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TIPI DESIGNS AND
MEDICINE PIPES
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CARDSTON, ALBERTA
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CARDSTON, ALBERTA
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INTERPRETER: DAVE MELTING TALLOW
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Describes various tipi designs amongst the Blood Indians.
- Describes how the Indians came to have tipis.
John: Tell him if he could give me the numbers of tipi flags,
tipi designs.

Diane Hellson: He spoke to you about the drawings on tipis.

Joe: Tipi designs.

Diane: He wants you to give him the names.

Joe: I'll give him all the names of the tipi designs.

Diane: Yes.

Joe: There is the Bald Eagle Tipi design. It's an ancient
tipi. It was the first tipi. It originated from the earlier
people. Bald Eagle Tipi design -- that one I know.

Okay, the War Tipi design, warriors are drawn on it. That's
another tipi that belongs to here. The warriors are drawn just
how they fought. The men they killed and the horses that they
stole.

Okay, the Half Yellow Otter Tipi design -- yellow otters on one
side and black otters on the other side.

This is a tipi and is owned by a man in the water. A man was sitting on a hill looking down on the river and all of a sudden he saw the tops of the tipi poles emerging from the water as far out as to where the poles were tied together. The man from the water told him, "Do you see that tipi?" He answered, "I don't see it."

The man from the water told him, "Jump into the water and go into the tipi." That man on the hill went into the water and into the tipi. The man told him, "Since you came and having difficult times, I will give you my tipi." He was initiated.

After the initiation the man in the water told him, "Now you got a tipi." He walked out from the tipi and looked around. He saw another tipi in the opposite direction. He walked to it and entered it too. It was a Buffalo Tipi design. The drawings were buffalo; they were yellow.

He was given a straight pipe by the man in the water and also the Buffalo Tipi.

At the Ridge In The Water (Crowfoot Crossing) the river was flooded; the people were going to ford the river. The man sitting there with the straight pipe told the people, "Wait, if we ford the river we might leave the dogs behind. I will shut off the water so that the dogs will follow us across."

The man took his pipe out and filled it with tobacco and smoked. After four puffs he touched the water with his pipe and it stopped flowing. So the people started walking with their dogs behind them to the other shore. When they got to the other side he made a motion with his pipe and the water started flowing again. So that's another tipi design I know.

Okay! There is another that I know. There was a man who fought in a battle. (The rest of this information is indistinct.)

I also know of another tipi. My father's father and a small band were walking through a forest and they were attacked. He was the only survivor of that massacre. As he was wandering around he came to a big rock. He slept by this big rock, since he was lost and thought, "I'll sleep by this big rock and if I die somebody is bound to find me by this big rock."

While he was laying there by this big rock a mysterious thing happened to him. He looked up and saw a tipi. The man invited him in. This man was a skunk that transformed himself into a man. The tipi was transferred to him. Skunks were drawn on each side of the tipi and down the back of the tipi. Seven crows were also drawn. This is the Skunk Tipi Design. The skunk man told him, "Do not fear. You will not die and you will get home." The skunk man told him, "Now get up and go home." So he got up and started for home where he reached safety. He made himself a cap out of a skunk skin. One day there was a big gathering at a chief's tipi. Of course it was a drinking party. When he got drunk the chief told him, "Can you

make some miracles with your skunk cap?" He answered "Yes." So he took his skunk cap off and lay it on the ground, sang and performed with it. The skunk cap came to life and sent out its fumes. The fumes filled the whole tipi and everybody had to evacuate the tipi.

There is the Yellow and Star Tipi designs. In his sleep a man appeared to him. The man told him, "I am a star from the heavens. I'll give you my tipi. You will draw me all over your tipi." So this is the Star Tipi design.

Okay! The Buffalo Head Tipi design, buffalo heads were drawn all around. A man was told by a bull buffalo that had been killed... all his insides had withered away. The man slept in this old dead buffalo. In his sleep a man told him, "Don't worry, nothing will happen to you. Draw my head all over your tipi." And that's the Buffalo Head Tipi design. This is another ancient tipi.

John: Tell him does he know that Medicine Pipe 'i-mi-ta-yah-ko-yi-ni-mun' (Dog Medicine Pipe).

Diane: Do you know of a Medicine Pipe called the Dog Pipe?

Joe: This is the first time I ever heard about this Dog Pipe. There is one pipe that existed. There was a dog; this was in the winter. A woman picked up a skin rug and laid it inside the doorway. A dog came in and grabbed the skin between her teeth and dragged it out and she had her litters on this skin rug. The man was at home. He threatened to kill the dog. The dog heard the threat of the man so the dog sang.

WORDS IN THE DOG SONG:

"Man, have pity on me. My children they have supernatural powers."

(CORRECTION: by Joe Chief Body, Oct. 19/67. "Man have pity on me. Open the door and house. So, holy man, pity me with my children. They have supernatural powers.")

Joe: The man told his wife, "Got out and take my dog and her puppies in." The dog and her pups were all taken in. So this song was put in with the Medicine Pipe songs. That's all I know. I don't know about this Dog Pipe. I don't know how it is. I don't know about him. He might know. Stories vary. So I don't know if he knows about this Dog Pipe.

Diane: He said he doesn't know about the Dog Pipe. But if he knows the story.

John: Yes, because there's none of them. There's one in Browning. I saw it. It's a big pipe, not like the Medicine Pipes here.

Diane: Is there a pipe that is called a Dog Pipe?

Brown Chief Calf: The one he is talking about, it's different. Outside, south, it might have existed over there. I don't know if it's true. The one he is talking about didn't exist over here. This dog was the only one that was mentioned in the song of the pipe. That's all I know, just this song. This song that he sang. The man kept his door shut because it was cold, also that the dog can't come in. A dog is not allowed to be in a tipi where a Medicine Pipe is kept.

The dog forced her way in. She was about to deliver her litters. During the night they heard the cries of the little pups. The man told his wife, "Take those pups and the mother out of here." So all the pups and the mother were taken out, but the mother kept bringing her pups into the tipi. After

every time they were taken out. After they were taken out again they heard the dog singing. The dog said in her song: "Man, open the door. Pity me and my children." That is how it happened. The man told his wife, "Bring the dog in and her pups." The dog was brought in and a bed was made for her and her pups. So that's how it is. The song was put in with the Medicine Pipe songs.

John: But you see if I get that pipe down there, I'll let Brown and Joe to look at this pipe. First I heard it was the Black Seizer's pipe. It was about that long. It's long, isn't it, Tom?

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