

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT:	GEORGE FIRST RIDER A WOMEN'S GAME OF THE BLOOD INDIANS/WAR GAMES OF THE BLOOD INDIANS
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INTERVIEWER:	J.C. HELLSON
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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:

- War games of the Blood Indians.
- A dice game for women.

George First Rider: Now there is another game. Four dice are used. The dice are made out of rib bones. The ribs are split. Two of the ribs are slant on both ends. There are three grooved lines on the other two ribs, three here they are both grooved in the same way. The other two dice are grooved down the centre in a winding manner; they are called the snake grooved dice. The women play with these bones and that is to amuse the children also. The ones that are grooved in a straight lines are counted six and the ones that are grooved like a snake are counted two. When the four dice are thrown and if a snake grooved die turns up and a straight lined grooved die turns up too then they are counted four. One is

counted six and the other is counted two. And when they are thrown if two different kinds of grooves turn up then they are counted four. They are the same as the dice that the white man plays with; you shake the dice and then they are thrown. If you want to flip a dice over you will use the dice with a straight line to flip a dice over so that the grooves will match. If the dice is flipped over we'll make a score of six points. The final score of the dice game is twelve points. Whoever scores twelve points first is the winner. If one woman wins two games she wins two games and if they play three games and if the same woman wins again then she will win four games. The women will bet quills in the game. That is to amuse themselves. These are games of the past.

WAR GAMES OF THE BLOOD INDIANS

Okay, we are telling stories and we recall about life so that the future generation will hear about it. All the amusements for the people are gone, and the Blood Indians, their Chief Red Crow and Crop Ear Wolf (Shot on Both Sides) they participate in all the games. The game is called the big hand game. I (First Rider) saw the major hand game. Rifles were fired. A man by the name of Bear Hat, he was with the Black Seizers Society. The other society were the Braves. It was not at the circle encampment when they played a hand game. They had a game in winter. Bear Hat went to the Lone Fighters clan. Bear Hat fired a shot and he turned back. The chief of the Lone Fighters clan, his name is Iron Necklace, that is Chief Heavy Shield, he sent a message. He said, "Why was a shot fired at us?" The messenger rode to the other camps and fired a shot too. The messenger went into one of the camps and he was told, "How and why was the shot fired too at us?" The messenger said, "We are going to have a game." The head men of the Lone Fighter clan gathered together immediately. They said, "We will use this spring for a dice." There was Shot on Both Sides of the Fish Eaters and his friend Iron. They went for Sun Chief (Eagle Plume). Sun Chief took an arrow point. He said, "We will use this for a dice." They gathered together and they

started to count coups saying, "So that our opponents may be weakened, I killed an enemy with this." They started to count coups of what they took from the enemy; the other group did the same. The day came for the big game. They all came to the dance hall. Everybody got prepared for the big game during the day. I (First Rider) saw a man by the name of Three Guns, he rode on a bay horse. He wore a pair of Hudson's Bay blanket leggings. His coat was Hudson's Bay blanket (capote) and a wolf fur cap. Those that wear fur caps are the ones that went on the warpath during the winter. Three Guns rode around the camps singing his war song. The camps were pitched by the dance hall for the big game. In the other group, Iron Necklace (Heavy Shield) rode on a roan pinto horse. Heavy Shield also was riding around the camps. He couldn't sing because he had lost his voice; he just rode around making signs. There were a lot of men counting coups at this point and night came. Iron Necklace was made to dance from their tipi to the dance hall. The other group were the Black Seizer Society and they were the

Horn Society too. They did not dance but they were just singing around the camps at night. They all stood in a row and the women in the back row. Four of the Horn members had drums. Sun Chief (Eagle Plume) took the lead. Crop Eared Wolf (Shot on Both Sides) and his friend Wolf Chief (Iron) are the leaders of the Horn Society. They did not want to act too proud to take the lead; they stood with the drummers. The group sang. After they had sang they went forward and they stopped and sang the same song again and they went forward again and sang the song again; they went forward again. On the fourth stop they stood at the door of the dance hall. They did not count any coups. After they sang they entered the dance hall and they sat down.

The drummers took their places. They sang various songs and they dance the sham dance. The Fish Eaters were the first ones to do the stick tapping singing. There were the Fish Eaters and the Lone Fighters. One group were singing the stick tapping songs. Their songs sounded merrily and there was a lot of noise in the stick tapping. After the stick tapping they counted coups about the places they were and the places where they stole. Those are the ones that sang and that worded their song, "Be still sleeping. I am here." These are the words in their song. The other group did the same. Both groups were counting coups ahead of time and they'd, "May this weaken our opponent Iron Necklace (Heavy Shield)." The singers were calling names of their special opponents. That doesn't mean that they are mad at each other; the words were just teasing words. The two group sat down in a row, one group on one side and the other groups on the other side. So the best singers were given the drum. The big drum was used for the opening of the game. Iron Necklace (Heavy Shield) was going to use a quirt for a guessing stick; Sun Chief (Eagle Plume) will use a

rifle for a guessing stick. The two of them were brought forward. Sun Chief was there walking up and down praying and singing his war song. Iron Necklace (Heavy Shield) was also walking up and down on the other side. He held his whip in his left hand for he was left handed. Iron Necklace (Heavy Shield) and Sun Chief (Eagle Plume) are going to be the guessers in the game. They looked for a man to perform that they had confidence in. The opposite team also looked for a performer, the very best man that they can find, a man that escaped luckily from a raid. What he stole we don't know. The man will perform by what he stole from the enemy.

When they sat down the two leaders divided the counter sticks evenly. Half of the counter sticks were ochred with real paint, the other half of the counter sticks were ochred with white ochre. The white ochre on the five counter sticks meant that Three Guns went on the warpath five times during the winter. It is the man that rode a bay horse singing his war songs and that wore a wolf skin fur cap. The reason why he (Three Guns) wore a fur cap, it's because he went on the warpath during the winter, and the other five counter sticks were painted frosty. A man by the name of Calf Running killed an enemy. That is why the other five counter sticks were

painted with real paint.* A man by the name of Steel was wounded, so the five counter sticks were also painted with real ochre on account of him being wounded.

The men demonstrated their supernatural powers and their conflicts in the game. Amongst one group there was Bear Hat and in the other group there was Big Eagle. These two men performed for the opening of the game. The one that helped the Fish Eaters was Bear Hat (Crazy Crow). The one that helped the Lone Fighters was Big Eagle. They were the ones that performed. That one that helped the Fish Eaters was riding on the backs of their opponents. After the trial performance with the dice by the two men from each side the dice were given to the other two men. Sun Chief (Eagle Plume) was just walking around. He was the first one to make a guessing point at his opponent who is performing with the dice. He (Sun Chief) aimed the rifle at the performer and he pulled the trigger. The rifle just clicked and he (Sun Chief) dropped the live bullet which he held in his hand and he pointed in the direction which the point of the bullet pointed. The performer was guessed right and Sun Chief's party slapped their mouths, whooping. The man from the other party performed too. Iron Necklace

*The real paint on the five counter sticks represents the blood of the enemy that was killed by Three Guns, and on account of Steel too.

(Heavy Shield) was walking around too and he sat down. When he (Heavy Shield) sat down a man from the opposing team got up running. He also had a whip. His name is Striped Wolf. He had a sorrel horse effigy and his whip was ochred. He (Striped Wolf) ran up to the man, Iron Necklace, that was sitting there. A northern white man blanket (Hudson's Bay blanket). Maybe that was the first time Striped Wolf took it out from his trunk. He wore the blanket and he got on Iron Necklace's back. He (Striped Wolf) didn't pretend to whip him (Iron Necklace), he (Striped Wolf) really whipped Iron Necklace on the thigh twice and he got off over his (Iron Necklace) head and he left the Hudson's Bay blanket on Iron Necklace's back.

The game lasted long because most of the time they were re-enacting what they did in a battle. The performers changed. The same two elderly men performed with the dice before they were given to the men that are going to perform. The men were singing their war songs. A man by the name of Owns Many Horses was on the Lone Fighters side and on the Fish Eaters side was Bear Hat. He performed for the Fish Eaters and Owns Many Horses performed for the Lone Fighters. Owns Many Horses and his partner took nine of the counter sticks before the guesser got them. The Fish Eaters performed then. The Lone Fighters took another guesser. The new guesser was Young Pine. He used a knife for pointing. The performers for the Fish Eaters took five of the counter sticks before the guesser got them. Two men performed for the Lone Fighters. Young Pine used a knife for pointing. As he dropped the knife it flipped over with the

blade pointing towards him which meant that he will point at the performers on both sides but instead he (Young Pine) pointed one way. He missed one of the performers. He guessed right in his second guess. One of the performers on the Lone Fighter side was missed and the Lone Fighters took all of the ten counter sticks and the game was over and everybody jumped up. The Lone Fighters charged the Fish Eaters. There was quite an obtrusion. Some of the Fish Eaters fled out of the hall. The Lone Fighters were riding their opponents and some will grab the other man by the hair and pretend to scalp him. There was quite a commotion in the war games. When everything subsided the Lone Fighters walked around inside of the hall singing their victory song. The guessers took the lead. The words in the song were, "Now you have seen the guessers." Then they stood in a circle and they danced the victory dance. They danced around in a circle and they were happy when they won the game. The Lone Fighters took the whip from the Fish Eaters that they used for pointing and their women danced with the whip. When everything was over they sang a fast song which is actually a war game song. After the singing the men started counting coups. When everything was over the drummers sang the smoking song and they smoked. After they smoked, Iron Necklace got up. He stood in the centre with another man. Iron Necklace was talking to him. The man said, "We had a good game. The Fish Eaters will have a return game in about two weeks time." When the two weeks were up they had another game. They played the same game. This time they played out in the open. They bet horses and blankets. This time they had the game at the east part of the reserve where the old Indian agency was located. These are good times in life. I (First Rider) know a lot of the songs; I will sing them in the future.

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