



This is a very particular time in history.

THE PROJECT OF OUR LIVES

JOHN MACLEOD

As a global phenomenon, the spring equinox offers a tidy shared moment to reflect on what we've been able to accomplish during the last solar cycle and where we're headed. The author reflects on the perpetual process of renewal.

 LANDSCAPES | PAYSAGES : WWW.CSLA.CA

► It's spring! The vernal equinox arrived on March 20 as the entire planet passed through the universal archway of half day/half night. The earth didn't shake as it happened and we might not have even noticed it, but as a global phenomenon the spring equinox offers a 'tidy' shared moment to reflect on what we've been able to accomplish during the last solar cycle and where we're headed.

In his classic work, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey suggests that once we've worked on the basics of knowing ourselves,

of understanding the importance of building character and relationships — lifelong commitments, to be sure — we get to the job of maintenance, of 'sharpening our saw'. We embark on the perpetual process of physical, mental, social and spiritual renewal.

THE PERPETUAL PROCESS Maintaining the physical dimension of our lives is something most of us are pretty much on to: choosing a responsible, interesting diet and incorporating lots of exercise and physical activity into our daily routines. Most of us are also continually engaged in the satisfying mental tasks of visualising, planning and honing our abilities through writing and drawing. Working on interdisciplinary teams and in community service, we are constantly confronted with social challenges. In grappling with the issues, we are offered the many rewards of service, which include the possibility of developing empathy and synergy with all sorts of collaborators.

WHAT SUSTAINS US? Having 'anchors' in our lives, we are rooted in ideas and directions of a spiritual nature that enable us to clarify our values and refocus our commitment through reflection and meditation. Landscape architects tend, I find, to be 'cup-half-full' people. Most of us see the advancement of our discipline and the simultaneous growth of environmental awareness as being much more than simply part of an incremental change in the

global orientation of science, art, business and culture. Rather, we see these developments as important dimensions of the sea change in global consciousness. This is, one might say, a very particular time in history — a time of social, economic and environmental upheaval and refocusing. The challenges presented by global warming and the promise of sustainable development, among many other forces, could potentially contribute to progress and ultimately to global prosperity.

WHAT KEEPS US IN SHAPE? As this is happening, quite a few of us, boomers mostly, are getting close to retirement — a particular kind of personal renewal calling for reflection and action. How will we continue to forge challenging, fulfilling lives within the constraints of this 'new' life? We have spent our careers planning and designing places that are in constant, organic development. It's pretty important that the major project of each of our lives — the crafting of who we are as people — should continue to be given considerable attention as we move through this major transition!

Serving humanity is, in the end, probably the best thing we can do to maintain and renew ourselves. Our personal preoccupations and our professional endeavours will continue to draw us closer to a truer understanding of ourselves as we contribute to the lives of others and to the renewal of our communities. ■