

The Battle of Cut Knife Hill: Harriet Yellowmud remembers

In the 1870s, the Canadian government signed treaties with prairie First Nations, and also battled the Manitoba Métis through the Red River Resistance. Nevertheless, the Canadian government in the early 1880s refused to hear Métis' grievances regarding land-use issues. And so in 1885, Louis Riel led his people in the Northwest Resistance and declared a provisional government -- most people know how that ended for Louis Riel.*

Amongst the many bloody battles of the resistance, including the Battle of Duck Lake and the Frog Lake Massacre, the Battle of Cut Knife Hill occurred on May 2, 1885. Joining the Métis were nine bands of Cree and three of Assiniboine, numbering some 1500 men, women, and children. They were attacked by a 'flying column'** of mounted police, militia, and Canadian army regulars, as the Canadian government was determined to crush the resistance before it spread. However, the Crown troops made several grave strategic errors, and the warriors defeated the Canadian forces, with losses on both sides.

Harriet Yellowmud was only 14 years old when she witnessed – and survived – the bloody battle at Cut Knife Hill. Harriet is here seen in 1947 describing her vivid memories of the battle to a group of government

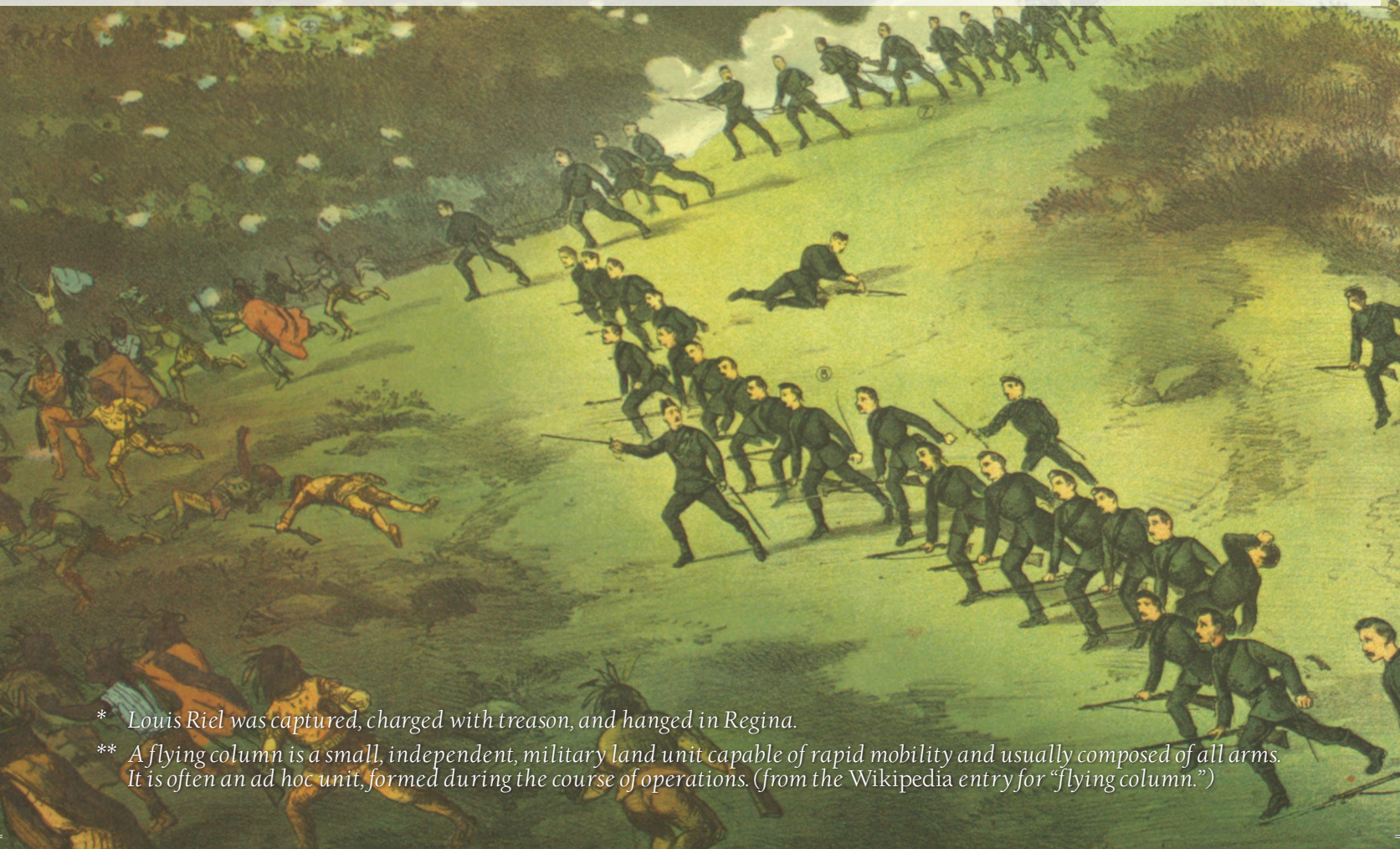


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Harriet describes what happened at the site of Cut Knife Hill Battle, which took place May 3, 1885. She also witnessed the Frog Lake Massacre that same year.

representatives. The group includes historians Campbell and Verna Innes, there to undertake research for the restoration of Fort Battleford, which opened in 1948.

Several battles of the Northwest Resistance were depicted in full-colour paintings-cum-lithographs, published in *Canadian Pictorial and Illustrated War News Souvenir* contemporaneously in 1885. Several of these lithographs form part of the SAB permanent collection.



* Louis Riel was captured, charged with treason, and hanged in Regina.

** A flying column is a small, independent, military land unit capable of rapid mobility and usually composed of all arms. It is often an ad hoc unit, formed during the course of operations. (from the Wikipedia entry for "flying column.")

This depiction of the Battle of Cut Knife Hill was originally featured as part of a series to illustrate the Northwest Resistance published in Canadian Pictorial and Illustrated War News Souvenir, 1885. Original art attributed to W.D. Blatchly. SAB R-D 285

