

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: BOB BLACK PLUME
AGE GRADE SOCIETIES
(BLOOD)
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: BLOOD RESERVE
CARDSTON, ALBERTA
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BLOOD RESERVE
CARDSTON ALBERTA
TRIBE/NATION: BLOOD
LANGUAGE: BLACKFOOT
DATE OF INTERVIEW: NOVEMBER 17, 1967
INTERVIEWER: J.C. HELLSON
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD
SOURCE: PROVINCIAL MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES
OF ALBERTA
TAPE NUMBER: IH-AA.043
DISK: TRANSCRIPT DISC 50
PAGES: 6
RESTRICTIONS: NONE

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Lists various Blood Societies.

Bob: I'll just sing one of his songs. One of each of the songs.

Diane: Yes. Ku (start)

Bob: Okay, I was telling all sorts of stories to my young brother, Yellow Fly (John Hellson). I was telling him some old people stories about the past. Okay! Now I am going to sing him some songs about societies of all different societies, here ourselves. Okay, I know these. They are called the Dogs. They are a Dog Society. They also have merry dances and then there are the Braves. They don't exist any more. These don't exist any more; they are a society of the past. The Black Seizers, the Black Seizers. Okay, the Pigeons. The Pigeons, these are a society from here, the Blood Reserve.

Mrs. Black Plume: The Flies.

Bob: The Flies. These are called Flies. Okay, the All Brave Dogs. These are also a society of the Blood Reserve. Okay, the Medicine Pipes are not left out; they are in societies too, the Pipes. And then there are the Water Bundle owners, these are Beaver Bundle Pipes, and the Crow Water Pipe. Okay, there are the Black Covered Pipe owners, and the Black Seizers' Pipes. These are all societies from here. Okay, the Old Woman

Society, they are also the superiors of the Sundance, and the Horn Society. These two societies are still in operation, and in prayers these are still in operation on the Blood Reserve.

Diane: (Indistinct)

Bob: Yes, the Black Seizers, they are separate. The Black Seizers' Pipe and the Black Seizers are different. They dance and after their dance they would run in all directions and grab people and take their clothing.

Mrs. Black Plume: They tear their clothes.

Bob: Some, they tear the clothes. Whoever resists them they tear their clothing from them. That is a bad society, those Black Seizers. Those that they don't catch, they will count coups to catch them. They would catch them in their tipis. Even if they go into the water or anywhere, they count coups and grab them and take their clothing from them and run home with the clothes. And if they resist they tear their clothing. The Black Seizers' Pipe is different.

Diane: What is a Black Seizers' Pipe?

Bob: It's a pipe.

Diane: Does it belong to the Black Seizers? Do they own it?

Bob: All I know about the Black Seizers is that they are different. They dance different. The Black Seizers' Pipe is different too. They are called the same but they are separate.

Diane: (Indistinct)

Bob: The Pipe. The Black Seizers are a different society and the Black Seizers' Pipes are different too. They just have the same names.

Diane: They just have the same names. There is a difference. There is a group that have the Black Seizers' Pipes and these Black Seizers are just the Black Seizers.

John: They were called, in the earlier days... We have records that show Black Seizers and another society called the Cheechers. One had a pipe and one didn't. One Black Covered Pipe that I got from Herald Chief Moon, that has nothing to do with the society.

Diane: Is that the Black Covered Pipe?

John: Ye ak! Covered.

Diane: There is a thing that belongs to Good Rider (Herald Chief Moon), the one he sold. Is that called the Black Bundle?

Bob: Black Covered Pipe.

Diane: Black Covered Pipe.

Bob: It's black covered.

Diane: Is it a Black Seizers' pipe?

Bob: It's another pipe. It's just another pipe only it's got a different name, the Black Covered Pipe. The covering is black.

Mrs. Black Plume: Yes, they call it the Black Covered Pipe.

Bob: Black Covered Pipe.

Diane: It's not a Black Seizers' pipe.

Bob: It's not.

Diane: No, it's not, it's just black covered.

John: Yes, just black covered.

Diane: And the ones that are called Bear Pigeons?

Bob: Yes, I didn't mention those, I just said Pigeons.

Mrs. Black Plume: Yes, we owned the Muddy Mouth Pigeon (Bear Pigeon).

Bob: I am a Muddy Mouth (Bear). I still own the Muddy Mouth (Bear).

Diane: They have belts?

Bob: Yes, and bow and arrows.

Mrs. Black Plume: They have fur robes. The one that I was selling him (John Hellson) is the robe for a Bear Pigeon.

Bob: Yes, they have fur robes and they have arm bands.

Mrs. Black Plume: His headpiece is still at home.

Bob: Yes, I still got it and my arm bands but they are not bear skins. I still got my arm bands.

Mrs. Black Plume: And the bow and arrows and the one you call the blunt arrow.

Bob: I am a Bear Pigeon, and I am still a Bear Pigeon.

Mrs. Black Plume: There are three of them but I heard the other two sold their bundles.

Bob: I haven't sold mine.

Mrs. Black Plume: Two are still living and him (Bob). Three of them.

Diane: He said there are only three living. They are called the Bear Pigeons.

John: Oh, the Bear Pigeons.

Bob: I haven't sold mine.

Diane: He's a member. He's one of them that had the wristlets, the garters, the feather and the robe she was trying to sell you, she says (Mrs. Bob Black Plume).

Mrs. Black Plume: When they sit down they crouch and they throw something at them. Then they sit up and imitate a bear.

Bob Black Plume: We sit up and look around like a bear does. We do this four times. We are the first ones to get up and dance. We dance behind the others chasing them and they dance away. We aim at them with our bows and arrows and then they turn around and start dancing the other way. We dance four times to-and-fro.

Mrs. Black Plume: They are bad. They are greedy.

Bob: Yes, we take food away from people. We did take some food.

Mrs. Black Plume: They'll take whatever they think is good and they'll take it home. A berry soup or anything that is good, nobody can refuse them. If the Horns would kill a cow at the camps, the Bear Pigeons will go over and take what they want. Nobody will stop them.

Bob: I did snatch some food. When we came out to dance, the Horns started their dance. They had a carcass. They had it all cut up. They were going to ration it out. They said, "Let us go and snatch some meat." So we went, three of us Bear Pigeons. The others were Yellow Pigeons. They are painted with yellow ochre all over their bodies. The Yellow Pigeons went in front of us and us behind with our bows and arrows ready for action. We took one leg (hindquarter). Nobody spoke to us. We took the hindquarter away and when we went away the Horn said, "Damn those Pigeons." They got mad at us. Nobody can stop the Pigeons. If a person tries to stop them from snatching anything, this person will be shot with an arrow. But the arrow is not sharp; it's a blunt arrow. They are mean, we act mean. We act the same as the bears.

John: Didn't they have a bear skin on the ears representing the ears?

Diane: He says do you wear ears, bear ears?

Bob: No, we just have a headpiece.

John: No. No. This is different.

Bob: No, there are no ears, we just wear a plume headpiece painted with ochre. I've still got my headpiece. It's a plume. I haven't sold mine. I haven't transferred them. If somebody is not interested or resists joining the society, we will grab them and take them out by force. That is how the society is formed. They don't put up any dances now. There are still some of the Pigeons that are alive. Now they don't put up any more dances.

John: How did Bob get his name? What is his name and how did he get it?

Diane: He says, "What is your Indian name and how did you get your name?"

Bob: I was named Skunk. My father's mother's mother had a skunk pelt which she used for curing. The skunk pelt comes alive if she used all her power. Even if the patient is very sick, if he has pneumonia or some other severe illness, if the pelt comes alive that means she is going to have success in curing the patient. And if the skunk pelt should not come alive it is a very bad omen; the patient will not recover.

The skunk pelt would jump up and start running and my grandmother would utter a sound of praise and satisfaction.

This skunk pelt was given to me as a charm. It's just a headpiece. They say that I was always sick when I was a child. My grandmother said I will grow up. "He will live." The charm was tied on me and my face was painted and I grew up. I used to have braids and I tied the skunk pelt to my braids. The skunk is complete.

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