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 the manufacture and significance of pipes.
George First Rider: Okay, I am going to tell a story again. I am going to tell a story about pipes, smoking pipes, how they are made. Finally holy pipes were invented; there are various pipes.

Now the Blackfoot Indians, the Blood Indians and the North Peigans in Akanawa (Blood Indians) the black stone pipe bowls are our pipes, the black stone pipe bowls are ours (Blood Indian). The catlinite stone pipes belong to the eastern people, the Gros Ventres, the Crows, the Nez Perce Indians, the Navajo Indians. They own the catlinite stone pipes. The way they make them and us how we make them.
There is a place called the Blood Indian Blackstones (Coal Mines) and at Black Stone (Lethbridge) that is where we get the stones. We will look at a stone, a mountain rock. We will look at the stones and we will take a stone that is not wet; the stone is not soaked.

The person that is going to carve a pipe will start chipping the stone. He will chip the stone in an oblong shape just the way he is going to carve it. Then he will put it in water and it is all soaked. Then they scrape them up in hairs that are scraped from a hide -- a cow hide, any kind of a hide -- then they put them under the mattress.

The stones are under the mattresses all night and they examine them in the morning. The stone will be wet where it is cracked; they will put it away because it is cracked. They will prepare the other one. They prepare many of the stones, the stones that they chipped in an oblong shape, the way they are going to carve them. They all put the stones under their mattresses and they examine them in the morning. A stone that is cracked will show. It will not dry where it is cracked. A stone that is not wet, and that is not cracked -- it just dried up -- this stone is carved into a pipe.

In the past people work on the pipes with sandstones and later they use files. The people of earlier times used quartzite to carve pipes. The pipes are straight. The people of the past use stones to drill a hole in the pipe and now the pipes are drilled with arrowheads. And now I've seen them, the pipes are drilled in the white way; they are drilled with steel drills. Before they were drilled with stones; that is why the straight pipes are not long.

When the pipes are completed then one hole at one end of the bowl is made larger. The eastern people, the Navajos and Gros Ventres, don't make the holes of their pipes larger. The newly made pipes show that they... the holes are drilled with a brace and bit. The Bloods and the Blackfoot scrape their pipe bowls larger; they are black stone pipes.

When a person finishes a pipe he will take a green stick and sharpen it and he inserts the stick into the hole of the pipe and then he greases the pipe; he will not grease it too much. Then he will build a fire. Buckbrush are used to build a fire. Pipe bowls are burnt black with the buckbrush flames and the pipe bowl is just black and then a manure is burned. When the manure is burned black then water is poured on it and then they rub the burnt manure on the pipe bowl; they are just like shoe polish. The pipe bowl is dyed with the burned manure and the pipe bowl is burned black by the flames of the buckbrush and the burned manure which is wet is rubbed on the pipe and then the pipe is polished. So it is a black stone pipe.

There is a hill about five miles down on the southeast side of Cardston. That hill is called Burning The Pipe Black On Top Of The Hill. A man was burning his pipe black on top of the hill
so that is how the hill got its name, Burning The Pipe Black On Top Of The Hill.

The pipe is completed, so the other one is made. It's a small pipe. The men use the larger pipe for smoking. He carries the small pipe around with him; that is his extra pipe. He puts it in his pipe bag. He also puts his stone pipe filter* in the fine cut tobacco; the fine cut tobacco is mixed with kinnikinnik.

Now the big pipe is put down. When the pipe bowl is completed, then they look for a yew. There is a place on the Crow Indian Reserve that is called Yew River. That is where people get the yews. People that go on the warpath are the ones that cut them and bring them home. Now it is going to be constructed. There is a pipe that is carved, now the stem is going to be made.

People that are going to burn a hole through the pipestem are invited. Lately things were improved; before there was no improvement. A wire pipestem cleaner is different. A burned stick is used to burn a hole through the pipestem. A person will say, "So that I may not burn the hole crooked," he will count camps. He will say, "I travelled straight and I got to the camps and stole a horse and he came straight home." So

*A pipe stone filter is a small round stone pellet. This stone pellet is put in the pipe bowl before the pipe is filled with tobacco. The stone filter keeps the tobacco from being sucked through the stem.

that is how a hole is burned in a pipestem. So the burning of the hole ends there because his boring stick is not long as the pipestem.

The next man will get up and he will count one war coup. This time a hole will be burned from the opposite end of the pipestem. "This is fantastic. A war party met another war party that were on their way home safely. The party that were on their way home gave something to the other party and they all turned and went back home." So that is how they count war coups. And then they bore the holes together, and they'd bore the holes together evenly and then they give praise.

Now both ends of the pipe are going to be carved out, the mouthpiece and the inserting end. They will count war coups to carve out both ends of the pipestem. They will count four war coups to carve out both ends of the pipe stem. The ones that cut the rope of a tethered horse are the ones that count war coups so that both ends of the pipestem will not split when they are carved out -- that is the mouthpiece and the inserting end into the stone pipe bowl.

The pipestem is greased when it is finished and then it is heated when the grease dissolves into the wood. And then they are polished with a rawhide and they are just shiny and the men
that were invited will smoke on the pipe.

They also count coups. They count coups of how lucky they were to get some food, the nice food he got, how greasy the food was that he got; that is how they count coups. The man that is going to smoke first will be told, "Now suck it open." The one that is going to smoke first will say a prayer with the pipe so that the pipe will always taste sweet. Some pipes taste bitter and burns the smoker's mouth; some pipes taste sweet. That is why they take precautions and then they smoke on the new invented smoking pipe. When the people smoke they'd make an inhaling sound. They enjoy smoking and they'd know whose pipe tastes sweet. They give away their pipes and they'd carve new ones.

Now it's all in one way. The man that is going to offer a smoke sits right at the back. When he fills his pipe, the person that sat on his right side -- the door of the tipi is facing east -- the one that sat on his right will be the one that will give the pipe and the pipe will be handed to the one that sat by the door and the pipe will be lighted for him and the pipe will be smoked to the left.

If pipes are handed the opposite way, when the pipe is handed back the other way, the men were handing it to the left, when the pipe gets to the man that sat by the door and he smokes and then the pipe is smoked the other way. They smoke them in one way. Now someone who was on a warpath, he ran back, he charged back at the enemy, he will smoke the opposite way; those are war exploits.

Now it comes to the pipes that are transferable. They existed through visions. It is said that a Medicine Pipe was given by the thunder. The Medicine Pipe was constructed here on earth. The pipestem of a Medicine Pipe is not a yew; it is made from a berry tree. A man that makes good pipes, he is the one that is hired for the pipe. He goes to look for the rock. It will be a big rock. He chips it up and after he chips off some of the stone then he wets it and he puts it under his mattress. When he looked at it in the morning there were no wet spots on the stone; it is all dried out good. He prayed hard so that the rock will not crack and the pipe did not crack.

Now he is going to carve the pipe. He did not eat; he fasted. The tools that he is going to use are called quartzite. These stones are rough. The quartzite is just like a sandpaper; that is his steel file. He went out into the prairie. As he started to work on the pipe he was praying. The man did not drink and he did not eat. He was just working on the pipe all day. If he does not finish the pipe he will sleep out on the prairie with it and he is praying, and he has not eaten yet and he did not drink yet. He will start working on it again in the morning; he will finish the pipe completely. When the pipe is completed he will drill a hole in the pipe bowl where the pipestem is inserted and then he will scrape out the pipe bowl larger.
When the pipe is finished, then they built a fire. They will look for abalone which are found in reddish soil. They then heat up some rocks and they lay the abalones on the heated rocks and when the abalones are burnt, then he crushes them on a rock. He crushes them real fine. Then he mixes them with black charcoal, then he puts the ingredients in water and he makes them into a dough, and then he lines the inside of the pipe bowl with the compound so that the pipe will not heat up too hot as it is a huge pipe.

He has plastered the inside of the pipe completely and he dried it out and then he burned it black. He built a fire with bark, then he threw the buckbrush into the fire. When the buck-brushes were burning, he took the stem that he made and he insert it into the pipe -- that is a Medicine Pipe -- and then he burned it black. Then he took it out from the fire.

A burned dung was ready. As he had no water so he spat on it and it got wet for spitting on it. He chews sage grass to water his mouth and he wetted the dung with his spit. Then he polished the pipe with the burned dung which was soaked. When the stone was ready he went home and he laid the pipe down. Then he ate and rested. Wing feather, white weasel skins, were all set ready with which to decorate the pipe. The man that had the vision of the pipe was just showing him the things to attach to the pipe. Everything was ready on hand. He went to the cherry bush, saskatoon berry bush. He cut a good size saskatoon berry willow and he went home with it. He did not scrape the bark off right away. We will say they use hot water on them first. They say they are boiled.

The stick was long but there was a place where it was boiled. They dig the ground and then water is poured in it and then the hot stones are thrown in. When the water boils then the stick is put in. Stones that are heated red are put in the water continually. The water comes to a great boil then the stick will be taken out. The bark is still on the stock, then they are dried. When they start to get dry they are straightened out, as they are boiled soft and they straighten out.

When they are quite dry, when they are good and dry, then they are scraped. If the bark is scraped off right away they crack when they get dry. If they are done in this manner they don't crack when they dry up. Then both ends are carved out. After both ends are carved out then a hole is bored through the stick.

Good people are invited. They don't have to be Medicine Pipe owners. Chiefs, good chiefs, are invited. They are the ones that will count war coups to burn a hole through the stem. A hole is now going to be burned through the Medicine Pipe; a hole is burned through them.

They will count four coups. A Medicine Pipe owner has a limit of four. What he is going to work at will be four. He will
count four war coups and a hole will be burned through the stem. He will not tell a lie in his war exploits. He will do everything honest and he will also pray that he told the truth. He confessed that he told the truth how he travelled. Then a hole is burned into the stem and the burning of the hole ends there. Another one will get up and he will also count a war coup. It’s the same subject, when two war parties meet out on the prairie. This man also made an oath that he met the war party, that he met them out on the prairie.

Here is how it is. He met the enemy war party, he kills them and he came home a new chief. It was an honest truth what he said. He was made a chief through his oath and then he will burn a hole from the opposite end and he burns the hole clean together and the rest all gave thanks.

It is very hard, the four war coups that he counted. In that way he met the enemy out on the prairie and he kills them. Some don't count four war coups but they help each other on that and finally there will be four of the same subject, meeting the enemy out on the prairie, with what made us chiefs, the turning back of the party. That is why they have a big sitting together (big assemblance).

Now a hole is burned through the stem and it is carved at both ends and the pipe bowl is tried on. One end of the stem is carved exactly the same as the hole in the pipe. They are not carved evenly; they are carved a little in an angle.

The pipestem is inserted further into the pipe hole as it dries. If the stick is carved exactly to the size of the hole in the pipe, when the wood dries it will shrink and it will not fit into the pipe. Now the other end, the pipe that is carried around, the mouthpieces on the stem of the pipe are carved flat. The pipe that is used at an invitation, the mouthpiece is carved round. The mouthpiece of a Medicine Pipe is also carved round. That is how it is made.

When the wood is finished, it is greased up and it is dried. They are not dried by the fireplace, they are dried in the sun. When it is dry, the former Medicine Pipe owners assemble to it. A man that had a vision, a most talented person, is the one that constructed the pipe. The feather decorations suspended from the pipestem are quilled; the best quiller does the work. The white weasel skins that are used are just attached to the stem. The attendants smoke in a different pipe and the others are constructing the pipe. The person that had the vision instructs the men what to do. The construction of a pipe will not be completed in one day as there are a lot of various ways to work on the pipe. Some will work on a pipe for four days and the work is complete.

Some will plane a maple wood flat beforehand. They soak them in water and then they plane them flat. They will scrape the bark off from the other wood, the maplewood that they thinned. They thin it as a board. As the wood is soaked, it is bent on the other wood and it is tied secure to the wood; they are tied
with rawhide thongs. A stump of a tree is used. When the maple wood gets dry it is just lifted out from the stump. The stump is used to shape the frame for a drum. Then holes are burnt in the circular frame and then the drum frame is covered with a green hide and holes are burnt through the hide even with the holes in the frame. The frames are well covered so that the wooden frame will not show. So those are four Medicine Pipe drums. War coups are counted to ochre the drums and they are completed. The four drum beaters are also made; they are covered with rawhide. A hole is burnt at the bud of the drum beater and a thong is strung through the hole. The little finger is stuck into the loop so you will not drop it. As soon as the Medicine Pipe drummers pick the drums they will not let them go.

The drums are completed and they are put outside to dry. As the sun travels the drums are moved in the same direction. They're dried in the sun. The pipe is completed. The pipe is ochred at its completion; it is not completely ochred. This is called, it is made holy; it is touched with ochre.

The cedar needles are in a utility bag; they are already crushed. Those are used to sprinkle the pipe from the mouth. The pipe is perfumed with the cedar needles and it has a fragrant smell. Then we will have to perfume ourselves when we are going to use the pipe and we will have to perfume our hand; we will use the cedar needle.

A person will chew some of the cedar needles when he is going to dance with the pipe. The cedar needles are already there. He takes some and he chews them. First he purifies his body with them. He spits the cedars on the palm of his hand and rubs his robes with them, twice to each foot; that is four times. Then the person could dance.

When everything is set, now the newly constructed pipe is constructed. They have names -- the Long Time Pipe, the Opposite Pipe, and the Cree Pipe. Some were brought here; they are not constructed here. They are all different. The one that was constructed here, the person that had the vision was giving the instructions. When the pipe was completed, berry soups were prepared immediately. There are four berry soups and some tobacco. The person that had the vision had already collected what he needed for the pipe. Now the former Medicine Pipe owners are invited and the Medicine Pipe owners were also invited. The one that had the vision is now going to tell about his vision of the pipe. The former Medicine Pipe owners arrived. He selected the drummers. The selected drummers are called KOYAIH (Mouthy). They easily know songs and they are good singers so those are KOYAIH; it means they have good voices.

It is also hard. The singers, everybody will sing. The people will not all sing good. The good singers will be amongst the
people and those are KOYAIH (Mouthy). There are a lot of people that don't sing a song accurately. Some don't put the words in a song accurately. We will say the way an English song is worded, the singer will put the words down real good. It is the same with the Indian. A real good singer will put the words in a song real good. So that is why the singers are selected.

The Mouthies will be seat and sing the songs that the participants received in a transferal. A person that is going to dance with the pipe, a rattle or the whistle, or he is going to dance with the owl, he will say, "I will dance with that." He will sing the song of the item, and he will say, "I will dance to this song." The singer will catch the song and they (drummers) will sing the song that the person is going to dance to and the song is sung and the person will dance to that song.

The Medicine Pipe is completed and people are invited to the Medicine Pipe ceremony. The person that had the vision sat at the back. The reason why he sat there, it's because he constructed the Medicine Pipe. He will perform with the pipe to show that the Medicine Pipe is holy. He will do a magical performance to show that the pipe he made has supernatural powers. If a person does not perform with the Medicine Pipe that he constructed, everybody will know that the Medicine Pipe is a fake.

What kind of a sacred bundle that a person constructed today, it is not right if he just gives it away. First he will have to perform with it and the sacred bundle will be transferred. There is a man, his name is Moon Crescent; his other name is Wolf Shirt. He dances with Medicine Pipes. He puts them on his head and when he really dances he lets them go and the pipes will not fall off from his (Wolf Shirt's) head. That is how we perform with Medicine Pipes.

Now when we get through performing with a new constructed pipe and after it is blessed, then it is wrapped and it will be put away. A person will admire the pipe. He knows that a magical performance was performed with it. He will say, "I will take that pipe because a magical performance was performed with it and I will live long by it."

Medicine Pipes are not just purchased for show off. People obtain them to live long by them. The ones that are going to sing, the ceremonialis of the pipe will also have a way to bless a person, and the man's children that owns the pipe will grow up healthy. So that is where I will close my story.

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