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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:

- The origin of the Beaver Bundle and its transferal.  
George: We are just giving the history of what we know about life. The ones that I heard talking stories - there is Bull Back Fat, Night Caller, Eagle Speaker, and Little White Weasel Calf. These people that told stories, there is a person his name is also Eagle Speaker, Wolf Shirt and Curved Face. I also heard these people they told the story of the original myth of the Water Pipe Bundle, how it was presented.

It was said that a man broke camp and moved to St. Mary's Lake to get his food supply. He travelled light. He did not have too many provisions with him. He went over to hunt and to trap. The man went out shooting. He did not go on a buffalo chase but he was after the deer. Before he started he told his wife, "There is no need for you to come. I will not go far, so

you'll stay home." The man went out to shoot some game. The man made his kill and left the meat and he went home. He had horses, one black gelding and the other one was a white horse. He got his horses the next morning and they went to where he hid the meat. So they loaded the meat on each of his pack horses and they went back to their camps. The woman looked after the meat and he looked after his weapons and he went out again and he made another kill. He packed the meat on his back and he came home with the meat. The next morning the man told his wife, "I will start off early so I'll come back soon." As the man went out, the woman went back to bed and she went to sleep. We don't know how long she slept when someone told her, "My mother wants you to go over to her." She jumped up and looked around but there was no one around so she went back inside and she didn't do anything. Her meat laid there idle. She was thinking of the voice that spoke to her. She heard it very clearly.

The woman took her water buckets and went out. The lake was right straight in front from her camp. This is the St. Mary's Lake. She walked down along the shore and she came to where the shore was rocky and she walked over the rocks and she stood there and she was wetting her hair with water. Suddenly someone told her, "Just come in." She looked around and she didn't see a tipi. The woman left tracks on the shore where she walked. Again the voice told her, "Just come in." Then she looked to the water. She saw a boy. He was very handsome; she couldn't avoid him. The boy told the woman "Come." The girl waded into the water. She did not notice that she was in the water. The boy had hypnotized her. She went in with him in his home. The father told his son, "Finally you brought the girl. My friend is always camping nearby and now you brought his wife in. Why are you so obstinate?" He told his father, "Anyways, I have brought her in." The man didn't say another word. The girl stayed and took the boy for her husband.

The man came home in the evening; there was nobody home. He went to the fireplace and laid his hand on it; the fire had died out for some time. He knew then that his wife had left

long ago. He thought that his wife must have been devoured by a wild beast so he went out in search for his wife. He found the water buckets. He walked up to them and he saw his wife's tracks leading into the water, so he looked around for more tracks but there were no tracks from her that led out from the water. The man was walking to and fro on the shore, mourning for his mate. The beaver man heard the man weeping. He told his son, "You have done a miserable thing to my friend. Why did you have to take his wife in here? He is out there crying." But the beaver man couldn't do nothing.

The man slept in his tipi and the next day he looked after his meat. The man was ashamed to go home without his wife so he started out in search for his wife during day expecting to find her if she was caught by a wild animal; but he did not find her. The following night the man went to the lake and walked along the shore and wept again. The man did not know that the

beaver was his friend. It was the beaver that claimed him as a friend. On the third day very early in the morning a woman called him from outside. The man recognized his wife's voice; he jumped to the door. His wife stood away from the entrance. He was about to go to her to greet her but his wife told him, "Wait, stand right there. Don't approach me. I am coming home. My life is not normal any more so don't approach me." The woman told her husband, "Start getting prepared right now and you will build the altar just like the Holy Lodge altar and you will put one hundred tail feathers on the northeast side. And your pelts, the black coyote and the others, you will have them all laid out. And our horses, the white and the black horse, you will tie them close by and put your wings in a conspicuous place." The woman told her husband, "We will be coming ashore very early in the morning. I will be coming ashore with a pipe which will be transferred to us. I was procured by the beaver man's son. Now I will come home with the pipe to satisfy you." The man was just listening to his wife. What can he say because his wife spoke to him strangely? The man told his wife, "I am very glad to see you. Can I go to greet you?" His wife told him, "No, you cannot come close to me to greet me. The beavers will tread me first then I will come back to you." The man told his wife, "Yes, there is nothing wrong with that." His wife told him, "Now, go inside and don't peek out at me as I go." The man didn't watch his wife as she went back into the lake.

The man went inside and started to arrange everything. He scraped the ground to a large size for an incense burning place and then he spread ochre over it. Then he laid one hundred tail feathers beside the altar, a black coyote and other pelts, wings, and all his trappings. The man burned the incense very early in the morning. The inside of the tipi had a fragrant smell from the burned incense. Suddenly he heard some singing. I (First Rider) know some of the songs. The beavers were on their way for their transferal ceremony. It was not mentioned

that the beavers paid every time they dived around in a circle and it was not mentioned too that they were shot on the fourth time, they dived around without a shot. The man heard the beavers singing right at his door. His wife warned him not to peek out. He called out, "Come in," and the door opened. The first thing that was held in was the Water Bundle Pipe. Where did the Water Bundle Pipe come from? It came from a strange world. The first one to come in was a beaver man with the pipe. Behind him was the beaver man. Behind the beaver man was the beaver boy, and the rest of the beavers. The beavers all sat on one side of the tipi. The smallest beaver sat by the doorway. Then a woman came in and his wife came in after. The man told the beavers, "Now give an invitation call." The beaver man told his son, "Go and dive upstream and tell all the beavers to come and attend." And he told the other beaver, "You will dive downstream and invite the ones that live in that direction." A crow was told, "You'll fly eastward and invite all the fowls and you will also invite the buffalo." So the crow flew away and invited all the birds and the buffalo. So the birds started to go in and sat down. The snakes and the

lizards were by the doorway. It was strange that were invited came in a hurry and the transferal ceremony commenced.

The man went and sat at the back by the ceremonialist and his wife sat opposite him. At this point the forward songs had already been sung; the beavers just started pounding their rattles. I (First Rider) don't know the sequence of the songs but I know some of the songs. The pipe was given to him and his face is painted for the pipe. After his face was painted he started making his payments for the pipe. Today those songs are still sung. The words in the song of the beaver man were: "I am asking for a white horse." The man told the beaver man, "Yes, there is a white horse." And the other words in the beaver man's song were, "I am asking for a black horse." The man told the beaver man, "Yes, there is a black horse, that is your horse." "I want a black coyote." The man told the beaver man, "Yes, there is a black coyote. Make a bag out of it." And the other words in the beaver man's song were, "I want a white buffalo." He told the beaver man, "Yes, there is a white buffalo. It is yours." All the articles that the man gave were worded in the songs of the beaver man, where did the clothing come from that were given to him, in exchange in the transferal.

When night came the participants started to leave, and when he was alone inside with the beavers that transferred the pipe to him, the man was laid down by the pipe with his head to the north and his wife laid on the south side using the Pipe Bundle for a pillow and they slept. They were told not to get up at their own will. The beaver man told them, "We will wake you up in the morning." The beavers came into their tipi. The beavers sang a song with the words, "It's morning. Get up."

And they got up and they went out and when they came back and sat down, all the different kind of birds started to come in and singing started again.

The counter sticks for the water songs are one hundred and during the four days of singing the beavers must have sang four hundred songs. The transferal continued and night came again and they were bedded down using the Water Bundle for a pillow. They slept in the same manner as the night before. The payments that they have already made were worded in the songs over again. So they slept and early the next morning the beavers came into their tipi. The beavers sang with the words, "It's morning. Get up." The couple got up and they went out.

On the third day all the animals and fowls that participated in the ceremony sang. The buffalo sang. They gave a hide; that is why the hide is with the bundle. It is used as a drum. There is a song to the hide. The reason why the crow sat on the rattle, it's because he went out to give invitations. The rattler came from the buffalo. The rattler are made of buffalo hide. "The crow will see its food from a long ways," the crow worded its song, "I am an eagle." The crow was very proud that he could join in the society. That is why he worded his song, "I am an eagle." The crow's song is a very nice song. The

ruddy ducks sang, all the various birds sang too and the dogs also sang. The dog sang about coming into the ceremony with its travois. The dog loaded some food on the travois that he came in with into the tipi.

Night came and they were put to bed. They slept on each side of the pipe using it as a pillow. The bundle just contained a pipe; there were no pelts or bird skins in the bundle. The birds just kept on singing, and they all joined in the society. That is why the hide drum is with the bundle. There was no hide to the pipe before, or a beaver pelt. It was just the pipe that was taken out from the lake to be transferred. All the participants that were asked to attend started to donate themselves to the bundle on the third day. Night came again; the couple slept again. The next morning the beavers came into their tipi and they sang the song again, "It's morning. Get up." A song was sung for what they were going to eat. The words in the song were, "I want to eat pemmican. Berries I want to eat." The manure was the thing that was turned into a pemmican by the beaver man and the berries were produced from the willow that was transplanted by the beaver man. The berry tree produced only four berries. They eat the four berries but the berry tree would produce more berries. That is why the Water Bundle Society use albino berries in their tobacco planting. The loons worded their song, "When I am sitting under the water I hear and I have supernatural powers." I (First Rider) know a lot of the Water Bundle songs. I could just sing them but I don't know all of the songs. The ruddy ducks donated themselves and all the various birds. The otter put himself last; the muskrats and the beavers also put themselves last. The original name was not Beaver Bundle, they

were called Water Bundle Pipes. I (First Rider) will say this is the Blood Reserve and the water that the beavers live in is their water; that is why the pipe is called the Water Bundle Pipe.

When the lizards sang, the words in their song were, "I want rain." The lizards told the beaver man, "Sketch us on the hide. We live by the rain." The turtles also said, "Put me in too. You will use my shell for your facial make-ups. You will use my shell for a bowl." The snakes were given the privilege to sing on the last day.

When the snakes refused to sing the beavers filed out and the rattles were flipped over at this point. First the beavers sang. The words in their song were, "Stand apart." This is the closing song. It does not mean to quit it means to stand apart, to make way for the beavers. All the participants made a sound - whoop, whoop, whoop, whoop - and they filed out from the tipi. The snakes were the only ones that did not sing and they were the only ones that were refused to be admitted into the Water Bundle Pipe and everyone walked over them. They were hissing but their hissing didn't do any harm. Everyone walked over the snakes and when everyone was gone the snakes were found lying there only in their bones; their flesh was trampled to dust. Today nobody likes snakes. If a snake is

seen it will be killed. Snakes have no friends. That is why the snakes are not included in the Water Bundle Pipe. Now the man is left with the pipe. There were no rattles; he just took the Water Bundle Pipe.

When all the participants left the man met his wife and greeted her and he stayed with her again. The pipe was given to him in the apology from the beaver boy. The man had tied his white horse to a tree and the horse died and so did the black horse. The one hundred tail feathers, the wings, and all his payments were gone. The beavers had taken them all. The couple broke camp and camped along the river, and he trapped. I wonder how the people trap in those times. (First Rider) I heard that he snared the beaver, a huge beaver. He skinned the beaver with the tail and teeth still on. They dried the skin and woman tanned it. After she tanned it she turned the right side out. The man snared another beaver and by luck he snared the female beaver. He did the same thing to it. He skinned it with the tail and teeth still on. The woman also tanned the hide and turned the fur side out and she put it away with the other beaver's pelt. Now they got two beaver pelts put away and he got a muskrat. The muskrat skin is used to wipe the face. And he got an otter. The otter was skinned and tanned and it was also put away with the other pelts. The man knew all the animals and birds that attended at the transferal ceremony and after each one would give him a song they'd tell him, "You will

put me at that certain part." The man started to kill all the various animals and birds. He killed a loon and the woman tanned it and put it with the rest of the others. The pipe started to bundle up. A mink was added too. He killed a bull buffalo and skinned it and he cut out the thickest part of the hide. And as the lizard and the turtle had said, "You will sketch us on the hide drum," today the lizard and the turtle are still sketched on the hide drum. He drew all the ones that said to be sketched on the hide and the contents started to mount up. The man took an elk hide and his wife tanned it and the skins were wrapped in the elk hide; that is why there are elk songs to the bundle and that is why there is a digging stick in the Water Bundle Pipe. That is why the bundle is very close to the Holy Lodge. The dog's tail is in the bundle. The dog dance is very fast. That is why the women bark when they dance the dog dance. The words in the dog song are, "I came in with my travois." It is holy. The secondary pipe woman donated the counter sticks. She said, "These are my counter sticks. I will donate them to the bundle." That is why there are counter sticks in the Water Pipe Bundle. All the animals and birds that participated in the ceremony told the man, "You will put us in the bundle." So the man collected all the skins of the animals and birds that donated themselves to the Water Bundle and he knew all the songs.

This story of the Water Bundle Pipe is very interesting to listen. The people that tell the story will sing the songs of the animals that are in the bundle with the words in every song and I (First Rider) know nobody can sing the songs any more. The ruddy duck song, the smoking song. The rest of the

participants have all sang. The ruddy ducks didn't know what to say and what to do. They were about the last ones. Then they thought of smoking and they sang. The words in their song were, "What will I say? I'll smoke." The ruddy ducks were the last ones to sing. The little children that sat close to the door, the long-haired children, they are associated to the planting of the tobacco. The little children also sang. The words in their song are, "The child is running the other way." It was said that the child didn't run fast he was just trotting.

When the man had collected all the skins of the animals and birds that attended at the transferal ceremony he bundled them up with the pipe. The Water Pipe Bundle cannot be put on the ground so tripods were made and the bundle was hung on the tripods and taboos were given. The taboos are, a wood that has been gnawed by the beavers will not be burned. If a Water Pipe Bundle owner burns a wood that is gnawed off by the beavers will sweat all over his body even the place has very little heat. And there are many other taboos to the bundle. None of the attendants of the transferal ceremony was left out. When the animal and bird skins were all collected, they were wrapped up and the bundle was a sacred Water Pipe Bundle then, and the bundle was taken outside and it was hung on tripods. Medicine

Pipes are hung above the door on the outside and Water Bundles are put at the back inside. The Water Pipe Bundle will not be hung up. If it's inside it will be put on the ground and when the bundle is taken outside in the morning it is hung on tripods.

It is a strange thing; the tripods for the Water Pipe Bundle are set up in the opposite way. Two bottom ends of the two legs of the tripod are against the base of the tipi and the third one is set to the west and the bundle is hung on the tripod resting on the two legs that are against the base of the tipi. So the Water Pipe Bundle will be on the east side of the tripod. When a Medicine Pipe is hung on tripods, the bottom part of one leg of the tripod is set against the base of the tipi and the other two are spread out and then the sacred Medicine Pipe is hung on the tripods resting on the two legs of the tripod. So the sacred Medicine Pipe Bundle is on the west side of the tripods.

When the people saw the Water Pipe Bundle being hung on tripods they said, "What is that?" One of the men said, "Yes, that man's wife was taken into a lake (St. Mary's Lake) by a beaver boy and that bundle was given to him by the beavers. It is a very strange bundle. All the various kinds of birds are in that bundle and all the animals and birds have songs." A man said, "Go to the owner of that bundle and tell him to give me his bundle." The messenger went and walked into the man's tipi. The man told the owner, "The reason why I came over, a man sent me to tell you to give him your pipe." The owner of the pipe said, "Yes, I will give him the pipe. I am not stingy with it." Water Pipe Bundles are not supposed to be asked for. The owner of the pipe told the messenger, "Here's what you will

do. Go back to the man and tell him to fill up his pipe with tobacco and you will come and notify me when he is ready to come and I'll get prepared and then he can come. When he comes in he will dispose of his robe and he will approach me with the pipe and he will offer me a smoke and he will tell me, 'here this is your smoke. Give me your pipe.' And I will smoke the pipe and if I refuse I will just wave him to go on." The messenger went back to the man and told him, "The owner of the pipe said to go to his tipi very early in the morning, so that is what you'll do." The man that asked for the sacred Pipe Bundle invited the older men and they prayed for him to be successful in getting the Water Pipe Bundle.

In the morning the man approached the owner of the pipe and offered him a smoke for his Water Pipe Bundle. The man approached the owner of the pipe. He told him, "Here, this is your smoke. You will give me your pipe and this pipe is your pipe." The owner of the Water Pipe Bundle took the pipe and told the man, "Sit down." The owner of the Water Pipe Bundle prayed and after he had prayed he smoked with the man that asked for his pipe. This is a truce between them. The owner of the Water Pipe Bundle told the man, "Go home and wait. I

will invite the ones that are going to do the rattling for me." So the owner of the pipe made an invitation call and the older men came to the tipi and the singing started. The pipe was opened. The owner took the pipe and the rest of the men took one of the skins and the last ones took the hide drum and the tripods and the procession started. The man that asked for the pipe didn't invite anybody. He just sat at home all prepared. The owner of the pipe and the rest of the men started. They were singing on the way. There were four markers on the way and the man that asked for the pipe paid a lot on these markers and the rifle that was fired was a payment too.

The procession started and when they came to the first marker a shot was fired at them and they turn and walked around in a circle blowing their whistles. And they walked on and when they came to the second marker another shot was fired at them, by a man that was sitting by the marker, and the men walked around in a circle blowing their whistles. And they came to the third marker and a shot was fired and they walked around again in a circle. Four shots were fired and four rifles were given away and they entered the tipi. The man that asked for the pipe was all prepared. He spread out a rug where the pipe will be laid and the pipe was opened and the transferal ceremony started. The owner of the pipe transferred his pipe the same way it was transferred to him. He sang. The words in his song were, "I am asking for one hundred tail feathers." The recipient said, "Yes, I will give you some tail feathers. I will give you a horse instead of the tail feathers." The owner of the pipe went on singing, wording his songs, "I am asking for a black horse. I am asking for a white horse. I am asking for a black coyote. I am asking for a white buffalo." Later on people will give a steer instead of a buffalo. The Water Bundle Pipe was transferred as it was transferred in the first place. The second transferal lasted for four nights and

four days. After the four days the couple will get together again.

When the owner of the Water Bundle Pipe gave his pipe away another man approached him and the man told him, "Could you give me a Water Bundle Pipe?" The former owner of the Water Bundle Pipe said, "Yes, I will." So he hired the people and they started to kill all the animals and birds that were needed and when the pipe was completed and it was transferred to the second recipient the bundle was transferred in the same way. The transferal also lasted for four days. Water Pipe Bundles were constructed after the original Water Pipe Bundle; that is why there are a lot of Water Pipe Bundles. Another asked for the original Water Pipe Bundle and it was transferred to him and people started to donate something to the bundles that were later constructed. The lynx tail was added to the bundle later. There was no lynx tail in the original Water Pipe

Bundle. And the wristlets were added to the bundle after. The secondary Water Bundle woman wears the wristlets; the wife of the owner of the bundle doesn't wear wristlets. These are the new items that were transferred with the bundle.

I (First Rider) saw the woman that actually went into the home of the beavers. Her name is Last Calf. She is a white woman. She had T.B. and there was no hope for her so she went into the home of the beavers and the beavers also gave her a pipe. She sponsors holy ceremonies with the pipe and the Blood Indians didn't sponsor only holy ceremonies with the Water Pipe Bundle. The South Peigan Indians cured people with the Water Pipe Bundle. There are some different songs to the pipe that was given to the woman (Last Calf). The Blood Indians just use the pipe for dancing. They did not add anything to the Water Pipe Bundle. The Blackfoot Indians did not sponsor holy ceremonies nor put up dances with the pipe. They just use the bundle to celebrate their tobacco planting; that is why the songs are all different; that is why they word a song, "We are all pouring." A Blood Indian will tell a story about the Water Pipe Bundle and somebody will be listening and then a Blackfoot Indian will also tell the story of the Water Pipe Bundle and his story will be different. And a South Peigan Indian will tell the story of Last Star [Last Calf??] that went into the home of the beavers. He'll tell it exactly how she (Last Star) got cured by the beavers. The Blood Indian will just tell the story of how they dance with the pipe. The stories of the Water Bundle Pipes are not the same but on the other hand the pipes are all alike and they are used in different ways. The Blood Indians are the first ones to forget the songs of the Water Bundle. The Blackfoot Indians still remember how they use the bundle in their tobacco planting.

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