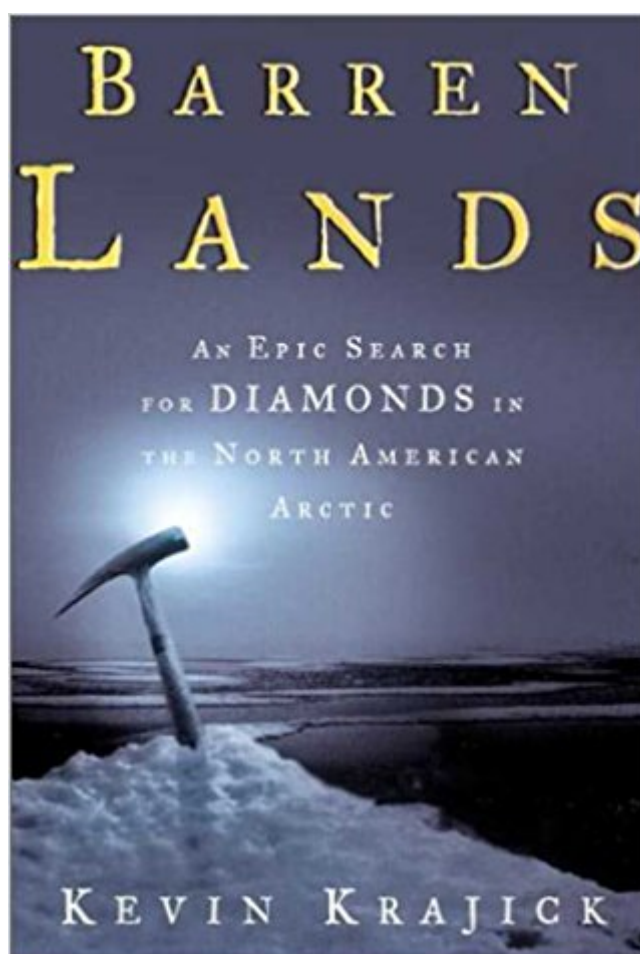


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# Barren Lands: An Epic Search For Diamonds In The North American Arctic



## Synopsis

In the tradition of Sebastian Junger's *The Perfect Storm* and Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air*, *Barren Lands* is the extraordinary tale of two small-time prospectors who risked their lives to discover \$17 billion worth of diamonds in the desolate tundra of the far north. In the late 1970's, two men set out on a twenty-year search for a North American gem mine, along a fabled path that had defied 16th-century explorers, Wild West prospectors, and modern geologists. They are an unlikely pair: Chuck Fipke, a ragged, stuttering fellow with a singular talent for finding sand-size mineral grains, and Stew Blusson, an ultra-tough geologist and helicopter pilot. Inventive, eccentric and ruthless, they follow a trail of geologic clues left by predecessors all the way from backwoods Arkansas up the glaciated high Rockies into the vast and haunted "barren lands" of northern Canada. With a South African geochemist's "secret weapon," Fipke and Blusson outwit rivals, including the immense De Beers cartel, and make one of the world's greatest diamond discoveries- setting off a stampede unseen since the Klondike gold rush. A story of obsession and scientific intrigue, *Barren Lands* is also an elegy to one of earth's last great wild places, a starkly beautiful and mysterious land strewn with pure lakes and alive with wolves and caribou. An endless variety of primeval glacial rock formations hide copper, zinc, and gold, in addition to diamonds. Now that the barrens are "open for business," what will happen to this great wilderness region? *Barren Lands* is an unforgettable journey for those who, in the words of a nineteenth-century trapper, "want to see that country before it is all gone."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Diamonds spell adventure, and their lure is timeless, as evidenced by this compelling book. Magazine writer Krajick (Natural History, Newsweek) leaves few stones unturned as he presents not only a "diamond rush" in Canada's Northwest Territories during the 1990s but a history of one man's pursuit of this gem. The familiar names are here, including Charles Tiffany, Frederick Kunz, Cecil Rhodes, and the ubiquitous DeBeers. So, too, are the diamond mines scattered across the globe in India, South Africa, South America, the United States, and Canada. Scandals and scams have long been a part of diamond lore; the Great Diamond Hoax in 1872 Colorado rates a fascinating chapter of its own. The chief character featured throughout is Canadian Chuck Fipke, an eccentric, obsessed prospector and principal in the Lac de Gras/Ekati diamond mine (currently in operation in Canada's Barren Lands). A combination of arctic climate, corporate spies, and inexact geologic science, mixed with human greed, grizzlies, and prodigious amounts of insects and alcohol, turns the last half of Barren Lands into a suspenseful thriller. Miners, geologists, and rockhounds will be spellbound, but the appeal will easily extend to general audiences as well. This book is highly recommended for all libraries. Janet Ross, formerly with Sparks Branch Lib., NV Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

When we think of treasure hunters, we tend to think of gold or silver, but diamonds are rarer than either, and humans have been hunting them for half a millennium. Two such diamond hunters are Charles Fipke and Stewart Blusson, the prospectors who struck it rich in a region of Canada's Northwest Territories called, appropriately enough, the Barren Lands. Their adventure is the centerpiece of this diamondhunting story, which combines excitement and danger, disappointment, tragedy, and the kind of luck that changes your life forever. Fipke and Blusson became extremely wealthy men; others who spent their lives in pursuit of the elusive glittering mineral were not so fortunate. Krajick, a journalist who reported on the Barren Lands diamond rush for Discover magazine, is a smooth storyteller with a novelist's ear for dialogue. But these aren't flamboyant fictional characters living out madeup lives; they're real people, and this is what really happened to them. A can't-miss for fans of reallife adventure. David Pitt Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

When I started reading this book I was immediately impressed by the author's long involvement in reporting on Canadian diamonds and the fact that he interviewed and was in repeated contact with nearly every important person in this story. This gave him an overview and perspective that none of the people involved could possess. Just as important, the author understood and could

communicate the fine details of minerals, exploration, rock units, glaciation and the other geological elements clearly and accurately. The book was easy-to-read, interesting and hard to put down. One of the best-told geological stories. If you are only going to read one book about Canadian diamonds or diamond exploration, this is the one.

Fantastic story! It was informative and riveting up until the very end! I got too excited halfway through and lent it to my mother to read, and then had to wait two days for her to finish it and give it back to me so I could finish the last couple of chapters. It's currently sitting on my brother's nightstand! I learned so much about diamond formation and prospecting, exploration, and what it's like to do something like that for a living, and I mean a real sense of having that passion and dedicating your life to it. The history was extremely well written into the story and provided a lot of insight; the chapter detailing the battle of Bloody Falls still haunts me. I would recommend this book to absolutely everyone. Whether they have an interest in mineralogy or not, they will by the end of this book!

Interesting true story of a persistent geologist whose somewhat harrowing adventures eventually pay off handsomely. Krajick, who was not involved, provides much detail about disagreements within the characters' personal relationships, reads like a grouchy geologist's diary. Would have given it 5 stars had it been 50 pages shorter without all the grumbling.

This is a well-written, interesting book that teaches a lot about the history of the Canadian Arctic and the search for diamonds around the globe. I particularly liked the history of Canada's "Barren Lands" in the north from the 1500s onward. I also learned a great deal of earth science and geology. It was fun to read, and kept my attention throughout. I particularly enjoyed the maps in the front of the book and referenced them often. I also appreciated the index in the back; with so many people overlapping and involved in diamond exploration, I had to reference the index frequently to remember who was who across the global history presented. The chapter notes in the back of the book are also quite good; I wish they were footnotes on the page as many were interesting. As I will be teaching a course on this area and will be going to Yellowknife shortly, I thought the book gave a great overview of the area. It also convinced me to add a few lectures on geology.

Recommended by a geologist friend. I recommended it to my wife who has a love/hate relationship with diamonds, and to my fiends who have read Isaacson's book Steve Jobs as part of

understanding the spectrum of Autism and Asperger's in making progress in society. The power of singular purpose and intense focus is wonderful - provided it is aimed or I should better say provided it happens to be aimed in the right direction. I thank the gods that neither Steve Jobs nor Chuck Fipke was born in a place or time where they could lead a nation.

Although I was quite familiar with the exploration in the Canadian mountains for diamonds, I didn't know the nitty gritty of the two men who were responsible. Barren Lands is one of the most exciting, adventure stories of factual material I could have imagined. The author, a science writer, seems to have done his research and documenting of it in a full on bibliography, quite well. It was a situation where I already knew the ending, but not the beginning or the middle. Now I know "the rest of the story," the famous saying of radio personality, Paul Harvey.

Thank you so much . very good book and a awesome story . keeps you going to the end . Blessings

A very well written account of the excessive desire of the search for diamonds and the eventual discovery of diamonds in the Great White North of northern most Canada.

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