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Exceptional Careers

Jeremy Haile, P.Eng., is one of three
winners of our inaugural Lifetime
Achievement Awards. **P. 10**



Lifetime Achievement Awards

We proudly present our inaugural three winners.

By Peter Saunders

In late 2022, for the first time, *Canadian Consulting Engineer* launched an initiative to recognize leading professional engineers for their exceptional careers in—and legacies of contributions to—consulting engineering in the fields of construction and infrastructure. The community responded strongly, with a wide variety of nominations for

these accolades. The following are the chosen winners.

Jeremy Haile

Principal engineer (formerly president) of Vancouver-headquartered Knight Piésold Canada, Jeremy Haile expressed an early interest in engineering projects when he was a child—and as it happened, he was in the right place at the right time.

“I was very fortunate to grow up in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and go to school in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) at a time when lots of major projects were being built, including the Kariba Dam and the Kafue hydroelectric project,” he recalls. “We lived in one mining town, Bancroft (now Chililabombwe), before moving to another, Broken Hill

PHOTO COURTESY KNIGHT PIÉSOLD CANADA.

(now Kabwe). All of that was part of my youth and I wanted to go into civil engineering.”

Haile graduated from Oxford University with an M.A. in engineering sciences and economics in 1972. He started his career that year as a project engineer with Watermeyer, Legge, Piésold and Uhlmann (WLP), the predecessor to Knight Piésold, working at an office in the U.K. and construction sites in Zambia and Malawi.

After completing an M.Sc. in soil mechanics at Imperial College of the University of London, he was transferred to Knight & Piésold in Vancouver in 1979, where he served as senior engineer and director until 1990. (The Knight Piésold name was adopted by WLP and associated operating companies around the world in the early 1990s.)

Following the retirement of Bruce Knight, founding partner of the Canadian operations, Haile became president of Knight Piésold Canada, a position he held until 2012.

“I’ve only worked for one company,” he says. “When we expanded to Canada, we brought a different perspective from mining in central Africa. Translating our expertise into a Canadian context was a major learning exercise; I’d never dealt with winter conditions before! It was an exciting challenge.”

Growing from a team of about 20 people in the 1980s, the company focused primarily on mining tailings and water management projects until Haile, as president, branched out into British Columbia’s hydropower industry in the early ’90s. The company developed run-of-river hydro-

electric projects for mining clients and independent power producers. Haile also led geographic and service expansion by opening another office in North Bay, Ont., increasing involvement in Eastern Canadian and international projects.

**“He has been an incredible mentor.”
- Ken Embree**

The company had grown to about 200 people across Canada when Haile stepped down from the helm in 2012.

“It was a big relief to hand it on,” he says, “knowing there was a very capable team in place to continue managing the company.”

Looking back today, Haile’s 50-year career—one of the longest tenures of anyone currently working at Knight

Piésold anywhere in the world—has combined technical expertise in civil and geotechnical engineering, mentorship of his fellow engineers and contributions to industry associations.

“He has been an incredible mentor to me ever since I started at the company 32 years ago,” says its current president, Ken Embree.

“Now I can work when I want to,” says Haile. “I get involved when I’m asked to and I don’t come into the office unless there’s something for me to do. I enjoy staying in touch with everyone. I write proposals, look at management systems, conduct risk reviews for projects around the world, streamline office documents and just help make it all work seamlessly. I like staying involved in complex, challenging projects.”



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Continuing a legacy of excellence

Congratulations to Jeremy Haile, recipient of the *Canadian Consulting Engineer’s* Lifetime Achievement Award.

For over 50 years, Jeremy has dedicated his career to the success of the Knight Piésold team, and we are continuing to build on his legacy of excellence for the next generation of consulting engineers.



Jeremy Haile, P.Eng.
Principal Engineer

Catherine Karakatsanis

Morrison Hershfield (MH) chief operating officer (COO) and board director Catherine Karakatsanis sensed she was destined for a career in engineering from a very early age.

“In a foreshadowing of my profession, when I was in Grade 1, I was put in a special math class where we studied algebra,” she recalls, “and through the years, I always wanted to do something meaningful. I had relatives who were in engineering and I knew the positive impact their profession made to society’s standard of living. I was always encouraged by my family and never made to feel like I shouldn’t pursue work in

a male-dominated field. And I wasn’t let down at all—it’s been really rewarding!”

Karakatsanis studied civil engineering at Western University in London, Ont. One of her particularly influential mentors was Professor Alan G. Davenport, whom she calls “the father of wind engineering.”

“It was inspirational to visit buildings like the World Trade Center and Sears Tower on field trips,” she says. “That experience focused me on buildings and infrastructure.”

Davenport encouraged her to join MH. Karakatsanis was receptive to the suggestion, not least because she had studied firm co-founder Car-



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son Morrison’s book on ethics in her fourth year.

“You had to study that book to get your engineering licence,” she explains. “It reflected the ethical culture of the firm, which was highly professional and a very welcoming place for a woman.”

She joined MH in 1989 as a structural engineer and quickly progressed through technical and project management

of our company over the years,” she says. “I haven’t had one day when I’ve been bored, so it never occurred to me to go anywhere else!”

As a leader, she has strived to make the firm even more welcoming to and inclusive of women and minorities and to provide greater technical support to its younger engineers. She oversees MH’s inclusion and equity committee, com-

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roles to become a director, senior director, vice-president (VP) and COO. She was the firm’s first female executive and board member.

“I’ve worked in and gained an understanding of every part

munities of practice and climate change practice development initiative.

Along the way, she has worked with Engineers Without Borders (EWB) and led Professional Engineers On-

PHOTO COURTESY MORRISON HERSHFIELD



“I haven’t had one day when I’ve been bored, so it never occurred to me to work anywhere else!”

tario (PEO), the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) and Engineers Canada as president. Most recently, continuing that trend to a global level, she became president-elect of la Fédération Internationale des Ingénieurs-Conseils (FIDIC). She will be the first woman to hold the position in the organization’s history when she takes the office this year.

“FIDIC has been very exciting,” she says. “It represents more than 1.4 million engineers and 40,000 firms in more than 100 countries. With its global reach, it is the ideal vehicle to facilitate collective action to advance the industry and deal with the pressing issues facing our planet.”

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Maurice Brisson

A founding—and still active—member of BBA in Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Que., Maurice Brisson was recently invested as a Member of the Order of Canada in recognition not only of his expertise in designing electrification plans and developing major power transmission lines, but also for his philanthropic contributions to promoting education in electrical engineering. He received the honour—the nation’s highest for civilians—on Nov. 3 at Rideau Hall in Ottawa.

Brisson grew up under entrepreneurial parents who owned a bakery in the Laurentians. As he explains, they passed along their values and principles for achieving business success by respecting and satisfying clients’ needs.

“Engineering was a natural fit for me because I loved applied sciences,” he continues. “I also liked the idea of giving back to society and my community, of being part of something bigger than myself, by advancing knowledge and practice.”

He earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in electrical engineering from Polytechnique Montréal, began his career as a high-voltage system researcher at l’Institut de Recherche en Électricité du Québec (IREQ) and then joined Shawinigan Engineering, where he developed close working relationships with colleagues who would go on to co-found BBA in 1980.

During his career, Brisson has been involved in projects around the world (including electrification plans in Ivory Coast, Guinea, Burundi and Honduras), led techno-eco-



nomic and development programs for rural, urban, public and industrial distribution systems and studied markets, load consumption and forecasting, power generation and transmission planning.

“Engineering was a natural fit for me because I loved applied sciences. I also liked giving back to society.”

In recent years, he has completed studies on interconnecting independent power producers, cogeneration projects and medium- and large-capacity wind farms in Québec and Ontario.

“Trailblazing projects in energy efficiency and optimization and in wind and solar farms will help us with decarbonization efforts in the coming years,” he says.

One significant way he has given back to the industry is through education. He has mentored more than 30 junior engineers, many of whom are still working for BBA today. In 2016, l’Association des Firmes de Génie-Conseil – Québec (AFG) named him Mentor of the Year in Consulting Engineering.

In 2009, he created the Maurice Brisson Scholarship through Polytechnique Montréal to promote university education in engineering. In 2015, he made a sig-

nificant donation to the institution to launch the Maurice Brisson Scholarship Fund and ensure its continuity. In recognition for his involvement, a laboratory at l’Institut en Génie de l’Énergie Électrique (IGEE) has been named after him.

Meanwhile, as an educator himself, he has taught courses about protection relays and systems for power grids as part of the university’s master’s program in electrical engineering.

Even now, Brisson is at BBA’s offices five days a week.

“It’s not like work for me!” he says. “It’s always a pleasure to progress with projects, connect with young engineers and continue to learn.” **CCE**

PHOTO COURTESY BBA.