

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: GEORGE FIRST RIDER
THE ROUND DANCE/MEDICINE
HAT GAME OF THE BLOOD
INDIANS

INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: BLOOD RESERVE
CARDSTON, ALBERTA

INTERVIEW LOCATION: BLOOD RESERVE
CARDSTON, ALBERTA

TRIBE/NATION: BLOOD

LANGUAGE: BLACKFOOT

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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:

- Origin of the medicine hat.

George First Rider: As the woman went for a pail of water she saw a bow and arrows and a rifle, a real rifle (flintlock musket). They were put there. As she looked over the bank there was a man sitting on the shore early in the morning; he was going to take a drink. The woman just ran back and told the one that she married, Eagle Child. She told him, "Eagle Child, there is a man out there." Eagle Child just ran out and as he looked at him he was about to drink. He took a big rock and walked up to him and as the man was haunted by him he struck him with the rock and killed him. They laid him on the good side and scalped him. His arrows and his rifle were already on the bank. They took his cartridge belt, his knife

sheath and his knife and they threw the bald head body into the river and he told the man in the water, "Now you feast on that corpse." The woman walked back, took the arrows and the rifle; she gave them to her husband, Eagle Child. "This where you got the bow and arrows and the rifle. Here they are. Take them." They went home with them and took them out. He laid out the scalp to dry and after that things went on. Eagle Child is the one that saw the medicine hat; today the town is all over the creation. That is called Medicine Hat. This medicine hat that was mysteriously seen, there is no such transferal to be said, "This is the medicine hat that was seen at Medicine Hat. It is being transferred." The woman just saw it. There is no medicine hat that is seen in a dream that is transferred.

The man, Eagle Child, broke camp and moved for home; now he walked in force. He has killed. He had a shot a scalp with thick hair and the bow and arrows, and the real rifle (flintlock musket), his knife, his cartridge belt, he took all these. It is very seldom for a man to take things like that. He took all these things at once, then he went home. He found where the camps were, as the people in the past are always moving camp. So he found the camps where the camps were. He spied on the camps and announced that nobody should leave the camps tomorrow to ride out into the prairies, "You will see a mysterious thing." Then in the morning just at dawn the man made the announcement. He said, "Nobody is to ride out from the camps before high noon. You will see a mysterious thing." The man sat there, Eagle Child, and when the sun came up he was told by his woman, the scalp, the bow and arrows, the rifle, the knife and the belt, the tail feathers of the eagles that he killed. It doesn't say how many tail feathers there were. They just cut off the whole works. I didn't say how many tail feathers that Eagle Child gave to his wife. He told her, "Take these home with you." The woman went home with the crushed meat and the pemmican that she made. They kissed each other and she went. The woman said, "You will know if my husband kills me and you, you live." Eagle Child told her, "What is the use for me to live when your husband kills you? I will approach him and he will kill me too."

The woman went. At that point a woman was seen carrying a heavy load in her arms. She met a woman and she told her, "Where is my home, that one?" "Why did you walk into the camps? Your husband has a terrible threat on you." "Yes but I've been gone long enough." As she went her husband was still home. She walked in and as the man looked, "Here comes my wife." She walked up to him and she kissed him. She put down what she fed him. He was told by her, "Eagle Child, here is a scalp. Cut it light yourself. Wear it around your neck. Here are the bow and arrows. Here is the rifle. Here is the knife. Here is his belt. You have struck a foe here as I give you these right now and you will eat these." He was looking at the stuff and then he knew then. "My wife has apprehended me. Now someone has won my wife from me." The people did not wait; they all walked in. The man was not eating at this point. They told him, "Take courage. The way you are offered with

gifts is a great honor. Now it is good for you to accept the gifts." He understood then but he missed his wife who was a pretty girl. He really missed her. He knew then what to do. He knew, "I am beaten." It is a gamble, that is what it is. His wife was won from him.

When he knew that he was beaten he then started to eat. After he ate he told the people, "Let us go. We will sing the victory song. Everybody got happy and they all went to the centre. The woman that was taken away (eloped) walked far ahead. Her husband, she walked in front with her real husband. At the big victory celebration, the people that are dancing with swaying heads, the scalp was tied to a staff, the one dance they performed. After they danced with it he cut it in pieces and gave each of his friends a scalp. The ones that are given a scalp are now chiefs. With the scalp they are given the chieftainship. The ones that were made chiefs by the scalp were all won by Eagle Child.

The victory celebration went into full swing again; the men that received scalps gave the scalps to their wives. The scalps were tied to a staff with which the women danced with their right arms in a right angle position, at this point wording their song, "We are telling a story about happiness," and they were mocking their enemy. That is why they sang the victory song. Towards the conclusion of their celebration the man told his wife, "Where is my friend?" His wife told him, "He is sitting out on the prairie." "Yes, go and tell him. Go in with him in our home," the man said. "Okay. Eagle Child has invited you. He has invited you all to my home."

The victory celebration concluded. The woman went out from the camps to get Eagle Child. She gave a tail feather to each of all the men that followed. They will fan themselves with them. The men each received a fan, the others all each got a scalp. The man himself got a bow and arrows, a rifle, a knife, and a belt, a belt. Eagle Child came in. The man told him, "Sit beside me, my friend." Eagle Child sat near him. He turned

to him and kissed him. Now he is a relative to him. Eagle Child won. It's a gamble; Eagle Child won. He told him, "You fill the pipe." Eagle Child took over his friend's home. He is offering the smoke. He told the story of how he killed the man and how he scalped him. He gave the scalp to his friend so that he will be made a chief instead of himself. The man knew that his wife was won from him. "I cannot kill Eagle Child. He killed a man. He has a higher rank than me, why should I kill him?" The man told his wife, the one that sits next to him, "Have you finished beading that tipi?" She told him, "It is done." "Give it to your sister and the tipi liners," he told his wife. "Get your pack horses and your travois and pack the tipi just the way you used to pack your things. Okay, my friend Eagle Child, you gave me this rifle. I am giving you my bow and arrows and here is my dagger." He gave him a suit; he supplied him completely. He told him, "My friend, I have two geldings. One is that color." He told the others, "Get the horse for my friend. He will own the horse so that he can get

his food with the horse." So he gave his wife to Eagle Child because he was beat. Eagle Child just went out and pitched his tipi up. He told Eagle Child, "I gave you my chieftainship and you gave me your chieftainship and now we will live together. You will be my relative. This is why we made peace today."

We are still saying Medicine Hat, this Eagle Child that saw the medicine hat. That is why Eagle Child lead the people in moving camps by this lying in and now I saw the whole area. I saw it all the way the story was told to me. That is the game. They had a game for the woman and Eagle Child won her. That is the way with life and the games; that is the end of it. The instructions, the things I was instructed, the three different Indians that told me stories. A South Peigan Indian, his name is Arch Face, he tells stories real good and explains his stories very good. A Blackfoot Indian, his name is Heavenly Old Man (White Headed Chief). I am not saying that he doesn't lie but he puts his stories in a very interesting way. And here, the Blood, this man Sun Chief (Eagle Plume), these two sure put their stories in an interesting way. Now the medicine hat we will tell a story how the medicine hats were invented.

Now a man who is courageous in his battles the men will give a name to a child for what they took from the enemy. Some who gave names gave the name Took Many Guns and some gave a name Who Killed Many. They call these names by the variety of life. A man will also be... a thing that is transferred, when he owns it he will attach something to decorate it. The significance of the decoration is to commemorate his life, his thefts that made him a chief. That is what it is. Now a man goes on the warpath continually, he gradually got very courageous in his warpaths. He got to be a bold man and finally he had a dream

that even he is touched with a rifle he will not be hit. The people that he goes on the warpath with never had any mishaps with him. The next time he went on the warpath some of his war party were all young boys. They have taken horses at this point and there they stopped. While they were sleeping the people came from the thick forest and came upon them and they saw the horses that they stole and themselves they all got up and ran away and they ducked in a hollow place.

In the direction they were running people came up the ridge; they were surrounded. They ducked in the hollow place. Immediately they started digging and they piled the dirt high; they dug their foxhole deep. The ground was soft. They piled the dirt on the edge making spaces as loop holes. There were not very many rifles at that time but bow and arrows. They were shooting arrows through the openings. As the people were lying in the open they can see the ones they kill. They were killing through the head with some of the arrows and a name was given with this shooting on the head. A woman never did raise a child and when she had another baby she was very glad. She told her baby, "Grow up and get shot in the head from a long distance, only by the enemy." So the child got the name Shot

In The Head From A Long Distance. That's how it is. The man told his company, "Don't raise your heads. I'll do the fighting." He was killing the people. When they get too many, his companions supplied him with their arrows when his arrows started to get low and when the enemy gets too hot on him. That is when they are too close to them. He runs out and chases the foe in all directions and he gathers the arrows that are left behind and uses them to shoot with. It was heard, the story was told four nights.

On the fourth night they crawled out. Towards morning he was encountered. During these four nights they never had anything to drink and what are they going to eat? None of his companions were harmed as they never poked their heads out of their foxhole. He killed a lot of the enemy then they crawled out and when they got home he told the story of his exploits. Those are the ones that perform dances. Not the kind of dances we have now. That is the real dance. The people at that time, let's say they are the ones that gamble for their women (wives). Those with higher rank will get the woman (wife); that is the kind of dance they have.

A man suddenly put it in thought. The people at that time wear upright tail feather headpieces. If they killed an enemy, if he killed two men he'll wear two upright headpieces and if he kills three men he'll have three upright headpieces. That is the meaning of the upright headpiece. Himself, at the time he was encountered, how many people did he kill? So he prepared a hide and he cut it round and attached thongs to it. This represents his dugout and he sewed a tail feather to it. He sewed the tail feathers around and he tied them around the

rawhide and he had it on as a hat and tied it together at the back. That set the tail feathers. That is how the medicine hats originated, the rawhide that represented the dugout.

He stuck the tail feathers around the rawhide and it was... they are called straight up medicine hats. Okay, he gave it to his wife. That is how the woman's medicine hats originated. The men's medicine hats are the same; they originated from the woman's medicine hat. The women didn't make their own medicine hats. They are not from a dream; they are symbols. The next time he was encountered, this is the same man, he killed a lot of people. He couldn't make two medicine hats for the next dance to be held. Instead he stuck the tail feathers on a rawhide and tied it behind the medicine hat and now trailer medicine hats originated. Straight up medicine hats originated and a trailer is attached to them. His other war exploit he made another one of the same kind. He didn't have anything to attach it to so the medicine hat was made to have two trailers. He gave it to his wife. He said, "I will be chief with my wife. This is her medicine hat and these are the ones that I killed. I attached them and now it is my wife's property."

There are symbols to everything that we transfer. This is why the medicine hats originated. And the song to the straight up medicine hat, when they are transferred the song is different

and the song to the horn headdress is also different. There might be a few that know that it was like this. What we call the spread out medicine and the backward medicine hat are different. The big open medicine hats, those are just for dress wear; that's why they originated. They're just for fancy actions. There are some straight up medicine hats that are built onto hats. They are not the kind how the straight up medicine hats originated. They are symbols and they are also put into the Horn Society. The straight up medicine hats are symbols; that is why it was in the Horn Society. They called it the medicine hat with a red plume in the front and that's what they are called and that is how the Horn medicine hat originated. That is called Shot in the Face. Those are the dress-up wear, the medicine hat that is used in the victory celebration. And when we settled down the beloved wives, we'll say the rich women, started to transfer the woman's medicine hat to one another.

When we started having dances, we called it the rich women that wanted to be medicine hat women. The woman's medicine hat was transferred to them. There are some that are falsely made. They are just called woman's medicine hats. They are the straight up medicine hats. The woman's medicine hat that has a trailer, those are the ones that are used in the victory celebrations. These other woman's medicine hats are just for dance wear and now the woman's medicine hat, the straight up medicine hat with the rawhide, there are songs to them. The

songs to the woman's medicine hat are different. The man's medicine hat are different, the man's medicine hat song. The straight up medicine hat song is different and the one with a trailer is also different. The woman's medicine hat that is also trailered, that was given to her and she is the one that transfers the medicine hat to women. And the ones that are called woman's medicine hats, the ones that are used for dancing, they have different songs. The words in the song are, "You are going to see a rich woman." The woman's medicine hats, the men that have belts they loan their belts. The women that have the medicine hat will know a woman that has a rich husband. "She is a rich woman. You will capture her for my medicine hat and I'll give it to her." The men will get up and put on their belts and will dance. The capturing song will be sung and they will dance around. As they are dancing they'll have their arms stretched out to the women and on the fourth round the woman is taken up. She is then made to get up and dance and the words in the song are, "You are now going to see the rich woman."

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