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 importance of elk.

George First Rider: Okay, I have a mystery story to tell. I (First Rider) said before that I will not tell a story that I don't know. I will give an information on what I know. I am questioned about the elk, what they are and why they are so good.

The people of the past, those are the people that are -- let us say they are very soft. They will die with what we are not supposed to die of. We will say they are the people that are barely alive. The man that sang, that worded his song as
follows, "My name is Barely Alive." The people of the past that are barely alive, I (First Rider) heard that they die if anything gets stuck between their teeth. That is why there are a lot of bones at the bottom of a buffalo jump because they don't chew the meat off the bone, as their quartzite knives are not very good and they have stone hammers.

The people imitate the birds. The reason why they imitate them, it's because the birds fly and they are clean. That is why they dress themselves like birds and that is why they dance with birds and that is why they adore the birds. And now this kind of life is here and now we are just imitating the life of the past. People take this imitating through the completion of their opponents and vows.

When the elk is getting up, before it gets up, he'll look around in all directions and it will get up very slowly. He will not jump up in a hurry. A bird with white feathers, the elk got its name by this white-patterned bird. The elk was called White Getting Up. When the elk was cut, the color of the meat was a yellowish-white colored meat. The name of White Getting Up gradually started to change. Finally it was Ponoka (Elk). An elk will not jump up, it will get up slowly. A lazy woman and a proud person -- it's in both ways -- a lazy woman, we will say she gets up like an elk. A sponsorer of a Holy Lodge will not jump up lively. She will get up very slowly and we will also say she gets up like an elk. They'll say, "Yes, she sponsors Holy Lodges. It's good that she gets up like an elk."

We will say an elk's hair looks like butter. The elk is not white and it's not yellow. It's got a yellowish color and it is handsome with its teeth. The elk's canine teeth are not rough. They are nice and smooth. They're just like as if they're sucked into shape.

The pitch on a pine tree will be nicely formed. We will say it looks like an elk's nipple. The elk's nipples are not black; they are white yellowish color. An elk's tail will be lifted and its rectum is yellowish-white and there is not a speck of manure on the rectum of an elk. It's very clean. They're not like the domestic animals. A cow will have manure all over her, even on its stomach and on its legs and on the hoofs too.

A horse that has a brown-yellowish color, we'll call it an elk haired horse. If a horse is not so handsome but if it has the color of an elk the owner will have the horse for his best horse. A woman will have a sinew, an elk sinew. She will put it away; she will use it only when she is going to sew a special garment.

Now a woman makes a dress. Women will have skin dresses; men will have skin wearing apparel. A local person will not have elk clothing. A person will kill, give the hide to a chief. The chief will pay for the hide that was given to him for a robe. He will pay ammunition or bow and arrows or a rifle or
he may pay a horse for the elk hide. The chief will think of a woman that sponsors a Holy Lodge. She will tan the hide to make a dress for the Holy Lodge sponserers to wear, or she will make an elk robe. The elk robe is not a hairy robe. The hair is scraped off and it is tanned soft and yellow-ochred. There is no beadwork on it. There was no beadwork in the earlier times. The robe is the Holy Lodge sponsorer's robe. The women that cut the tongues don't wear elk clothing. The only time they'll wear elk clothing is when they sponsor a Holy Lodge.

If a woman wants to have a pair of elk hide moccasins, a quiet woman and who doesn't act crazy will have elk clothings. That is why we have the name Elk Robe; Elk Robe is a name from the elk. The elks are admired because of their graceful legs. As I said before, even if a horse is not so handsome but as long as it is elk-colored, it's a handsome horse because it has an elk fur.

Now a woman will notice another woman that got mad. The first woman is an untidy and filthy woman too. She will gossip about the other woman, that she is a bad woman. The woman will always dress up attractively. The first woman will say, "Why does she dress up so nicely and attractive? She hasn't got a vagina like an elk." Even women will ridicule each other about the vagina of an elk. They say, "She hasn't got a vagina like an elk." They admire the elk's vagina.

Okay, the men are going to have a feast; they're all men. A man will kill an elk and he will take the elk's rectum. He'll tell his wife, "There is an elk rectum that I took. Fix it good and cook it and I will feast with the wealthy ones." The wealthy ones means, we will say for now, the rich people. So he'll feast with the rich people.

The woman will start preparing the elk rectum. She will stuff it with saskatoons. There will be an even amount of fat and berries. They will not be punctured; they will be cooked with great caution. They are cooked like this. The top ashes in an open fireplace will be scraped away; the charcoals are underneath. The prepared rectum will be placed on the charcoals and then it will be covered with the top ashes and a fire is built on top.

The wealthy people are invited; those are the chiefs. So they all came into the tipi. When the men all came in, that's before her husband offered a smoke, the woman brushed away the hot ashes and took the elk rectum out. Then she brushes off the ashes and after she brushed off the ashes she wiped the rectum. Then she cut off the end and fed it to the dog, then she cut some of it. There are no plates in those times. She got up with the slice that she cut and gave it to the first man. She went back and cut another slice and she gave it to the next man and so on like until she fed all the men. Then she gave the rest to her husband. She did not eat any of it. She gave a big piece to her husband because she knew that he will share with her.
After the woman served the guests the man explained how he killed the elk and how lucky he was to kill the elk. He told the whole story how he sighted the elk, he killed it and there it is. He said, "I gave it to so and so." He also invited the man that he gave the hide to. After the man told the story, he said, "Now we are going to eat." So they ate the elk rectum.

A man that is invited, the wife that he sits with will tell him, "Bring me something to eat," and he will eat a little of the elk rectum and he takes some what food he saved for his wife. Food is not supposed to be taken out from a Medicine Pipe tipi. Somebody will have to count war coups before the food can be taken out. Not all homes are like that; war coups don't have to be counted to take food out. The feast with the elk rectum is just like a Holy Communion. That is why war coups have to be counted to take some food home for your wife or anyone in your family.

A man will tell the women, "Go out and call my wife." The woman goes out and calls the wife. The wife will come to the tipi. Her husband will tell her, "Here, take this. That is your share." It is different in a special gathering; the guests will go home with what food they want to take out. In this kind of invitation a person will save some food for his child. He will tell the woman, "Call my child. Tell him/her to come and take these and to eat them." When the child comes in the father will say, "Son, sit there and eat this food that I saved for you." The child will sit down and he/she will eat the food that his/her father shared with him. So the elk rectum is eaten.

The elk rectums are highly recommended. Nobody can eat a whole elk rectum. When an elk rectum is to be eaten, the greasy taste and the sweet taste will be of the same amount. We get filled up fast with an elk rectum; that is why they are highly recommended. The elk rectum is really a chief meal.

A person that has an elk clothing, his elk clothes are really admired. A person will think, "I wish that I could live that kind of life so I can have my wife to wear elk clothes." That is why the people of the past are very jealous of their wives. An old woman is very jealous of her granddaughter. She will not let her fool around and if she catches her granddaughter she will lay on her, smothering her.

A woman will always tell her granddaughter not to do this and that but still the girl will fool around. So the woman takes her awl. These awls are against the phalanges of an animal. They are called awls. They're bones. They are dried hard. They're put in water and then they are dried and when they're dry they turn white; so those are bone awls. A woman, an old woman, if her granddaughter doesn't listen to her she gets a hold of her and she will pierce her ears and she will stick a short twig into the holes. If the old woman pierces a boy's ears she will start piercing each ear from the lobe to the top of the ears. How many holes she is going to pierce, we don't
Some old women are very mean. If an old woman's grandchild doesn't listen to her, she will take her knife. In those times they had no small knives. She takes her big knife and she cut the ear from the top down to the bottom. That is called trimming the ears. And then a rawhide is used to cover the ears. The rawhide will not be taken off. The mothers can't do anything; they'll just put grease on the ears.

This torture is to enliven the child and it is a blessing. The children that are treated in that manner, their ears stink and the mothers will use cedar on the children to deodorize the ears. A man will tell his wife, "Tell the old lady to pierce my child's ears." The child's ears will be pierced and a strip of elk rawhide is used to tie the hair so it will not touch the ears and they use elk food (Puccoon) for perfume. The smell of the elk food is not so fragrant. We don't know if the elks eat the puccoons; they are called elk food just by how they grow. Anyways the elks eat the puccoons. The elk lives with all the elegance of life and plantation.

A good horse, nowadays we are having the race horses as our best horse. Horses are naturally used by the people of the past, but they have certain horses that they brag about. When they see a horse they will look it over. If the horse has long hoofs they will say, "Ah! it's a handsome horse. It's got eyes like an elk."

An elk will be sitting and it will be stirred by something. The elk will get up slowly and it will see a man approaching. It will not run. Instead it will relieve itself of its water and the man will be walking towards her but she will stand there relieving herself. The man will be getting closer to her then she will turn and run. An elk will not gallop. I (First Rider) saw an elk running. It did not gallop; it was just trotting real fast. Okay, a person will be asked -- a lazy person, we will say he passes water like an elk. A woman will be with her husband and they will be in a place where the woman will not be able to lower herself to pass water or there may be snow on the ground and there is no other place where she can go. So she will tell her husband, "Wait. I will pass water like an elk." So she lifts her dress up and she will pass water standing up. The elks are admired the way they pass water.

Men make quirts out of the antlers of an elk. People will say, "That man is a handsome living person. He is even handsome with his whip. It's an antler. The roots of an elk's canine teeth don't grow into the jawbone; they grow on top of the lower jawbone. Not everybody will decorate his wearing apparels with elk teeth. Only a really favorite child's clothing will have elk teeth and also a very rich woman will have elk teeth on her dress. Today our precious properties are the elk teeth. The elk's antlers, the single bone antlers, are scarce. A person will have to live a splendid life, then he'll
have a single bone antler quirt. Now, how can we use a blacktail deer's antler quirt? A hide scraper is made out of the antlers of an elk. The shank of an elk is used to make a hide flesher. The bone is spliced at one end and into a raw teeth like at the end. So the antlers, the teeth, and the shank bones of an elk are used. Elk ribs are tied together and the kids use them for sliding in wintertime. The elk ribs are long and smooth. The elk ribs are also used for sliding in the summer down a grassy slope. The sleighs are used for sliding in the wintertime and also in the summertime. The sleighs wear out fast in the summer.

The elk's leg will be cut off at the knee; the hoofs will be taken out. The hoofs are hard to knock out. After the hoofs are taken out the hide is stuffed. They are stuffed with cedar. The cedars are crushed and they are mixed with meadow rue so that they will not stink when they are dry. They are worked over a little. A woman will sew a strip of rawhide on the rim; they are called berry bags. A woman don't just use the bag for berries, she also uses the bag to put her sewing outfit in. The elk heads are skinned and they sew them together with the noses together at one end and they sew a rawhide strip around the rim and a long lace of buckskin is threaded through them. It is tightened and it's a bag. Dried meat and fat are stored in the bag. The dried meat are mixed with wild mint. The contents of the bag are tasty.

The elk is used in a lot of ways. They are really admired, especially the way their vaginas are shaped. So I (First Rider) will close my story about the elk. That's all.

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