



dip, dip  
and swing

PADDLING THROUGH  
SASKATCHEWAN'S LAC  
LA RONGE PROVINCIAL  
PARK — HOME TO  
LOONS, BALD EAGLES  
AND THE STILL-ACTIVE  
STANLEY MISSION, THE  
FIRST CHURCH IN  
WESTERN CANADA

## WILDERNESS

## WOMAN

## MEETS

## THE

## CANADIAN

## SHIELD

by judy waytiuk

Everyone else was gathered around the campfire, watching the sun set over the lake and sharing a pot of caribou stew. I was in a small tent, lying limp on my pool-toy air mattress. Afraid to move my aching arm and shoulder muscles, I listened gloomily to valve-hiss as my mattress deflated. It had taken 40 minutes to breathe air into the cursed thing.

I hated the Canadian Shield. I hurt all over.

I desperately wanted a taxi home.

The four-day canoe excursion from Lac la Ronge up the Churchill River system in northern Saskatchewan had sounded enthralling, back home in Winnipeg. Shield country is genuine wilderness, soaked in historic importance. La Vérendrye, Henry Kelsey, Radisson and Des Groseilliers all paddled the Shield's crazy spider web of waterways, using birchbark canoes modelled after those made by the Ojibwa and Algonquins. Those early "canots du nord," some big enough to carry a dozen men and over a tonne of cargo, hauled in trade goods and hauled out furs for the Hudson's Bay Company. By the mid-1800s, they had been phased out in favour of far sturdier, heavier wooden canoes.



