforcement of Essipit’s capacity to take charge of managing its Innu Assi while assuming the responsibilities that come with it. Thus, this Innu principle covers two English-language principles, namely autonomy41 and responsibility. Research discussions covered the following themes: expertise, practices, forest environment, and management of forest access. For this principle, 11 objectives for forest-based development were identified (see Table 4).

The following excerpt illustrates a general consensus among the participants that the dominant forestry model cannot be implemented on the Innu Assi of Essipit because of scale and impacts on the environment, wildlife, and culture.

Basically, the problem with timber cutting that is done, it’s that [forest companies] always have the economic aspect in their heads, thinking about what will be left in their pockets. The

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10Note that the term “year-round” does not necessarily mean, in this context, jobs over a period of 12 months, as some Essipit people need a few months to practice traditional activities such as hunting and trapping.

11We define “autonomy” following Prudham and Coleman (2011, p. 5): “autonomy [...] refers to the situations of individual persons or communities and to their capacity to shape the conditions under which they live”.

12Published by NRC Research Press
According to the female and male elders and the outfitters groups, the first step towards gaining greater control over land management is to make an inventory of current resources on the territory to improve the general state of knowledge. The next step is to determine land potentials and set quotas for harvesting wildlife and vegetation, including timber. Participants mentioned that these are crucial steps to avoid overexploitation of resources, ensure sustainability and economic benefits, and protect and value their distinct culture. Various management strategies that could make this objective possible were discussed to meet objectives that are broader than only timber production: optimizing certain elements within the calculation of the annual allowable cut (e.g., wildlife habitat models versus harvested volume); developing a silvicultural system for deciduous and mixed species stands; and identifying operational guidelines for forest operations, outfitter activities, and Innu Aitun practices (e.g., partial cutting and calendar of operations). According to the Essipit Forest Entrepreneurs group, Essipit has to be actively involved in land management, because only with a better understanding of operational requirements and costs will Essipit be in a better position to obtain a fair return on its investments or to predict the effects of different management scenarios. As the next quote shows, taking over management of the Innu Assi cannot happen without developing the capacity of community members:

> At a certain point, if the community wants to manage many hectares and develop it, it takes a vision, it takes data, it takes people. (EFE1)

Thus, one of the objectives aims to evaluate human resource needs and to prioritize these needs. A complementary objective aims to establish a training plan to meet these needs. For example, internships would train people and help youth in making career choices. In addition to building more autonomy, participants are expecting that the development of local expertise can contribute to the following aims: (i) bring local jobs, (ii) develop community pride, (iii) facilitate communication and consultation between the Council and its members, (iv) increase community participation in management decisions; and (v) increase trust in decision-making.

The next objective, forest protection, could have been associated with the principle Nutshimiu–Aitun. Indeed, it is intertwined with the Nutshimiu–Aitun principle, because protecting the territory is essential to maintaining a strong culture in Essipit. Another way of explaining this objective is by showing the sense of responsibility apparent in the participants’ discourse.

> Protecting the environment, it is imperative. If we don’t protect it, it is not our neighbours who will do it in our place […] Because the Indians have always protected the environment. They have always protected things. They went fishing, they did not take all the trout. They left some for the next year […] They lived from that and they knew how to protect them. (FE4)

Similarly, this participant said that forestry on the Innu Assi has to respect the environment:

> Forestry, it really has to respect the environment, if you want to continue with the other things […] Yes it creates jobs, but I wouldn’t go as far as destroying the environment. There’s a lot of things to respect. (OG4)

In relation to forest protection, participants formulated an objective of managing land access adequately. From their experience, forest roads open the territory, which then leads to overexploitation of fisheries and wildlife resources through hunting, fishing, and other recreation activities.

> They build roads, but it’s later that we are invaded […] I am not against forest harvesting, but under the condition that after the harvest, you deactivate the road or you put natural barriers so that people can’t go. You try to preserve the land.
a little […] We see what land use does, in relation to forest harvesting [in this region], but go to Lac-St-Jean region, there are cottages, it’s just like cities! The cities also bring overexploitation of the lakes over the summer, overexploitation of wildlife […] The invasion is too big. (LU1)

Protection of forests in a broader sense involves maintaining the quality of the forest environment: biodiversity, peace (avoid noise pollution of machinery), and landscapes.

4. Discussion

“First Nation deep roots in the forests” indicates that recognition and respect for Aboriginal cultures need to become an integral part of professional forestry in Canada. “Deep roots” evokes a strong sense of connection to forest resources and forestlands, which is a consistent theme throughout the paper. FN communities are seeking sustainable ways to develop forests as a means of meeting their cultural, social, spiritual, and economic needs. The visions of “intact forest landscapes” and of a “forest industry” are not necessarily antithetical; it is rather the choice of practices that creates issues and problems. Evidence from across North America indicates that FN development initiatives should be designed in a way that matches the local values of FN communities (Jorgensen 2007). This research translated the values of the Essipit Innu FN into 34 observable objectives for forest-based development. These objectives were gathered into three core principles defining, up front, cultural referents that should be considered in forest planning, namely Nutchimiu–Aitun (identity-territoriality), Mishkutunam (sharing–exchange), Pakasitshitshun (responsibility-autonomy). Now, we show how some of the key results presented in this paper relate to previous studies, as well as their relevance and importance for FN communities, forest businesses, and governments.

Participants often cited benefits such as jobs and revenues, yet the wide variety of objectives identified in Tables 2–4 shows that it is impossible to reduce FN forest-based development to purely economic benefits. Indeed, social and cultural benefits were seen as equally important. Across all focus groups, the most common topic discussed was the maintenance of a strong cultural link to the forests (see Nutshimiu–Aitun objectives in Table 3). With the focus group labelled “Essipit forest entrepreneurs,” we expected that the discussion would mainly revolve around business opportunities and entrepreneurship conditions. Instead, we had a lengthy discussion on cultural objectives such as facilitating land access as a means to improve knowledge and cultural transmission. Evidence from across North America highlights that nurturing a strong cultural link is fundamental to FN cultures. For instance, the Atikamekw peoples in Quebec (Wyatt 2004), the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples in British Columbia (Clayoquot Sound Scientific Panel (CSSP) 1995), and the Menominee peoples in the US (Trosper 2007) although involved in forestry still emphasize cultural contribution in assessing the impacts of forest practices. We have shown that this is also the case with the Essipit people. However, most of the challenges that FN communities face are related to integrating their cultures, values, and language into forestry (Hickey and Nelson 2005; Boyd and Trosper 2010; Booth and Skelton 2011). Trosper et al. (2012) explain that even when the language is in danger, other means allow FN peoples to identify themselves as having a distinct culture. In our project, participants found strong identity markers in the success of the Essipit community as outfitters. We make the same observation for the members’ involvement system used for setting up business projects. This highlights the importance of a bottom-up approach to identify the distinct characteristics of the community in question.

For Essipit, as elsewhere among FNs in Canada, the land represents an ancestral legacy that community members must preserve for future generations. Several research participants indicated that forestry practices can negatively affect the forest environment and, therefore, their cultural link to the forests. For this very reason, participants want to impose certain guidelines at the onset of an industrial forestry project. Our data show that timber harvesting is acceptable to the community as long as logging and restoration practices are harmonized with the ongoing economic activities of the Essipit community as outfitters and the Innu Aitun mode of land occupancy. For example, large-scale industrial practices would be incompatible with the objectives of Essipit and be more likely to create conflicts. As one of the participants mentioned:

If there are no benefits for Essipit, there will be no logging and the forest will stay intact. (LU2)

This quote exemplifies the perception that mainstream forestry hardly delivers benefits to FN communities (Wyatt et al. 2015). Tables 2–4 highlight several elements for developing benefit-sharing systems with FN communities, e.g., investing in the culture, in forest access, or in maintaining visual landscape quality. Our data further indicate that the Essipit community actively seeks out new forest management tools to enable the initiators of future projects to achieve sustainable forest development. Similar to the Menominee, (Trosper 2007), the Saulteau, and the West Moberly peoples (Booth and Muir 2013), Essipit people want to establish a culturally adapted allowable annual cut calculation, silviculture techniques, and management plans, as well as protected forest areas to strengthen the local culture. For example, informants desire a code of practice that would be used to regulate informal subsistence activities such as fishing. They also want to promote participation of community members in a local advisory panel that would diversify forest management options. These findings highlight the adaptive nature embedded in the Essipit’s objectives for forestry that involves a requirement for developing skills, strategies, and processes (as shown in Table 4) that would evolve with forestry implementation. Thus, our data concur with Booth and Muir’s observation (2013, p. 164):

The future essence of Aboriginal forestry in Canada likely rests within and appreciates an “in progress”, adaptable approach of balancing the values.

This research excluded the topic of land ownership by keeping the discussions within the scenario of an Innu Assi (i.e., communal privately owned lands). Yet our results illustrate that autonomy and control are crucial for Essipit, as for other FN communities, to maintain a strong cultural link with the territory. The same pattern prevails when it is time to decide how the benefits of forest-based development can be shared equitably.

Our data also corroborate the findings of Nikolakis and Nelson (2015) that a complex set of objectives is required to fully meet the expectations of FN communities. These authors identify four long-term and strategic forestry goals (i.e., community governance, environmental stability, jurisdiction–treaty rights, and employment and economy). As mentioned in the Introduction, Anderson (1997) identifies three FN goals that are in line with Nikolakis and Nelson’s: greater control over their lands, wealth for socio-economic improvements in their communities, and protection of their cultures, values, and languages. However, the current literature is still at an emergent stage with respect to analyses showing a FN guidance system for forest-based development at the community level. With our 34 observable objectives grouped into three principles, we enable a progression in the analysis of FN approaches to forest-based development. Our results highlight the importance of community-level research, where community members engage in a collaborative approach to define a forest development that is culturally meaningful to them. Three chapters in the book edited by Stevenson and Natcher (Saint-Arnaud et al. 2009; Shearer et al. 2009; Webb et al. 2009) also report similar results and provide three other examples of community and researcher collaboration.

Our results, as shown in Tables 2–4, further revealed several aspects that also emerged in previously reported work on C&l...
developed by or with First Nations (Shearer et al. 2009; Saint-Arnaud et al. 2009), e.g., cultural transmission, land access, community consultation, biodiversity conservation, and job creation. Our work, however, remains different. We started with the idea of identifying successful conditions for forest-based development from the perspective of Essipit inhabitants. We ended up with an Aboriginal world view, namely the Essipit’s vision that sets the stage for a promising dialogue with forest planners. Above all, our results show that forestry is not the finality. It could be a means to achieve a better synchronization between humans and the forest. This is possible through a common language that formulates explicitly the needs of the community. That is how the well-being of both could improve. In comparison, FN C&I place stress on forest management, creating a baseline to monitor local forest changes, compare situations, and evaluate the sustainability of forest management systems. In short, the concurrence with previously reported themes in Aboriginal C&I studies strengthens the external validity of our work.

Our case study can inform forest management in a narrow sense, but it also shows a path for FN communities to apprehend their reality and to make it understandable in terms of social and economic development. Essipit’s objectives are more than a “wish list” for two main reasons. First, participants have discounted unrealistic objectives (e.g., providing free and unconditional access to the Innu Assi for individual interests). Second, Essipit is already implementing some objectives (e.g., creation of a local consultation panel within the community, development of a forest economic strategy with cultural features, analysis of nontimber forest product opportunities) demonstrating the robustness of this observable objectives approach.

Molander (2014, p. ii) argues that the dominant narrative in forestry is worth reframing, “…not only since the field of forestry has lagged behind other academic disciplines in explicitly opening up decolonizing and anti-colonial spaces, but because it has also been historically complicit in both entrenching and reproducing settler-colonial structures of domination on unceded indigenous lands.” Smith (1999) made similar comments about decolonizing research more generally. Thus, instead of articulating our objectives around common Western principles separating environment, economy, and society into three different spheres, our study proposes three FN principles that integrate across these areas. Our principles are also congruent with the six characteristics of FN cultures proposed by Trosper (Trosper 1995, 2009; Trosper et al. 2012): identity, connectedness, reciprocity, accountability, sustainability, and subsidiary role of the market economy. Our study used slightly different terms to better represent the views of our research informants. Furthermore, the work of Trosper did not explicitly single out autonomy as a characteristic. One reason is that each community is unique and one should not expect an exact fit given that Trosper distilled his characteristics from a worldwide survey of indigenous communities. Another possible reason is that American Indian tribes and Canadian FN communities are characterized by different economic, legal, constitutional, and cultural contexts in that US “tribes ... have been able to retain or obtain some independence” (Trosper 1995, p. 83).

In sum, the case of Essipit exemplifies that FN participation in mainstream Canadian forestry models requires a more complex approach to forest-based development than the current approaches in use. Moreover, there is a need to acknowledge their philosophies while enabling them to realize their long-term aspirations.

5. Conclusion

The forest industry has been promoted as an avenue to provide abundant opportunities for FN communities across Canada. Yet forestry initiatives continue to provide few benefits, leading to frustration for these communities. We know that differences in the values held by FNs and mainstream society exist, but FN communities have had limited opportunities to affirm how they want to participate in forest-based development. There have been noteworthy efforts made by FNs to engage in existing forestry models or by forest managers to incorporate FN values and knowledge (Wyatt 2008). There are, however, few alternative models (e.g., tenures or self-government arrangements) that are based on FN values, systems, and paradigms.

This case study shows how objectives identified by the Essipit Innu FN reflect the values of FNs elsewhere in relation to forest-based development. The Essipit approach enables a style of forestry based on “FN deep roots in the forests”. More specifically, our method allowed the community to develop a set of core principles and measurable objectives for forest-based development. The diversity and scope of objectives identified in this research contribute to the argument that FN peoples have a more diversified approach to forest-based development than dominant forestry models. There are parallels between this case study on Essipit and previously reported work on C&I developed by or with FNs, although these frameworks are tools to demonstrate forest management sustainability and they should be reviewed in terms of cultural references to better reflect Innu aims and values.

We acknowledge that context is important, because FN communities often have different realities. What is relevant to Essipit might not be the same for another FN community. A research contribution is the identification and use of the Innu language that adds to Essipit efforts to revitalize its traditional language. Further research with other Innu communities will provide a better understanding of the Innu concepts proposed in this paper and of FN values and goals on their own terms. That being said, this research proposes principles that are consistent with work done in other indigenous communities across North America. Furthermore, this research offers a process that is transferable to other contexts, representing a small but strategic step towards greater FN participation in forest-based development. We suggest that it constitutes a road map, with specific details about how to meet the expectations of FN communities. It provides an organizing framework for prioritizing and selecting forest-based development projects, as well as for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Notably, developing such a framework can help forest companies develop a good working understanding and relationship with FN communities and their interests related to forest-based development in their territories. Understanding the forest through Aboriginal concepts can be a stepping stone to successfully incorporate the principle of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). As pointed out by Smith (2015, p. 25), such an approach “has the potential to open up new avenues for conservation and development, rather than relying on colonial approaches where both governments and other stakeholders (ENGOs and industry) decide that they know what is best for First Nations.” In sum, this paper proposes a way to move beyond consultation and accommodation processes and to show how FN communities can successfully engage in forest-based development.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the First Nation of Essipit for their support and collaboration on this research. We also thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Faculty of Forestry at UBC, the Hampton Fund, and Mitacs for their financial support.

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