

Stein



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Y Yve in a remarkable period of human history when the most predictable characteristic of our lives is change. It is easy to forget that this is a radical departure from the way more species have lived for 99.9 percent of our biological existence. Homo sapiens evolved some 600,000 to 800,000 years ago; for almost all of that time we lived in a state of nature—deeply embedded in and dependent on the rest of the natural world. Our numbers were small and our technology simple—as small family groups of hunter-gatherers lived lightly on the land. Nature was vast and endlessly self-renewing. People depended on their accumulated knowledge of seasons, plant cycles, and animal behaviour to avoid predation, to find nourishment, and to meet their medical and physical needs. Around the world, land was sacred. Land meant much more than just a place—an area—it represented the spiritual and physical source of life itself. The land included the air, water, animals, rocks, plants, one's ancestors and the generations yet to come. The very

definition of one's identity and purpose came from the land. Aboriginal people around the world maintain a radically different relationship with the land around them than do members of western technological societies. Native people speak of their kinship with all creatures of their brothers and sisters: the ravens, eagles and killer whales of the finned and the tree people. We tend to think of this as quaint metaphorical speech but molecular biologists have begun to show that these relationships are grounded in physical reality. There is a unit of all life forms that goes to the

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