

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: BOB BLACK PLUME
FUNCTION OF THE PIGEON
SOCIETY 3 OF THE BLOOD
INDIANS, QUARRYING, FUNCTION
AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PAINTS
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: BLOOD RESERVE
CARDSTON, ALBERTA
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BLOOD RESERVE
CARDSTON, ALBERTA
TRIBE/NATION: BLOOD
LANGUAGE: BLACKFOOT
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INTERVIEWER: J. HELLSON
INTERPRETER: DAVE MELTING TALLOW
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Describes the functions of the Pigeon Society.
- Discusses the use of ceremonial paints.
John: At 3 and 3/4 speed 1968 at the home of John Hellson,
Cardston. Recordist: John Hellson, Craig tape recorder.
Informant: Bob Black Plume, Blood Indian, Blood Reserve,
Cardston. Mr. Black Plume is giving information concerning the
functions and membership, bundles, facial painting, of members
of the Pigeon Society of the Blood Reserve.

Diane: The member of the...

Bob: The Pigeons.

Diane: The Pigeons. How many members are there?

Bob: Here's who I know a member. Two of the members are our
leaders, the coyote packer, a coyote pack that he packs on his
back, and the owner of the rattle. Those are the leaders. The
second highest in rank are the Muddy Mouths (the Bears). There
are four of them. There were only three of us at the time we
had our transferal. One didn't. The Yellow Pigeons, there are
four of them too, but all of them were not there. There were
just two Yellow Pigeons. The time we had our transferals two
didn't join in. The former Yellow Pigeons didn't transfer

their bundles. There is the one that we call the smearer. The smear staff, it's a long pole and a bad stuff is put at one end. If the Bears try to argue with him... the Bears will take anything what they like from they grub that they bought. A berry soup or meat, the Bear will snatch anything and will put it down. If the smearer doesn't want the Bear to have the meat he'd get up and point the smearing staff over the meat. That is if the smearer wants to eat the meat he'd try to smear the meat, let's say with an axle grease or something else. He'd hold it over the berry soup and he will look at the Bear. The Bear will be shy at the smearer and he will sit back, and the smearer... and he will let the smearer take the berry soup from the Bear.

If the Bear resists, the smearer will dip the smearing staff into the berry soup and that will spoil it and it will not be fit to be eaten and the Bear will go without it. That's what the smearer is there for. Okay, I don't know about the Pigeons. There are so many of them. I have named the Yellow Pigeons, our leaders, and the Bears. The Yellow Pigeons and the smearer there are higher in rank. The others are the Pink Pigeons; we call them the Pink Pigeons. They are painted with ochre. Painted with real paint all over their bodies. I don't know how many they are. Some of the former Pigeons didn't transfer their bundles. When we first started to organize some of our real friends were afraid to join in. We had to hunt for them. Some fled from the camps. They didn't want to be Pigeons.

Diane: How many women were in the society?

Bob: A member will join in the society with his wife and whoever has a wife will join in with his wife. Their wives are painted too with ochre and they are in with their wives in the Pigeon tipi.

Diane: And if a member hasn't got a wife?

Bob: If a member hasn't got a wife he will join in with a married couple, making three. The single man will dance for his friend, the married man. If a married member wants a helper he will take one of the single men to help him in dancing. This single man will be his friend, making three of them. They will own one bundle. A bundle is transferred to each of the members.

Diane: They're all married, right?

Bob: Yes, they all have wives, and if a member is not married he will join in with a married couple. That will be three of them and the single man will do most of the dancing, of course. The married man will dance too. There will be three members to one bundle. The single man will be painted on the bundle too, the Pigeon bundle. That's how it is.

Diane: How many bundles are there, are there any?

Bob: They haven't got bundles; they are in parflechets, the same as that. And the one with the bow and arrows, a feather headpiece is tied to their hair. They are parflechets, the same kind of parfleche as that one.

Diane: Yes, how many are they?

Bob: Each member has its own.

Diane: So they'll number to the number of members.

Bob: Yes. The married man will store his society stuff in the parfleche, their paints, et cetera.

Diane: How many bows and arrows are there?

Bob: The arrow and the bow.

Diane: Yes.

Bob: That makes two. The one that is called the blunt arrow, it's not sharp. They'll shoot with the blunt arrow because they know that it will not penetrate the skin. And the other arrow, if they want to have four arrows they will have four

arrows. They'll have as many arrows as they want in case they lose an arrow. Or if they want only two arrows or three arrows with two blunt arrows and the others will be sharp, they don't use the sharp arrows.

Diane: And how many rattles did they have?

Bob: The only one that has a rattle is the leader and the rest have no rattles. The leader is the only one; he dances with his rattle. The coyote owner dances in one place. He is the one that we watch all the time. When he turns around we all turn around and dance the other way. We be watching him and when we dance up to him he'll turn the other way. He doesn't follow us in the dance. We dance four times in one direction and four times the way back and then he'll sit down and the drummers will start singing and before we get up to dance we'll cover ourselves with our robes and we'll imitate a bear that's about to charge. We'll be rearing up. We'll do this four times and the young children will be throwing something at us, anything that will not hurt us, and we'll be acting as if we're going to charge just like a real bear.

We'll be rearing up and they'll be throwing something at us. As soon as we cover ourselves they'll start throwing something at us. At the fourth time we get up to dance. After we're up to dance the rest will all get up and start dancing. We dance behind the Pigeons making them to dance faster and if anyone slacks behind we'll aim our arrows at him and he'll dance faster.

Diane: And what about the coyote?

Bob: The owner of the coyote pelt will not follow us in dancing.

Diane: Is that the only one?

Bob: Yes, there is only one coyote owner and one man with a rattle. Those are leaders. They'll stand up and will dance in the same place where they stood.

The rattle owner will be shaking his rattle while he is dancing and the coyote owner will be dancing too. We have two arrows and if you want to have four you can have four arrows. Two arrows are blunt arrows. They are not sharp, they have ball points. We snatch something and if a person tried to take it back, what we snatched, we'll shoot him with the blunt arrows because we know that it will not do any damage. We never had any trouble. We always get away with what we snatched. No one

will try to take back what we took. All the Indians know what the society is, that's how it is. I told him the story about the time we snatched some meat from the Horns. The group that are in the Horn Society are called the High Hats. The beef was brought to the centre. That was when the Horns came out in the open to dance and we were out to dance too at the same time. The Horns sat in a circle and us we sat in a circle too, away from them, and the buffalo carcass was brought to the centre. The group that were in the Horn Society are called the High Hats.

Diane: What is a buffalo carcass?

Bob: It's a beef. A steer will be slaughtered and it's buffalo carcass. It's the beef. The word buffalo carcass is used in the earlier times and it's still used nowadays. The buffalo carcass is the meat. The buffalo carcass, it's a word used in the earlier times. The meat will be brought to the centre and that's a buffalo carcass. It will be cut in four quarters. Our older friend told us, "You will go and snatch some of that meat." That was Little Weasel Calf, Bear Forearm (Tom Morning Owl) and Red Boy (Billy Heavy Runner). There are four of them. So they told us, "You will go and snatch some of the meat." The Yellow Pigeons took the lead and us we walked behind. We were with the smearer. When got near we went ahead of the Yellow Pigeons. They left everything with me because I act so crazy and I told, "Let's take that hindquarter. There's plenty of meat on it." The Yellow Pigeons grabbed it and carried it away. We walked behind with our bows and arrows ready to shoot anybody that tried to take our meat away from us. Nobody did get up when we took the meat. The High Hats or the Horn Society members said, "Those damn Pigeons." They got mad. But they know, they all know. So we brought it home. We took it into our tipi. We had our dance. We were in a hurry and anxious for the dance to be over so we can get to our meat. When we got back into our tipi our older friends had the meat

cut up and the Yellow Pigeons gave us each our share.

Diane: How many of the Pigeons that are still living now?

Bob: I know our leader, Star (Dan Chief Moon). He owns the coyote which he packs on his back. And myself (Bob Black Plume), I am a Bear Pigeon and another guy by the name of Left Unburnt (Emil Good Rider). He is also a Bear Pigeon. And First Rider (George First Rider); he is a Yellow Pigeon. These are still alive. And Wailing In the Woods (Ben Brewer). He just joined in with his bow and arrows; he was a former Pigeon. His outfit was transferred to him before so he just joined in. There is Crumpled Horn Bull (Joe Young Pine). And Bob Tail (Ambrose Shouting in the Middle). These all joined in with

their wives. These are still alive, and who else? Black Bachelor (Bob First Charger) (Iron Headpiece) and White Calf (Charlie Good Rider) He is one of our older friends. He is still alive and the others are all dead. That's how many people that I know that are still living.

There were not very many of us and when we had our first meeting our friends fled in all directions. We tried hard to get them but some of them didn't move camp to the Sundance. They steal home so nothing was transferred to them. They had no transferals with us. That's all I know. The others are all dead.

Diane: The real paint, you know it?

Bob: Yes, the real paint.

Diane: The real paint, where do you get it?

Bob: The earlier people, I just heard this, there is ochre in the mountains. The ochre will show in the water and on the side of a rock. The earlier people will make a trip to get their ochre and they pray very hard before they pick the ochre. They'll pray very hard to get their ochre. They might pray all night and in the morning they'll go in all directions to pick their ochre. The ochre will show on the rock like a line (a streak) and a knife is used to scrape the ochre and a person will start picking his ochre and he will be praying all along while he is picking the ochre. This will not look like an ochre but they will know that is the kind for making paints. When he gets home he will bake it; he will bake the ochre. I never saw how they are baked. When it is baked it will turn red, just like the paints we have. If a person does not pray with all his might he will not find the ochre. It's a bad sign when a person fails to get an ochre. The person that is lucky to find his ochre will live long for being fortunate to find the ochre; he will find the ochre by his prayers. If a person's prayers are not heard he will not find any ochre. They'll be looking for the ochre but they will fail to find any.

Diane: What are they used for?

Bob: The paints are used in this way. When a person prays, yes, the paints are used. The people in the past -- we don't know how long, so many million years -- the people that lived in the past, a person will dream how to paint a person's face. A holy spirit or a human on earth will show him how to paint a person's face with the ochre. It might be a real paint and there are some we call the seven paints. They're similar but

the seven paint is a little different in color and red ochre. They're bright red, yellow ochre and black ochre. The person will use these paints in the same manner as the one that gave him the power and how the person painted his face that transferred a bundle to him. A bundle will be transferred to a person and his face will be painted. The earlier people pray to the sun. You see it when it starts to rise in the east, its face is colored; it's the sun dogs. And when the moon rises you see some colors that are like paints. You must have seen them. A person's face will be painted in the same way. We will say he is blessed and prayed for and blessed in any way. That's how the paints are used. A person will live long with the blessings and prayers. The same with a child. It will be raised by painting its face and praying for the child. What is given to a person, how to give blessings by this, he will paint the face of the child and perhaps he will give the child a necklace, a Sundance necklace if the person puts up a Sundance. The necklace will make the child be strong in body and prevent him from sickness and to grow up successfully. It's the same with the priests. They'll give us a scapular to wear. And a child that is baptised, they'll baptise a child and they'll tie a small crucifix around the child's neck so that it may grow up successfully. It's the same way and that's how the paints are used.

Diane: And does the Horn Society use them?

Bob: The Horns uses the paints a lot. They have parfleches and they store the paints in there, their paints (holy). The paints are not to be disturbed by noise. Just like that one. That one is in a good place, that parfleche. The paints will be kept where it's quiet, where a child and us will not abuse them. We'll consider the paint holy, that's what the paints are.

Diane: Does the All Connected Beds (Women's Society) use them too?

Bob: It's all the same. The All Connected Beds (Women Society) use the paints a lot too, the purple. And so is the Horns. They use the purple paint too. They paint the faces with the purple paint when they're going to have a big ceremony. They'll paint their faces and they'll start performing. After the Horns are dressed and painted nobody is to pass in front of them. In the procession the people in the past consider it as a holy procession.

Diane: Why do you use them and why are you so concerned about them?

Bob: They are considered holy because a person will have luck with them in his home and his home will be peaceful and sickness will not come into it, to his children and himself. He will live long with the blessing he had with the paint and his children too and he will raise his children successfully. His prayer will be heard. In the past some people will perform a miracle with the moon. A person will say, "Look at the moon. Its face will be colored." The people would go out and look at the moon and it will be exactly the way the man predicted. The moon will hear his prayers. It will pity him because he prays to it, if he is walking straight in his prayers and if he tells the truth and believes, if he really believes in his faith. The people will predict that the sun will have a certain color during the day, its face will color. And everybody will look at it and it will have the color just as the man said. His words will be true. A person's prayers are heard by the one that he prays to.

A person will paint a face with the same colors as the moon had. And the Holy Lodge dancers... you must have seen them. They dance in the Holy Lodge dancing with a whistle. You know them. They dance to the Holy Lodge songs; those are the ones. In every prayer ceremony ochre is used. A person will pray very hard before he starts painting the face of a person to say the truth on him and to live a good life and to be successful in every way. Let's say like earning money and the supply of food and living to be soft on him. That's how much belief we have in the paints. That's how it is.

Diane: And the same with the seven paint is what you call it?

Bob: The seven paint is connected with the, uh...

Diane: The real paint.

Bob: Yes, the real paint, there are various kinds. There is the real paint and what they call the seven paint. The yellow paint and the purple paint and the black paint.

Diane: What color is the komonoih (purple)?

Bob: It's a purple color. They are called Komono. It's a purple color; it has a color like this. But it has a deeper bluish color. It's almost the same color as that chair.

Diane: Yes, now I know.

Bob: That will be used for designing. Every word of prayer will be said when a person start painting the faces of the

people by the man that is sitting the ceremony. We'll say like a priest officiating a sermon. It's the same with the man that

is sitting at the head. He'll be the one that paints the faces of the people and he'll pray very hard and the one that he prays to will help him and if he paints the face of a sick person the patient will be cured by painting his face.

Diane: And where do you get the seven paint?

Bob: At the same place where they get the ochre. The person that got the ochre will know in what color he wants them when they are baked. He will bake the seven paint. It will have a slight difference in color. It will have the same color as my seven paint. The same with the real paint and the yellow paint.

Diane: Where do you get the yellow paint?

Bob: The one that is picking ochre will get it at the same place, on the side of a mountain or on the side of a cut bank or river. He'll find it in these places and he'll know what kind is in these places and he'll know what kind of ochre it is. He'll be picking it and he'll be praying very hard. He'll know the color of every separate ochre. It might look like a line on the rock, that's what I heard. He'll start picking it out with a knife or something else. He'll have something on the ground where the ochre will drop and he'll bake it himself. He knows what to do. It will turn out the color he wants. A real paint, seven paint, yellow paint and black ochre and the one I talked about, the purple paint, in all these various paints.

Diane: And the red ochre.

Bob: It's colored red. Yes, a red ochre, that's what it's called.

Diane: A red ochre, what is the purpose for it?

Bob: It's used in a lot of ways. They are used for painting and prayer.

Diane: The all colors, they're all baked, right?

Bob: Yes, the one that got the ochre bakes them. He knows what they are and how to get the ochre. I don't even know but that's how the story was told to me by my mother and my father.

Diane: What purpose do they use the red paint for? Do the Horns and the All Connected Beds (Women's Society) use the red paint and the purple paint?

Bob: The red paint is used by the Medicine Pipe owners.

Diane: Which one, the red paint?

Bob: Yes, they'll use it very seldom.

Diane: What society used the green paint?

Bob: The All Connected Beds (Women's Society) and the Horns uses it. You must have seen the All Connected Beds (Women's Society). They use it for painting; it's the purple paint.

It's their centre pole that they paint on their faces. It's like a cross. It's similar to the cross on which Christ was nailed to. It's just like in the white religion. They paint that cross on their faces with the purple paint.

Diane: And who uses the blue paint? Did you give any information on it?

Bob: Yes, I spoke about the All Connected Beds (Women's Society). They use it for painting faces and they paint the cross on the face. The cross where Jesus was nailed on. The Horns use it too, to paint their faces, and they also draw a cross on their faces too, the same cross. That's the mystic part of it. Both are similar, the Indian religion and the white religion. The cross is used in both religions. Okay, you know the Holy Lodge, the centre pole is a cross. It's the cross where our Creator was nailed to. It's also in the Holy Lodge.

Diane: And there is a color like this?

Bob: Yellow color.

Diane: Yellow color. What society uses that?

Bob: It's used in a lot of ways. We say it's used on tipis, on all these different tipis. They are designed with the yellow paint and it's also now used to paint the face.

Diane: Is there a white ochre?

Bob: There is a white clay.

Diane: White clay?

Bob: Yes, they're called white clay.

Diane: Yes, where do you find it?

Bob: I know where there is a white clay. My father used to take some between the Belly Butte and the place that is called Willows in the Water. As we get across to the other side of the river this white is there and my father used to take some of this white clay and it is muddy. I think it's always damp. He takes a big lump of the clay and when we get home he dries it up. He doesn't bake it, he dries it, and when it dries up it turns real white.

It's used in a lot of ways. The All Connected Beds (Women's Society) uses it too. They use it on their heads and also the Holy Lodge dancers use it too, to their faces and they smear

themselves with it. It's used in a lot of ways. They're the same as the paints. Sometimes the All Connected Beds (Women's Society) use it to paint their faces. The All Connected Beds (Women's Society), yes, they paint their faces with white clay. It's generally used in prayer and everything and sometimes it's used on buckskin suits, if the buckskin suit is dirty. If something is to be made white, the white clay is used on it and when it dries you'll rub it and the buckskin shirt will stay white. There is a lot of other ways to make use of the white clay.

Diane: Is it holy?

Bob: They consider it as holy ochre. That's why the All Connected Beds (Women's Society) uses it to paint their faces and the Holy Lodge dancers will paint their faces with it and smear himself with it.

John: Mr. Black Plume has just given additional information on the quarrying, preparation, function, and significance of the following paints:

Real paint, seven paint, green paint, blue paint, yellow paint, Medicine Pipe paint, black paint and white paint. End of recording.

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