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 various ceremonial songs.

George First Rider: Okay, I am going to tell a story again. I am the one that is telling stories. I am First Rider. I am through telling stories of how the Holy Lodge operates. I did not mention of the last construction of a Holy Lodge. They were poorly operated. Everything has changed in the camp circle; that is why I did not mention anything about it in my stories.

This is the fifteenth day of the Liar Moon (May). The stories that I am telling, the songs that are sung at the Holy Lodge. I am going to sing them now. I am not going to sing them from where the songs originated. I will sing the songs that are sung at the Holy Lodge. Various societies attend at the Holy
Lodge with these songs and I will illustrate the songs.

The stories that I am telling and the stories that I am going to tell, I understood that they are ancient. I (First Rider) am telling these stories in the year of 1970. I wonder what year it will be in the future and my stories will still be good. The future generation will still hear my voice and they will remember what I illustrated. I (First Rider) will be long gone by that time. That is why I thought to illustrate things straight. I didn't like my storytelling just to make money; I am talking about life.

Now the people have sat in the Holy Lodge. The people got in the Holy Lodge with the visions they had and the transfers that they went through. On this side of Lethbridge where the two rivers flow into one is the place where a man slept and a ghost haunted him. He shot the ghost. When he shot the ghost, the ghost gave his shirt. I (First Rider) saw that shirt. It had holes all over it. I saw it with a man by the name of Flying About. He wore it at a dance and they said, "That is the shirt that was given by a ghost."

I saw the feather headpieces that were given by Holy Woman. My father had the feather headpieces. The headpieces were the main tail feathers of two peregrine falcons and the rattlers of a snake were attached. The headpieces were yellow ochred. My father had them. I (First Rider) don't know what became of those headpieces. I also saw the headpieces of Walking With A Calf. They were pheasant tail feathers. Striped Wolf had those headpieces. I saw all those war charms in a Holy Lodge. All the songs of transferable items were sung in the Holy Lodge.

The song for the lodge dancer is just a one song. Those are fancy home songs. All the warriors are all decorated and the Holy Lodge was newly constructed so the Holy Lodge looked fancy. The songs are not sung at any place. There are songs that are sung at nights around the camps and there are Holy Lodge songs. The Holy Lodge songs are also called the fancy home songs. All the fancy things were brought in the newly constructed Holy Lodge for the sun.

The songs will not be sung at any other place, only at the circle encampment. The songs will not have to be transferred to a person, as long as a person knows the songs. A man was travelling alone. He was going home. He got lost from his companions. He slept by a tree. As he laid there he heard an owl in east, heard it again. The third time it came a little closer then he knew that it was approaching him. Then he heard the owl sing.

Words in Song:

"I love that tree."

That is how he heard the owl singing towards him. It worded
its song like this, "I love that tree." A man was buried by the tree. People that tell stories don't mention the names of people. He heard someone cough from above the tree and he was praying. While he was talking it sang again.

Words in song:
"I love that tree."

The spirit told him, "Son, don't worry. As you are not seeing me, you will be invisible to your enemies and I gave you this song. Go home and after four days start again. Even if you go alone in the warpath nobody will see you. Before you start get someone to make an announcement for you. Here is what he will say: 'All you boys that are wandering around, be quiet. This man is going to sing around the camps.' Go to the east side of the camps. You stand there and you will shout then you will sing the song."

Words in Song:
"I love that tree."

"That is how you will sing."

So he started off on the warpath. At daybreak he was walking out in open but he did not see anything and it was night again and he went home the next day and he rested. On the fourth day he told a man, "Tell the boys to all go inside. I want to go singing around the camps." The man went around and said, "All you boys go home and sleep. Be quiet. This young man is going to sing around the camps." When it was all quiet he went to the east side of the camps and he shouted and sang.

"I love that tree, I love that tree."

After he sang, the dogs howled. The people were surprised to hear the strange song. When he got on the south side of the camps he shouted again and sang.

"I love that tree."

And the dogs howled again. Then he got to north side of the camps and he sang again. He sang the same song with the words, "I love that tree." After he sang the dogs howled again. He got to the east side of the camps and he stood there, he shouted and sang the same song, with the same words, "I love that tree." After he sang, he shouted and the dogs howled again. Then he went home.

When they went on the warpath him and his friend were just the two of them. They came back on the tenth day; they brought a lot of horses. He came back with black covered pipe. He killed an enemy. He stole the black covered pipe and a lot of horses. Backrests were set up for him at a victory dance. It's too bad that his name was not mentioned.
So those are the songs. This is similar with the story a man who was also travelling heard someone sing.

(NO WORDS IN THE SONG.)

When he heard the voice he sat down and he fell asleep. When he went to sleep he heard the voice again.

WORDS IN SONG:

"When I see the morning star that is the time when I go to sleep."

The spirit told him, "Here are some hoofs." The hoofs were buffalo hoofs; the hoofs were deer hoofs. The deer hoofs belonged to the moon. Her son, the morning star, was walking around singing and rattling the hoofs. Those deer hoofs were seven and where the hoofs were strung some dyed items are attached. The people of the past have only few colors. A spinal cord was dried and it is used as a handle for the hoofs. My father's father, Holy Descending, before Holy Descending died he gave the hoof rattles to my father. My father kept the hoofs and he uses them for curing. When I (Fist Rider) want to sing around the camps I used to take the hoof rattles and I rattle them when I am singing. Some use bells. The buffalo hoofs are used in the white buffalo dance. The buffalo hoofs were presented by the same spirit. This is where the song was about the morning star. The words in the song were, "When I see the morning that is the time when I go to sleep." Some of these songs are war exploit songs. These are the war exploit songs.

WORDS IN SONG:

"Cree woman get up."

A man captured a Cree woman in a battle and he took her home for his wife. While he was going around the camps singing he thought of his Cree wife and said in his song, "Cree woman get up." He wanted her to go singing around the camps with him. These songs are not just the songs for the Holy Lodge. They're all separate songs and they are taken to the Holy Lodge and they are sung in the Holy Lodge. The All Brave Dog Society songs, the Dog Society songs are taken into the Holy Lodge. Except the Horn Society songs. The Holy Lodge songs belong to the lodge dancers and there are the war exploit worded songs.

(NO WORDS IN SONG.)

These are the lodge dancers' songs. They're not just ordinary songs. They were given to the lodge dancers in their sleep. The lodge dancers transfer their lodge dancing to others. I (First Rider) don't know how they're transferred. The lodge dancing was not transferred to me but I saw how it was transferred. They also give moccasins in the transferal and a
waistband (belt) and a robe.

A man by the name of Bo-Bo, he had supernatural powers from the sun. He has telescopic vision. It is performed in the Holy Lodge and the telescopic songs are sung in the Holy Lodge. The telescopic vision songs are holy songs.

The Pigeon Society originated from the Gros-Ventre. The All Brave Dog Society came from B.C. Indians. The Horn Society was amongst the Blackfoot, the Bloods and the South Peigans. When they separated and settled on the reservations the Blackfoot and the Blood were the only two tribes that carried on with the Horn Society and the Motoki Society. The North Peigans did not have the Motoki Society; the South Peigans did not have the Horn Society; the North Peigans did not have the Horn Society. All the songs are taken to the Holy Lodge -- that is the Holy Lodge songs -- and they are sung in the digging dance. These are the digging dance songs.

(NO WORDS IN SONG.)

The men would shout after the dance and they fire a shot into the air. These are the songs that the Pigeon Society sing at the Holy Lodge.

(NO WORDS IN SONG.)

Though their voices sound to be far away, though their voices sound to be far away, O, whi-o-o-o, when the Pigeons get real aggressive in the Holy Lodge they sing this song.

(NO WORDS IN SONG.)

When the people hear the Pigeons sing the bear song they will hide the grub which are for lunch. The Pigeons will enter the Holy Lodge. When we were in the Pigeon Society we went to the centre of the camps when the Horns Society brought in the groceries that they were going to serve for lunch. We had one dance and we went to the centre of the camp. Skunk (Bob Black Plume) had a bear belt, Emil Good Rider had a bear belt and Bear Coming Up On The Ridge (Nick Striped Wolf (Deceased)) had a bear belt.

I (First Rider) was a Yellow Pigeon and Long Time Crow (Paul Melting Tallow) was a Yellow Pigeon. After we danced we went to the centre of the camps. Nobody can go near the Horn Society. A former Horn Society member can go amongst the Horn Society members. The Pigeons have nothing to stop for, so we made an approach.

I took the lead. I am First Rider. I took the lead. We went for the grub and Big Sorrell Horse told us, "Don't take any of the grub." Bear Coming Up On The Ridge (Nick Striped Wolf) had his bow and arrow ready. If Big Sorrell Horse spoke any more he'd shoot him. His (Big Sorrell Horse) other members told him, "No, keep away from them; they will shoot you." So we
approached. Emil Good Rider took a case of oranges, Skunk took all the meat that was boiled and the other one took the bread. Then we turned back. We took what we grabbed into our tipi and then we went out again and started to take wood from every camp. We took the wood to our tipi and we made fire. We had taken what the Horns were going to have for their dance. We left very little for them and we ate outside of our tipi. That is what the Pigeons are, they’ll grab anything. The Pigeons took some grub right from inside the Holy Lodge. They took them to their tipi and ate them.

The reason why the All Brave Dog Society participate at the Holy Lodge, when they enter the Holy Lodge they sing.

WORDS IN SONG:

"Old age is bad."

(NO WORDS IN THE ALL BRAVE DOG SOCIETY DANCING SONG.)

The All Brave Dog Society will dance at the entrance of the Holy Lodge then their leaders will scatter them. Then they will gradually dance into the Holy Lodge.

There are some people that are forbidden not to have anybody to pass in front of him. People are not supposed to pass in front of the lodge dancers. When the All Brave Dogs are scattered they’d finally be dancing at the back of the Holy Lodge. As they are called the Brave Dogs they have no bosses; that is the reason why they enter into the Holy Lodge, because they are associated to the Holy Lodge. In there they show what kind of life they have lived.

Now the Braves as they are called, the Willow Braves, they don't have to assemble separately. The All Brave Dog Society are just Brave Dogs. They ride on horse because of war exploits; those are the All Brave Dog Society horse riders. The Braves walked in front.

(NO WORDS IN THE BRAVE SOCIETY SONG.)

There are the Red Pigeons, there are the Braves. They sang at the Holy Lodge entrance. These societies will not just go into the Holy Lodge. They have a dance outside the entrance of the Holy Lodge and then they go in and sit down. Their leaders, the Bear Braves, I just said this, but the Willow Braves get the best of the Bear Braves. The Willow Brave will whip the Bear Braves on the face with the willow staffs and they take what the Bear Braves had grabbed and then the Braves are made to dance.

(NO WORDS IN THE BRAVE SOCIETY SONG.)

The song reminds me of my father, Dog Child, Little Weasel Calf. My father was a Bear Brave; I (First Rider) am a bear cub. So they entered the Holy Lodge. Those societies are
qualified to go into the Holy Lodge with the transferals that they went through. I (First Rider) know that the Bear Braves and the Bear Pigeons are the Brave Dogs. These Brave Dogs travel alone and they'll go into the Holy Lodge alone and they will sing for themselves and dance. These are their songs.

(NO WORDS IN THE BRAVE DOG DANCE SONG.)

These are the songs of the Brave Dogs. The Dog Society are the first ones to enter the Holy Lodge. I (First Rider) saw when the Dog Society went into the Holy Lodge.

(NO WORDS IN THE DOG SOCIETY SONG.)

These are the Dog Society. There are so many transferal songs that I know. I don't just know one song, I know a lot of transferable artifacts. The Dog Society also participate in Holy Lodge activities. Everything that is transferable is illustrated in the Holy Lodge. Lately when they started to hold Sioux dances in the Holy Lodge, a person that owns a forked staff (skewer) is qualified to dance in the holy. A person that owns an eagle belt is permitted to dance in the Holy Lodge with his quirt and so's the long knife owners. A woman that owns a medicine hat will dance in the Holy Lodge with her medicine hat; that is the woman's medicine hat. The transferable artifacts are exposed in the Holy Lodge. There are a lot of sacred artifacts that are transferable. There are a lot of things that I could illustrate and I'll illustrate them all; the way the people are that transfer their sacred artifacts. Now the tipi designs are given away as gifts in the Holy Lodge. The Braves will give away their Brave Society Bundles away as gifts. The Pigeons will give away their Pigeon Society away. They will not give away their Pigeon Society to one person, they will say, "We'll give our Pigeon Society to these younger men." The younger men will agree and the Pigeon Society will be transferred to them immediately.

The sacred bundles that you make a vow to take are different and are transferred to a person. You are qualified to go into the Holy Lodge with those sacred bundles that were transferred to you and you are associated to the Holy Lodge with the small societies that are transferable.

People will take their team and wagon to the dance in the Holy Lodge. I (First Rider) saw the suits of people. They are weasel tail suits, a person's medicine hat, a person's weasel tail shirt, his moccasins are solid beaded, his leggings are weasel tail leggings. His name is John Cotton. He stripped himself in the Holy Lodge and he gave away his buckskin suit. He (John Cotton) just wore a robe when he went home; that is how generous we will be at the Holy Lodge. That is why the woman that sponsored the Holy Lodge tries hard to improve her lodge. Now I (First Rider) will say us (Gray Horse Owners),
our friend is Many Big Swans. He is the comrade of the Gray Horse Owners. Our friend was going to sponsor a Holy Lodge. We did not have anything to help him with so we took the Pigeon Society. That is how we got into the holy lodge. If we didn't take the Pigeon Society we couldn't go in the Holy Lodge and we'd be just watching our friend from a distance.

It's just like this. We will be on the other side of a fence and the transferal of our friend will be inside the fence. We have no way of getting into the transferal. We have to go through a transferal so that we can go into the transferal; so that is what the transferable bundles are for.

Now us, the Pigeons, can sit with the ones that are going to look for somebody to sponsor a Holy Lodge. I sat amongst. I am First Rider. I sat amongst. The time when we gave the authority to Various Stealing Woman (Mrs. Rids at the Door) to sponsor a Holy Lodge, I (First Rider) was a Horn Society member at the time. Now Owning Nice Horses (Jack Low Horn) owned the Swan Staff at that time. We gave her the authority to sponsor a Holy Lodge. We stood for everything, that is why we got through transferals.

Now there is another place where we can't go, a person that had nothing transferred to him. It is ridiculous for a person that never had anything transferred to him to go to a Group Smoking Ceremony. If a person that never had anything transferred to him goes to a Group Smoking Ceremony will be ridiculed by everyone. What is he going to do? There is nothing that he can do. A person will have to go through a transferal and he will count how many transferals that he went through. As each person will sing four songs that's one song. He will sing of four items that were transferred to him.

The reason why I (First Rider) go to Group Smoking Ceremonies, I will sing four Horn Society songs in the first go round in singing and in the next round of singing I will sing four Horn Society songs again. And again in the next round of singing I (First Rider) will sing of four tipis that I owned and in the next go round of singing I will sing of four medicine hats that I took. That will make sixteen songs. The rest of the things that were transferred to me will lay idle. If I go to another Group Smoking Ceremony I will not sing the songs that I sang before. Myself, I am First Rider. I am the only person now that owned the Never Sitting Shield. I (First Rider) did not transfer the Never Sitting Shield. My father gave it to At Close Range (Frank Red Crow); he is the one that bought it. He got my father drunk and he gave my father forty dollars ($40.00) for the Never Sitting Shield. He (Frank Red Crow) was the first one who started selling the Indian sacred artifacts. He (Frank Red Crow) was the one that sold it.

Suppose I (First Rider) find the Never Sitting Shield this day, I will sing the songs of the Never Sitting Shield and I can transfer the Never Sitting Shield. I (First Rider) just have a
weasel tail shirt and I will transfer a weasel tail shirt. That is how I stand. Now I took it this way. People will say, "There is nothing wrong with me. My finger is sore. I just got a sliver on it and I can take the sliver out." And that is how easy I think for me to transfer a medicine hat.

I took the four medicine hats in one day. I just wipe my face and I go through another transferal and I (First Rider) also owned a Horn Society medicine hat. These Horn Society medicine hats are the ones. An open medicine hat has no songs to it and they are not transferable and there are no songs to it. People that want to argue with me, I will argue with him. He will tell me, "This is the song for the medicine hats that are worn for dancing." There is no song to them. It's false and the transfers are false.

The people that transfer the medicine hats will say, "We'll transfer it to him. He is a white man. He doesn't know any better." There are a lot of things that are false. The Horn Society medicine hats were also transferred to me. I (First Rider) took the bundle that had a rattle. I took the Horn Society leader's headdress. I took the associated staff, I owned the yellow-ochred staff. There are a lot of the Horn Society bundles that I walked for (secret ceremony). I will say I had my beds all around the Horn Society tipi; that is why I go to the Group Smoking ceremonies.

I (First Rider) know a lot of songs. People that try to sing, they just sing the songs that are sung in the Holy Lodge. That is why I said that the Utility Bag Bundle owners are associated to the Holy Lodge. A Medicine Pipe owner's pipe is wrapped in an elk hide and a bear skin. They have sweat baths with them. It's the same with a Medicine Pipe owner. If his pipe is wrapped in an elk hide and a bear skin, a person will have to have these. He will operate by them.

The lodge dancer also had visions of tipis. It was a lodge dancer that had a vision of the Sun designed tipi. It was Three Sun's tipi. It was a lodge dancer that had a vision of the Big Rock designed tipi. It was the lodge dancers that had a vision of all facial paintings and they are in the Holy Lodge.

Some of these transferable bundles all came from heaven. All the singing is operated from heaven. Drumming is new. Drumming was done on hide but rattles were invented long before. A place is called The Rattles. That is where Napi (Old Man) had a buffalo jump. He used a rattle. He was told, "Mind you, your ears are there. Don't word your song, 'I was hit in the center of my ear.'" Still he worded his song, "I was hit in the center of my ear" and a buffalo bumped into him and knocked him over and swung his rattles away and the rattles turned into dust and that is in the Holy Lodge.

There are a lot of various visions that are donated to the Holy Lodge. That is why there songs that are sung around the camps at night.
As I am singing these songs, in my thoughts I am right in the midst of the times that I am telling a story about. The story that I am telling got me lonesome for my ancestors. In the past I used to sing around the camps. I enjoyed myself. I went for the materials to cover the Holy Lodge, I went and cut the Holy Lodge centre pole, I built the Holy Woman's sweat lodge. I (First Rider) am a Pigeon Society member, I was an All Brave Dog Society member, I was a Black Seizer, I was a Crow Carrier member, and I was a Brave Society member. All these were transferred to me at the circle encampment. That took my thought back into the past.

I (First Rider) danced the Sioux dance at the camp circle and I went into the Holy Lodge and at nights I also pull tipi pegs to crawl inside and seduce women. My hand was never cut and I was never chased. That is all. The reason why I said it's because they got me thinking of the past. Now if I (First Rider) am hired for the stories that I told, I can stand it. I will know what to do. That is all. I am through telling stories. I close my story. I am First Rider, the one that is telling stories. Now he is through telling stories. That's all.

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