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THUNDER  
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CARDSTON, ALBERTA  
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CARDSTON, ALBERTA  
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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:

- Story about the origin of thunder.  
George First Rider: Okay, I got a story to tell. These are the questions. The relative thing is already told, that's the Medicine Pipe way and now I am going to tell just the story. Now I am questioned about the thunder. There are also a lot of stories that are told about the thunder.

The story that was told about the thunder, in the past life didn't exist. A man was walking along. The people of the past are the people that had wolf skin clothing. They are not the wolf clothing that you get something to eat with; they are ordinary wolf clothing. They are now just like a warm clothing. How can a person wear them when it's warm weather? I'll illustrate it this way. Will a person wear a fur clothing

on a hot day? That is why they go half-naked.

The man was walking along. It was a very hot day and he saw a cloud. He saw it. Suddenly he heard a noise. The lightning flashes and it makes a sound. He didn't know what the sound was. He thought, "What is this thing that is roaring?" That's what it is. Us, we take this way, this thing is making a sound, but the man thought that it is roaring. The rain got up to him. The lightning flashes and it makes a sound. He didn't know yet what it was. He was all soaked. He sat there facing away from the rain. The rain passed away from him and then the wind blew. He was very cold as he was half-naked. He walked along and suddenly he saw a cloud again. When he saw it he went home. That is the people that have skin tipis. Rains never come to them before. He told his wife, "The way that cloud is formed there is something in it that roars, so fix up the tipi," and the rain came and it rained again. And it occurred a person died from it. He was lying there when he was examined. A streak of burned line started from his shoulder down to the little finger. He was also half-naked. He was seen that he was dead.

Some hunters were all walking together and they saw a cloud. Right away they saw lightning in it. They called it a cinder. As they looked at each other where they were, and they all fled. They looked at each other; their hairs stood on ends. They were fleeing. They were looking for a crevice for shelter so that they'll be out of the rain. The one that ran at the end suddenly fell just like as if he was thrown into a somersault. When they looked at him he was moving; the burns showed on him. They said, "The one that roars is hunting us. Let him lie there -- us, we'll flee." So they left him behind and they found a place to sit in.

Time went on. They saw another cloud. As they looked at each other their hairs were not messed up. The rain was on one side but a little rain hit them. Time went on again and they saw

another rain cloud and as they looked at each other their hair stood on end and they said, "Now the one that roars is going to be near us again." The lightning was flashing. They knew that it is going to be near them again so they didn't move any more. They just sat down and covered their heads with their robes so that they will not get wet. They knew then that if we sweat it will eat us. That's what it means. The rain just blew by.

Okay, the man went away to sleep in the wilderness. He saw a bird flying, a great big bird. Its wings were long. When it flew close to him the bird looked at him. As it opened its eyes a lightning flashed straight out and when it looked the other way the lightning flashed sideways and then it roared. Its roar sounded like the roar of the thunder. He saw it sitting by him. It had a drum. The drum was yellow ochred with a purple paint in the centre. The drum was just all yellow ochred and it's painted in the centre in a circle with purple paint and four zig-zag lines are painted with purple ochre and red ochre. It is called the Thunder Drum.

Okay, when this occurred, when he saw him, the thunder told him, "What is the purpose of your journey?" The man told him, "Yes. For you to have pity on me." The thunder told him, "It's no problem. I will smoke with you." Okay, where did the pipe come from? The Thunder told him, "This pipe of mine is yours. Now you will offer a smoke in it four times. Whatever you are going to do you will do four times. And I don't borrow and I don't loan away. Don't loan away anything and don't borrow. If you borrow something you will not return it and if you loan away something you will not take it back. Okay, I am going to get something to eat. I am going to get something to eat the way the earth shows. I will not get anything to eat for a while, and now I am going to get something to eat. I am going around to get something to eat; I am going out to hunt." He put some tobacco in his pipe and he lit it. He just looked, looked at the pipe and the pipe was lit by the lightning from his eyes and he smoked. He puffed and the smoke made his eyes water. The thunder told the man, "This smoke that I exhaled will blind all the animals that roam and my tears will wet the people. Even the liveliest one will not dodge. This is what I get my food with." So he took his drum. It was yellow ochred paint with purple paint in the centre with red ochre around the rim of the circle. Four lines were drawn spreading out. They are all drawn in a zig-zag way. Half was drawn with red ochre; that's his right. Without any occurrence ahead he tried to hit his drum four times. First he looked and lightning flashed and he hit the drum. He hit the drum in a fluttering manner and a

person was lying there, He killed by that. The thunder told the man, "Now, my son, here is my pipe; I make rain with it. Here is my drum; I beat it. Now I give you my pipe. You will use four drums. All I (thunder) use are all four." That's a dream, how the thunder existed. That's what it is. It's a huge bird. The thunder gave him his drums and his pipe. The thunder told him, "You will not loan anything away and you will not borrow." When he slept the thunder gave him his tipi. I don't see that tipi any more. It is called the Thunder Lodge. It's the thunder's tipi.

The thunder told the man, "There is no bird in the heaven and a bird below that is more powerful than me, the way I am outstanding." The man that dreamed about the thunder told a story of what happened and he made the pipe. He made the pipe; he made the drum. And now when he got through making it as the thunder told him, "I'll use all four." At that point the man made them all in fours. The drums were four and he made four pipes as the thunder had given him all four items. The ones that were given the pipe, some invented pipes and the pipes disappeared and now they are just being made recently. They are made after another and that is how the pipes increased. The Medicine Pipes, they were in different ways. The people of the past feared the pipes because the one that handed them down was fierce. The people have nothing to pray to but they pray to the thunder. The people feared it. The thunder is invisible. How can we have revenge on the thunder? It is known that nothing can overpower the thunder. Okay, when he

handed down something here on earth he made fun of all the birds and animals. He didn't know that the bird which is small will overpower him.

Now defeat of the thunder. People that illustrate didn't illustrate accurately. How Crow's Lodge got its name. Indians gave the name Crow's Lodge; it's not a nest. Today the white man called it Crow's Nest. Indians gave the name Crow's Lodge. A crow lived on that mountain. The thunder took the crow's wife by force. The crow tried to get his wife back in every way. He found out that the thunder had taken his wife. The crow went for his wife but lightning flashed from the thunder. The thunder was staying in the crow's lodge. The crow can't approach him. The thunder was staying in the crow's lodge instead of the crow and that was the crow's lodge. The thunder stayed there instead. The people were killed by the thunder. The thunder looks for something to eat. He was a huge bird. He electrocuted the people and he has eaten them. He is that powerful, he'll tear up even great big trees.

So he took a wife by force at the crow's lodge. It is not called Crow's Nest it is called Crow's Lodge. The crow went

away from his lodge when he couldn't get his wife back. The thunder was just boiling on the mountain. Various kinds of animals were telling the thunder to give back the woman, the crow woman. The crow told his messenger, all the fierce animals. The crow hired a bear, he hired an owl, he hired a loon, but the thunder refused. The crow flew west; he flew north. He was looking for help, someone to go and get his wife. He saw someone; his clothes were all fur. It was a white owl. He told the owl, "I am trying to get my wife back but I cannot get her back so please go and get my wife back for me."

The owl told the crow, "Tell him to let your wife go. If he doesn't have pity on you I will not have pity on him either." The crow flew back and told the thunder, "The white owl told me this to let my old lady go. If you don't have pity on me he will also have no pity on you." As the thunder looked up lightning flashed and the crow was almost electrocuted. The owl knew then. He told the crow, "Crow, fly away. Get close to the sun and stay around there for a while. You will get your wife back today." So the crow flew away. He flew where the sun was near.

The man sang and he started to walk. As the crow looked, the north side blew gray. The owl was approaching. He told the man, "I will take your wife out. You will get your wife back." The thunder said, "No one is going to make a fool out of me. No one is going to take this woman out." The thunder was staying in the crow's lodge on the mountain. The man started. As the man was approaching the crow's lodge it started to get colder. Nothing couldn't be seen when he got to the crow's lodge. A blizzard was blowing; it was very cold. He had a wolf toque.

There was no snow on the mountain before and where did the blizzard come from? And the thunder would roar and the snow would thaw away a little around the lodge. A whirlwind blew. The thunder was almost freezing. He couldn't fly away it was that cold. He told the man, "There is the woman. Take her before I freeze." The owl told him, "You go away from the woman yourself." The thunder pleaded, "Please let it calm down a little," and it calmed down, as there was no snow on it before. Nothing happened after that but the wind was just blowing and the thunder managed to fly and he flew away.

And now when winter is coming all the birds will migrate and the thunder will go away when winter is coming. When it is summer what he handed down will not be used during the winter. The Medicine Pipes were not used during the winter. We'll wait for it. We'll be awaiting in the spring and the food for the feast will be ready. We'll be waiting and when the thunder roars the pipe will be opened and we'll have a Medicine Pipe dance. So that's what the thunder is.

The thunder was overpowered by this white owl that makes winter. That is why that mountain was called Crow's Lodge and now some are saying the Crow Indians are called Crow People in English and a Crow Indian was staying there, that is why it is called Crow's Lodge. That is not true. Low Horn told me this story. Sun Chief, Wolf Chief and Stripped Calf, these people conduct the Medicine Pipes. They are the ones that told the story that I told. The thunder was a foll(?) at that time.

Later on the thunder was seen in a dream that he was on horseback. He was riding a black horse galloping along. The horse would stumble on something; whatever he stumbles on would flash and his horse roared. That is why the Medicine Pipe drums were made. The first drum was one. He told the first one that he had pity on, "I'll use four items." That is why it existed. The Medicine Pipe owner hasn't got just one wife and it is still like that today. The Medicine Pipe owner will not just go in partnership with only his wife. The secondary Medicine Pipe woman is the tripod woman. There are always two women and they have children and their children wear the topknots. That's what the story is about.

Okay, the man himself when he transferred it away, the recipients were given drums and today just the Medicine Pipe will be transferred to a person and the drums will be transferred to him after. And the incense tongs will be transferred to him and the ochring of a robe will be transferred to him after. There are a lot of things that are newly transferred in addition. The first item that was handed down was a few and now it was said the thunder handed it down.

And now in the past when there is a Medicine Pipe dance the thunder is the only one that is important in the ceremony. That's why the drums are beaten in a fluttering way. That's why they start singing in a loud voice and at the end of their singing they start singing again in a loud voice and they'll stop singing. That is the kind of gift. It was said that the

thunder is a bird. He burns the people with lightning. The people of the past, I'll say what they could eat -- a bird, maybe a buffalo or a cow. We don't eat an animal that is killed by lightning.

It is also strange, scaffolds are not built for people that are killed by lightning. Why it is like that? A scaffold will not be built for a person who is killed by lightning. That's what it is and now we ask questions about these and myself I just illustrate how they came to be that way. These old men that tell stories, this Stripped Calf, he is the one that has a big matted hair in front and when he unwinds it he lets it hang down on his back and it touches the ground and I really admire

him the way he conducts Medicine Pipe dances. This is the Stripped Calf. He named his old lady. He gave her the name Lone Stretching. And his granddaughter who is dead her name is Westward Stretching. He carried on strongly with the Medicine Pipes.

When the crow's wife was taken by the thunder by force the white owl came to him and with the cold weather the thunder was flashing and roaring but he couldn't do anything to the severe cold weather. He gave back the woman and he fled and today every fall the thunder flees and he starts roaring again in the summer. The thunder is so power every town and city are lighted by his electricity -- that's the lightning. And now the Medicine Pipe owners don't call on him for help. The owl was added; the bear was added; the loon was added. These are all used; they are all new made items to the pipe. That's what the thunder is. I don't have to tell all the story about the Medicine Pipes. The thunder handed it down. So that's how he was overpowered by the smallest bird, the crow. The cold weather came and the thunder lost that so that's how the Medicine Pipes existed and we don't call on the thunder for help any more. We are just having wars with him. And I close my story at this point. It's completed. That's all.

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