

## **LESLIE DAY BAIKIE (1936–2026)**

By Craig Lake with the assistance of the Baikie family



Leslie (Les) Day Baikie of Halifax died on May 1, 2026. Born in Mulligan, Labrador, on March 27, 1936, he was the son of Henry and Stella Baikie, and the second of four siblings. In childhood, Les and his family were among the last generation to live the traditional life of early settlers of the Hamilton Inlet area of Labrador. This life was not for the faint of heart; it required a quiet ruggedness and self-sufficiency born of experience.

Les attended school in North West River, Labrador, before entering the engineering program at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland, in 1956. He completed his BEng at the Nova Scotia Technical College (NSTC; later the Technical University of Nova Scotia (TUNS) and now Dalhousie University) in 1959.

From 1959 to 1960, Les worked for Canadian National Railways in New Brunswick, where he met his wife, Jeannine of Rivière-du-Loup, QC. He later returned to NSTC to complete a MEng in geotechnical engineering in 1961 while working with the Department of Public Works in Ottawa from 1961 to 1963. He subsequently completed a PhD in Civil Engineering in 1966, under the supervision of Geoff Meyerhof, with research focused on soil-structure interaction in buried culvert structures.

After completing his PhD, Les returned to Canadian National Railways, but in Montreal, as a Soils Research Engineer. He then moved to Calgary in 1967 to work with Hardy and Associates Ltd. as Manager of its Geotechnical Division. He spent a formative 13 years in Vancouver and Calgary with Hardy working on projects such as the Port Mann (Thornton) Railyard, CNR Bridge replacement program in Lower Mainland of BC, the Arctic Gas Pipeline Project, the Beaufort-Delta Oil Pipeline and the Shell Canada Oil Sands project, among others.

In 1981, Les returned to Atlantic Canada where he spent the next part of his professional life as a teacher, researcher and Head of the Civil Engineering Department at TUNS/Dalhousie until his retirement in 2001. During this time, he delighted hundreds of students with his quiet and calm demeanor and his ability to convey technical concepts through story telling of his considerable work career in private practice. Academically grounded but practically motivated, many of his former students remember the valuable insights delivered to them, both in and out of the classroom.

Les was a lifetime member of the Association of Professional Engineers of Nova Scotia and a Fellow of the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering. He made significant contributions to his profession across Canada. His professional legacy extended into national safety and policy; he served for eleven years on the NRC Standing Committee on Structural Design, and on a number of geotechnical boards and committees, helping to ensure the integrity of Canadian building standards.

Outside of his passion for geotechnical engineering, Les was a lifelong admirer of Canadian literature and art. He also compiled accounts of early Labrador settlers and genealogical history into a book titled *Up and Down the Bay*. He found great joy in the outdoors—camping in the Rockies, sailing in Nova Scotia, spending time with his grandchildren at the cottage in Martin's River, NS, and discovering secret spots to pick wild berries. Together, he and Jeannine built a lifetime of memories while maintaining deep connections to their roots in Labrador and Québec.

Les is survived by his wife, Jeannine; his children, Susan, John, and Andrew and three granddaughters, Madelaine, Céleste, and Estée.