**Transcript of Thrivival: The Fire Within
5. Elder Phillip Gladue's Views on This Work
Project Lead and Speaker: Heather Simpson**

HEATHER SIMPSON:

Elder Phillip Gladue's views on this work.

To speak more about the significance of this work, I would like to respectfully share a reflective statement expressed by project Elder Phillip Gladue. ᑕᓂᓯ (Tanisi). Hello. My name is Phillip Gladue and I am a Métis-Cree Elder. I am from High Prairie, Alberta, raised in the traditional way. I am a Cree Language Carrier, Knowledge Keeper, and currently work as a Resident Elder for the Justice Institute of British Columbia and for public school districts and various governance boards in Central Coast Salish territories. I also sit in the Senate with Métis Nation BC.

I have worked in the BC public school system from kindergarten to higher education for many years. During this time, I've yet to see a research project like the one that we're proposing today. It is the first of its kind. What I have seen are students from the earliest of ages, who are Autistic or living with other disabilities as well as Indigenous students, being marginalized and who carry the effects of systemic racism throughout their lives.

This research is meant to break this history for students who are Autistic and Indigenous. Too often marginalized students bear the negative consequences from the lack of meaningful cultural supports and relationships. As you well know, some end up involved with gangs, find belonging on the streets, end up in jail or tragically lose their lives. This research is to help create a safer place for Indigenous Autistic students to come out of their shell and through Aboriginal ways of doing, create cultural opportunities so that students can give something to the communities whom they belong to for their own health and healing.

We have so much to learn from these students. We also have so much to learn from you. We hope to learn from your Nation's perspectives about what your community is going through and supporting these young people to live their fullest potential. We hope you'll join us in the beginning steps of a research project that will look to learn from Indigenous Autistic students and respective Nations so that we can help BC's educators with tools and knowledges that are self-determined and self-created by Indigenous Peoples for Indigenous People and will benefit all people. To make real change in our communities, there is no other way.

I will see you again. All my relations, Elder Phillip Gladue.