**Transcript of Thrivival: The Fire Within
8. Research Methodology
Project Lead and Speaker: Heather Simpson**

HEATHER SIMPSON:

Research methodology.

To conduct this research, we used digital storytelling, a participatory audio and visual method of research that is credited in academic literature as being both more culturally relevant to Indigenous Peoples as it is powerful, a powerful means for promoting community dialogue and creating opportunities for individual and community change. and is a method of research that shows greater efficacy in helping Autistic participants voice their perspective. Arguably, digital storytelling as a methodology also challenges the Euro- Western intellectual tradition that values and prioritizes written knowledge representation and instead promotes Indigenous oral tradition, storytelling and symbolism as valid purveyors of systems and representations of knowledges.

There is no one approach to digital storytelling and published research using digital storytelling is expanding, which provided a solid evidence-base for this project. Photovoice is an example methodology utilized by Hanemaayer et al. and Genuis, Willows and Jardine in studies conducted in Indigenous communities to explore perspectives on traditional foods. Photovoice is described as a process in which people, usually those with limited power due to poverty, language barriers, race, class, ethnicity, gender, culture, or other circumstances, use video and/or photo images to capture aspects of their environment and experiences and share them with others. In Freeman et al., researchers working with the Nak’azdli Whut’en, a First Nations community in northern British Columbia, utilized a video-based methodology called WeVideo technology, piloting an intergenerational digital storytelling platform with Elders and students to co-create digital stories to create a cultural legacy for future generations.

Instead of selecting a specific technology like Photovoice, or WeVideo, we invited participants to share digital stories that consisted of choice content that might include photographs or other images, video and audio recordings, artwork and/or songs and music, into a private individual and secured Canadian-housed digital drop-box, with Sync.com, shared between the participants and myself. Each digital story submitted explored research questions in ways unique, meaningful, and relevant to the participant. Both students opted to share digital stories using Microsoft PowerPoint, though each participant presented stories in different ways. One participant balanced, written and symbolic representations on a separate slide and provided an oral explanation of the submission during a recorded live session. Another participant chose to use the voiceover function to narrate their story in a series of slides. The slides included additional written explanations in the English language that summarized the oral narration provided. This student also opted to share a document file that contained additional responses to research questions, augmenting the submitted digital story.

All engagement in this research was compensated following a project budget and the research process itself was conducted over eight weeks. Sessions ranged between one and two hours in length, were a mix of individual and group sessions, and all were conducted online using Microsoft Teams. Sessions included Elder support and Teachings, ceremony and practice a various protocol such as land acknowledgments, and an introduction and sharing circles. Each session was process and outcome focused and promoted reciprocal knowledge transfer and dialogue. To learn about and be supported to create digital stories, two sessions, session five and session six were facilitated by Knowledge Keeper and post-secondary educator, Dr. Aaron Johannes. Dr. Johannes is a professional and natural storyteller who operates Imagine a Circle Collective, which leads training, curriculum development, workshops and other community-based projects that support the needs and well-being of people with disabilities. Dr. Johannes is a skilled graphic artist and facilitator and provided the participants with the Teachings and tools to assist them in creating and telling their stories. Elder Phillip Gladue personalized sessions by providing participants encouragement while sharing his lived experience and Teachings on all the topics introduced and explored to provide an Indigenous perspective that participants learn from and can draw upon for this project and in general.

Participants were introduced to various ways of approaching digital storytelling and creating digital stories, including variations of storyboards and the planning processes. Elder Phil shared Medicine Wheel Teachings and guided participants in referring to these Teachings to help them develop stories that were culturally relevant, as well as holistic and individualized. Digital stories were developed over the course of session five through eight. This research is based on individual participant case studies. However, data collected has been analyzed and interpreted both individually and collectively, not as a comparative between participants, but to identify emergent themes in response to research questions and the development of a collective narrative. Recordings from sessions and digital stories were transcribed and coded in NVivo, and data was analyzed for emergent themes and findings. A participant evaluative survey following the completion of the study is also included in our final report.

Now that we have set the stage with protocol and shared the research background, scope and methods. It gives me great honour to share Truths, the Knowledges and storied experiences that were gifted during the research process.