

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: GEORGE FIRST RIDER
TIPI DESIGNS OF THE BLOOD
INDIANS/TRANSFERALS, CONSTRUCTION
TECHNIQUES OF PARFLECHES
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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:

- Describes the transfer of tipis.
- Describes various tipi designs.

George First Rider: Okay, I am just illustrating tipis. Let's say one tipi is a vision. The ones that go with the transfer are different; they are redesigned. Some lodges, I'll a Buffalo Designed Tipi. A person has a tipi. His tipi is buffalo designed. When it gets old then it is called a dilapidated tipi. Then the design will be changed to a new tipi and the tipi will be in two.

We will hate to use the old tipi for something else. We will hate to tear it up, so we will offer it to the Great Spirit. The real old one, the real old one is been used many times.

That is called back dilapidated tipi; it could be changes. Okay, the people that speak different languages. The Buffalo Designed Tipi could be on the Blackfoot Reserve. The North Peigans have the buffalo design. The Bloods have a Buffalo Design Tipi; the South Peigans have a Buffalo Design Tipi. The four tribes will own the one tipi; it's just a style. The lodges are ruined because they were shot by the enemy. They were captured; that is how they are ruined. Recently tipis are ruined by rain. Mice gnaw holes in tipis; they are ruined by these. Now I saw it, I saw it on the Blackfoot Reserve, half was all painted black and the other half was painted yellow. It's on the Blackfoot Reserve. Here on the Blood Reserve, at the South Peigans, it's the same tipi. These kind of tipis are dreamed here on the earth. The war exploits are different. There are not many of them; only the chiefs own them. Now I'll be going to tipis. There's another tipi that existed. It is called A Hole Gnawed Through The Ice Design. A circle is designed above the door with ochre, purple, yellow ochre and black ochre. That is how it is designed, in a circle; it's at the back on the outside.

The Gnawed Through The Ice Design was transferred by the beavers. It is not transferred as an Iniskim. There are two songs to it. The woman is clothed, the man was stripped and he was given some clothing; that is how it was transferred. There is another tipi; it is yellow-painted. It is called Yellow Designed Tipi. It is still a tipi of the Bloods. It is painted yellow and the mountain peak designs are around at the bottom and the design is divided with purple-painted ruddy ducks and their kidneys are painted with ochre and the neck is painted black with the ruddy ducks around it. At the back is the mountain design and a ruddy duck is perched on it. It is still on the Blood Reserve and it has gone to the burial place. Tipis are not set up for the dead any more, they are just put in the grave. There is another tipi. It is called Bulrush Designed Tipi. It's not all painted; it's just painted black at the bottom with mountain peak designs. The bulrushes

stood between the mountain peaks. The bulrushes grow in wet land. They look like drum beaters wrapped at one end. They are designed around the tipi. There are seven on the south side and seven on the north side. The incense burning place is scraped and bulrush is burned for incense and it is transferred in Iniskim way and the song to it is a Water Bundle song. The words are, "He went home and there is my home. It is holy. Spring, there is my home, it is holy." That is how it is sung. I saw it when it was transferred. I didn't own it but I just saw it when it was transferred.

There is another tipi -- Doesn't Own A Nice Horse (Jack Low Horn). That is the Buffalo Head Designed. The buffalo heads are all sides. I saw it too when it was transferred. Those are transferred to the songs of the buffaloes. At this point motions are performed to the White Buffalo Dance song. It is not transferred in the Iniskim way. I saw the ones that it was transferred to. The recipients were also stripped of their clothing and they were given clothing to wear. All tipis are

transferred with pipes, a tamp stick and a tobacco cutting board. That is how they are transferred. They go with the forked stick; they are called incense tongs. The kind of material that the tipi is incensed with will be transferred with it. There are fragrant smell, there are creeping cedars, there are elk food (puccoon), there are the big turnips (prairie parsley). Those are used to burn the incense. There are the hairs that are pulled with a comb. They are not transferred with ochre; they are transferred in various ways.

Now recently a person that is going to transfer a tipi, even his tipi is different he will transfer it just the way it was transferred to him; he'll not follow the rules. In the past the people were careful; they transfer a tipi just the way it is supposed to be transferred. This day people that transfer sacred artifacts just make money in their transfers. They just collect on them. They don't care to transfer in the right way.

Okay, this Otter Designed Tipi, the flag is an otter and now the new Otter Design Tipis are newly made and they are going to be transferred. They will be transferred the way an Otter Design Tipi is transferred. The one that is going to be transferred, they will be transferred the way an Otter Design Tipi is transferred. The one that is going to be transferred to will be given clothing to wear, a pair of moccasins, clothing and a blanket. The woman, a pair of moccasins, clothing and a blanket. That's what they'll be given with the transferal. When the tipi is transferred to him, the rectangular parfleche will be put in there. It's not the real parfleche, it's a rectangular parfleche; the tipi flag is

contained in it. A forked stick will be stuck into the ground and the rectangular parfleche will be hung on it. It's not the Horn Society parfleche; this is a little smaller. The flag is just contained in it, the otter flag. The one that is going to do the transferring took the flag inside. The one that is going to do the transferring hired the helpers himself. One person that goes in there that has a rightful tipi and his tipi is all known, the person knows the song to his tipi and he has it inside his chest. The number of people that all have a tipi, some still have their tipis. The ones that are invited, the one that is going to do the transferring invited them.

The one that is going to do the transferring seated someone there and this person will lay out himself. The ceremonialist will pay him and the goods that he is going to give with the transfer and now he is going to do the transferring and the forward song is sung. In another song he performed with the clothing and he gives the clothes to the recipient. The recipient puts on the clothes; those go to him with the transfer. When he puts on the clothes, his moccasins, his robe, those are given to him with the transfer; the one that transferred his tipi owns the clothes. Now the woman, the one that is transferring his tipi hired the one that is going to transfer his tipi. The one that is going to transfer his tipi, the one that is going to transfer for him, is accompanied by his wife. The woman will also perform with the clothes that

are given to the woman, then she will give them to her. The woman will take her clothes off and the one that transferred his tipi will own those. If the one that transferred his tipi thinks that he would give the transferor the clothing that he took off from the recipients, he will give them to him and the transferor will have some gifts. The owner is the one that gave some clothing; those are performed with first.

Okay, when the recipients put on the clothes, the owner of the tipi puts his pipe down, his tamp stick, his tobacco, his fine cut tobacco, and the tobacco cutting board and the incense burning place while is neated with sod. That's what he did; those are his giveaways in the transfer ceremony. Now after the recipients put on the clothes, the berry soups are served then. So they drank berry soup. After they drank the ceremony commenced. Now it is going to be transferred to him. He has changed his clothes and he has finished to eat. He sang the otter song, the song when the otter will be coming out, when it is going to be taken down as it is on a stake. The song was sung and the flag was taken down and there is the parfleche; the rectangular parfleche was put down. But the one that the tipi is going to be transferred will pay at this point. He will put something good where the flag will be put on. Then

the flag will be taken down. The one that transferred his tipi also owns those. The flag is taken down and one end of the parfleche is untied; that's the bag. The otter flag is exposed just a little. The incense was kept burning. Singing started immediately, the otter song. The song was worded as it is being pulled out. The song was worded as was follows, "When I come out it is holy. When I come out my sight seeing is holy." And it was taken out from the parfleche. It was taken out. It is then given to the recipient and sat with it like a child and he prayed to the otter tipi flag. When he got through praying to it he gave it to the woman and she also prayed to it and then it is put back where it was. The song was fast and then it was uncovered. The forked stick was pulled out and the otter was tied to a pole. Now it is going to be hoisted up. It was tied to the stick and it was stuck into the ground towards to the centre. They were just initiated on it at this point; it is now hoisted up.

There are four songs. The tipi design is with the clothing and there are four songs too; it was transferred on eight songs. After it was transferred to them hot coals were put on the incense burning place. They didn't dance; they were just... were just performing in motions. A whistle, the one that is going to transfer his tipi will give a whistle with the transfer. He gave whistle to the recipient. He was initiated in all of these and in blowing the whistle; the otter owns the whistle. After he is initiated, after the transferal, the incense was burned. The one that sat close to the door on the north side, those four people were given the four rattles. Incense was burned for the man that sat close to the door. Okay, the smoke is floating to you. The one that sat close to the door know the main song to his tipi so he sang it. He sang

one song and he worded his song; the others helped him in singing. When he got through singing the song he told the recipient, "I give you this song." Incense was burned again for the man next to him, "Okay, incense is burned for you." He knows the song and he started it. He sang the main song to his tipi so he sang it and the words in the song. He tells the recipient, "Okay, this is a song for you." Incense was burned for the one that sat next to him. He also sang. He knows the song to his tipi so he sang that. After he sang it he told the one that the tipi was transferred to, "I give you this song." Four people took the four rattles and each one sang his own song; they each gave the recipient a song. The other four people were also given the rattles. They didn't just handed them to the man. When the four people all got through singing the rattles were given to the ceremonialist. He took the rattles and held them to the incense and he threw them to the ones that are going to use the rattles. These four people also took them and they sang the same way. Incense was burned for the first man and the others helped him in singing and the

others all helped in singing for the one that sang. He also knows the main theme song to his tipi so he also sang it. After he sang it he was wording his song. The words in the song, the recipient got to know all the words in the songs of the people. And their songs, those are given to him. He tells him, "Okay, this is the song to my tipi so now I give it to you." Incense was also burned from the one that sat next to him, so he sang. He sang the main song to his tipi. The ones are going to sing might own the same tipi. That doesn't matter; they'll sing the same song. If the recipient goes to a Group Smoking ceremony he will sing the song that he knows. If he wants to sing an Iniskim song he will sing an Iniskim song in a Group Smoking ceremony. The songs to a tipi are sung only at a transferal ceremony. A person that is just painted for a tipi, he is useless. He cannot give a song to the recipient. What song can he give him? Because a tipi was not transferred to him.

A person will give his tipi away. He give it away at a dance. When he gives it away he will have no say on it because he has no more business on it any more. He will tell the one that he gave it to, "You get someone to paint your face for it." He will just go away from what he gave away; he will have nothing to say back on it. The tipi is transferred to the man. That was given to him free. Okay, the one that gave away free has no business on it. The one that the tipi is going to be transferred to, the one that is going to hire the ones that are going to transfer the tipi to him, he now owns it. He is painted for it rightfully. He owns it. Somebody will ask for it and he will also give it away. When he gives it away and when he gets paid for it, if he thinks of the one that gave it to him free, he will tell him, "I have transferred away that tipi that you gave to me free, so I give you these." So he will give him something in return. If he doesn't want to give him anything in return, he doesn't have to. When the tipi is transferred, when it is too transferred, the one that gave it

away free has no business on it. A person that offered a smoke for a pipe is offered a smoke for the pipe. He offered a smoke for the tipi; it is transferred to him. Now it will be recognized by. The Horn Society parfleche and the rectangular parfleche are different. The parfleche for the Holy Turnip is also different. The parfleche for the Holy Turnip will be recognized by the two sharp points on each end of the parfleche. The Horn Society parfleche will be recognized by the way it is ochred. The Holy Turnip parfleche will be recognized by the heavy ochre that is applied on it; the digging stick will be tied to it on the side.

Now the flag, whatever it will be -- it might be an otter, a beaver flag, it might be a marten -- whatever the flag might be it will be in a round bag. The bag for the flag didn't have to be designed. It's just tanned smoother and it is small. It

will be recognized by that. That is a parfleche for the flag. The Horn Society parfleches are different. The Holy Lodge parfleches are different. The parfleche for the belt is made like that too; it is made different. The fringes are not sharp pointed, they are blunt. They are not constructed the same way. They are recognized by the way they are constructed. We will know if we take any kind of parfleche and put the flag in it. People will not know what's in it. He'll have to uncover it, then he'll know what's in it.

Now if it is going to be transferred, the one that is going to do the transferring, the one that is going to help in singing, if he gives it to him and tells him, "You transfer it yourself," he will tell him, "You will get the goods that go with the transferral." Now the one that is going to transfer the flag will get some clothing for the man -- a pair of moccasins, clothes, a blanket, a tobacco cutting board, a pipe, and a tamp stick. He will get these. He will get a rattle. He will transfer the tipi with the clothing, a blanket, a pair of moccasins, a tobacco cutting board, a pipe, and a tamp stick. He will transfer these with the tipi. The one that is transferring the pipe, the flag, himself, he will go and borrow a hide drum and a rattle, what he is going to use. The incense tong goes with the tipi. He will give him something to burn the incense with, whatever the incense will be. The recipient will not supply all these. The recipient will include these with his payments for what is transferred to him. Now a person that is going to transfer something will get these. He will clothe the woman and the man completely. He will put down the things to burn the incense with, a pipe, a tobacco cutting board. He'll put some tobacco and kinnikinnik because the person will have his own tipi. He'll invite people and he'll have smokes with people with these. That is how they are transferred. Now a person that is going to transfer something will have to get a supply of these, then he can transfer a tipi. It is also different if he is just going to paint his face for the tipi. The person may give him just a blanket for the facial painting; that is all he will be given. He'll just paint his and nothing else. He will just paint his face. He will just be praying. It's the same as the cleansing of the

body. The cleansing of the body is done in a sweat lodge. There is nothing to watch in a facial painting. We will find out when a person says, "Somebody painted my face for that. It is my tipi. I was painted for it." And if he is going to transfer it away how can he know about the payments and how it is transferred? His face was just painted for it. He will go to a Group Smoking ceremony; he can't do a thing. He doesn't know the song to the tipi. He will tell a person, "Sing a song of that tipi." He will pay the one that is going to sing for him; that is what the tipis are.

I saw a lot of these tipis that are transferred. I owned four tipis; they were transferred to me, my very own tipis. There is the Gnawed Through The Ice Designed Tipi, painted yellow. It was transferred to me. There is the Mink Designed Tipi; it was also painted yellow. That was transferred to me too. There is the yellow painted tipi. It was transferred to me too. That is the one that has the fox song to it; Rainy Chief gave it to me. I still own it; it is also yellow-painted. There is the Tipi with a Marten Flag; it is also yellow-painted. We got out from it by drumming. It was transferred to me too. I know that too.

I owned four tipis. They are all painted yellow and they are all different. I was invited to a tipi transferral when the first tipi was transferred to me. I saw those old people of that time and how they transfer the tipis. I also give away the song and the tipi that was transferred to me. That is how the tipis are transferred.

Now I illustrated the tipis the way I saw them. I will not illustrate what I didn't see; I might say wrong. If I am going to perform a transferral I will transfer a tipi the way it was transferred to me. I cannot transfer a thing that is not transferred to me. To transfer it at my own will, in that way I'll spoil the transferral. That is how the tipi transferral is. It occurs we will hurt ourselves if we transfer falsely what we are transferring. Misfortune will come to a person for his false illustration. That is what a lie is. That is why the holy say* existed. We talk straight as the pipe. If we are going to sing we'll say, "O holy spirits, let me sing as straight as this pipe," and we'll sing the song straight. All songs are all in sequence. The first song, the second, the third -- we will have to know all those. We will not mix them up in singing them. If a person mixes them in singing it is called, he sings them here and there. How can his singing be good; he spoils everything. Now we should really work straight so things will turn out good. So I end my illustration of how tipis are transferred and I'll tell another story, a different story. That's all.

*Holy Say - Swear on the Holy Bible.

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