EDITOR’S NOTE:
These are challenging and life-altering times as all of us cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. In a very real sense, the situation parallels how it must have felt in 1940 when WW2 changed everything. Hence, we can learn from Churchill’s inspirational speeches that rallied the British people in their “finest hour”.

Our COVID-19 response proves British Columbians can mobilize in a common cause when confronted with an unprecedented emergency that impacts all. **It is a 'teachable moment'**. Viewed in this context, and looking beyond the short-term response, Dr. Daniel Pauly offers timely words of wisdom for “bending the curve” in the years and decades ahead to achieve ecological restoration and, in the process, adapt to a changing climate. When there is a will, there is a way. Keep calm and carry on.
“We shall fight on beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.”
Meet the World’s Top Fishery Scientist

In recent years, the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia has advanced cascading themes to build understanding and inform a call to action for improving where we live: 1) shrink our destructive footprint while growing our regenerative footprint; 2) restorative development results in sustainable stream restoration; and 3), get it right by reconnecting hydrology and ecology. These point the way to a desired future.

A source of inspiration for these efforts is UBC's Dr. Daniel Pauly. He is “the world’s leading fishery scientist - a robust, 70-year-old man who has studied every fishy thing, from the collapse of Peru's anchovy stocks to the under-reporting of fish catches around the world,” says Andrew Nikiforuk, an award-winning journalist and contributing editor to The Tyee, an online news magazine.

In a 2003 interview, the NY Times described Daniel Pauly as “an iconoclastic fisheries scientist at the University of British Columbia who is so decidedly global in his life and outlook that he is nearly a man without a country”. Most fisheries scientists work for regulatory agencies charged with managing a particular stock in a particular place, he said in the interview. “But we have given ourselves the mandate to look at the whole world. Nobody has been asking these questions before," he told the NY Times.
Daniel Pauly:
The ocean's shifting baseline

Mission Blue Voyage - 00:02 - Filmed Apr 2010

28 subtitle languages

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Bending the Curve

In 1995, Daniel Pauly coined the term **Shifting Baseline Syndrome** to explain why and how ecological decline is incremental and imperceptible over multiple generations. While communities cannot restore lost diversity, they can halt its decline and consciously direct efforts into bending the trend-line in an upward direction.

An understanding of Shifting Baselines is a foundation piece for implementing restorative development, reconnecting hydrology and ecology, and bending the curve to restore stream systems. Accepted ‘standards of practice’ - especially those for engineering, planning and finance - influence the form and function of the Built Environment.

The goal of shifting to an ecologically functioning and resilient baseline and creating a creekshed legacy would ultimately depend on the nature of change to standards of engineering, planning and financial practice.
“With each new generation, the expectation of various ecological conditions shifts. The result is that standards are lowered almost imperceptibly,” stated Daniel Pauly during his TED Talk in 2010

Shifting Baseline Syndrome refers to a gradual change in the accepted norm for ecological conditions.

Daniel Pauly developed the concept in reference to fisheries management in a one-page paper titled 'Anecdotes and the shifting baseline syndrome of fisheries'. This well-read essay helped to start the field of historical ecology.

**Concept Application:** The phrase describes an incremental eroding of standards that results when each new generation lacks knowledge of the historical, and presumably more natural, condition of the environment. Each generation then defines what is ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ according to current conditions and personal experiences.

With each new generation, the expectations of various ecological conditions shifts. Over time, and in the absence of a ‘teachable moment’ to raise awareness of a change, the result is that standards are lowered almost imperceptibly.
**Bend the Curve Upwards:** In 2002, film-maker and former marine biologist Randy Olson broadened the definition with an op-ed in the Los Angeles Times newspaper. He explained the relevance of the concept to all aspects of change and the failure to notice change in the world today.

"If we know the baseline for a degraded ecosystem, we can work to restore it. But if the baseline shifted before we really had a chance to chart it, then we can end up accepting a degraded state as normal — or even as an improvement," wrote Randy Olson.

**Historical Ecology:** The Shifting Baselines concept arose in Ian McHarg’s seminal book *Design with Nature*, published in 1969. Renowned as a landscape architect, writer and educator, Ian McHarg (1920-2001) is best known for introducing environmental concerns in landscape architecture. McHarg compared the landscape as we know it to that which ancient humans lived on.

“The innovation of which I am most proud was the discovery that the competing claims of the many environmental scientists could be organized through the employment of chronology. Investigation began with the oldest evidence and proceeded towards the present,” wrote Ian McHarg in the Preface to the 1992 edition of Design with Nature.
“And the question is, why do people accept this,” asked Daniel Pauly

“We transform the world, but we don’t remember it. We adjust our baseline to the new level, and we don’t recall what was there. If you generalize this, something like this happens (refer to graphic ABOVE),” explains Daniel Pauly.

“You have on the y axis some good thing: biodiversity, numbers of orca, the greenness of your country, the water supply. And over time it changes – it changes because people do things, or naturally.

“Every generation will use the images that they got at the beginning of their conscious lives as a standard and will extrapolate forward. And the difference then, they perceive as a loss. But they don’t perceive what happened before as a loss.

“You can have a succession of changes. At the end you want to sustain miserable leftovers. And that, to a large extent, is what we want to do now. We want to sustain things that are gone or things that are not the way they were.

“And the question is, why do people accept this? Well because they don’t know that it was different. And in fact, lots of people, scientists, will contest that it was really
different. And they will contest this because the evidence presented in an earlier mode is not in the way they would like the evidence presented.

“So you have a situation where people don’t know the past, even though we live in literate societies, because they don’t trust the sources of the past,” concludes Daniel Pauly.

Link: https://mailchi.mp/watersustainabilitybc/improving-where-we-live-maybe-we-are-not-doomed-after-all-we-have-the-brains-do-we-have-the-will-xguoofvr2a-995923