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:

- Description of hunting techniques.
- Role of horses in Indian life.
- Brief account of traditional foods.

George First Rider: Okay, the same subject. We'll tell a story about hunting. We have finished telling a story about being on foot. Okay, when the first people had horses, horses were available. It occurred the ones that captured horses for themselves, the ones that found the horses, what they found were all wild horses. There are some of the various people that had horses, they are on horseback. Themselves, they didn't know that. They got horses and they found the same kind (horses).

They did the same. They surround them and they rope them. They didn't rope them on the neck. Some do rope them on the
neck. Others will just throw a loop in front of a horse. Even if they rope one leg they'll all pull on the rope and they hold the horse back. Some of the horses that they wrestle with, that's the ones that they are going to break in. So they succeeded to catch them and they started to catch them. The horses that were already ridden, they rode with them. When they started to break them in, they break a horse with dirt. Some use wood. They'll take a short rawhide rope and they'd tie a stump at each end of the rawhide rope and they throw them on the horse. The stumps are doing the breaking in of the horse.

Finally there were certain people that break horses. I saw this too. A horse is led into a muddy place; that is where they are broken. They cannot buck in the mud; that is how they break their horses. Then they train them on calves. Finally the hunting by horse came. They found out, they realized, that the bull buffaloes are not edible. They say that they taste bitter, they are not good. And today we don't eat domestic bulls. They say that they eat the female buffaloes.

There are people that are good hunters. They know the fat buffaloes and the good buffaloes. They say that fat buffaloes have short tails. They have big rumps, they have fat tails. That's how they recognize them. When they are on a buffalo chase they pick out the fat buffalo and they kill it. The horses of the real hunter, in the summer when the grass is dry the hoofs of the horses get smooth and slippery. They pick up some dungs and they'd put them in one place and they soak them. They soak real good and the horse is made to stand on them. When the horse stands on them its hoofs start to grow. The horse cannot walk anywhere else. They are not fed. It is made to stand there during the day. Its hoofs are made to grow. It's going to be used on a buffalo chase during the winter. We depend on that horse. He is known that he is a real aggressive horse. He never stumbles in the snow. It won't slow down on the case. It will run through a rugged place and he is long-winded.

These kind of horses are all favorites. These kind of horses are scarce. Other horses are short winded. Some horses get allergic to buffaloes when they are used for buffalo chase too long. Some will stop; they will not want to run any more. Some will run from a buffalo and some will slow down; they will not want to catch up with the buffalo. So that is how good horses are found. The best horse is going to be used during the winter. His hoofs are made to grow. He is turned loose in the evening. The herd will be rounded up to where the grass is good and to where the grass is still green.

As the horse don't eat during the days he nibbles away real fast. Although the horse didn't eat all day but he started to get fat on what he ate during the night. He didn't have no belly. What he ate was just making him fat. He didn't eat himself to a big fat belly, so he is solid fat and tough. The horse is not made to stand like that when he is known that its hoofs have grown. Where it stands its own droppings are spread
out and he stands on them. Their hoofs grow fast that way. They say the hoofs are greased with kidney fat. That's when the hoofs grow. When they get through growing the horse will have a deep hollow sole. The hoofs are not smooth and slippery. We say the hoofs are through growing.

The horse will not be used in a buffalo chase during the summer. The horse will be idle if the winter is not cold. The horse that is going to be used during the winter is taken to a good place and he grazes there. The finest part of a robe is cut for the hunter and he makes a pair of mittens. They have no separate sections for each finger. They are sewn like a bag with a thong to wear them over the neck. The white man's gloves have separate sections for each finger. The first mittens are sewn like a bag. They are cut square. That is how a person works with them and there's a thong sewn to them to hang on the neck and they are fastened together at the breast. A person will not lose them even if he takes his hands off from them. He'll just take them off but he still got them over his neck. The other style is different. They are just hung around the back of the neck. This style, they are fastened together at the breast. If we take off the mittens we still got them around the neck. That's what it is.

The one that is going to do the hunting made a good pair of mittens. The mittens that he made are soft. And they all have moccasins with fur, buffalo wool. He presses it together. The wool that he pressed together is quite big. They'll strip themselves half naked when they are going on a buffalo chase in the summertimes. Some will wear moccasins; some will not even wear moccasins. They just wear breech cloths and they go on a buffalo chase. Some will take their leggings and their shirts off when they kill a buffalo. They just wear breech cloths. That is called his small robe and there is his robe. That's when they use.

The mittens that he is going to wear for the winter are set. The moccasins that he is going to wear during the winter have very high vamps. The others are different. They are tanned. They are to cover the legs (puttees). The laces are on the inside; they are not on the outside. The person will lace them himself. Those are his leg binders. His mittens and his cap is cut out from the hump of a buffalo hide. They are made like the fur caps. The only thing, the fur of these caps are on the inside. The inside is on the outside; that is how they made them.

Their summer quivers are designed. The fur is still on their winter quivers so that the arrowheads will not break in the winter. Buffalo wool are put at the bottom of the quiver. A wealthy person will look for where the grass is soft. They pick this curly grass. It's not the stiff grass. There are grass that protrude from the rest; they are like gopher tail grass. They are small. They are not the gopher tail grass. They are also small. That kind of grass is small; they pick that. The grass are put in unborn calf skin bags. Berries are
stored in this same skin bag. Kinnikinnik will be put in the same skin bag. The same skin bag is kept for a bag; that is what they are used for.

In the summer the arrows, with black stone arrowheads, will be used in a buffalo chase. If a buffalo is hit in a rib with a black stone arrowhead it will break; they are not hard. The white quartzite arrowheads are used for shooting them between the ribs of a buffalo. A real hunter will run his horse beside a buffalo and he'll watch it. When it stretches out then he'll shoot it behind the elbow. If he shoots it when it doubles up he'll hit a rib. If he shoots it when it stretches out the arrow will go through between the ribs and he'll kill it.

This, I (First Rider), my mother's father's name is Crow Bull. He is short and stout. Myself I think he must be very strong, this grandfather of mine, Crow Bull. He is famous for his powerful shooting. If he shoots at a buffalo, they say, if he shoots from the side, the arrow will go right through the animal and the arrow will stick into the ground on the other side. The late Crow Bull killed two buffaloes with one arrow. He shot at two bull buffaloes. He shot the one closer to him and the arrow went right through and it also hit the other buffalo and the arrow almost went through the second buffalo. The way he hit with the arrow, he shot two buffaloes with an arrow.

That's how they are. Anyone that want to go on a buffalo chase in the summer will go on a buffalo chase. We don't go hungry in the summer. Hunger is hard because all we eat is meat. We change our food on berries. We also eat tender roots, we also eat white roots (Bitter Roots). They don't grow here. The mountain people gives them to use and we boil them. The mountain people also gives us the excrements*. We also eat those. They are scarce; we cannot use them all the time. We dig up the tender roots, double turnips (Jambas) and prairie turnips. These are dried. The turnips are strung with a thong and then they are dried. They are chopped up and boiled. The tender roots are not good when they are dry. We don't always eat them. There are not too many other things to eat.

Now we get our winter supplies during the summer. The intestines are tended to very carefully; they are dried. The thin layers on the inside of stomachs are peeled off and they are dried by the women. The lungs are sliced and dried. They also dry the hoofs and the cords. The hoofs are put in rawhide bags. That's the people's food supplies -- their dried berries and their grind chokecherries, saskatoon berries. They seldom pick bull berries because they have a bitter taste. The white berries are just for eating from the tree, they are not dried, that's the white berries. The wild rose berries are not dried; they are picked through the summer and winter. The diggings, the women go out digging turnips. Those are the native turnips; they are prairie turnips, the double turnips (Jambas).
They are called clay. The women also gather them. There are two kinds of these. The white earth that's used to paint ourselves white, the thing that is used to scrape buckskin suits, that is called my earth. That is earth. It is not called soil. It is said, my earth. Okay, the clay it is called my dried clay. They are soaked in water before they are eaten and they turn back to mud. They are edible and they taste greasy. I ate some too; they had no taste to me. They are just food. So these are their food supplies.

Okay, they get their medicines during the summer when the leaves start to dry up, the wild licorice. Okay, the turnips, the double turnips, all sorts. Sage, big sage, they gather them ahead of time. The sage are their chief medicine, cough. They are also used in steam baths. There are a lot of things that the sage are used for, and they use them in their holy ceremonies, in group smoking ceremonies and the offering.

*Jambas are called excrement in Blackfoot because they look like excrement.*

Sage are in all various ceremonies and at the end they use them as toilet paper. There are man sage; there are women sage. They use those. It's the women that dig herbs. They pick berries. They are the ones that dry the berries. They do the tanning. Hide tipis didn't exist at the start of time, only shelters were used, the shelter. When the people had tipis then they made food containers and the unborn calf skin bags got scarce. There were still some around but the skin bags were invented. The food containers are for hoarding food. The food containers are recent. There it is; it's laced together. It will never be untied but when they are really in hunger then it will be untied and they'll eat some of it.

It occurred that a man will be too glad to have his wife. He'll never take her to a crowd, et cetera. He'll always camp alone and somehow he will pitch his tipi away from where the camps are grouped up. We'll talk about his wife. We'll say, "Her husband laced her up with his supplies." If we don't say that, we'll say, "She is laced up with the supplies. She must be laced up with the supplies." Recently at The Men With Many Wives (Cardston) on the Indian reservation, the mountains are on the west side, a man is close to the mountains. His name is Only Medicine Pipe Owner. He built his house alone out there. Okay, his friends. He got married; he lived there. His wife died; he got married again. His new wife dances. She is a cheerful woman. The woman don't go to the dance any more. She lived up there alone and his friends don't yearn for Lone Medicine Pipe Owner, they yearn for his wife. His wife's name is Stole Ahead. His friends would say, "Stole Ahead Woman is laced in with the supplies at Many Fishes." Around there is a creek which is called Many Fishes. So his friends will say, "Stole Ahead Woman is laced in with the supplies at Many Fishes," because she is not seen where she is. That's what laced in with the supplies means.
The food container that the food are laced in is very hard to untie. The parfleche is not hard, the food that are going to be cooked when the man gives an invitation. The woman knows how they are laid. She doesn't change them from the way she always puts them. When the woman is going to cook, if the men are already sitting there, she will tell her husband, "Give me that and I'll feed the men with the food." Those are given to the woman and they serve them out.

Okay, she cleaned all the intestines. She boils them and she dries them. Okay, they also dry the stomachs. She also puts all the old dried meats in her food container. She also puts in some grind chokecherries. Fat are put in there too and then wild mint are put in there. As I am telling a story about this it made me hungry to have a meal like that again. I might never have a meal like that again, of that excellent food. If we eat some of that food that's in that food container it will take a long time before we get hungry again. They are that good. They are of all various kinds.

The food containers are all put away like that. It is the same. The Medicine Pipe owner and the Beaver Bundle owner, the Beaver Bundle owner had something in all of his skin bags. The bundle is opened and he puts something in them. The Medicine Pipe owner also puts something in the skin bags -- berries, tobacco and fine cut tobacco. The Medicine Pipe owner hoards tobacco. He puts tobacco in the birds, the loon and the owl. In the summer when the thunder roars he just takes them. He gets things ready that he is going to use for his Medicine Pipe dance. The Beaver Bundle owner sings in the cold moon. He sings when the first moon appears. He sings every time there is a new moon and he turns an item around the other way. I (First Rider) thought, "What are these that are turned around the other way?" They are tissues. The items that are turned around the other way are tissues. The bladders are different. The bladders are for putting fat and quills in them; they are stiff. The tissue is different. The covering of a heart is a tissue. That's the one that the Beaver Bundle owners turn the other way round.

They got everything ready that they are going to use for winter. The man also made bow and arrow, okay. Winter came. When winter came, winter was very hard. Okay, it's time to go hunting. Now the horse that was turned loose whose hoofs were made to grow is now brought home. It will be led around so it will excrete because it's going to run. "Okay, okay, we are going to get some meat." The one that is going on a buffalo chase, some of the curly grass that are in the skin bag were taken out and they were rubbed, then they were put into the fur moccasins and he stuck his foot into his fur moccasins with a buffalo wool. He made the vamps real high. He put the vamps over his leggings then he put on the puttees. He used them for garters.
Okay, the buffalo wool. He lined his breech cloth with buffalo wool. His breech cloth had fur on it; the fur went under. It was just like as if he had a diaper on. Okay, his buckskin shirt, they are called bad tipi shirts, he had it on. They are fur coats; he wore that. His cap was cut from the hump of a buffalo hide, then he put on his mittens. There are no fingers on them. He used a soft tanned hide for a scarf and a thong for a belt. His robe is a fur robe. He pinned it together in front and he wore a belt over it. He didn't use a saddle; he sat on a buffalo skin. He sat on the fur side of the skin and on the side with no hair was against the horse. The heat of the horse went through and the rider was warm.

Now he is on the chase. When he got up with the buffalo it is said he threw his robe back from his shoulders. His robe flipped over and then he took his mittens. He will not lose them because he strung them a thong. His mittens were blown to the back of him and he got close to the buffalo. He got real close to it and the buffalo will try to run the other way. They say that they stretch out. The buffalo turned. As it stretched out he shot it in the stomach. There are no ribs where the stomach is, so he shot it lengthways and the buffalo stopped and he ran for the other one. He shot it as it was turning. The buffalo stopped and he got up with the other buffalo.

The horses are trained to be steered with the knees; that's what the horses are. He got up with the other one and he did the same thing, he shot it when it was turning. So he shot it. He saw it when it also stopped. Maybe he'll kill three buffalo. The buffalo will turn up against the wind. Maybe he'll kill three or two or one. His first kill is not hard; his next shot is hard. He will not be able to bend his fingers on the third. It is said his fingers got stiff by the cold and he can't shoot any more and he pulled rein and he stopped his mount.

The horse will stop slowly. The rider will jump off when the horse stops. He didn't have his mittens on; he just jumped off and he loaded his arrows into his quiver. He sat in front of his horse and he put his hands between the forearms and the breast of the horse; he held his hands. He'll notice when his hands get warm, then they jump up and stick their hands in the snow and they will rub their hands with the snow. Then they'll put their hands between their own armpits.

Others will jump down from the horse and he'll stick his hands in the snow and he'll walk to his horse and he'll put his hands between the forearms and the breast of his horse. He'll know when his hands get warm. They'll thaw out. He'll take his away and as his clothes are all fur he'll then put his hands in his armpits. They get warm. Then he'll go to the buffalo that he killed. He'll go to the first buffalo and he'll butcher that first and so on to the last one.
The other one didn't kill anything. He just followed. So he gave a share of the meat. The man helped him to butcher the buffaloes, so the other man got some meat. There might be two of them; those came along to get some meat from him. His pack horse, and there is the horse that he rode and he lead the

horse that he rode in the buffalo chase. Sometimes he'll load the meats on one horse and on the horse that he rode and the horse that was used in the buffalo chase will be turned loose. At the point he was turned loose he made a little run and he rolled on the snow. He got up and shook himself.

When the men are taking home the meats the horse will paw the snow and he'll eat some hay. When he is left far behind he'll run after the riders. They'll pass them and they'll stop far ahead of them. Then they'll start pawing the snow away and they'll start eating again and the riders will pass them. When others are left far behind will start running and the horses will neigh and romp on the way. The horses are not all like that. Some are not so lively.

Okay, the other man's horse is not very good. He was dressed very warm too and prepared. A person that cannot go on a buffalo chase is called a lazy man. How can he go on a buffalo chase? There are a lot of people that go on a buffalo chase, they fall off from their horses and they freeze because they run against the wind. A person will be aggressive. He'll ride a horse which is a fast horse too, but not so good. He'll be gaining on a buffalo but the horse will step in a hole and the rider will fall off. As the horse is also lively he'll run off as soon as it jumps up and the riders will be on foot.

That's what happened to Band Designed Tipi. I was looking at his leg. He was gored on his left leg. He fell off from his horse by the buffalo and the buffalo gored him but he was saved. The riders behind him killed the buffalo. Rifles had come out at that time. This happened to Band Designed Tipi; he was gored. There are some horses that are very swift but they get to have a bad habit after they are used too many times on a buffalo chase. They'll run away from the buffalo when they get close to it. Those are called allergic to the buffalo. They get shy when they catch up to a buffalo.

There are some horses that are very good but the rider is no good. He catch up to a buffalo but he'll be cold and to his clumsiness he'll hit a bone. Some will aim between the ribs but they'll hit a rib; they will not kill a buffalo. The other place where to shoot a buffalo is the stomach and the arrow will go forward. We don't just burst the stomach. If a buffalo is just shot in the stomach it will run away and we won't be able to catch it. The one that is shot straight forward will be killed. That is why they take good care of their horses.

Okay, the lively one, the one that was on a buffalo chase, after he butchers for a while he'd jump to the snow and sticks
his hands in the snow for a while and then he'd put his hands in his armpits and he starts butchering again when his hands thaw out. It is said that he jumps around he was butchering that fast, while the clumsy one will be grunting. He'll be cutting the same thing and he'll be called, "We got killed through him." The lively one has already tied all the different kinds of meat separately. He'll cut the kidneys, the briskets. Some children will say, "I want to eat testicles," so he'll cut the testicles for the children.

The children will ask for what they want to eat -- kidney, brisket. They ask for what is eaten raw. "Get me a shank. Cut me the testicles." That's what they ask for. When the meats are brought home the children will hold their hands out for what they asked for to eat. Then comes the invitation call. I (First Rider) explained this before. Okay, it occurs the good horses are not used to round up the buffalo. Other horses are used to round up the buffalo. They'd herd them to a dead end and they'll jump off from their horses and they'll shoot them as the buffaloes try to escape. Lot of people get gored for shooting the buffaloes on foot.

Okay, the people all have horses and the man will recognize a winter horse, a tough horse. He takes good care of that horse; he is going to use it during the winter. Even if a horse is very swift and even if he is a real good horse but we know that he is not good for the winter. Okay, it occurs the people that see their horses in a vision. Others that saw his horse in a vision, the horses that were given to him, he saw it in a dream, have dreamed what he got out of that horse. It isn't one of his mare's foal. He'll know that he saw this horse at a certain place and he'll hunt for it when the time comes.

This hunting for a horse is the vision. He saw the horse in a vision. The colt belongs to another person and that is the horse that he saw in a vision. He'll approach it, he'll look for it and he'll find it. "This is my horse. This is the horse that I saw in a vision." The horse might not be broke. He'll go after it if it's not broke. He might pay bow and arrows for it, whatever he can pay for it. It's different for a good horse, a gelding. A man will just admire the horse.

He is a Medicine Pipe owner and he unwraps his pipe during the night. He will not notify anyone, he just secretly chose the people and the one that is going to open his pipe. The pipe is opened during the night and they sang low. They were singing secretly so they had everything set up. Some will have a little sleep and there are some that don't sleep. They'd look out and when the birds start to sing that means it's towards morning. When it's near morning they'll wake each other up. "Let's go." So they'll walk slowly to the tipi.

The ones that are going to drum are ready and some went out and watched the others and they went in slowly where the man was that had a fast horse. So they went in slowly and they saw
him; he was still asleep. They were chewing cedar needles and they spat on their hands. One of them tried to grab him four times and on the fourth time he grabbed him and the rest whooped. A robe was spread out on the ground. They grabbed him and they sat him on the robe and they lifted him and they carried him out. The pipe was given to him; he was captured with it. So he was lifted. His wife walked behind him. The drummers in the second tipi started to sing when they heard the men whooping.

SONG: There are no words in the Medicine Pipe song.

The man was carried to the tipi and he was brought into the tipi and he sat down. They told him, "You are captured for your horse. That will be your payment." The owner said, "Go and get the horse." If the person is not told, "You are captured for that horse," he will make his payments and the horse will not be there. The Medicine Pipe owner danced and went out to look at the payments. If he doesn't see the horse that he made a capture for he'll walk back and he'll sit down. He didn't give away the pipe. The drummers will sing and they will word their song as follows: "Why didn't I see that horse in such a color?" The owner will say, "Go and get the horse," but he'll turn loose the best horse amongst that he brought forward and the pipe will dance again and he words the song, "That's what I thought."

This is different. Seeing a horse in a vision is also different. They use these horses in warfare. Okay, a person is just using his horse for buffalo hunts. He didn't make any other uses of him, like to use him in warfare. He just uses it for buffalo hunts. Since he didn't make any other uses of his horse his elder brothers gave him the name Owns A Fast Buffalo Horse. It is said that he is not warlike and that his horse is fast on buffaloes. Owns A Fast Buffalo Horse is just like this. We will say, "He likes to eat." That's what it is.