

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: GEORGE FIRST RIDER  
YELLOW BUFFALO TIPI DESIGN/  
BLACK BUFFALO TIPI DESIGN  
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: BLOOD RESERVE  
CARDSTON, ALBERTA  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BLOOD RESERVE  
CARDSTON, ALBERTA  
TRIBE/NATION: BLOOD  
LANGUAGE: BLACKFOOT  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: NOVEMBER 12, 1968  
INTERVIEWER: J.C. HELLSON  
INTERPRETER: DAVE MELTING TALLOW  
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD  
SOURCE: PROVINCIAL MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES  
OF ALBERTA  
TAPE NUMBER: IH-AA.058  
DISK: TRANSCRIPT DISC 52  
PAGES: 6  
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:

- Tells how the Blood got tipis.  
George First Rider: Okay, we are talking about old times. We are talking about the legend. Now these two people, they are friends. There is Considered Holy. Some people that tell stories about this is also not put accurate. Some people call him Weasel Heart. It's not Weasel Heart. Those are the ones that are not heard accurately. If a person is going to listen to a talk, if he concentrates on it, if he listens good to it, he'll know what it is. People that are going to listen to any story, it is really true that they should concentrate on my talk. They will know what it is. These are the two people that are friends and Considered Holy -- some people don't know the name Considered Holy. Someday in the future I'll

illustrate all these kind of words. The ones that are going to listen, you will know the meaning of them. They are not hard. If we just listen good we'll know them. There they are. They really had supernatural powers. They love each other; they walk around together. They are not mentioned in war stories. A story is told about their supernatural powers. And now the story that I am going to tell, I am going to tell a story about two tipis. This is the Black Buffalo Tipi and this is Yellow Buffalo Tipi. The story, White Headed Chief, a Blackfoot Indian, he was telling me the story and I will illustrate that. The other man, this Sun Chief (Eagle Plume), told the same story. The other men, he is a south Peigan Indian, he also told the same story. These three people are all from different tribes -- a Blackfoot Indian, a Blood Indian, and a Peigan Indian. They all told the story the same way. I believe that it is like that. If there is someone that heard about it real good than me I will not argue about it. He might tell the truth or he might tell it incorrect. But me, I believed the three people; they told the story the same way.

They said it was in the spring when the long time rain came and the rivers flooded. It is said flowed across is up north. There is a cut bank and the river flowed straight. It was a flood and the river was dirty. The people will say the river is got driftwood; the old men will say it flooded wide. They were lying on the cut bank. They were looking down at the river. While he was lying there he told his friend, Considered Holy, "My friend, there is a lodge." The lodge was where it was deepest, where there was drift, where the river was dirty. "The crotch almost shows."

His friend, Considered Holy, told him, "My friend, me too I see a lodge over there." It was the same, the crotch was almost showing. The lodges were a little apart. Considered Holy's friend told him, "My friend, I will go into that lodge. I'll go up river and I'll swim down and when I get to the spot where the lodge is and say, 'It's there,' and I'll go into the lodge." Considered Holy's friend didn't go into the lodge that he saw. Considered Holy showed him where the lodge was that he saw.

The men went up the river and he swam down. He was not seeing where the lodge was. His friend, Considered Holy, saw it and he was the one that was seeing it.

So he swam and Considered Holy told him, "It's right there," and he dived and he entered the tipi. Considered Holy went up the river and he plunged in and swam away and he dived where he thought the lodge was that his friend saw and he entered the tipi. That's how these three people told the story. Considered Holy didn't go into the lodge that he saw; they exchanged in entering the lodges that they saw. That's how the story was told. So they went inside. The man told Considered Holy's friend, "I am surprised that you, I have nothing to give you. I am glad that you came in. I have no supernatural powers to give you. I give you this lodge; that is the Black Buffalo Designed Tipi."

The other one, the man told Considered Holy, "I am glad that you came in. What shall I do with you? What can I do to you?" Considered Holy told him, "I am in for warfare." The man told him, "It's not in my life. This is my tipi. I give it to you, the Yellow Buffalo Designed Tipi." So they both got tipis. These are the Yellow Designed Tipi and the Black Buffalo Designed Tipi. Today they are in Montana, U.S.A. I didn't see them there any more. Maybe they are given back to here. That's where I last saw them, in Montana. The owner of the tipi told Considered Holy, "I have a child here. It is very poor." The man had a son. "He has no clothes. Please give my child some clothes." The other one, the man that he visited told him the same. As he had given him his tipi, the man said, "I am poor. Here is my child. He has no clothes so please give him even an old pair of moccasins and even old clothes, so please give him those. I gave you my tipi."

One thing, they didn't say who got ashore first. It was just said, when they met at the cutbank, when they met at the cutbank Considered Holy's friend said to him, "My friend, I got a tipi. The tipi I got is Buffalo Designed, Black Buffalo Designed." Considered Holy told him, "My friend, I got tipi too. The tipi I got is Buffalo Designed, Yellow Buffalo Designed." Considered Holy's friend didn't go into the lodge that he saw. He went into the lodge that Considered Holy saw and his friend, Considered Holy, went into the lodge that he saw and they were exchanged to them. The one that saw the lodge with the Black Buffalo design was given to his friend and the Yellow Buffalo Designed Tipi that his friend saw was given to him. So they each had a tipi.

Time went by and then the tipis were designed. They are water people lodges and the buffalo is on the Black Buffalo Designed Tipi. It's the same buffalo, and the Yellow Buffalo Designed Tipi. And now when they were transferred, when they

transferred them, themselves, the one that was transferred first, I (First Rider) heard that the Black Buffalo Designed Tipi was transferred first. Both of them sat there, Considered Holy and his friend, when they transferred it. That is how they told the story. His forehead was painted with real paint his chin was painted with the same real paint and the back of their hands were ochred. Their bodies were not ochred; the recipients had clothes on. The women were painted the same way.

When the Yellow Buffalo Designed Tipi was also transferred, the recipient was painted on the forehead with yellow ochre and on the chin and his hands were painted with yellow ochre. The same with the woman. Her forehead was painted with yellow ochre and on her skin and her hands were also yellow ochred. That's how they were transferred. When the Black Buffalo Designed Tipi was transferred he went and borrowed rattlers from the Beaver Bundle owner. He took four rattles and he took the hide drum too. They burned sweetgrass for incense.

The altar of the Buffalo Designed Tipi was not scraped; it was made out of white earth. A ridge was made on the altar with a dung on it. The door of the Buffalo Designed Tipi was facing east and the back was to the west. The dung was put on the south side of the altar. It wasn't on the corner; it was a little to the centre. There is a pipe. It's not a small pipe, it's just a pipe. It was laid against the dung. The mouth of the pipe bowl was to the wall. It was filled; it was put there. The south side of the altar as it is facing to the door, on the south side, this thing is usual. The south side is daylight and the north side is darkness.

The south side of the altar was yellow ochred and the north side was ochred with real paint. It wasn't so bright. The yellow ochre was just spilled on it and the small pipe was there. Incense was not burned on it. A hole was made at the east corner of the altar. The incense tong is usually in the right-hand side. The forked side was towards to the centre, so the incense tong was put there and there is another stick; it is a lighter stick.

Okay, the man was not painted on his body. How can he be painted? Buffaloes are hairy. His face was just painted as I have told you before. Ochre was down to his eyes and ochre was on his mouth and his hands were painted with ochre. Okay, the rattles were four. They are the rattles of the beaver men. There were a lot of participants that are going to help in singing. The rattlers are usually four men. The songs are Beaver Bundle songs. The outer wrapping of a Beaver Bundle is a buffalo hide. They sang to it as the tipi was Buffalo

Designed. Two songs of the four songs were sung in the Black Buffalo Designed Tipi and two songs were sung in the Yellow Buffalo Designed Tipi. Those are the major songs; the rattles were swung at those.

The participants all donate a song in a tipi transferal. They donate some of the tipi design songs. There are only two songs to the Buffalo Designed Tipis. The participants didn't give a song to the owner of the tipi, the recipients. The one that transferred a tipi, Considered Holy and his friend, the ones that the tipi is going to be transferred to are also friends. I don't know the names of those two. Their names were mentioned to me but I lost the names. They were also loving friends, that is why they took the tipi.

They performed very hard. It was said that the tree was not there. The men almost rubbed their cheeks on something. Elks rub their cheeks on trees and the buffaloes also rub their cheek on trees. That's how they sang to the recipients, only they sang two songs. These two songs are sung four times. The other was sung four times so there are eight songs. Buffalo tongue soup was made for the Buffalo Designed Tipi. War coups were counted before the tongue was cut.

When it was transferred to him, Considered Holy's friend took

the pipe. The one that sat by the doorway, the orderly, jumped up and took the lighter stick and he held it in the fire and when it burned he went to him and lit the pipe for him. The man's robe was over his head and the pipe was just sticking out. The pipe that a prayer was said with is different. He covered his head with the pipe and the orderly lit the pipe. The pipe burned after four puffs. The orderly laid the stick down and when he sat down the man blew a puff of smoke to the east, he blew a puff of smoke to the south, then to the west, and to the north.

He blew two puffs of smoke on one of his hands and two on the other hand. Then he gave the pipe to the one that sat beside him and on to the others. It was not handed to the other side across the doorway. It was handed to the shaman then it was given to the recipient. He blew a puff of smoke on his hand and he touched himself with it and it was handed on to the men and when it got to the doorway, it was handed back to the shaman. It had burned out. The pipe went with the transferal.

The same thing was done to the Yellow Buffalo Designed Tipi. The altar was done the same. The south side is yellow ochre, the one on the north side is real paint. The dung that was put there was yellow ochred and the pipe was laid against it. The

mouth of the bowl was to the wall and the stem pointed to the north. A hole was made on the same side. The sweetgrass, the lighter stick, and the incense tong were placed in the same way.

The Yellow Buffalo Design Tipi was transferred the same way as the Black Buffalo Designed Tipi was transferred. They were transferred at the same time. The rattles were just taken out to the other tipi, the men went to the other tipi and a tipi was transferred to the recipient's friend. The tipi kept on being transferred from then on. Then they separated. I heard that the Black Buffalo Designed Tipi was transferred to a Peigan Indian.

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