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BALD EAGLE DESIGN TIPI
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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:

- Discusses tipi designs.
Okay, a vision, and the gains from a vision, that's the home life. The first people have hide lodges. The vision comes and they design it on the hide tipi. Some designs are not from visions; they are war exploits. So these are visions. Some will design what they saw in mystic happening that occur to them, or in their mystic ways, but there are more of the war exploits.

The way the legend was told, the tipi was just a plain tipi. So the snakes existed. The male snake had one horn in front and the female snake, his wife, had no horn. The one that walks the earth, the marten... the snake that has a horn,

people, birds or animals will see him and it will hypnotize it. A person will be just staring at him or maybe it will be a bird. The man will never move and the snake will crawl up to him and the snake will bite him and kill him and they eat them and the birds too.

The marten can't be spared by the snake. They are two, with the female. As the man slept a person approached him. The man told him, "Why are you sleeping here?" He told him, "Yes, I am sleeping around here for warfare." The man told him, "Yes, myself, I am running on foot. Now what I can give is, the ones that run on foot are all my children. You, you will have all that run on foot be your children."

The man told him, "There is my home. Go to it." So he started to walk in his dream. There was a white earth and there was a lake and the lodge was on the west side. So he walked up to it. When he got to the door the man told him, "Just come in." As he went in, when he entered the tipi, men were all sitting in there before him. The man's bed was at the back. The man told him, "You may as well sit beside me." So he sat beside him and the people started to tell stories. The subject that they were telling stories was, they confess what they gained in warfare.

They drank berry soup. The human drank saskatoon berry soup with them. As he looked up at the walls of the tipi on the right-hand side there was a snake and there was another snake on the left-hand side. The one that was designed on the right-hand side had one horn in front and the one that is designed on the left-hand side was just a snake. At the back of the tipi outside, a circle was designed just like a hole gnawed through the ice and just like a sun drawing with a spotted bird designed on top of the circle.

The tipi is yellow painted and it's ochred black around the neck, the group stars on the north side and the seven stars on the south side, not on the north side. And it is mountain peak designed around the bottom with black ochre and the rest with yellow ochre. The thing that was driven into the ground in the

centre. The scraped altar, the scraped off soil was piled in a row on the west side of the altar.

The ground is scraped like a furrow made by a plow, in the shape of a crescent moon. It was put there. It still had some grass. That is where the incense is burned. Holes are made at each end of the moon. Juniper needles are burned for incense and sweetgrass is burned in the main altar. The incense burning place is scraped like the incense burning of a Holy Lodge dancer's altar.

A forked stick is tucked into the ground and there is a yellow-ochred drum. It's small and the spotted bird which is designed on the tipi is also designed on the drum and the drum stick is bind with another skin. It's just a stick to beat the drum; it is on the drum. The flag is a marten with seven tail

feathers attached to it. There are four bells. One bell was tied to each of the marten's legs. They are called muffled bells. They are the first bells; they are hoofs. They may be deer hoofs. They are small. The marten jingles.

When he calls out an invitation, when the participants start to go out after they smoke, after they get through smoking, his drum is taken and when they start to go out, the drum is not beaten fast, it's beaten slow. It is beaten continually and the people will be walking out and when they've all walked out then the drum is beaten four times and the drumming stops and it is put away again. The tipi is called the Tipi With A Marten Flag.

This man that had the vision, the night when it was transferred, when he transferred it, it was going to rain the night it was transferred. It was dark when he sang the song. No one here on the Blood Reserve knows these songs. I (First Rider) am the only one that knows them; I will sing them in the future. When he sang the song with the words in it the snakes on the tipi glowed. When they glowed all the dogs barked. Where the man stopped singing the snake stopped glowing.

Intestines are not supposed to be cooked in the tipi. If an intestine is cooked inside the tipi a snake will come crawling in out of nowhere and if moccasins are stitched in the tipi we'll get a sliver or we'll step on something sharp. Those are the taboos. And water is not supposed to be taken into the tipi. At the moment the water is brought into the tipi it will rain and the tipi will be flooded. When the Tipi With A Marten Flag was transferred to me those were the taboos.

We'll be painted on our body and then the one that transferred the tipi will clothe us. The Tipi With The Marten Flag is not

transferred too often to people because it's the only tipi that has the highest price. People that own the tipi will not let it go because it is holy. The only time they'll let go is when they die. And they give it away when they get too old, so not very many people owned the Tipi With A Marten Flag. So I (First Rider) own it and I still own it now.

Here on the Cardston soil, there is south, St. Mary's Lake. That's where the woman was taken into the lake; that's how Beaver Medicine Pipes got into existence. Okay, this lodge, there are two small mountains behind Chief Mountain. There are bald eagles that nested on these small mountains. Later on my father saw those bald eagles in his vision; he cures people with the powers of those bald eagles. People -- the Peigans, Blackfoots and the Bloods -- all know that Dog Child does some curing with the powers of those bald eagles.

Those are the ones that gave this tipi. It is called the Tipi With A Bald Eagle Flag. I (First Rider) saw that tipi. It's not my tipi but I just kept on seeing the Tipi With A Bald Eagle Flag. There is an old lady, she is related to my mother, she is the one that owned it. She is the one that told a story

about it. A man... the people of the past go to the... it is called forest. It is not said the mountains, it is called forest. They move camps to the forest.

The people camp around there to hunt elks. The elks frequent the Chief Mountain; that is why the people go there. A man stayed there till in the evening and there are some pines; they are called curly pines (Jack Pine). These curly pines are short and they have a lot of branches. So he made a bed by it with creeping cedar and he made a shelter. It was going to rain and he crawled inside.

A man came and told him, "You are invited by our old man." He was invited from those small mountains behind Chief Mountain. So he started walking in his dream and he entered a lodge, a white lodge. There is an arch design on the west side. It's like a mountain and a bald eagle is designed on it. It is also designed above the doorway. That's the Tipi With The Bald Eagle Flag. There are no other designs and it's ochred with black ochre at the neck, and it's mountain peak designed at the bottom. That's the Tipi With A Bald Eagle Flag. That's the lodge of the bald eagles and with a flag of their own kind.

This lodge... the bald eagle's food are the fishes. The bald eagle flies. It's got nothing to use as a float. Even if it's a flood, we'll say there are driftwood in the flood, the bald eagles would go flying higher up and then they'll dive into the

river and they'd swim ashore with a fish. They'd catch them in the water and now those that own the Tipi With A Bald Eagle Flag do not eat fish. So this is the Tipi With A Bald Eagle Flag.

The bald eagles have one song and I (First Rider) also know it and the rest are just lodge songs. The tipis that are transferable haven't got too many songs. There are various kinds of lodges, and the song to a person's tipi will go to a tipi transferal with that song. The participants will each give a song to the new recipient of a tipi. That is why there are so many songs to all tipis. The reason why I combine the stories 'cause I know them, the Tipi With A Marten and the Tipi With A Bald Eagle Flag.

These are the two tipis that have drumming while the people are walking out. I know these two, yet there may be another tipi that does some drumming while walking out from it; maybe I don't know. If anyone knows about a tipi that a drum is used while walking out from it, I'll not deny him. Maybe he's right. Myself these are the only two that I know, the Tipi With A Bald Eagle Flag and the Tipi With A Marten Flag.

People that own the Tipi With A Bald Eagle Flag will have supernatural powers; they use it for curing. The man that first saw it in his vision, when he went home he got himself a tipi and he designed it, and he transferred it when night came. It was transferred to himself. When he blew his whistle the bald eagles that were designed on tipi also gave a shrill clear

note that the people that sat inside all heard them. The bald eagles will also make a sound like a whistle.

The snake that is designed on the Tipi With A Marten Flag glowed, so we saw those in a truthful way. The reason why I illustrated them together, it's because we walk out from them with drumming. These tipis are used for curing. The first one that was given the Tipi With A Marten Flag is a shaman. He used it for curing and in warfare too and he became a chief by it.

The ones that own the tipi are always fortunate and they are wealthy. Misfortune never comes to them and their children and the wives. The ones that own it never become orphans. The Tipi with a Bald Eagle Flag is also used for curing. The ones that own it all became shamans. They got supernatural powers from it. The same thing occurs. They use it in warfare. They take the bald eagle along with them on the warpath and they'll gain some horses with the bald eagle.

No one that carried the bald eagle flag is ever apprehended with the horses that he stole from the enemy. People were made new chiefs with the bald eagle. Okay, it's the same with the marten flag. The owner of the tipi is painted and he takes it along on the warpath or he'll give it to his relative and he'll paint his face on it and his relative will take it on the warpath with it.

Something is gained with the marten. The one that carries the marten, the one that went to war with it, he confronts a Cree. It wasn't mentioned what kind of a Cree he was. They ran at each other and he kills him. He takes his arrows and when he came back to his comrades he told them, "Here are his arrows. I captured them." And as they looked at the quiver it was a marten skin quiver and what he took along to war was a marten. It's told he captured a marten skin quiver. This is famous; they tell stories about it.

There is an old lady who just died recently, not many years ago. Her husband's name is Beg Calf; there are a lot of people that know it. This woman's grandchildren are here. That woman's name is Marten Woman. She got her name by the marten skin quiver and her name was just put short; her name was just Marten Woman. The woman's name is Marten Quiver and she is just called Marten Woman because she is a woman. There is another woman, her name is also Marten Woman. She is insane and she died of insanity. The other one was captured by the Crees when she was a little girl. The Crees won victory and her mother was killed and her, she was hit with a rifle and her head was bashed in and there she was crying when the people started to gather their dead. When they looked at her, her head was bashed in. They grabbed her hair and they pulled it out and when she got old she always ties her head. She always has a headache on account of her head being bashed in.

The lodges are not offered just to be lodges. The bald eagle

told him, "This is my home, I give it to you." There are some that have horse designs in the other tipis. The one that is going to transfer a tipi to a human, he will tell him, "This is my home, I give it to you." The one that is going to take pity will tell the human, "This is my home, I give it to you." This is just like a pelt.

A plain tipi is of no use; it can be abused. We cannot about those that are designed. There are a lot of tipis that forbid drumming inside and there are a lot that forbid noise inside and these two tipis have drumming while walking out from them.

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