

*First Nations member Carol Jacobs, an Elder-in-Residence for Aboriginal Student Services, spoke at the United Nations flag ceremony Jan. 26, 2012 to celebrate the presence of the University main campus within a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve — the Niagara Escarpment.*

“Good morning, I welcome you all here on this beautiful day. I am Carol Jacobs, Cayuga Nation, Bear Clan. I am Haudenosaunee!

“When I was asked to say a few words here, I asked, ‘What do you want me to say?’ I was told to talk about the special connection the Haudenosaunee have with nature.

“In 200 years, no one has ever understood anything about us. Our connection is really very simple. We are part of Mother Nature. When the Creator made us, he used the soil. She is our Mother, she nourishes us as only a mother can nourish her children. She nourishes our babies and our spirits.

“It is a give-and-take relationship. Mother Earth gives us everything to survive and thrive. In return, all that is asked of us is to give back to her the ability to continue to provide for us.

“We know that we are dependent on everything Mother Earth provides. Mother Earth can and will continue on without us! We cannot continue without her.

“In 1995 the Haudenosaunee did a presentation at the United Nations in New York City. At the time, a book — entitled ‘Haudenosaunee Environmental Restoration: An Indigenous Strategy for Human Sustainability’ — was presented to Noel Brown of the UN Environmental Program. We also called for action, not meetings and words.

“It is good to see action. I congratulate Brock on the newly established Environmental Sustainability Research Centre.

“However, I look to the day when humans realize that all of Mother Earth is special, and needs to be cared for.”