

BUILDING BRIDGES PUB MOOT

Newsletter
December 2009

Editor's Corner

Is it really December 1st? Looking out my window it seems more like September. There is no snow, no blustering winds, no snowflakes dancing through the air.

Where O Where could winter be hiding?

Is it playing a trick to lull us into a false sense of complacency? Will we wake up one morning to find a blanket of snow covering the ground and icicles hanging from the trees? Or will it rear its beauty with the strength and fury known to our Canadian winters? No matter how the Great Goddess chooses to show herself, I don't dare question her arrival. I know She will make her presence known in Her own good time, and I'm sure that by January I'll be wishing it would all just end. But the anticipation of the first real snow fall always leaves me feeling excited

Winter has always been my favorite time of year. It reminds me of a simpler time in my life; a time when building snowmen and snow forts was the only thing that mattered. When snowball fights were always followed by hot chocolate and giggles. But alas, winter games have given way to preparation for large family dinners and holiday entertaining. While the smell of holiday cooking fills my kitchen, I am wrapped in the warmth of the matriarchs of my family, and once again reminded of the greatest magic of all. The magic and the wisdom passed down from Mother to Daughter and the mysteries only women can teach each other, as they work as one to create the *perfect* holiday meal.

There is an energy that fills my kitchen and a whisper of voices that fill the air, guiding me in a way only the love of family can provide.

As I prepare for Kith and Kin to arrive over Jùl, I am comforted by the memories of childhood, wrapped in the love of the season, and guided by the knowledge that even though they are no longer with me, the women of my family join me in spirit and continue to teach the things that only they are capable of *teaching* me.

May the upcoming holiday bring you peace, love and joy.

Crystal

Editor-in-chief

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Moot Listings

Durham Pagan Coffee Moot

Date: Dec 6/09

Time: 1-4 pm

Location: Country Style

Street: King and Centre

City: Oshawa

Join us for the Durham Pagan Coffee Moot!

We've picked a new location, have 3 awesome organizers, and have picked a new day. This is a child-friendly event, alcohol free, and allows for those early morning jobs that some of us have. All are more than welcome! Hope to see you there!

Durham Pub Moot

Date: Dec 2/09

Time: 7-11 pm

Location: Riley's

Street: 104 King Street East

City: Oshawa

C-K Pagan Pub Moot

Date: Dec 4/09

Time: 7-12 pm

Location: The Montreal House

Street: 185 Grand Ave East

City: Chatham

A social night out for Pagan's in C-K and beyond

If anyone wishes to donate a prize or service to the raffle

table, everything is welcome.

Kingston Pagan Pub Moot

Date: Dec 8/09

Time: 7:00-11 pm

Location: The Toucan

Street: 76 Princess St.

City: Kingston

Contact 613-544-0852

Ottawa Pagan Meet and Greet

Date: Dec 9/09

Time: 7 pm

Location: Dow's Lake Pavilion "Malone's Lakeside Bar & Grill"

Street: 1001 Queen Elizabeth Driveway

City: Ottawa

The Hedge Witch

www.thehedgewitch.com or contact us at
905 478-1837

18944 Leslie Street, Sharon, ON, L0G 1V0

Cerridwen's Mug

Thanks to everyone who came out last month to make our eighth anniversary celebration a huge success!! We had a great mix of regular Mug attendees and new faces all of whom laughed and socialized and shared Mug memories and took home amazing prizes, and a thank you to all who donated those prizes. We've come a long way after eight years and we can only go up from there. With that in mind, Cerridwen's Mug is in need of a few changes to allow for this event to grow. We'll be taking the month of December off (so everyone can focus on enjoying the holiday season) to search for a new venue and consider the change of going from a coffee networking social to a pub moot (with a change of name). If you have any questions, concerns, feedback or suggestions please contact **Samantha Wu** at **647 206 5540** or at rayvyn@gmail.com. I look forward to your replies. Thank you once again for all your continued support throughout the years and beyond. Have a blessed and safe Yule and I'll see you all on Friday, January 8 2010 when the Mug will pick up again. Blessed Be!



Wyrddwood Publications
A small eco-friendly
publishing house selling
Pagan/Heathen eBooks.
www.wyrddwoodpublications.com

Barrie Pagan Pub Moot

Date: Dec 12

Time: 6-10 pm

Location: Down the Road Irish Pub (Sunroom)

Street: 650 Big Bay Point Road

City: Barrie

We are a friendly bunch of pagans, very approachable and love good discussions. Whether you are new to the area and want to network with like-minded people or have been to many moots before and feel like enjoying a meal in good company. You are most welcome.

Make sure to bring your sense of humour!

Please check the Facebook page for monthly date.

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/group.php?gid=138897710275>

M O O T L i s t i n g s

Toronto Pagan Pub Moot

Date: Dec 21/09
Time: 7-11 pm
Location: The Fox and Fiddle
Street: 1535 Yonge Street
City: Toronto

The Toronto Pagan Pub Moot is the first and longest running Moot in Canada (c. Feb. 1996). It is an open and friendly social event that meets every Third Calendar Monday of every month. It is open to Pagans, Wiccans, Witches, Druids, Asatru, etc of ALL ages. Open to those who are new and would like to learn more, to those who have been walking the path for decades. As this is a social event, there are no lectures or specific talks. It is a GREAT place to meet up with old friends and make new friends.

For more information, please feel free to contact either Evan or Karen

torontopaganpubmoot@rogers.com
<http://torontopaganpubmoot.shorturl.com>

Toronto Building Bridges Pub Moot

Date: Dec 16/09
Time: 7-11 pm
Location: The Ground Hog Pub
Street: 401 Bloor St East
City: Toronto

Just a reminder: we are accepting donations for our "Need Table". It is a community driven initiative and we hope its success will continue. If you need anything or know anyone who is in need

and can't make it to the pub moot feel free to take from the table. That is what it is for. We are in tough times, and we have folks in the community who could use some help; either starting up a new apartment, clothes, or food items...so any donations will be appreciated. Don't forget our networking table. It's the best way to network your businesses. Also our upcoming events announcements on what is happening in our communities.

HammerTown Pagan Pub Moot

Date: Dec 20/09
Time 7 pm
Location: Corktown Pub & Fare
Street: 175 Young St
City: Hamilton

The HammerTown Pagan Pub Moot is proud to present **David Hickey** and his **Crystal Journey**. Crystal Journey is a musical and vibrational journey through our solar system with 10 Paiste Planet Gongs, Quartz Crystal Bowls and Vibraphone. Trust us; you do not want to miss this show! After the performance, we are once again delighted to have Konga and the **Shanti Drumming Circle** host an Open Drum Jam in honour of the Suns Return! It's going to be an amazing night!

Hamilton Foodbanks are suffering this year. Just like last year there will be a Food and Toy Drive in effect; we ask that you please bring a food item, a new toy or if you are unable to do either of those a cash donation, every little bit helps. Last year we had a total of 112lbs donated to Hamilton Foodshare, lets see if we can top that number this year. Let's help to make this Yuletide Season a good one for everybody.

As always, we will be holding our awesome raffle and 50/50 draws and some other fun Yuletide surprises too! So, come out and get to know YOUR pagan and magically inclined community!

Need more information? Want to volunteer?
Email us at info@hammertownppm.com
Check out our Website: www.hammertownppm.com

Forest City Pub Moot

Please be Advised: Due to the organizing committee changing hands this event will not be available until January. Building Bridges Newsletter will keep you advised as new information becomes available.

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?ref=home#/group.php?gid=52870726646&v=info0>

Moot Night

Date: Dec 23/09
Time: 7 pm
Location: Winchester Arms in Belleville
Street: 173 Dundas Street East
City: Belleville

This event will re-establish itself in August!!! Come and enjoy an evening with other pagans. This event is a social evening and is a wonderful place to make new friends and contacts...Hope to see you There...Any details needed contact Tracy at "The Crystal Crib" 613-969-7415. Good idea to call Tracy to confirm event is ongoing.

London Ontario Pagan Coffee Social

Date: Dec 26/09
Time: 7 pm
Location 513 Queen St
City: London

The LOP coffee Social is held at 7 pm on the last Friday of every Month behind Need hams Funeral Home (side door)
There will be Coffee, Tea and Hot Chocolate provided for \$1 cup. All proceeds will go to fund our local Spiral Scouts group.



Tuesday December 1st...Full Moon Guided Meditation...(\$20)
Tuesday December 15th...Balsamic Moon Guided Meditation...(\$20)
Thursday December 17th...New Moon Guided Meditation...(\$20)
Wednesday December 30th...Full Moon/Blue Moon/Lunar Eclipse Guided Meditation...(\$20)
*All of the above meditations are from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30
Friday's 4th, 11th, & 18th from 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. "
ION CLEANSE & ULTIMATE INCH LOSS WRAP"...
SAVE \$20.00 in December!

DON'T MISS OUR HOLIDAY SEASON OPEN HOUSE,
Saturday December 19th, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
DECEMBER 1st thru DECEMBER 24th, The Ancient Mystic
will pay the Taxes on all Customer Purchases!

*****Please Register in advance for all workshops*****
For more information please visit our website
at

www.theancientmystic.com

5694 Highway 7 East ~ Unit 13, Markham, ON, L3P 1B4

What is Yule?

The snow is beginning to fall, and Yule is approaching fast. This is the time of year for entertaining, spending time with family,



were off in their slumbers.

The word Yule probably derives from the Norse "iul" or the Anglo-Saxon "hweol", both meaning "wheel". According to Webster's Dictionary, however, it originates in "geola" (Old English for "ice"), another name for the month during which it was celebrated. "Modronacht" (Mother's Night) is yet another Name for the Midwinter Festival.

The celebration of the Winter Solstice, is as often as not referred to as Yule, and is common to almost every culture. For this reason (although the Christian Church has long since adopted it as the birthdate of Jesus) it has retained more of the ancient Pagan traditions than any other holiday or festival. In earlier times, December 25th (the date now recognized as Christmas) was commemorated as the Birth of the Sun God, Mithra, and January 6 (Old Christmas) was a Dionysian festival. In Egypt, a celebration dedicated to Osiris was held at this time.

On this longest night of the year, darkness reaches its depths, and the year turns to begin its journey back towards the light. The dark winter is safe like our bedcovers



at night. Dark whispers of a Mother's love caress us. In the darkness of the Mother's womb, in the void we are safe, sustained, at peace, and can move inward, into our own dark selves, looking, learning, and purifying. Halfway through the winter season, it is a time to splurge a little and eat richly, celebrating the sweet return of the sun. We can cleanse ourselves of all that blocks us from being born new with the rising new solstice sun when the sun King is born, with promises for the spring ahead.

In many cultures this turn of the wheel is celebrated as a rebirth of hope, the birth

of a Son or the Sun. It is a time when families pull closer together to keep each other warm through the second half of winter. The world outside is cold, dark and damp, and everyone makes an effort to make the indoors cheery with candles or sparkling electric lights and decorations that celebrate their own interpretation of this time. Many bring an aromatic tree into the home, and hang bright fruits on it to emulate the rich harvest they pray for the following spring.

The Battle of the Kings!

The Holly King and the Oak King are part of Celtic mythology, and they represent two sides to the Greenman/Horned God and

could not exist without the other. They are probably constructs of the Druids to whom these two trees were highly sacred. The ancient Druids believed that the Gods lived within the trees, the trees were the doorway to the underworld and Guardian thereof. It was also thought that the trunk of the tree lead to the enchanted world of the Fae.



The Oak King (king of the waxing year) kills the Holly King (king of the waning year) at Yule. The Holly King and Oak King do not directly switch places twice a year, but rather both live simultaneously. The Oak King is born at Yule, and his strength grows through the spring, peaks at Beltane and then he weakens and dies at Samhain. The Holly King lives a reverse existence, and is born at Midsummer, waxes more powerful through the summer and fall, to his peak at Samhain. His influence then lessens until Beltane, when it is his turn to pass away. In this perspective, the two Kings enjoy a more intricate interplay of power and is perhaps a better illustration of their duality. At any given time, they both exist but have varying levels of influence throughout the year. Either way, each King represents different ideas.

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The Holly King, who has evolved into the present day Santa Claus, wears red, dons a sprig of holly in his hat, and drives a team of eight (total number of solar sabbats) deer, an animal sacred to the Celtic Gods. Holly and mistletoe are traditional to the season through commemoration of

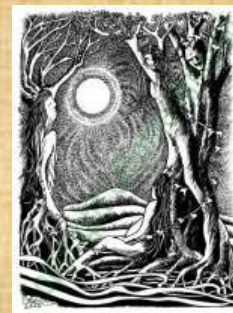


the battle. The holly was hung in honor of the Holly King; the mistletoe (which grows high in the branches of oak trees) in honor of the Oak King.

The time of the Oak King is for growth, development, healing, and new projects. The Holly King's time is for rest, reflection, and learning.

Yule is a time to look without fear into the dark and reap its wisdom before it is dissipated by the coming light, and it is a time to celebrate this returning light with love and renewed hope. It is a time to share the gifts of the previous year and to open the way for more in the year to come by sharing love, light, laughter and nourishment with those less fortunate.

The Ways of Old



Try to imagine yourself in a very cold climate, where the winter nights are very long. Firewood and food are both becoming very scarce and you have begun to fear for your own survival. As you keep a lonely vigil through this, the Longest Night, you feel as though the Darkness has taken over the Earth and the Light will never come again. Imagine your joy at that first spark of light and your hopes that, someday soon, the snow will melt and you will be warm and well fed! This is the way our ancestors must have felt about this time of celebration.

Many customs have survived from Pre-Christian times that lend themselves quite nicely to our rituals today. Among them is the ever-popular Yule Log. Traditionally, the Yule Log has been of oak, ash or beech, ritually cut (often at Dawn) and ceremonially carried into the house. It was lit by the head of the family with much ado. Toasts were often drunk with wine, cider or brandy, in those early morning hours, giving the participants a good head-start on the festivities.



A lesser known tradition is that of the Yule Clog. The Clog was a knobby block of wood, burnt in the kitchen hearth. Household servants were entitled to ale with their meals for as long as the Clog was kept burning. In many parts of Scandinavia, the object burnt was a fat wax candle, instead of a log. The candle was lit at Dawn and must burn until Midnight, or be considered an ill omen.

The Yule Log was said to have many magickal properties. Remnants of it, or its ashes, were kept in the house throughout the year for many purposes. Among these were protection from thunderstorms or lightning, protection from hail, preserving humans from chilblains and animals from various diseases. Mixed with fodder, the ashes would make the cows calve and brands were thrown into the soil to keep corn healthy. Women often kept fragments until Twelfth Night to ensure a thriving poultry flock in the coming year. It was customary to pour libations of wine or brandy upon the Log and to make offerings by scattering corn or bread crumbs over it. Even money was placed on the Log. Those charred "lucky coins" were then given to children or servants as gifts.

Wassailing is another happy survival of an old tradition. "Wassail" comes from the



Anglo-Saxon "Waes Hael", which has been translated to "Be

Well," "Be Whole" or "Be Healthy." The proper response to this toast is "Drink Hael", making it a shared blessing, a mutual well-wishing. Traditionally, carolers went from door to door, singing and bearing their "Wassail Cups", to be rewarded with the drink and fruited breads or other sweets.

Even with the Yule Log and the Wassail Bowl, no Yule celebration would be complete without a decorated tree. This custom is thought to originate in the Roman custom of decorating homes with laurel and evergreen trees at the Kalends of January (the Roman Winter Solstice celebration). It is interesting to note that, as with many other traditions adopted by the Church, the decorated evergreen (now called a "Christmas Tree") was originally condemned by Rome. An early Christian writer, Tertullian, spoke of the practice as follows:

"Let them" (the Pagans) "kindle lamps, they who have no light; let them fix upon their doorposts laurels which shall afterward be burnt, they for whom fire is so close at hand; meet for them are testimonies of darkness and auguries of punishment. But, thou" (the Christians) "art a light of the world and a tree that is ever green. If thou hast renounced temples, make not a temple of thine own house."

Even as late as the sixth century, Bishop Martin of Braga forbade the "adorning of houses with green trees." So obviously, the Christian adoption of the evergreen tree as a holiday symbol was another case of "If you can't beat 'em, join'em!" In Winter, when all is brown and dead, the evergreens symbolize immortality. They are reminders of the survival of life in the plant world, a means of contact with the Spirit of Growth and Fertility, which has been threatened by the absence of Light.



Especially good for this purpose are plants like Holly and Mistletoe, which actually bear fruit in Winter. (Mistletoe, the Golden Bough, the All-Healer, is traditional both at Winter and Summer Solstice)

It was thus that our Ancestors greeted the Yule festival. Although spring would not truly arrive for many weeks, they were assured of its arrival. They celebrated, daring to feast upon some of the remaining stored provisions, being certain that soon the Earth would begin to turn green and bear fruit. The traditional feast also contains carryovers from our Pagan ancestors. For example, the roasted pig with an apple in its mouth began with the Teutonic custom of sacrificing a pig to Frey at the Winter Solstice, to ensure fertility in the coming year.

A Musical Yule:

Music is a very important part of this joyous festival. Many of the "Christmas" carols are just as suited to Yule, with virtually no change. (It's a good guess that some of them were ours to start with!) "Joy to the World" and "Deck the Halls" are quite appropriate as is and you can have a lot of fun creating your own words for some of the others. In some cases, existing old lyrics prove that we are simply "reborrowing" what was "borrowed" from us, such as:

The Yule Days - traditional (The Twelve Days of Christmas)

The King sent his Lady on the first Yule day
A papingo-aye (peacock)
Who learns my carol and carries it away.

- 2nd - A Papingo-aye
- 3rd - Three plovers
- 4th - A goose that was grey
- 5th - Three starlings
- 6th - Three gold spinks
- 7th - A bull that was brown
- 8th - Three ducks a-merry laying
- 9th - Three swans a-merry swimming
- 10th - An Arabian baboon
- 11th - Three hinds a-merry dancing
- 12th - Two maids a-merry dancing
- 13th - Three stalks of corn

Each followed by "Who learns my carol, etc." ----- circa 1870

Note the thirteen days rather than twelve days and the variation of numbers in the verses. This was probably an instructional song, or perhaps a riddle. We have discovered other references to thirteen days of Yule, as opposed to twelve days of Christmas. It was customary to burn the Yule Log for thirteen nights to promote Fertility. (There is, by the way, a version of "Twelve Days" with the standard lyrics, except that it begins "On the last day of Yule, my beloved sent to me", and ends with "Thirteen Queens a-courting"!

So it is that the Log, the Tree, the Carol and the Feast are all parts of the Yule celebration with roots in The Old Ways! No matter how you observe, participate or celebrate this holiday season...soak yourself in all the warmth and blessings this magickal season has to offer! Waes Hael!

Tameika Oak
Mhorag Coven, HPS
Spirits of the Earth Festival

Family Traditions

New Traditions for an Ancient Festival"

Many years ago, before my children were born my sister and I began what was to become our Family Winter Solstice Tradition.

In a tiny apartment, nestled in the east end of Toronto my sister and I stocked up on sweet and salty snacks, rented favourite movies and prepared to stay up all night as we 'laboured' with the Great Mother and prepared for the birth of the sun. We lasted until about 4:00 a.m. when, warm under snuggly blankets, we fell sound asleep. We awoke before dawn, drove to the water plant in the Beaches and witnessed the rising sun as he struggled free of his dark womb re-emerging for another year.

Over the years I envisioned a non-commercial holiday with handmade gifts in a home where Christmas was long forgotten. Not so easy with well-meaning family that love to celebrate 'Commercial Christmas'. Today my kids are eight and five years old and over the years we have built a layered and rich tradition for celebrating the Winter Solstice.

Early in December we dig through the boxes of lights, candles and decorations, giving each ornament its special place in the house. 'Santa the Shaman' graces our foyer in his woolen cloak, stoically standing astride a wooden sled, staff held high. Our fresh Yule tree is lovingly smothered with decorations both homemade and store bought. Swan Lake Barbie dangles alongside a cryptic ceramic snowman that was hand painted at one of our Yule craft-making parties. The children 'ooh' and 'ahh' reminiscing over the sparkly and colourful decorations we've made over the years. Pictures glued to the lids of tin cans, tied with bits of yarn. Pinecones and cinnamon sticks bundled and tucked amongst the branches.

Finally, when all is quiet and we are bathed in the glow of twinkling lights and tinsel, it's time to build our family altar. Everyone disperses to their rooms to gather statues, stuffed dolls and action figures. All are welcome in this motley crew that becomes our 'nativity scene' to gather and witness the re-birth of the sun. A metaphor for our own community, the Goddess holds her honored place in the centre of the table while the Three Wise Women; maiden, mother and crone (ballerina statue, wooden carving and a picture of our grandmother; respectively) are there to play handmaiden, midwife and wise elder. Every evening a candle is lit and food offerings are left on the ancestors' plate.

Finally the big day arrives - the day before the Winter Solstice we prepare the guest rooms, portable beds and fill the house with snacks, movies and crafts. Dinner is a traditional Ukrainian meal to honour my maternal ancestors. Those who lived far in the north and suffered the dark cold days of winter must truly have rejoiced the returning light-half of the year!

Dinner begins with a boisterous toast to our health while piping hot borscht and sour cream is shared with family and friends. The table groans under the weight of perogies in fried onions, sauerkraut with kielbasa, fresh bread and cheese, pork schnitzel and apple strudel.

After dinner each of us, from baby to grandfather, make our Winter Solstice Sun craft. This two-sided sun represents the dark and light half of the year with its black-and-yellow sides. The yellow side comes alive as we paint; draw and glitter glue our dreams, wishes and hopes for the coming year. The finished suns are hung on doors with the black side facing out, quietly enduring the longest night of the year.

As the night wears on we play charades, board games, and cards and watch Blue Planet (a must!) and other favourite movies. We try our best to

keep each other up all night. The little ones and 'Dedo' (my dad) often nod off in splendid slumber.

Just before dawn arrives, I silently collect all of our family and guests and we pull on hats, mitts and warm coats grumbling and complaining that we have to go out into this cold, dark morning. But as we gather at the shoreline, a little huddle of loved ones, stamping feet to drive away the cold a hush falls and the grandness of the moment descends. Suddenly a change in the atmosphere, the sharp coldness of night gives way to a palpable expectancy as across the water the sun majestically rises above the horizon. Inching its way ever so slowly higher in the sky, suddenly the sun seems to burst forth in a red blast of energy. Our little crowd cheers and hugs, warm tears falling upon cold cheeks. The mood of the group is decidedly jovial and we all chatter away about the coming day. Who will make us hot chocolate? Who will do the breakfast dishes?

Back in our warm and cozy house coats, hats and mitts are shed as one-by-one we turn over our suns, the yellow side out, ready to face the light half of the year once again. My attempts to convince my children that Winter Solstice is better than Christmas are no longer important. It is different than Christmas, and that is just fine!

Winter Solstice Sun Craft

Craft paper black and yellow or orange 8.5" x 11"

Glue sticks

Markers

Paint

Yarn, thread

Hole punch

Glitter glue (optional)

1. Take one piece of black paper and another piece of yellow or orange paper and glue them back-to-back.
2. Draw a sun on the yellow side with a pencil or marker, make the sun any way you like, just make sure the rays are big enough to decorate with words.
3. Cut out the shape of your sun.
4. On the yellow or orange side write words on each of the rays representing what you are grateful for or what you wish for (or both!).
5. Decorate the centre of your sun and make it really special, just for you!
6. The black side can be left plain or can be decorated to represent that which you wish to release this year. The words should be written in dark marker so they cannot be easily seen.
7. Punch a hole in your sun and add some thread or yarn so it can be hung up.
8. Hang it up with the dark side out until the sun rises on Winter Solstice and then turn over to the light side. Blessed be!

Valery Mitkos Philip

Yoga Instructor,

Aromatherapist and Nutritional Consultant

Feast of the Dead Festival Review

Each year, I look forward to Feast of the Dead with excitement and despair. Yes, my friends, despair. Excitement - because I will once again have the opportunity to be with family and friends, attend a great ritual and have an awesome time. Despair, because it is the final Festival until Spring. Winter can be a very long season when you live so far away from everyone!

But despair aside, I must say I had a great weekend. We had reserved our regular cabin and much to our surprise and delight, there was a really cute skull wearing pink horns hanging from our door when we arrived. No mistaking who's cabin was whose!

Once the van was unloaded, the beds were made, and we did the all important *sigh...we are here*, we ventured over to the kitchen cabin to see what was up. Pagan Karaoke!! Let me tell you, there is nothing funnier than a bunch of pagans gettin' down and gettin' funky with Karaoke. We sang, we danced, we butchered the classics, but most of all, we relaxed and had fun.

Saturday dawned bright and sunny, and incredibly warm for this time of year. It was a fantastic day, and you could feel the excitement building as the day wore on. Tonight was the night of the ritual. Tonight we would welcome our ancestors. Tonight we would don our costumes, lay out our feast, take a journey to the Underworld, and say goodbye.

For anyone who has attended Spirits of the Earth, you know that Fox and Tameika always go above and beyond to make your experience as magickal and as exciting as they can. Feast of the Dead is no exception. The Journey to the Underworld is a part I look forward to each year.

After a fantastic ritual, which connects us to the spirit world, one by one we file outside.

The Gates to the Underworld await us. The Guardians guide us in, blind fold us, and this voice comes from the darkness. It wraps around you, and seems to come from everywhere. As we walk, hand to shoulder, we spiral down deeper and deeper. The air takes on the distinct smell of earth, and a chill creeps in. Always there is that voice, guiding you, pulling you. Always my thoughts turn to those I have lost. Those that we have all lost. It comforts me to think that on this blindfolded journey, they are there, just outside of our path. I can't speak for all, but I certainly feel the magick of the Underworld, and the energy of our ancestors all around us.

This year was by far the best one yet. Being blindfolded, you obviously no longer have the sense of sight, so all your other senses are heightened. The journey plays to these senses, creating a magickal, charged atmosphere around you. It makes you vulnerable, dependent on your guides, and tests your limits of trust. All this is done in a safe environment, so that you can let go, release your fears, and maybe share a moment with a loved one.

After the walk is over, we all head back into the kitchen cabin, which I must say, has been turned into quite the Feasting Hall. As we share a meal together we are treated to a beautiful dance routine.

As many reflect quietly to themselves or approach the altar to light a candle for the dead, a feeling of peace settles over the room. It is truly a ritual you must experience. There aren't enough words to describe all the emotions that I feel.

What I can say for sure, is that I will be back.

Written by Lupa



Blessed Arts~~ The Sacred Art of Hairstyling~

Haircutting with Intention and Reiki for relaxation.

~Reiki Harmonic Balancing~

A fusion of sound,spirit drumming,colour,crystals,aroma,and guided visualization.

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Natalie Rubyhill is a Holistic Reiki Practitioner with 20 yrs of experience as a hairstylist and artist.

416-255-5014 faery369@yahoo.ca
www.blessedarts.biz

Yule Musings

Well here we are coming into the month of December and ahead of us is the yuletide explosion of events!!!

This is an excellent time for us to network and connect with folks during the holiday celebrations. We will be attending pagan and non pagan events and parties. It's a good idea to be "up" on our yuletide lore... This can come in handy for icebreakers at parties where you don't know too many folks, and or just good stimulating conversation. Check out the other articles in this newsletter for some helpful background. Don't forget the rule of 3! Try to connect with 3 folks at each event you go to. Including family events! Make an effort to have a substantial conversation with 3 people at a family gathering. Tell them what's happening with you and connect!!! You may end up with a tip on a purchase, a place, a job, or place to get a good bargain!! Most new networking connections come from the family and friends department so don't forget. If your out at a craft faire, Yule tree yard, or in the parks for sledding or yuletide events, keep that same networking focus.. You may meet someone who may be important or influential for you in the next little while.. So enjoy December and all the social goodness and opportunity it may bring you!!!!

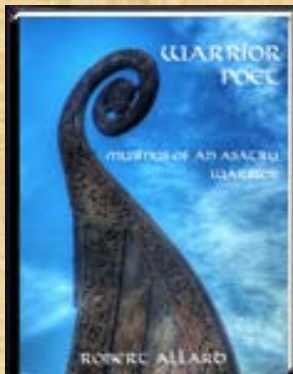
Also, something to bear in mind is Our Ancestors. For those of you who do the Yule tree annually, you may want to (if not already) dedicate one of the decorations to a relative or friend or other ancestor who have passed over. There may be an ornament passed down, which was once a favorite of theirs, or you can make or purchase a new one for the tree. Each year then, when decorating, a part of their legacy will be with your celebrations. This also works very well if you do wreaths instead...to honor and remember their gifts, their inspirations and their legacies.

HAVE A COOL YULE EVERYONE!!!!!!

in service,
Jim

Warrior Poet

E-Book Review



Deep within the dark depths of the internet is a little oasis of the written word called **Wyrddwood Publications**. This wonderful site publishes pagan delights in E-book form. WP is also dedicated to environment awareness and plants a tree, in a deforested area, with the sale of every 'Green Leaves' eBook..

It is owned and operated by Edain Duguay and she has taken obvious care to bring together a collection

of authors that are both unique and talented.

Warrior Poet, Musings of an Asatru Warrior by Robert Allard is one of WP's delights. Released Oct. 22/09

Warrior Poet is Robert's first prose piece and is exclusive to Wyrddwood Publications. The reader is taken on a journey of the soul, written by a modern day warrior. Robert is an accomplished leather worker and has completed wood projects that leave me in awe. Considering Robert is my "Kindred Brother" and we have spent many a night around the fire, I had no idea this strong craftsman and experienced swordsman also had a Skuld hidden deep within his warrior persona. Robert has taken the same care in his poetic musings as he does with his leather work and has therefore tooled a written work of art.

He gives his reader a glimpse into the heart of his creativity and does it with passion. His use of Kennings is profound and authentic. Robert has captured the essence of a warrior, wrapped it in chain mail and served it to his reader with the nine noble virtues as his shield.

Yule is just around the corner and if you're looking for the perfect gift for the heathen on your list, I believe Warrior Poet, Musings of an Asatru Warrior would satisfy even the harshest of critics. For information on how to order this book as well as others exclusive to Wyrddwood, visit their site at: www.wyrddwoodpublications.com

Written By
Crystal Allard

Wearing the Web

The Theoi Project - www.theoi.com

I recently had this website pointed out to me and I have to say that I'm impressed by the scope of information available!

The website was originally dedicated to profiling only deities and mythical creatures from Greek Mythology, but it has grown and covers much more, including kings, villains etc.

The initial menu gives you the option of searching through a number of categories: *Gods/Goddesses*, *Creatures*, *Titans/Titanesses*, *Giants*, *Heroes/Kings/Villains*, or *Nymphs*. Each listing is extremely comprehensive and chock full of awesome information, including academic references and quotations from various ancient texts, which I really appreciate. In addition to that, they offer a full bibliography of the sources used, plus a page dedicated solely to e-texts, which allows you to link directly to classical texts they have referenced that are available online.

Most of the categories are listed alphabetically, but you can search both the "Gods/Goddesses" and the "Fabulous Creatures" listings by category, such as "Agricultural Gods", "Sea Gods", "Dragons", "Giants" and the like.

Each profile includes:

- the name in Greek and Latin, as well as a transliteration and the meaning of the name,
- a listing of both their parents and their offspring,
- a short description, followed by an encyclopedic summary,
- quotations from a wide selection of ancient Greek and Roman texts with source material footnoted,
- other applicable stories and myths.

There are also many other awesome areas of this website to explore!

- A list of over 3700 names from Greek mythology, each with their own short write-up.
- A bestiary, describing all sorts of creatures from Greek myth.
- A "Pantheon" page that describes the eight classes of Greek gods.
- Not to mention, a whole page focused solely on the various cults dedicated to specific Gods in ancient Greece.

The one thing that I found disappointing was the "Families" page. It is supposed to offer eight comprehensive family trees of the gods but unfortunately, none of the images would come up.

Sadly, it doesn't look as though the site has been updated since roughly 2007 but the information that is there makes it an invaluable resource.

Upon a quick scan of the guestbook, it would seem many, many people agree with me!

Amanda Hyde
Hamilton PPD Chairperson
Regional Coordinator for PPD Canada
info (at) ppdhamilton.org
905-902-4011

Events

Voodoo Blues Fest

Date: Dec 5/09

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Black Swan Tavern

Street: 154 Danforth Ave

City: Toronto

Cost: \$5.00 cover charge, some of the proceeds will go to Yoruba House.

A night of fun that includes traditional African drumming combined with the blues. Bring your drums and your Instrument and step up on stage and jam, You are all welcome to express your self. There will be some special things happening through the night. I hope to see you all there, Come on out and say Happy Birthday to Apaulo

The Toronto Small Press Book Fair

Date: Saturday, 12 December 2009

Time: 10:00 - 5:00

Location: The Gladstone Hotel

Street: 1214 Queen Street West

Town/City: Toronto, ON

Hostess for the Toronto Pagan Pub Moot, Karen Dales is the author of The Chosen Chronicles which include Changeling: Prelude to The Chosen and Angel of Death: Book One of The Chosen will be at the Winter Book Fair on Saturday, December 12th.

She has been a Notable Guest at Polaris23, a Special Guest at Fan Expo 2009 and is currently a Celebrity Judge for Dark Idol 2009-2010 Horror Writing Contest. Karen is married, has one son and two cats, and lives in Toronto. Currently she is hard at work writing the next novel in the series Shadow of Death: Book Two of The Chosen. Visit her website <http://www.thechosenchronicles.com> Come out and get your copy of her book and get it personally signed.

Kucios - Baltic Winter Solstice

Date: December 13th

Time: 3:00-7:00pm

Street: 140 Carlton Street

Town/City: Toronto

Kucios is an important rite for Balts, be they pagan or christian. It is one of several rites which has survived virtually intact into the modern era. During Kucios we observe the weakening of Saule, the Sun Goddess, and with our songs & prayers we grant her the strength to triumph over the darkness. Kucios is the Baltic New Year, a time of forgiveness and fresh starts. Come celebrate this festival. The feast is the ritual, so please just bring your selves.

Spirits of the Earth presents...

Yule Ball

Saturday December 5, 2009

Doors open at 7:30pm

Games ~ Billiards
50/50 Draw Door Prizes
Live DJ ~ Midnight Buffet
Silent Auction ~ Licensed Bar

Advance: Single \$20, Couple \$35
Door: Single \$25, Couple \$45

SUGAR & SPICE Everything Ice

519-762-2000 | info@spiritsfest.com

Purchase tickets online, by visiting our website at...

www.spiritsfest.com

Port Drum

Yule Be Drummin'

Date: Dec 13/09

Time: 5-9 pm

Location: Bathe Hall

Street: 289 Eulalie St.

City: Oshawa

Admission is \$10

Start the Yuletide season off right Come on out to sing and drum with us! Born of a need to feel the beat, we are proud to present to you, the Port Drum Circle! We are a teaching, learning and healing circle catering to all levels of drummers! This event is brought to you by OPA. The sessions will be in parts: Meet and greet; integrating singing and chanting, a teaching segment where we will be learning the basics as well as some new licks; break time with healthy snacks and refreshments; then a jam session to close out the night!



EVENTS

Stress Reduction for the Holiday Season with Tony Murdock

Date: December 13, 2009

Time: 7-9pm

Location: Prana Yoga & Wellness Studio's Inc

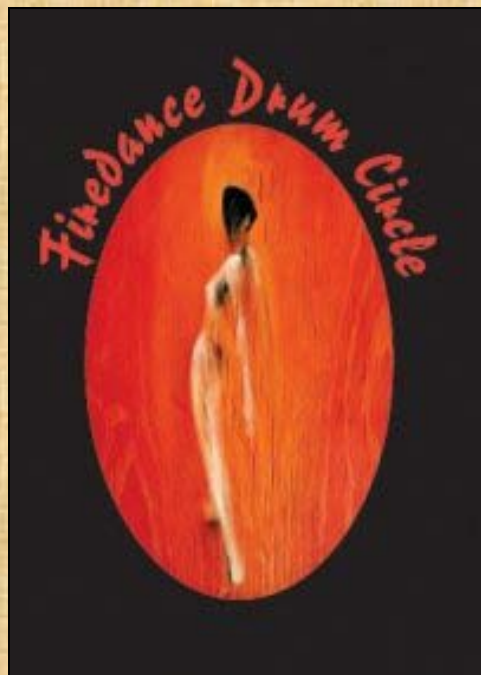
Street: 245 Wycroft Road #2

City: Oakville,

Cost: \$35 pre-registered; \$40 at door (+gst)

Learn meditations and breathing practices that will help you to keep your energy levels up during this often exhausting time of year. Learn to keep your mind calm, to keep your heart open (and loving) and to keep your self connected to the SPIRIT OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON.

For More Information on how to register for this and other workshops contact the studio @ 905 338-2880 or info@pranayogastudios.com



Date: Dec 19/09

Time: 9:00pm to 2:00 am

Location: Rails and Ales-this month only!!!

Street: 752 Danforth Ave

City: Toronto

Cost: \$10:00

Join us as we celebrate Yule in a style unique to Firedance. Our beloved "Headbanging Drummer" Tony will be home for the holidays and ready to jam. Bring your shakers, drums and your shimmying hips, to our One Night only at Rails and Ales. Firedance returns to the Black Swan in January.



Intuition Development with Monica Bodirsky

Date: Tuesday December 1st Time: 6:30 - 8pm

Sound Healing Ceremony - presented by Vibrancy Inc.

Date: Thursday, December 3rd Time: 7:30 pm

Ecstatic Trance Body Postures with Ingrid Cryns

Wednesday December 16th 6:30 - 9:30 pm

Hand-Painted Ceremonial Objects by Fire & Water Gifts

Opening Reception Friday December 4th 6 - 8pm

Pottery Show and Sale by Inspirations Studio

Opening Reception Friday December 11th 6 - 8pm

Chanukah Candle Lighting

Friday December 11th 4:23pm

Juicy Fridays! Celebrates Winter Solstice

with Deirdre Norman Friday December 18th 7pm

Tarot Tuesdays 12 to 5pm Weekly with Monica Bodirsky wwd

For more information please visit our website at

www.gowonderworks.com

or contact us at 416-323-3131

79a Harbord Street, Toronto, ON, M5S 1G4

SiMuCOR Yule Celebrations

Date: Dec 20/09

Time: 2:00 pm

Location: Brentwood Community Centre

Street: 9926 County Rd 10

City: Brentwood.

Cost \$2:00 for members \$5:00 for non members

Our Yule Celebrations will be held on Sunday.

The doors will open at noon, Ritual starts at 2 p.m. and will be followed by potluck. The doors to the Brentwood hall will close at 6 p.m.. Children are welcome. Please keep an eye on www.simucor.ca for updates as the ritual gets finalized.

<http://www.mapquest.com/maps?city=Brentwood&state=ON&address=9926+County+Rd+10>



Starting your own Pub Moot

Combine a night at a pub, pint of your favorite brew, a great burger, and a selection of great friends. End a long work week at a cozy coffee house with a mug of hot coffee or a spiced tea and a warm scone, then add your friends. This is the scene at your local pub or coffee moot, the only difference being that the friends, associates and new faces that surround you are members of your local Pagan community. What better opportunity to socialize, network, learn of upcoming events, find out more about the different paths and traditions that forge the community?

Moots exist and currently thrive in many local areas with a strong Pagan presence. Toronto alone has three monthly moots that each draw their own unique crowd of regulars and new faces that soon become regulars. Curious to start your own moot? Here are a few key points to keep in mind.

Know your area and your local Pagan community

Preliminary networking to know your own area is the first step - talk to store owners or other notable people in the community to get their feedback on a moot that would benefit the community most. Consider the type of venue (pub, coffee house, bookstore, etc.) being mindful of the onset of a crowd and the effect that would have on the location. When scouting locations, remember to be frank and honest with the venue owner or manager, let them know that your event is Pagan in nature so no one is surprised later on. Settle on a date, once a month is ideal, which would suit the venue and your crowd.

Start advertising

Make use of online social media (Facebook, Twitter, mailing lists, message boards) where you can reach a large number of people with a single click. Create an online presence (a website or a profile page on a social site) where people can find out more and have ways of contacting you. Outside of the Internet, be sure to make posters, flyers and business cards that you can distribute to local Pagan-friendly businesses. Of course, the best way to advertise for your new moot is through word of mouth. Always be an advocate of your moot and be willing to discuss it with all the pertinent information.

Don't forget that the crowd you're hoping to draw will require plenty of notice, so begin advertising early.

Let them come...

As Rome wasn't built in a day, neither will be your moot. It may take weeks and even months to build momentum for your new social, so don't get discouraged. Patience really is a virtue, so keep at it!

Maintain your advertising presence and keep the word out there and soon enough, the crowd will come.

Keep with the ebb and flow

The atmosphere of the event will be the drawing factor of a crowd, keep the mood light. Encourage Pagan discussion when possible but let that not be the sole focus of the evening. Converse with those new to the community and answer their questions to the best of your knowledge and refer them to others that may know more. Be prepared to make changes (date, time, venue, etc.) if you see that a change will benefit the crowd, consider these changes early on so you can inform your attendees well in advance. As the host, you are responsible for the crowd, while you are socializing keep a general eye on everyone attending for security measures. Be sure to encourage attendees to bring their own networking materials to pass around and keep the networks flowing. Above all, be open to receiving feedback both positive and negative. Take this constructively and remember that though your moot may be something you take great pride and joy in, it is not YOU, so don't take it personally.

Beyond the technicalities of running a moot is the sheer joy and satisfaction of knowing you are actively supporting your local Pagan community by weaving and maintaining the web. Keep that in mind during every step and remember to have fun. Running a moot is a labor of love, one that you facilitate and the community builds.

By Samantha Wu

The Dirt and Nothing but the Dirt

Yuletide at the Hearth and around the Home

When I was asked to submit an article for this publication, it was to be about my favourite baking recipe and a bit about baking at Yule. Yes, it's true that baking is an important part of this time of year; it scents our homes, it creates the hearth environment from many, many years ago where the family would gather at the end of cold dark days to warm themselves around roaring hearth fires, perhaps sharing in some mulled cider or wine. This is where the family would socialize about their day's events, share in the cooking duties or build the excitement of the coming Yuletide by eyeing the cookies, cakes and pies that have been prepared for the upcoming holiday. All these things are representative of the Yuletide celebration, the return of the Sun, the re-birth of the God, the battles between Dark and Light and of Oak and Holly Kings.

However, being a Hedgewitch, my baking is of a very much different matter at this time of year. I tend to be the type of Witch that is happiest with my hands in the earth; so after putting the garden to bed in later Autumn, I turn my focus to our wild Earth and Air bound friends. I dig out the bird feeders from the basement, give them a good cleaning, load them up with feed and hang them outside, preferably where we can watch them. Supplementing the food supply of our feathery and woodland friends is very important during harsh winter conditions, it helps guarantee their survival. The amount of energy/calories that birds and other small animals need to maintain for optimum winter health is staggering, so our help is very important to them.

Some simple Yuletide treats I do each year are: String plain, slightly stale popcorn or plain oat cereal to form garlands or string popcorn with cranberries and hang them on an outdoor trees or shrubs for the birds and squirrels. Cut slices of whole grain bread with a seasonal cookie cutter, spread with peanut butter, sprinkle with birdseed or pieces of corn and unsalted red skinned peanuts, place on fence posts. Make suet balls or Pinecone Bird Feeders (recipe below), or if you are really ambitious, make a suet wreath to hang on a fence! You will find that our woodland and feathery friends will thank you by giving you, your kids, and if you have them cats, the best "cat TV" ever! You will also find your own fascination in their habits; lifestyles & daily dramas will very much become part of your daily routine.

What ever you do to celebrate Yule in your home, may it be in Peace with Happiness and filled with much Love and Joy.

Pinecone Wild Bird Feeder

Materials you will need for each pinecone feeder:



~ A large, open pinecone ~ Vegetable shortening, lard or suet ~ Oatmeal or corn meal ~ Birdseed, preferably a good blend for outdoor birds that is higher in black sunflower seed & less on cracked corn & filler ~ A few feet of cotton string or jute twine ~ Mixing bowl, Butter knife, Spoon, Scissors ~ Pie tin, paper plate or cookie sheet ~ $\frac{1}{2}$ cup measuring cup. *Optional:* High-energy bird foods such as dried fruit (cut into small chunks), red skinned peanuts, sunflower seeds, millet



How to make one Pinecone bird feeder:

Tie the string around the wider, stem end of the pinecone. Mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup lard with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oatmeal or corn meal in a mixing bowl until well blended, spread over pinecone with knife. Pour the birdseed mixture into a pie tin, roll the pinecone in the birdseed until well covered. Suspend the feeder from a tree branch outside.

by Amy Taylor

Moon Moments

Full Moon December 2 Gemini 11 degrees

Those bold visions you have need to be backed up with hard data now. The Mercury / Uranus alignment suggests wild ideas are needed to refresh daily life. A Venus / Saturn sextile supports relationship commitments so consider taking the next step. Mars, Jupiter and Chiron combine to offer hope and enough daring to help you overcome any fears or insecurities that have held you back. Adventure, discovery and new horizons help you get a fresh perspective on current events.

Planet Tracks

Mercury in Sagittarius November 17 - December 5

Mercury in Capricorn December 6 - February 10 2010

Venus in Scorpio November 9 - December 1

Venus in Sagittarius December 2 - 25

New Moon December 16 Sagittarius 25 degrees

This hopeful New Moon, in the most optimistic sign of all, channels the vision and compassion of Neptune along with the drive and energy of Mars. Magic happens under skies like these as you have the chance to find the kernel of truth within and act upon it. An enlivening Venus / Mars trine lifts spirits and energy levels, encouraging you to take healthy risks for happiness and for love. There is much positive energy to be discharged now so see the opportunities in your life and act on them.

December 31 Full Moon Eclipse 11 degrees Cancer

The New Year begins with a soulful lunar eclipse that highlights the importance of work / life balance. Domestic dreams demand attention as you realize action is needed if you want to create your ideal home life this year. Venus aligns with this Full Moon helping you find balance and compromise with significant others. Mars retrograde under this Full Moon suggests turning your attention inwards rather than moving forward. Explore your motivations and desires - you may be surprised by the homely truths illuminated under Full Moon. Use your new awareness to adjust future plans.

Planet Tracks:

Mercury retrograde until January 14

Venus in Aquarius January 18 - February 11

Mars retrograde in Leo

Jupiter in Pisces January 18 - June 6

Saturn in Libra retrograde from January 12

By Kelly Surtees

Coming Next Month

January Events
Fun with the Kids
More Dirt with Amy
Web Weaving with Amanda