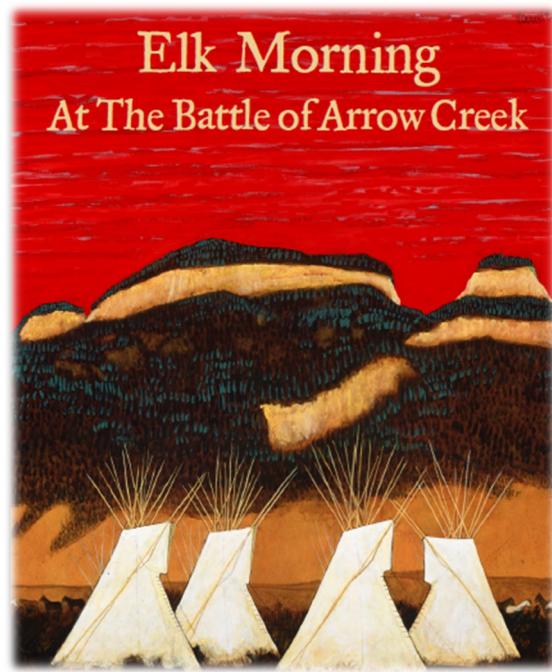


Elk Morning At The Battle of Arrow Creek

This new book is written by local authors A.J. Otjen and Sabrena Half. The story is based on an actual event that is culturally accurate and is specific to Apsáalooke (Crow) history. The book is a beautiful representation of Crow history and traditions and highlights the qualities of honor and courage. The authors state that one goal of the book is to contribute to a more accurate and inclusive understanding of Crow culture and history and to help children appreciate the unique traditions of their tribe.

The Battle of Arrow Creek, the Crow name for Pryor Creek, is considered by many Crow elders to be one of the most important events in Crow history. The battle, which took place in 1861, is also known as Ashkoota Binna Chikuwa/Where The Camp Was Fortified. The battle story has been told and retold with the site established as a National Historic Landmark. The artwork of Kevin Red Star, world renowned Crow artist, fill the pages of the book.



Overview

Anchor Text Elk Morning At The Battle of Arrow Creek

Time Frame Two - five days (30 – 40 minutes per day or as time permits for classroom schedule and student grade level)

Lesson Summary

Students will read a story about an important event in Apsaalooke (Crow) history. *Elk Morning At The Battle of Arrow Creek* and supplementary materials could be taught over 2-5 days. The following lesson plans support the standards for English Language Arts and Social Studies. Additionally, some of the supplemental activities are based around the area of Pryor (traditional territory of the Crow people) but could be adapted to any outdoor landscape in Montana.

The Crow Indian Reservation encompasses 2.2 million acres, mainly in Big Horn County, in south central Montana. The Crow tribe's name in their own language is "Apsáalooke," which means "children of the large-beaked bird." White men later misinterpreted the word as "crow." This [Map of Tribal Territories in Montana](#) shows the current reservation location and traditional territory of the Crow people.



Learning Objectives

While reading and discussing the aspects of the book, students will:

- ✓ work effectively and respectfully in a small group, listening to everyone's responses;
- ✓ understand and analyze literary elements such as character and plot;
- ✓ ask questions, check inferences, and summarize information from reading and viewing background sources related to Crow cultural traditions;
- ✓ create and share with classmates one's own responses to and understandings of the unique Crow history encountered in this book;
- ✓ Determine mood and tone of artwork and juxtapose the story.
- ✓ Retell the important details of the story.
- ✓ Connect the details of the story to the traditional land base of the Crow.
- ✓ Develop an increased awareness regarding Essential Understanding 3 and understand how powerful ceremonial and spiritual connections impacted the outcome of the battle.
- ✓ Understand how intertribal warfare changed because of westward expansion.

Background Resources & Materials Needed

(Links are within the lesson plan portion of this document.)

- Elk Morning at the Battle of Arrow Creek (book) -one copy
- Battle Background Information - Crow Accounts/Quotes
 - [Spirit Warrior Credited for Crow Victory](#) – Article from the Billings Gazette
 - [History of the Battle of Pryor \(Arrow\) Creek](#) – Little Big Horn College
 - [Crow Indian Elders Recorded about the Battle of Arrow Creek](#)
- General Crow Tribe Information
 - Montana Indians Their History and Location
 - Little Big Horn Library
- General Information
 - The Art of Storytelling: Plains Indian Perspectives
 - Tribal Territories in Montana Map
 - Montana Stories: Kevin Red Star (video)
- Images of Arrow Creek

Day One: Introduction of the Lesson, Overview of the Crow Tribe

Review the [Tribal Territories of Montana](#) map which shows the traditional territories and locations of current reservations. Utilize this map to make students aware of the large traditional land base of the Crow Tribe. Ask students if they remember what the Crow Tribe call themselves in their own language. Share some basic facts regarding the tribe. General background information regarding the Crow Tribe can be found in the OPI resource [Montana Indians: Their History and Location](#) and more detailed information is located on the [Little Big Horn College Library website](#). Facilitate a class discussion about

the Crow people and tell students they will be reading a book that is about a significant event in Crow tribal history.

Day Two: Vocabulary and Story

Engage: Create a Triple Venn Diagram on board with the words courage, faith, and honor above each portion. As a whole group, prompt students to determine meaning and examples of the three words. Ask engaging questions: What is courage? What is faith? And honor? How are they the same? How do we define them separately? How do we demonstrate each one?

Next, define historical fiction and facilitate a class discussion. Let students know they will be reading a story that is a fictional account based on actual events.

Explain that students will hear a story about an important event in Crow history that displays courage, honor, and faith. Further, encourage students to find moments of courage, honor, and faith while the story is read.

Read Elk Morning aloud to students.

Return to the Venn Diagram and add examples of courage, honor, and faith to the already working example.

Reflection writing: How did the story's examples of courage, honor, and faith match our own ideas? How did they challenge our previous knowledge of courage and honor?

Once again, refer to the book and have students summarize key points in the story and utilize the synopsis to guide the discussion and review.

If possible, bring in Crow guest speakers to speak about the battle and/or utilize the suggested on-line resources to include more context and content regarding the battle.

Summarize and compare the fictional story of Elk Morning with the following non-fiction account written by Dr. Joe Medicine Crow. [History of the Battle of Pryor \(Arrow\) Creek](#) – Little Big Horn College.

What elements of the battle are the same in each account? Are there differences in what was included in the nonfictional account vs. the Elk Morning version?

Sample quotes to use for comparison from the article by Dr. Joe Medicine Crow are included in the Appendix.

Facilitate a class discussion and highlight key points.

Day Three: Student Reflections

Prompt students to share the details of the story including main ideas, traditions, setting, characters, problem, connection and acknowledgement to location of where we live, and examples of courage and honor.

Model template of letter writing. Ask students to reflect upon what they have learned and facilitate a discussion. Suggested assignments: write a letter to the individuals who authored and illustrated the book explaining what they have learned and/or write a summary of the story for the school newsletter.

Day Four: Connecting to Place (This is specific to the area around Pryor)

Take students on a field trip to the actual battle site where you can see the Pryor Mountains and the surrounding valleys and hills. If possible, coordinate your trip with local Crow cultural experts and historians. Contact Indian Education staff for ideas and suggestions regarding local speakers.

Begin with a guided sensory grounding activity. Guide students through a silent, meditative journey of sight, smell, touch, feeling, and sounds.

Connect the setting of the story to the traditional territory of the Apsaalooke. Review the [Tribal Territories of Montana](#) map which shows the boundaries as defined by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and the Flathead and Blackfeet Treaties of 1855. Today's reservations are also shown. Utilize this colorful map to make students aware of the tribal territories of the past; these aid the students in realizing the ancestral lands of a particular tribe, including seasonal migrations, hunting and fishing territories, and lands shared with other tribes.

Begin a discussion asking students to study the landscape and brainstorm some Crow connections to the landscape. Connections to land – knowing and being familiar with your surroundings – Crow people chose a good defensible position. Share the pictures from Arrow Creek and have students analyze the landscape features.

***Possible Adaptations:** In the event that it is impractical or impossible to see or visit the Pryor and Beartooth Mountains based upon your location, it is recommended that you do a local place-based activity that includes the meditative journey and exploration of the historical significance of the site and landscape features. Here are a few ideas you might consider:

- Visit a site of local tribal significance or history. Consider consulting a tribal expert for information about a site in your area.
- Consider visiting the site of another battle or other event in Montana that has historical significance; e.g., Big Hole Battlefield, Bear Paw Battlefield, Little Big Horn Battlefield. In addition, state parks, such as the Madison Buffalo Jump and First Peoples Buffalo Jump, are excellent places for students to visit, experience the landscape, and learn about tribal connections to place.
- Visit a historically important site in or near your community and have students reflect on what their ancestors experienced there using the sensory and informational reflection strategies. Close by reinforcing the idea that Montana is a collection of individual and group experiences going back thousands of years.

Extended Learning Activities

Compare and contrast the Elk Morning books - Elk Morning Counts His First Coup, and Elk Morning at the Battle of Arrow Creek. Compare images of the battle drawn by Amos Bad Heart Bull.

Conduct a field trip to a local Native American historic site and have students conduct place based educational research in collaboration with local community and tribal members.

Art Literacy Activity for the Elk Morning books.

Inform students they are going to look closely at details, lines, colors, scenes, mood, style, etc. of artwork in the story. Display one page from the story for a two to four-minute examination.

Prompt students to share what their findings are. Follow with the question “How does the artwork make you feel? Why?

Ask students to predict the meaning or message the artists are trying to communicate by analyzing the artwork.

Live art: Assign students in groups and have them create a sculpture of their favorite art piece from the story. Allow ample time for students to create their artwork and provide guidance as needed, e.g., students could sculpt an individual, a horse, tipi, or mountains. Have them share their artwork with the class and display them in the classroom.

Research and Reflection: Ask students, in pairs, to research the artist Kevin Red Star to find out more information about him. This activity could be done via direct instruction or student lead. [Montana Stories: Kevin Red Star](#)

- 3 facts about the artist
- 2 other pieces of artwork and how they compare/contrast to artwork in this story.
- Are the styles the same? Different?

Include a discussion of ledger art and compare/contrast with the artwork from the story. Utilize the ledger drawing from Amos Bad Heart Bull to show a Lakota perspective of the battle. (Appendix).

- [The Art of Storytelling: Plains Indian Perspectives \(K-12\)](#)

Teacher Note: Understanding the historical context.

What was happening in the United States during this period? The civil war was being fought and massive battles were taking place between tens of thousands of white Euro-Americans. This massive scale warfare was more common among European nations, and larger battles such as the one at Arrow Creek were a new type of warfare for American Indian peoples.

Prior to contact Plains Indian warfare in general was more about individual honor and counting coup as opposed to outright killing of individuals from other tribes.

It is important that students don't take away stereotypical notions of American Indian people as warlike and always fighting. Historically there were numerous peaceful interactions among different tribes; there was trading and positive interactions.

Standards

Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians

The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the “discovery” of North America. (EU3)

History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell. (EU6)

English Language Arts

Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; including those by and about American Indians; determine the central message, lesson, or moral; and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text. (RL.3.2)

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text; and include texts by and about American Indians. (RL.4.2)

Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text. (RI.5.2)

Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text and include texts by and about American Indians. (RI.5.3)

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly. (W.5.2)

Social Studies

(4) The history content standards for fourth grade are that each student will:

- (a) understand tribes in Montana have their own unique histories;
- (b) identify events and policies that have impacted and been influenced by tribes in Montana;
- (d) describe how historical accounts are impacted by individual perspectives.

(4) The history content standards for fifth grade are that each student will:

- (c) identify roles of individuals and groups and their impact on United States and tribal historical events;
- (d) understand the unique historical perspectives of American Indians.

Appendix – Pictures, Quotes, & Author Interview



Arrow Creek battle site.



Arrow Creek battle site – close view of the landscape that shows the defensible position of the Crow. Steep hills and narrow valley made it difficult for the other tribes to advance in full force.

Quotes from Dr. Joe Medicine Crow

...the Crow war chiefs adopted the strategy of warriors working together as a team under the direction of a war chief; the traditional display of bravery, where individuals would charge into the enemy ranks trying to count coups by striking an enemy with a stick, was put aside.

The repeated charges by the Dakotas suddenly stopped. The Crows waited and wondered. Then a wise Crow Indian decided to take advantage of the lull to try a bluff, hoping to instill fear into the hearts of the attackers. He rode toward the enemy making the sign that he had something to say. This often happened in Plains Indian warfare. Through the inter-tribal sign language, he said: "You have come a long way. By the size of your party, you have come prepared to wage serious battle against the Absarokee this day. Yes, the Raven People will fight you in a great way. Right now our two other bands are on their way to help us. They will arrive soon, and then you will have a real fight on your hands. I have spoken, Aho, Aho!"

The truth was, no help was coming at all. But the bluff was quickly followed by strange happenings. As the Crow was returning to his ranks, the Sioux onlookers on the hill were on their feet pointing excitedly toward the north; then they waved frantically and shouted to their warriors below that a large war party was coming up the creek. At this moment it so happened that a large herd of elk had become excited by the noises of battle and had started milling around. Their sharp hooves stirred a swirling cloud of dust. Their white rumps looked like war bonnets!

Again the ones on the hill hollered...another war party was fast approaching from the west. This time the warriors could plainly see a huge cloud of dust moving rapidly toward the battleground. This phenomenon was caused by a large herd of stampeding buffalo frightened by the noise of battle in the valley. The Sioux war chiefs quickly ordered a determined charge, hoping to dislodge the Crow defense lines before help arrived. Once again the lines held and inflicted heavy casualties.

At this time, a third strange thing took place. Now the Sioux saw a lone warrior riding hard from the hills to join the Crow defenders. His weapon was a two-pronged spear made of elk antler. Suddenly this mystic warrior hollered, "Kokohay! Kokohay!" and charged right into a group and began spearing Sioux warriors right and left. Other groups stood their ground and opened fire with many guns. Their shots were harmless; the man was invulnerable to bullets and arrows. He would circle and return, repeating the one-man onslaught. At this time the Crow ranks holding the defense lines broke loose into a full charge. The Sioux and their allies gave ground, breaking into a full retreat, with every man for himself. The strange Crow warrior was right behind them, shouting, "Kokohay! Kokohay!" and continuing to wield his deadly spear.

Excerpts from: [History of the Battle of Pryor \(Arrow\) Creek](#) – Little Big Horn College



Crow Elders and Cultural Historians Harry Rock Above (left) and JR Goes Ahead (right) share Crow perspectives about the battle during an American Indian Heritage Day field trip to the site with students from Hardin Public Schools. Oral stories and traditions still persist, and the story of Arrow Creek will continue to be passed down orally to future generations of Apsáalooke.

If feasible, consider taking your students to the battle site and invite Crow historians to share their oral traditions.

[For more background regarding the Elk Morning books and to hear from the authors check out this recent zoom video interview.](#) The authors share background information on how they started their company along with why they chose the Arrow Creek story and the process of publishing their books. Share the video with the students and facilitate a class discussion regarding key ideas the authors discussed.



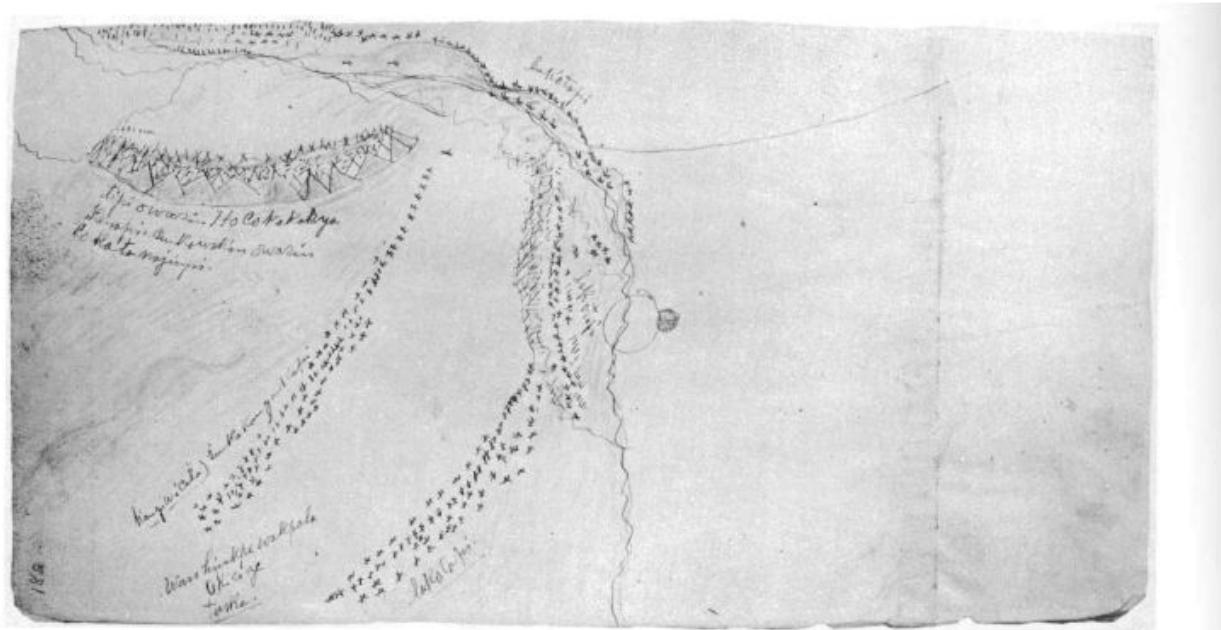
Sabrena Half

Kevin Red Star

A.J Otjen

For a Lakota perspective regarding the battle, share the ledger drawing by Amos Bad Heart Bull. Amos was born in 1869 and between 1890 and 1913 he drew over 400 pictures depicting Lakota history as it was told to him by his elders and several of his drawings depict the Battle at Arrow Creek.

How does this image compare to events in the story? The first Arrow Creek image from Bad Heart Bull is described as "Defending the Tent" where Crow people set up their lodges as a barricade. These images can reinforce the concept of viewing events from multiple perspectives to have a more inclusive view of history, in the case, Crow perspective and Lakota perspectives.



No. 41

NO. 41. SIOUX-CROW FIGHTS. EARLIEST DATES, 1856, 1858

First Arrow Creek Fight

Brief notes in Lakota. Translation:

- [1] All tipis were erected in a circle with all horses in the center [upper left].
- [2] Crow Indians riding horseback [center left].
- [3] Arrow Creek fight—a big battle [lower left].
- [4] Lakota [repeated several times from top around right to bottom, to indicate that all these besiegers are Lakota people].

A very small topographic miniature introducing the first or Upper Arrow Creek fight (Nos. 41 to 48; see also No. 218). The episode is also sometimes designated as "Defending the Tent" (*Tiyonajin Wicayapi*) because—as note 1 indicates—the Crows set up their lodges as a barricade and thus defended

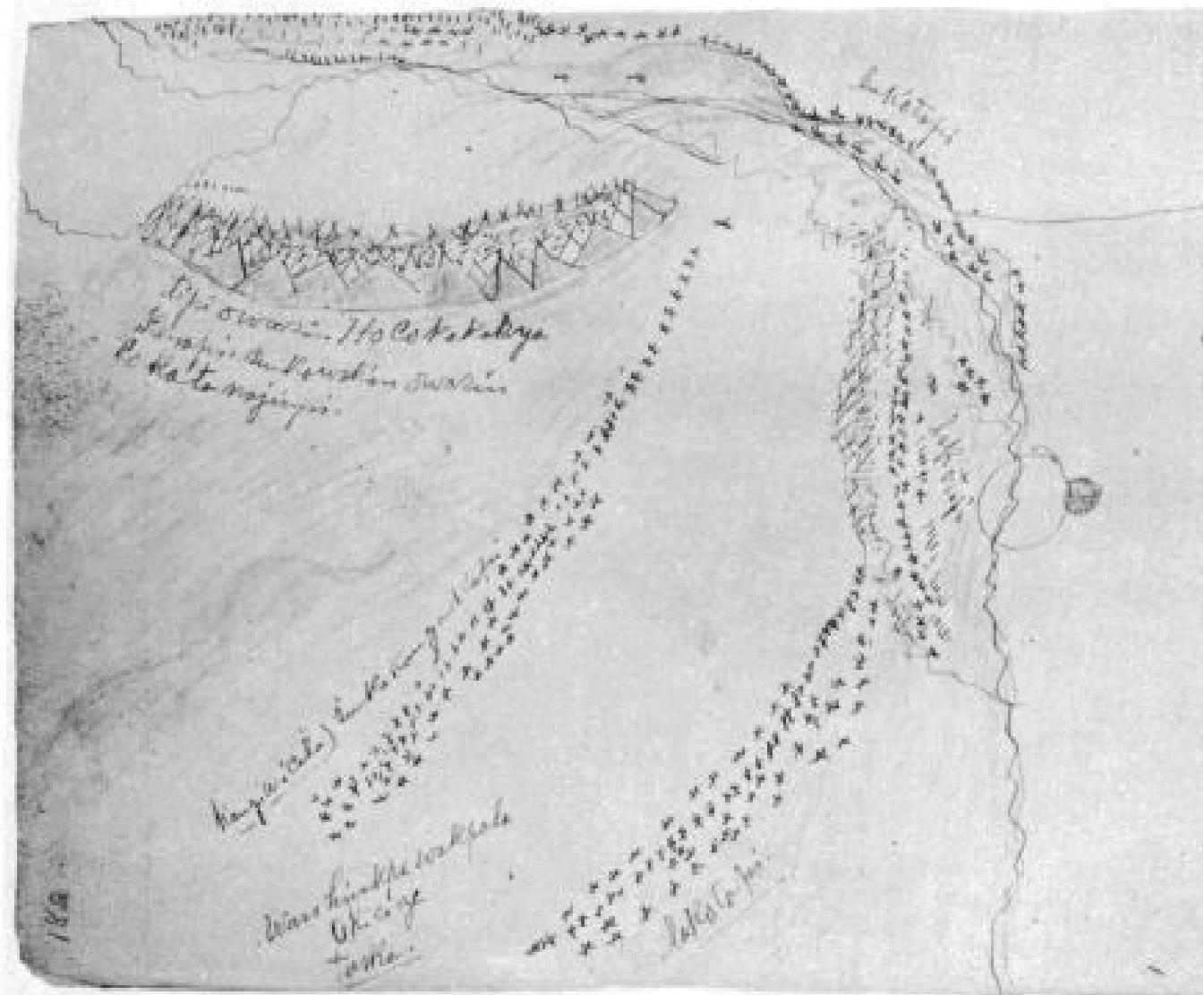
their camp. The lodges, in a circle, are seen upper left; below and to the right are some of the Crows out in battle line to meet the Sioux ("riding horseback," as note 2 has it). The Dakotas are strung out from lower right all along the creek suggested at the right.

The Sioux force was made up of Oglalas, their allies the Cheyennes, and a few Miniconjous—chiefly Oglalas.

The two forces charged back and forth: the Sioux tried to storm the barricade and unseat the Crows but were unsuccessful; the Crows tried to drive the Sioux back across the river but were not sufficiently strong to carry the point. Finally the Dakotas had to give up and withdraw after a loss of five Oglalas and five Cheyennes.

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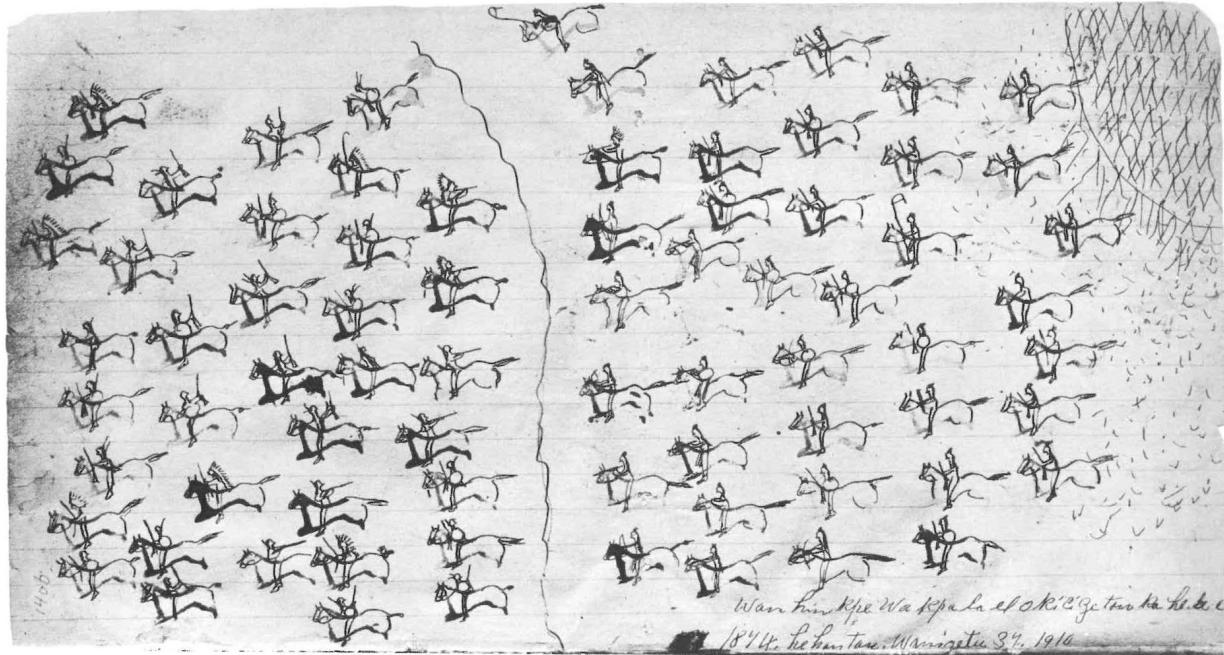
Close up image where you can see the detail that Bad Heart Bull included in his drawing. Clearly shows the landscape and defensible position of the Crow



No. 41

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A second battle at Arrow Creek occurred around ten years later in 1872 and this image has greater detail and once again shows the Crow warriors defending their territory. Note the description provided.



No. 288

No. 288. SIOUX-CROW FIGHTS. EARLIEST DATES, 1856, 1858

Second Arrow Creek Fight

A note in Lakota. Translation: "This relates to the big fight at Arrow Creek."

The artist has dated this 1874; but, as I have already pointed out, the two old men place it two years earlier.

In a miniature-scale impressionistic drawing in black and white, Bad Heart Bull shows a large war party of Crows driving a similar body of Dakotas before them. The Crow camp is represented at the upper right behind the Crow force.

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