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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 a sweat lodge.

George First Rider: Okay, we talk about the Beaver Bundle situation. These that are talked, they are stories that are told to me. Myself, the things that I saw, I illustrate them now.

Now a Beaver Bundle owner, the way he knows. My father had two pipes. The pipes were left with me in the will. One was stolen from me and the other one was given away. A transferal completed to the new Beaver Bundle owner and the bundle is being wrapped up for him. The Beaver Bundle owner's outer wrapper of the bundle is a buffalo hide. Okay, the other wrapper is an elk hide, the other. When life came near, cloths were used for outer wrappers. Now we are using shawls for covering sacred bundles. The outer wrapper is different; now they are covered with a shawl. If a Beaver Bundle owner's

outer wrapper is an elk hide the bundle will be unwrapped in the elk way.

If the other Beaver Bundle owner's outer wrapper is a buffalo hide it will be unwrapped the buffalo bull way. If his outer wrapper is a cloth it will be unwrapped in the moon songs; that is how the Beaver Bundles are. Okay, after the transferal he will call out an invitation. "Okay, now I am going to build a sweat lodge. I just went through a transferal." The sweat lodge means a baby is born. The baby cannot be just attended to in any ways. It will be washed and it will be made clean. After the baby is cleansed it will be wrapped up and it is going to be raised. So that's what it means, the reason why they build sweat lodges.

The new Beaver Bundle owner is born. He is the child of the person that transferred the bundle to him. He'll be washed in the sweat lodge after he is born and then he carried on by himself. The sweat lodge is made the same way as the Holy Woman's sweat lodge. Red willows are used to build the Beaver Bundle sweat lodge. A hole cannot be dug for the red willows. The red willows in the Beaver sweat lodge are large; those are bent into an arch. There are two of them. The slim end of one will be tied together with the big part of the other willow and the slim end of the other willow will be tied together with the big part of the first willow. So they are bent into an arch. That is a Beaver Bundle sweat lodge.

It occurs there are six willows on one side and six willows on the other side; there are twelve willows that are bent into an arch. The willows are all tied to the first two arches and then they are bent into an arch. The sweat lodge can be lifted if necessary; that is how it is made. The ground is just scraped and soil is spread out on it. The hole is dug in a

circle. The stones didn't have to be counted to how many they will be; the hole is just there. Now a fire is built. They didn't have a shovel. They had nothing to use to take the hot rocks inside. They will use a forked stick to carry the hot rocks inside.

It differed when the ones that are going to have a sweat bath are called. They all started at once. They all come in through the west entrance, they sat down and they strip themselves right away. The one that sat by the east entrance gave his clothes to the one that sat by the west entrance. The clothes were taken out through the west entrance. The clothes of the one that sat on the north side of the east entrance were put behind him on the outside and the same with the next one. The ones that sat on the north side, the one that sat on the north side of the east entrance also handed his clothes to the one that sat by the west entrance of the sweat lodge and they were also set in place.

The rocks were taken inside when their clothes were all set in place. The four rocks that used to be in there are not these.

A broken piece of stone was just set in a hollow place that was made on the ground. Water grass were put on the altar for a mat. There is no blanket that was put there; the water grass were put there. The one that sat at the back just scratched the ground with his finger and that is where the incense was burned. The pipe, the Beaver Bundle owner gives smokes in the secondary pipe; it also has a big pipe bowl. A smoke was offered to him in the secondary pipe.

The Beaver Pipe is hung on a tripod on the west side. The pipe will be put on top of the sweat lodge when the entrances are closed. When they were all seated, dirt was spread out inside and then it was covered with water grass (aquatic plants). The stones are going to be taken in. The wife of the Beaver Bundle owner. The pipe was already set; the pipe was on a dirt pile outside at the back. The woman took it and she went around with it the way the sun travels (clockwise) and she hand it in. The Beaver Bundle owner, the man, he took it and offered a smoke to the one that sat at the back and the shaman said a prayer with it. He just prayed to the former Beaver Bundle owners; he was just praying to those people. Then they lit the pipe and they all smoked it. He blew a puff of smoke on the palm of his right hand and he touched himself with it on his left side. He blew a puff of smoke on his left hand and he touched himself with it on his right side. He blew a puff of smoke on his right hand and he did the same to his side. He blew a puff of smoke on his left hand and he did the same.

All the people that are going to have a sweat bath did the same, they touched themselves with the smoke, when the tobacco burned out the one that sat at the back -- it's the pipe that was smoked inside the sweat lodge -- he stuck the tamp stick into the pipe bowl and he emptied it on the northwest side. He turned the pipe around in the direction that the sun goes and he emptied it again on the east side. He turned it around again and on the southeast side and on the west side. That is how he emptied the pipe, then the pipe was taken out and the stones were taken in. The stones were just rolled in. They call them striped rocks. Those are the river rocks. They have spots on them and they are gray in color and they say that they got very hot. That's what they call them, striped rocks. So the rocks were rolled inside. A forked stick was weaved with barks and it shaped up like a shovel. They can't lift the stones with it because it will burn. They just push the rocks in with it and they shove them into the hole that was dug. It's dug in a circle. It is called the gnaw of the beavers through the ice.

The pail, I saw it. It is a real pail (cast iron pail). It contained water; the water will be poured on the hot stones. A forked stick -- the cup is round, it's a forked stick -- the forked stick was split and it is secured to the cup and it was made like a long tail (spoon). It's the willow. The ones that were in the sweat bath, he had to cut a stick to move the stones. They had to go to the river and sticks that were gnawed off by the beavers were taken, seven on one side and

seven on the other side. Then it occurs if there are not many participants they will take each two of the sticks. They push the stones in place with them.

Now when they were all seated, the stones were not shoved in yet at this point. When they got through smoking then the ones that were going to have a facial painting were painted. The men were all painted the same facial paint. They were painted on their foreheads and on their mouths and on the back of their hands. They are painted with real paint; that is how they are painted for the sweat lodge. The rocks were taken in after they were all painted. The four small rocks were taken in and then the entrances were closed and the water is there. The curtain at the east entrance is lifted with a stick and the curtain at the west entrance is also lifted with a stick and the entrances were closed. This is a Beaver Bundle sweat lodge and that is how the floor was covered.

When the curtains were lowered, the shaman knows what the outer wrapper of the bundle is. He had to tell the Beaver Bundle owners, "What is the outer wrapper of the bundle?" There are three kinds, a buffalo hide, an elk hide and a blanket. Which one he named, let's say he said the outer wrapper of the bundle is an elk hide, the shaman will start off with the elk songs.

The elk songs will be sung. There are seven songs that are going to be sung and then the two entrances will be opened.

The one that sat at the back turned around to his right facing outside. It's afternoon at this time. He prayed to the Sun. "The way you are gladly seen in the morning when you are rising, may we gladly see this pipe in the same way, this pipe that is going to be wrapped up," and then they went on with the sweat bath. Everybody prayed and they sang. The Beaver Bundle owner will tell the shaman to sing certain songs. If he sings, if he wants to sing the still at home songs, he will not sing them all. He will sing four of the songs. He was singing them and after he got through singing the two entrances were opened again. The two entrances were closed again and they were just praying from then on. The entrances were opened again and they looked out; they didn't go out, they just looked out from the sweat lodge. On the fourth time the two entrances were opened, the one that officiated the sweat lodge went out and he sat behind the dirt pile. The Beaver Bundle owner sat beside him and the others started to come out. The woman took the pipe and the tripod. She took them and she'll put the bundle at the back on the ground; they are not hung up. So it's put on the ground. The tripods are put beside the bundle.

These Beaver Pipes are not the kind to be taken outside every morning and to be hung on a tripod. The shaman will sing. The words in the song are, "I am sitting here. I am moving," and then the pipes will be moved. Medicine Pipes are different. They are taken outside every morning and they are hung above the door. The man owns it now. He cleansed himself in the sweat lodge.

There is the Beaver Bundle offering sweat lodge. I (First Rider) went through the Beaver Bundle offering sweat lodge. The offering that I am going to offer in the beaver bundle offering sweat lodge is a hide. It was taken to the tipi of the Beaver Bundle owner. The hide is painted in the tipi; the sundogs were painted on it. The hide was painted with yellow ochre; that is going to be an offering. The sweat lodge was built the same way. Willows were bent into an arch. Holes are not dug for the willows, they are just bent into an arch. The inside is covered with dirt and water grass are used for mats. They stuck through the door from where the rocks are rolled in. The offering was fixed in the tipi; the offering is put on the tripod behind the dirt pile. The cup is made the same way. A handle is attached to it with a willow and it had a long handle. It is used for pouring water on the hot rocks. The cup is used to drink water from the pail. If some don't want to drink they'll just wet their heads with it. Sweat lodges are different. The participants are given water to drink; the pail of water is their water.

Now they are going to enter the sweat lodge. When they came out from the tipi, when they were all seated and the moon songs were sung, the words in the song are: "The old man came in with food, the bachelor came in with goods." Then I (First Rider) took the offering inside. I handed it to the man and he took it. The offering is offered up into heaven at this point. The curtains of the entrance are not lowered yet. The offering was offered up in the moon songs; the moon songs were sung.

I was painted with real paint after the offering was offered up into heaven and then I was clothed, the Beaver Bundle owner clothed me. I took them off when I was going to have a sweat bath. There were seven moon songs. The offering was handed out when the clothings were handed out. It was not put on top of the sweat lodge; the offering was braced up on the other side of the dirt pile as it has been offered up into heaven. Those are the lives of the Beaver Bundle owners.

The door curtains were lowered. The Beaver Bundle owner didn't sit beside the shaman; I sat beside him because I made an offering. Before the shaman started to sing, he just touches me and I make downward brushing motions on his sides and I put away the words in the song behind me, how I should live. There are four moon songs when the curtains were lowered, then there are three beaver songs and the doors were opened and they looked out. The beaver songs were just sung when the curtains were lowered. Again four beaver songs were sung and three moon songs were also sung; so they sang seven songs again.

The curtains were lifted again, that was my cooking. They were just praying when the curtains were lowered again. They didn't pray any more when the curtains were lowered for the fourth time, they just kept pouring water on the hot rocks. Water is poured in a Beaver Bundle sweat lodge with the buffalo, the duck, the lizard and the loon. If the participants want to pour water in behalf of the buffalo, four cups of water are

poured on the rocks. They say that the buffaloes takes a great big sup of water. The lizard is not so bad. It makes the sweat bath easier and the loon too and the duck. There are various kinds of sweat lodges. So that is how the sweat lodge is.

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