

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: GEORGE FIRST RIDER
CHILDREN'S APPAREL OF THE
BLOOD RESERVE
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: BLOOD RESERVE
CARDSTON, ALBERTA
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BLOOD RESERVE
CARDSTON, ALBERTA
TRIBE/NATION: BLOOD
LANGUAGE: BLACKFOOT
DATE OF INTERVIEW: DECEMBER 24, 1968
INTERVIEWER: J.C. HELLSON
INTERPRETER: DAVE MELTING TALLOW
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD
SOURCE: PROVINCIAL MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES
OF ALBERTA
TAPE NUMBER: IH-AA.067
DISK: TRANSCRIPT DISC 53
PAGES: 8
RESTRICTIONS: NONE

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:

- Describes various traditional clothing.
George First Rider: The stories that are told and the things that the children are taught. We are telling the stories about the ones that are gone beyond. A baby's hair will be combed with a porcupine hair brush and the tip of a buffalo tongue is also used to comb a baby's hair. People don't like it if they don't paint their faces. They say, "If we paint our faces it makes us look better." A dried manure is crushed fine and it is used as baby powder for the baby. A hole is just cut out on the neckline of a girl's dress and the sleeves are not sewn together from the armpits down to the cuffs; they are flappy. A boy and a girl are clothed in same style and their moccasins, the boy and the girl have the same kind of moccasins. The boy

and girl will have sores behind the knee and on their bodies. I (First Rider) think the reason why they have skin disease because they don't have a bath. They have sores on their backs and in their armpits and in their scalps and they have lice. A woman will not wash a wet diaper, she will just hang it out to dry and when the diaper is dry she will break a stone in two and she will use one part of the broken stone to scrape her diaper. A child's dress and its diapers will be just scraped white. They are never washed and they must have a bad odor.

Now they will grow up to approximately seven years. At this age the boy and the girl will have a different style of clothing from each other. There are some that still part their hair like a woman. Right now there is a man, his name is Yellow Horse Rider. Those are the ones that part their hair like a woman; he never changed his style from the girl's style. At the age of seven the boy will wear a different style of clothing. He wears leggings that are made out of a Hudson's Bay blanket or out of an old canvas or his leggings will be made out of felt. The leggings will never be washed and his breechcloth. A girl will have a wide belt. A woman will have a canvas dress. She will patch it on both sides to make it wider and her sleeves are not sewn together.

The woman will take a mouthful of water then she will spit some of the water on the palm of her hand then she will wash the face of her child with the water in her hand. She will wash the faces of her children with the water in her mouth and if she has a lot of children she will run out of water and she'll wash the face of the last one with the slop in her mouth and she will wipe her children's faces with her sleeve and she too will wipe her face with her sleeve. She will use her sleeve to wipe anything that she wants to wipe. When the woman's sleeve get too greasy and dirty she will just scrape it; women don't wash in those times.

Some women will make a pair of leggings out of a hide; some will make a pair of leggings out of a fur robe. These women

leggings are called pants and after they were called stockings. The stockings don't cover the feet so those are the women's pants during the winter and she put soft grass in her fur moccasins as for stockings. She wears her fur moccasins to do her outside chores. The man also has fur moccasins and he also puts soft grass in his fur moccasins. The man goes bare-footed most of the time during the summer and he goes without his leggings and his shirt most of the time too. I (First Rider) saw some of the old people, as soon as they take their shirts off they'll start to scratch themselves and there will be white marks on their bodies where they scratch.

Okay, I (First Rider) saw a lot of old people that don't braid their hair. There are some that just comb their hair sideways. There are some that have bangs just like little kids; they cut their hair across their foreheads. I (First Rider) saw a man, his name is Long Hair. He combs his hair down his forehead to the middle of his nose. Before a buffalo has her calf, its

milk is not white. It is of a yellowish sticky substance. He uses this on his hair just like a hair oil and he combs his hair down his nose and turns his hair up at the end. A man that combs his hair like that is considered a handsome man. People would say the end of his hair looks like a duck tail. This is his style. I (First Rider) also saw some of the brim headwear. A rawhide is cut in a circle and a hole is cut out so's it will be worn as a hat. This headgear has no crown like an ordinary hat; it's worn as an eyeshade. So those were the first headwear. Long Hair had a hat like that and he has an apparel which is called to grow with a nice figure (a vest). They are also called bodice. Long Hair doesn't wear a shirt he just wears the vest and his rawhide hat. I (First Rider) saw Long Hair going around barefooted but he wears moccasins during the winter. If the men are not going out they will not wear moccasins.

The women all dress the same way. They have only one dress in those times. There are no dances and there are no rodeos. The only time they'll have a dance is when they have the victory dance and men will dance the sham dance at the Sundance. That is why the people in those times don't dress up so fancy.

There are some proud people. A proud man will have a stick that is sharpened at one end to pick up his food just like with a table fork. Or a man is too proud of himself or he'll be chief's son someone will feed him. His food will be put in his mouth to chew. A child will be dearly loved by its mother. When the child is fed with some dried meat or something else the mother will chew the dried meat real fine then she will put her mouth against her child's mouth. The child knows how it's

fed. The child will open its mouth and the mother will drop the meat that she had chewed fine into the child's mouth; a child is fed the same way as a mother bird feeds her little ones.

Later on things went different in feeding. The older people are the ones that keep their food in storage containers. The old people are the ones that store away pemmican and they brew berries and they drink the juice as for tea. They raise their children with pemmican and cherry juice. When a boy is old enough he will want to have bow and arrows. They are called the shaggy feathered arrows. The arrows are sharp and some are blunt. The arrows have no stone heads. The boys will play game with their bows and arrows. The children will all go away to play and whenever they get hungry one of them will sing. Here is how the children sing:

"Whoever gets home first to get some marrow, marrow, whoever gets home to get some marrow, marrow."

When the singer is through singing, all the children will run home. Food will be prepared for the favorite ones so that they can just pick them up when they get home. The children will run back to their playground after they have picked up their

lunch. They'd put them in one place; the girls will do the same. The children will sit in a circle with a girl sitting in between the boys and they serve out the lunch. The boys and girls will play the lives of their fathers or anybody that they know and they also play man and wife and the girl's little sister or brother will be their child; at this stage they practise life. The children will use sticks for horses. They'll have two sticks the length of a walking cane. They'll the stick in both hands. Some of the boys will pretend to be buffaloes and the boys that have horses will chase them with sticks and they will fall pretending to be dead and the hunter will pretend to be butchering and taking the meat home; that is how they play. They have homes that they build and they stay in them in pairs as men and wives. The other group of boys will come spying on their camps as enemies and the group of boys will steal their wooden horses. The boys in the camps will trail the enemy and the other group of boys would ambush the boys from the camps and they'd have a battle. Some will pretend to be killed and one side will be victorious and they'd sing the victory song and dance the victory dance. An elderly man will participate in the victory celebration of the boys. After the victory dance the elderly man will make an announcement saying, "These boys are saying we celebrated the victory dance on account of so and so." The elderly man will name a person. So we are always demonstrating war.

Us, when we were babies we are wrapped and we're put in moss bags. The moss bags are laced from bottom to the neckline and gill are burnt black. This is used on our unbilicals so that they will not get infected and a binder is tied around us and the moss bags are laced all the way up. When the white man came we ration soap and our diapers are washed with these soaps. We still wear a dress at a certain age, just like the girls. Later on the knee pants came and we wear black stockings; we can't afford shoes. Some wear moccasins. We like to have our moccasin tops to be trimmed with red stroud. The boys like to paint their faces with seven paint and they'd rub their cheeks with their fingers. This is called shining the face. The cheeks will turn dark and shiny and we are starting to be stylish at that stage.

At the age of 17 the top front part of our hair is cut short like a horse mane. That is cut short; we are handsome at that age. We wear a necklace called fish teeth (cowrie shells). The girls will just braid their hair and their dresses are trimmed with ribbons from the skirt up to the waist and also their sleeves are trimmed with ribbons from the cuffs halfway up and also around the neckline to the shoulder. The girls will put red paint on the line where they part their hair. Most of the girls will paint their faces with yellow ochre and they will use red ochre on the eyebrows. A girl that has a make-up like that is very attractive to us boys. Later on, us boys started to wear leather wristbands and hats, good hats, and we always neat them out so that they will not wrinkle. Two holes will be punched at the base of the crown on both sides and strips of thongs will be threaded through these holes. The

things are throat lashes; we don't want to lose a good hat. A boy will have his own horse. He will be careful not to get his horse to have a sore on its back so that his horse will not swing its tail while he is getting on its back.

I have already told you a boy will be a young man at the age of 15 and 14 years. The shawls for the girls are very thin shawls. The girls wear long dresses. Their dresses are pleated just below their knees. If a girl wears a short dress we will all hate her for wearing a short dress and we cannot marry a girl that has a messy hair. A girl that has a messy hair we call her She Is Bitten By A Coyote, her hair is all messed up. That's what we call a girl that always is untidy and for not combing her hair. We will like a girl that always combs her hair especially if she paints her face with yellow ochre and uses red ochre where she parts her hair. We'd be determined to marry her because she is pretty and for combing her hair in the morning and for having a nice pair of moccasins. A boy will think, "I wish I could marry that girl. She is always well dressed, she must be well off."

A boy will tell his father, "Father, I like that girl. Please go and propose to her for me." The man will go to the girl's father. He will tell the father of the girl, "The reason why I come is to have me for a son-in-law." He spoke just like if he is the one that wanted the girl while it was his son that wanted to marry the girl. The father of the girl will agree. When the man says, "Yes, I agree," the mother will then be shy to see the boy. To be shy to our in-laws is very hard. Us men, when we were young, a girl who is not our lover will be brought in for us to have for a wife. Now take notice the reason why she is called a wife. A person will not say "my wife," he will say "my old lady." The reason why they're together and the way they're living and how they are going to have a child is the reason why the mother of the girl is shy at her son-in-law -- all the dirty words and all the filth in life. The mother of the girl knows how she had lived her life. When her daughter gets married she will know that her daughter is going to live the same married life as she did and the boy and his mother-in-law will never see each other. Today everything is different, far different. The girl's father will tell her sisters, "Your sister's husband will be the only man that you will marry. As soon as you are all of age to marry you will all be living in one place, so you'll know that you are all related to each other. You will not be married to individuals so's you will remember each other." This is why the girls marry one man.

The reason why a man has many wives is to have a lot of tanned hides. When there are a lot of tanned hides the women will make a tipi with the hides and they make their clothings out of the hides when and they make the use of the tanned hides in all sorts of ways. If a man has only one wife he won't have so many tanned hides but men with many wives will live nice and clean by their wives. A man that has many wives will work hard on account of his wives. The husbands will go out in bitter

cold days when it is very cold. The trees will crack, especially the green trees. The men will suffer out in the cold to get food for their wives.

Again later on the children were dressed like the whites and white flannels came; they were used for diapers. Before a child is born the mother will buy a supply of diapers and safety pins and the Indian body powders are not used any more. The Indian baby powders are manure. Some are burnt and they are used. Some women will use pine needles which they crush and put the crushed pine needles in a little bag and makes her baby hold them in its hands. If this is not done, the palm of the baby will give a bad odor for just folding its hands all the time. Some will tie the bag of crushed pine needles around

the baby's neck so that it will not have a body odor. When the white flannels came they were for diapers. In the morning a baby will be wrapped up in its diapers and the baby will be unwrapped only at night. The wet diapers will dry up on the baby before its diapers are changed at night. That is why they have lice and they have the itch too. Just lately people quit clipping and throwing water on children. Now children will be taken to a hospital to be checked by the doctor.

Life kept on changing, the elder the girls get they get to be more superior to their parents and when a girl gets to the age of 16 she will rule her own life; this is the difference in life. Now we have reached a lonely life. The life of the people in the past is not like today; our days and winters kept on changing. I (First Rider) saw a lot of young men in my times. A young man will live with another couple. This young man will provide food for the man. Even the boy still has a father and a mother he'll stay in the home of this other man. He will look after his horses and do other chores; he leaves his father at this stage. Some old people are advisers; I heard some of these old advisers. An elderly man by the name of Coming Up The Ridge With A Tailfeather, he advised me to live. He said, "In the future when you have a home, even if you have a tent for a home, try hard not to have any gambling in your home. A home where there is gambling is a filthy place. If there is a dance in your home that is another filthy living." He started to advise me what to do. He gave me an awful talking that made me cry; when I cried he got worse in talking to me. It is strange today I still remember what he told me. Now today I thought of the filthy life he spoke to me about was true, he was right. To live indecent is filthy living. The people in the earlier times that have left us didn't know about liquor. They had a happy life. During the summer they have their Sundance. For three months they had joyous times and there is not one drunken person to disturb their peace.

Those are the people that put grayish paint on their mouths, they say. That white clay is crushed with black charcoal and they use that to paint their mouths. It is illustrated this way. We'll say, "My, he is handsome. He has a figure like as

if he is trimmed up. He looks like as if he doesn't eat." This is the praise of the people for other people. White people will want to sit by a window to eat and us Indians we are shy to be seen eating. If a person is fat he is useless; he will always seek for death because he is fat. They are ashamed for being so fat and today we are proud to be fat.

When we were little kids we were scared of white people. When we are naughty our mothers would tell us, "Look out, here comes

a white man," and we'll be quiet. And while we are playing someone will say, "Look out, here comes a white man," and we'd all run away crying and we are also very scared of bald-headed men. The reason why we're scared of bald-headed men is from the story when the mice chewed off all of NAPI's (Old Man) hair. If we are wearing a hat our mothers would tell us, "Take your hat off. You will go bald." So we'll take our hats off.

My grandparents lived down along the Cardston River (Lee Creek). My grandmother uses a horse and travois for transportation. I ride in the loading section when she goes for firewood in the winter and when we get to the woods I (First Rider) go into the bush and I pick silver berries and after I've picked a lot then I go to my grandmother. My grandmother would sit down on the snow and I'd sit beside her and I'd give her the silver berries that I picked. I'd wander off again and this time I'll pick wild tomatoes (rose hips) while my grandmother sits with the silver berries and chews on them. And she puts what she has chewed on her rawhide mitts and after she chews all the silver berries she moulds them into like a ball and she sticks them into the snow. And I bring her the tomatoes (rose hips) and my grandmother starts chewing the rose hips and after she chews them all up she moulds them into the shape of a ball and she sticks them into the snow then starts to gather up some more wood. The rose hips and the silver berries will freeze. I'd pick them up and eat them. I did not think that my grandmother was filthy because she chews my food for me. Later on I'd give an old man what I am going to eat; it might be a dried meat or meat. The old will have no teeth. He chews the meat and I'll eat the meat that he chewed. This means that I am asking to live up to a hundred years, to be as old as the old man. This is the life in those times. Today that kind of life doesn't exist and now we think that the old people are filthy. They don't chew our food for us any more. The people in those times are the people that leave the old people behind to die. Those are the old people that will say, "I will prepare myself to die. I am many." That is what it is.

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