

Judith Brisson is a Montreal-based artist, educator and activist whose main preoccupations are painting, photography, dance, movement, guerrilla installations, social collaborations and working for social justice. Judith has lived and worked in Mexico, Toronto, Sutton, Montreal and Barcelona.

June 21st speech at At the Woods' Edge:

I thank you, the people of Kahnawake present and not present today, for greeting us on your territory.

I am most honoured and humbled to be able to take part in this Condolence Ceremony, to be able to acknowledge the many reasons for our grief and to give them voice.

I offer condolences for those who have lost a friend, a child or a parent, for to lose a friend we see our own death in his or her eyes; to lose a child seems not to be the natural order of things; to lose a parent leaves us an orphan, the one who left to bestow the unconditional love of wisdom to the generations to follow.

I offer condolences for your daughters who have disappeared, whose hearts you still search for.

I offer condolences for the fish you no longer catch, whose bodies are ridden with unnatural growths, and for the forests you no longer travel, not by waterway, nor by foot, whose pine-sweetened air once lifted the spirit.

I offer condolences for the blight of bitumen and the dark sands of used lakes, for the ruination of hunting grounds, and the flooding of the earth all so a very few people can shop in Milan on Thursday and then shop in Honk Kong on Saturday, a world that throws away more than it can provide, I offer my condolences for these grievances.

I offer condolences for the kidnapping and incarceration of your children by European Christians who believed that the children of the Northeastern Woodlands First Nations let their children run too free.

I offer condolences for the erasure of your history from the colonizer's textbooks and the perpetuation of the colonizer's narrative that this land was empty of people when the Europeans first arrived here.

I offer condolences for the fact that my small efforts will never amount to much in righting these many wrongs, but just the same I offer my continued commitment to the defense of Indigenous Rights, to Free Prior and Informed Consent on the matter of Land use or anything else affecting First Nations communities in Canada and

elsewhere, as guaranteed in Covenant 169 of the ILO, a convention that Canada has both signed and ratified.

As an offering I present this belt, created by a Mayan weaver in Chiapas, Mexico, where as you know, a similar great struggle is occurring. Indigenous Mayan Tzotzil and Tzeltal peoples are being uprooted from their lands at the hands of their own governments and corporate collaborators. They too have seen their forests razed and grazed and farmed like prairies. May you each draw strength in protecting the creative and regenerative powers of Turtle Island.