

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: GEORGE FIRST RIDER
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BUFFALO
IN BLOOD INDIAN
CEREMONIALISM
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: BLOOD RESERVE
CARDSTON, ALBERTA
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GEORGE FIRST RIDER

George First Rider of the Blood Reserve was born in 1904. He had no formal schooling but became an accomplished horseman and worked for a time on the rodeo circuit. After working as a farmer he ended up in jail as a result of alcoholism and theft. He attributes his reform to his conversion to Christianity.

He prides himself on his ability as a storyteller and on his knowledge of Blood culture, particularly the holy societies many of which he joined as a young man.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Describes the role of the buffalo and other animals in Blood Indian ceremonialism.
George First Rider: Now I am going to give another information -- an information of how the buffalo got to join in a sacred bundle and how the buffalo got to be so important. The buffalo gave his life to the Water Bundle Society. The owner of the bundle invited all the animals in the water -- the duck, the loon, the beavers and the otter -- and he invited the sun.

I will try and give a good explanation of this. I'll say a church is built and the people will be asked to donate whatever they can in money so whatever is needed for the church will be bought with this money. So that is how the Water Bundle was

built up. When the buffalo came he was told, "Now, you will donate something to the bundle." If a person wants to have a bull sweat bath he will pour a lot of water on the rocks four times because when a buffalo drinks he will rip a big mouthful of water. So the amount of water that is poured on the rocks is the same amount of water that the buffalo drank. So the buffalo donated this and donated his hide too; his hide will be used to rattle on. The buffalo said, "You will make the rattler with my hide." The buffalo also donated his seven songs and he also donated its hoofs which are used in the white buffalo dance. The buffalo also donated its tail and its fetlocks. So the buffalo donated seven articles to the bundle.

The sun was invited too and the sun also donated seven articles; some of what the sun donated were songs. And the birds also donated seven articles. The buffalo donated its hide to the Motoki. The Motoki had the buffalo hide for a robe and he also donated four buffalo horn bonnets. The four women that owned the buffalo horn bonnets are just like stud horses; they're called scabby bulls. The buffalo also donated his cross-breeding habit. The rattles were made out of the buffalo hide. The buffalo donated its tail to the Motoki and he donated his drinking of water. The buffalo also donated its stampeding. The buffalo donated seven articles to the Motoki. The buffalo donated seven articles to all the sacred bundles. He donated seven songs to the Horn Society and he also donated the cross-breeding. Today the buffalo is still associated to life. The buffalo managed to get into the Medicine Pipe; the Medicine Pipe drums are made of buffalo hides. The buffalo also donated seven articles to the Medicine Pipe. The Medicine Pipe robe is a buffalo hide. The buffalo donated seven articles to the Sioux Society or the Parted Hair Society.

We will investigate the seven articles that the buffalo donated and we will count them and there will be two sevens that the buffalo donated. Now we will trace back the buffalo facial paintings that the buffalo donated. I know that the buffalo donated fourteen; some are songs and I don't know the other

fourteen. The buffalo donated four seven articles. We, the Horn Society, got the buffalo's tail for a fan and the Horns will have the Buffalo sweat lodge. The buffalo is also associated to the Black Covered Pipe and also in the children sports. The children of the past play buffaloes. Now us humans, we make our robes out of buffalo hides and we make our moccasins out of buffalo hides and we eat the buffalo. All our regalias are from the buffalo. Now the elk, the female elk is the one that operated with love. That's why there are two Elk Rivers: the Northern Elk River and the Elk River in the USA. And there are two Big Rivers: the Big River (Columbia River) in the USA and Big River (St. Lawrence River) in the east.

There is a Buffalo Society and there is a Bull Society. The hoofs of the buffalo are given to jealous people. Those are the hoofs that Napiwa (Old Man) tied to his wife's dress; the jingling of the hoofs directs him to where his wife is. I remembered we used to go to the slaughterhouse and my father

takes the feet of the slaughtered cows and my mother boils them. And when they're soft the hoofs come out and while the hoofs are still soft my mother punches holes in the hoofs and she strings them and she hangs them to dry. When the hoofs are dry my father told me, "Now take these stringed hoofs and tie them around the neck of one of your horses." So I took the hoofs that were strung together and I tied them around a black mare's neck and buffalo horns are also used for bells.

The buffalo horns are also used on headdresses and there is a song about the Horn headdresses. The words in the song are, "May I gore a fine buffalo." I am not permitted yet to sing songs. There are words in the songs. Now the horns... the bones are used for making hide scrapers and fleshers. Wood is not used; buffalo bones are used. Buffalo trails were on this earth and today there are no more buffalo trails but buffalo trails that are made by livestock are still called buffalo trails.

The bear is also associated and my important in a Medicine Pipe and the loon is associated to both the Medicine Pipe and the Water Bundle Pipe. The loon is important to both sacred bundles -- the Medicine Pipe Bundle and the Beaver Bundle.

Now all the sacred bundles that are transferable are not managed by one. All the various animals and birds are invited and they each donated something. That is why there are so many songs. It's the same with a designed tipi. The tipi is going to be transferred. The one that is going to transfer the tipi will invite the men that he relies on for help. The ones that we know that own a tipi will be invited for the tipi transferal. There are only two songs to a designed tipi. Now

we will say I (First Rider) will transfer a Medicine Pipe and a tipi. I will look for the person that has officiated so many transferals and I will hire him to help to transfer the pipe. I will look for the men that own a tipi to help me in transferring a tipi and I will sing just two songs. After the two transferal songs are sung I will burn the incense for each of my helpers and each one will give a song to the recipient and the recipient will have a lot of songs. The reason why there are so many songs, because of the recipient knows any of the songs he will give it to a new recipient of a tipi. A tipi can be transferred to anybody except a young man cannot join in the Horn Society; only an elderly man can join the Horns. If we think of the bundles that are transferable, the buffalo did a lot of transfer in the bundles and the buffalo donated its wool in the Horn Society transferal. Its wool is used to plug the pipe bowls and its hide is used in a lot of ways. We use its hide for moccasins and for our clothings and we use its hide for a saddle blanket so the buffalo is associated to all the bundle that are transferable.

The bear is claimed to be important in a Medicine Pipe. The bear didn't join in all the bundles. The bear is not associated to the Beaver Bundle. The only bundle the bear is

associated to is the Medicine Pipe Bundle; the buffalo joined in the Beaver Bundle Society. The buffalo is associated to the shields and eventually the buffalo shield was made. The buffalo shield is the Never Sitting Shield. The buffalo is associated to a lot of the sacred bundles that are transferable. A man who is going out hunting cannot go out alone to hunt, he will have to go with the buffalo. How is he going out to hunt with the buffalo? The man took a buffalo horn and made a powder horn out of it and puts his gunpowder in the buffalo horn and goes out with the buffalo horn to hunt.

Now we will think about something else. The buffalo joined in a lot of transfers. There is the Horn Society, the Buffalo Society and the Bull Society. The buffalo is worded in all the songs of these societies. The buffalo is even in an Indian saying, "The buffaloes came clattering their hoofs." And a person that doesn't have a good pronunciation in Blackfoot will not be allowed to pronounce the words but a person that has a real good pronunciation in Blackfoot will be able to pronounce the words. I (First Rider) am thinking of a ceremony where the buffalo is not used; the buffalo is used in all ceremonies. The smearing staff in the Pigeon Society is also from the buffalo. The excrement of the buffalo was once used for smearing and now human excrement is used for smearing in the Pigeon Society and the song of the buffalo is in the Pigeon Society. There are a few societies that the buffalo is not associated to but I think there is no society the buffalo is

not associated to. The buffalo is also associated to the Sundance lodge. Its hide is used for tying the rails. And we will think of the societies that the buffalo is not associated to. There will be a few societies that the buffalo is not associated to.

Actually there is only one lullaby song for children. The words are: "Buffalo come walking in between. Walk heavily. A calf slept alone, running off deteriorated." Deteriorate means old. The one that ran off is old and has died and gone beyond. These are old Indian words.

The buffalo is also associated to the Black Seizer Society. And now the Indians lived by the buffalo. Today meat is still the favorite food for the Indians, although there are no more buffaloes. But anything that is got a meat on is still the favorite food for the Indians.

The buffalo is associated to every artifact that is transferable. The buffalo donated seven articles to all the artifacts that are transferable. The buffalo donated fourteen articles to the Horns. The coming out of the buffalo and the circling of the buffalo -- the buffalo donated these to the Horns.

I (First Rider) heard that the buffalo donated four seven songs. I know two seven songs. The buffalo is mostly associated to the Horn Society; that is why there are Horn headdresses. Now we know why the buffalo is associated in all

the sacred artifacts and now a question is asked why the buffalo donated its hoofs to the Beaver Bundle which are used in the white buffalo dance. The white buffalo dance means they illustrate how the buffaloes go for a drink and how they cross-breed; the calves are the children. The children play and imitate the buffalo and what is used all came from the buffalo.

And now the arch staffs. The buffalo staff is amongst the staffs. No Blood Indian knows about the buffalo staff. Now we are doing a research for the accurate information of life. Some people don't give accurate informations. Most of the informants say, "We will not give them." I (First Rider) will not take it that way. I will give a real accurate information.

Now I am working with these men and I will do an honest job for them. I know that if there are too many that are working like me the informations will all be mixed. A person will give an information just the way he thinks. I will not give an

information of what I don't know; I will give an information of what I know. I (First Rider) cannot illustrate an obscene word in the informations that I have already given but now I know that I can illustrate an obscene word. I will not put a word out or exaggerate. Now whoever is going to listen will know that my stories are accurate. I (First Rider) know a lot about transferals and I know a lot of transferal songs and I know how tipis are transferred and I know how the Horn Society transfer their sacred bundles, and I know how the medicine hats are transferred. I had a lot of medicine hats and Horn Society medicine hats and I also owned the Never Sitting Shield and I also transfer that. I also know how the shield was transferred. I think I am the only one that still remembers how the Never Sitting Shield was transferred and I think that I am the only one that still knows how the tipi with a marten flag was transferred. Nobody can transfer the tipi. I went a long ways in the Horn Society. I can illustrate the operations of the Horn Society. A lot of people hide of how things are. I (First Rider) will tell the truth. People are just after the money. And now that is all I can tell about the buffalo and now I conclude my story at this point. That is all.

INDEX

| INDEX TERM | IH NUMBER | DOC NAME | DISC # | PAGE # |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------|--------|--------|
| ANIMALS | | | | |
| -in religion and ceremonialism | IH-AA.087 | BUFFALO | 56 | 2-6 |
| BUFFALO | | | | |
| -spiritual significance of | IH-AA.087 | BUFFALO | 56 | 2-6 |