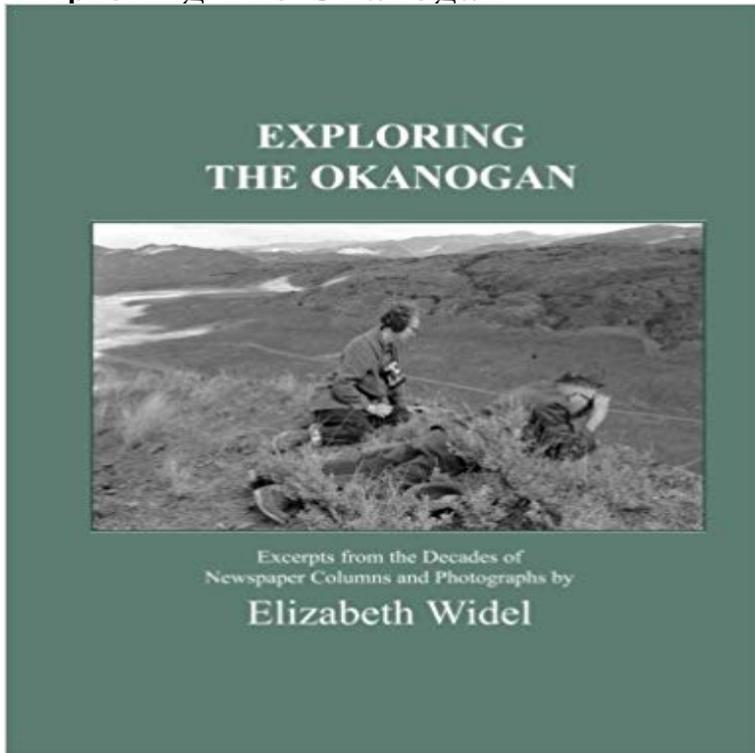


## Exploring The Okanogan



Since 1957, Elizabeth Widel has written about and photographed the vast region known as the Okanogan for her aptly named weekly newspaper column, Exploring the Okanogan. This book of the same name is a broad sampling of her nearly 3,000 columns and accompanying photos. Widel takes the reader from Grand Coulee Dam to the North Cascade Mountains; from British Columbia, where its spelled Okanagan, to the mighty Columbia River and its tributaries. An amateur and enthusiastic geologist, Widel marvels at how this rugged country was shaped by glaciers and floods, recounting how the stories of those epic events are revealed in rocks and ridges, troughs and valleys. She delights, too, in the people, animals and events of the Okanogan. Things both great and small catch her attention and inspire her musings. This collection of columns travels both throughout the region and through time nearly six decades. Widels passion for the Okanogan is at the core of her writing, illuminating each of her explorations. A transplanted Midwesterner, Widel describes part of what captivates her about the Okanogan: The ruggedness of the country, with the bumpy skylines giving so much more interest and challenge than the unrelieved flatness of other places. In that bumpiness lies the whole fascinating world of geology and all the marvels of earth which are there to be read. The book represents a miniscule portion of Widels giant volume of work. The columns were selected not by Widel but by a small group of newspaper colleagues who agreed that they werent looking for the best of her writing. She inevitably does her best each week. The colleagues sought to demonstrate the broad scope of her interests and represent the varied facets of Okanogan life that fascinate her. Her writing voice is descriptive and enchanting. She writes, for example, about a valley that

stabs right back into the mountains with the scenery getting more perpendicular by the minute. She explores by car, by airplane and on foot. On one occasion, searching with a companion for an obscure waterfall with no trail or path leading to it, she knew we would simply have to thrash through the undergrowth (and perhaps the rattlesnakes if they were home) until we found it. She was age 80 at that point. Readers will not have to thrash through undergrowth nor evade rattlesnakes, but they will get a well-informed tour of the Okanogan as they explore with Elizabeth Widel.

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