

Aontacht

Creating Unity Through Community

Celestial Spirituality

Volume 5 Issue 4 Spring/Autumn 2013

Brought to you
by the community of Druidic Dawn
(www.druidicdawn.org)

aontacht

creating unity in community

Volume 5 Issue 4
Spring - Autumn 2012

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*Volume 5 Issue 4
Celestial Spirituality
Summer/Winter Solstice 2012*

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Contributors



Biljana Banchotova: Her passion as a visionary painter flows from the sacred path of self-realization; the beauty and sacred geometry of spirit & matter that animates all Nature. Each of the paintings is held by a moving "life force" (flowing energy) and reveals a "wisdom story" that is found within its movement. The vibrant imagery appears tranquil on her canvas, with a shape-shifting nature that mystically inspires and invites the seer. Find her at: <http://www.biljanaart.com/>



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Duncan Lunan has written seven books, 820 articles and 33 short stories. "Children from the Sky", "With Time Comes Concord" and "The Stones and the Stars, Building Scotland's Newest Megalith" are all on Amazon. After 30 years in Glasgow, Scotland, he's returned to his home town, Troon with his wife Linda.

Contributors



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Alison Leigh Lilly is the producer and co-host of Faith, Fern & Compass. Nurturing the nature-centered, mist-and-mystic spiritual heritage of her Celtic ancestors, she explores themes of peace, poesis and wilderness through essays, articles, poetry and podcasting. Her work has appeared in numerous publications both in print and online. You can learn more about her work on her website: alisonleighlilly.com

Environmental Benefits Statement

Aontacht magazine is only available online as a free .pdf download; thereby saving trees, water, solid waste and greenhouse gases. It is designed on an Energy Star rated computer.

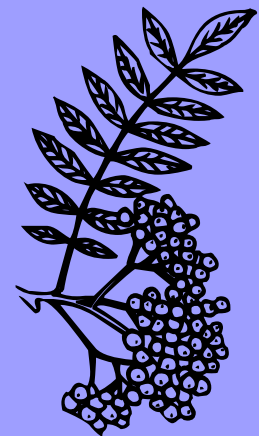
Editorial Notes

You do not have to be a member of the Druidic Dawn community to submit to the magazine.

Please submit contributions directly to the editorial staff via email to:

aontacht@druidicdawn.org

Refer to the last page of this issue for writer's guidelines and more information, before you submit inquiries or contributions.



Contributors



Below is the theme for the next issues

Volume 6, Issue 1

Plants

Totems, guides, our spiritual relationships with plants, use in divination.

Deadline May 15, 2013

Volume 6, Issue 2

Indigenous Beliefs and the Land

Relationship with Mother Earth, the Elements, Sacred Motion, Protecting the Land

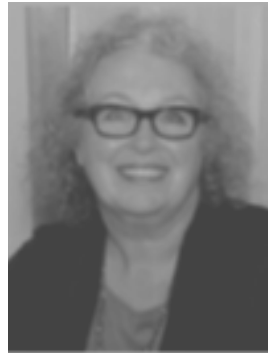
Deadline Aug 15, 2013

Volume 6, Issue 3

Women in Druidry

Individual Women Druids, the Female Perspective, the Divine Feminine, Working with Goddesses

Deadline Nov 15, 2013



Shelley Carter, Elora Tarot Project coordinator, comes from a family that has been card reading for at least one hundred years. Originally taught to read cards by her grandmother, Shelley says that when she was introduced to Tarot cards, it was like a switch was turned on. Since then, many happy hours have been spent with the Tarot, exploring the history and art work, reading, collecting decks and teaching. <http://www.eloratarot.com/>



Sofia Dabalsa is an artist everyday and for me the creative path is following my spirit. I imagine myself walking along a dark forest like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz; I'm a bit scared but I know I've got brains, heart and courage coming along with me. My spirit illuminates the yellow-bricked road of creation and each time I decide to pay close attention to my spirit, I brighten up. www.sofia.blogspot.com



Faye Boyd (Fae) has been interested in Nature and all things Celtic for many a year. She is a member of OBOD, Druidic Dawn, Ord Brighideach International, Celtic Reiki Master, Hot Stone Therapist, Guided Meditations and is a spoken word artist. Fae resides in Canada.



*News from the Aontacht
Production Team*

From the desk.....



There is an old philosophical construct where different blind people come to an understanding of what an *elephant* is by touching only one area of the elephant's body.

The one with the trunk thinks an elephant is like a thick hollow rope while the one touching the side thinks an elephant is like a wall. In each case their conclusion is drastically incorrect despite their personal experience because each of them is drawing their conclusion from data from only a small part of the entire elephant.

But at least a side or a trunk is a *significant* part of an elephant. But when we are talking about understanding the *universe*, what we experience is less than one *millionth* of one percent of the entire universe.

How arrogant and blind it is of us to think we know something for *sure* about this vast universe. How odd that we think we have an understanding of the intelligence beings that exist in the universe and the mechanics of how it operates. How uninformed we really are as we carry on about the nature of God and Goddess and what they purportedly want of us or have provided for us.



We think we have developed *knowledge* about life and its many forms and we seek a greater understanding about all that we perceive, yet we do so adrift upon a vast sea of assumptions.

Yet, while we can admittedly know very little *for sure* about the *overall* universe, we can know *some* things *about the part of the universe that we can examine* and blindly touch.

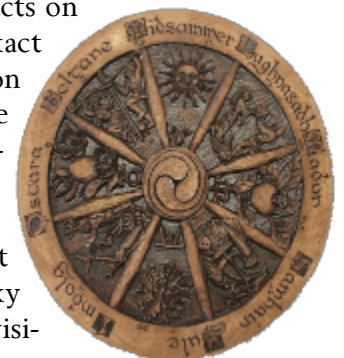
This is made more difficult as it seems to many that the universe is not just a stationary unthinking model to examine and study, but that it is reaching out and trying to communicate *with us*.

That said, and regardless of whatever your believe is about higher intelligence in the universe, we certainly know that the worlds beyond Earth certainly have a profound and continuous *impact* on us.

The *sun* provides the energy of photosynthesis and thus provides our entire food supply. The *moon* impacts our waters in powerful ways, moving the oceans and the all the lands they touch every day. Large asteroid hits have had species altering impacts in the past that fundamentally helped shape our world's ecology and greatly altered the evolutionary paths of *all* planetary life.

Who is to say what other parts of the universe have unseen or little known impacts on us? While we know the exact second sun flares will arrive on earth and that they interfere with our satellites and technology,

Who is to say what effect Mars has on us, or the galaxy travelling comets and other visitors that visit our solar system.



Who can say what the impact is of the more distant stars and the planetary configurations and alignments when we are born and as we traverse our brief time upon the sea of life?

But having *some* knowledge of the universe we are brave enough to guess and to slowly expand our framework of reality. Some folks among our earth based spiritual community are more *sensitive* to these forces, and they make it their life's work to look for the ways the universe is communicating with us and impacting who we are and affecting the conditions of the world.

There are great visionary artists like our Interviewee, Biljana Birthing Star who can see into the patterns of the universe and express what she sees in her art and through her healing. Others use their knowledge of astrology to give guidance, some understand the mechanics of the universe and share that knowledge for those with a desire to understand our place in the universe.

There are more identified stars in the apparent universe than all the grains of sand that exist on Mother Earth. And we are constantly striving to expand what little we know of this universe as we experiment with and grow into new ways of perceiving and understanding the universe.

And each of us has a unique way of *expressing* what we think we know about the universe. We share a common interest in expanding our knowledge and we are constantly building up a new vocabulary and ways to express what we perceive. Ultimately, we are part of a grand biological and spiritual experiment of epic proportions, neither knowing where the experiment is going, how it got here nor whether there is anyone steering the boat.

Let our place in the universe and our complete lack of being able to answer these questions provide us with a deep sense of humbleness, but one that allows us to more fully embrace and experience the *journey*. And may we find joy in working with the universe and being part of such a marvellous adventure.

Renard

Editor

Aontacht Magazine





News from the Druidic Dawn Management Team

Since its inception as a web site in September 2007, Druidic Dawn has grown to what it is today by the hard work and dedication of the Directors, Management team and Volunteers who have spent many hours compiling and developing the site into what we believe is the best centralised forum for Druidry currently available....

Druidic Dawn has constantly grown in terms of membership and knowledge and has strived to provide free access to all available Druid related information to all. This information has been collected and compiled over many years by the team, intent in making all of us aware of each other and offering a staff to support and aid us all on the path we choose to walk.

Over the last year or so the work behind the scenes has increased exponentially with the growing numbers of members. The web site you all know is at a point where, for many reasons, it has become unmanageable. Over the last five months or so, a new web site has been developed, is currently under review and scheduled to go live at Beltaine.

At this point we'd like to say that the new web site retains all the existing functionality and is, from the feedback we currently have, just as good or better to navigate and use. Hopefully everyone will have the same experience.

This leads us to a topic that has been the cause of much debate, cost!

Over the last fifteen months Druidic Dawn has provided a facility and gently asked for donations. It was hoped that sufficient funds would be collected to allow DD to continue in its current form and be totally free to everyone.

Unfortunately, the donations we have received so far, and many thanks to those who have donated, have not been sufficient to cover the base costs of keeping the web site on line.

After more debate and discussion, we have come to the conclusion that if Druidic Dawn is to be maintained, it's essential for the running costs to be met, aided by the many who enjoy the facilities the site provides and not borne by the same few who dedicate their time to keeping the site running. With this in mind and trying not to deter, restrict or exclude anyone, different methods of fund raising have been discussed and with some regret, the following proposed. Anyone with an interest in Druidry, wishing to become a member of Druidic Dawn can still do so, free of charge.

However, access to certain information and services will be restricted

It is hoped that current members of Druidic Dawn understand the need for these changes and find the unique resources Druidic Dawn provides worth supporting in the future.

For those wishing to support Druidic Dawn and have full access to everything the site has to offer we ask that they become Friends of Druidic Dawn (FoDD) for an annual subscription of £10, \$15AUD, \$15USD, \$15CAD, 14Euro, with unrestricted access to all services, as currently enjoyed by all.

In addition FoDD members will be legible for concessionary advertising rates within the Aontacht magazine for those who wish to use that facility.

Payment can be made directly from Druidic Dawn using PayPal or bank details can be provided for bank transfer or deposit.

The community consultation which occurred this time last year. In response to the feedback received. Druidic Dawn and its community magazine Aontacht will be introducing paid advertising. This will commence in the next issue of the Summer/Winter Solstice, additional information will be made available on the website.

The advertising rates, sizes per issue are available in the following table .

Aontacht Magazine Pricing Structure

Full page		\$90
2/3 rd page	120mm W x 257mm H	\$60
1/2 of a page	190mm W x 126mm H	\$45
1/3rd of a page	120mm W x 126mm H	\$30
1/6th of a page	60mm W x 126mm H	\$15
Business Card	120mm W x 50mm H	\$10

To advertise on the Druidic Dawn website send an enquiry for further details.

It is hoped that current members of Druidic Dawn and Aontacht readers understand the need for these changes and find the unique resources Druidic Dawn provides are worth supporting in the future

Blessings

nigel

Aontacht DD Representative



Druidic Dawn

Feature Interview



**A Conversation with Biljana Banchotova,
Renard and the Druidic Dawn Community.**

Biljana Banchotova

Her passion as a visionary painter flows from the sacred path of self-realization; the beauty and sacred geometry of spirit & matter that animates all Nature. Each of the paintings is held by a moving "life force" (flowing energy) and reveals a "wisdom story" that is found within its movement. The vibrant imagery appears tranquil on her canvas, with a shape-shifting nature that mystically inspires and invites the seer. Find her at: <http://www.biljanaart.com/>

DD: On behalf of the Aontacht staff, the Druidic Dawn and our global community, I would like to thank you for taking the time to be part of this Interview and sharing a bit about yourself and your work.

To start off, *you say you woke up in your birth country of South Africa to the beat of the Mother Drum.* How old were you when this happened and can you describe the awakening or was it something that happened gradually over a period of years?

BBS: Greetings to all the friends at Aontacht and Druidic Dawn. Thank you for asking about my birth place and country. In 1976, my family was travelling in South Africa. During that time, by celestial influences and the pull of Mother Earth's gravity, I came into this World. Those were challenging years for the South African people. I was only 2 when my family went back home, to Macedonia. I have often wondered at the mystery of my birthplace and people in Macedonian have often questioned me about it. Sometimes, African ancestors will appear in a dream, slowly pulling me to remember. At 24, I gave birth to Justin my son, here in Canada. Soon after, I was given an African Tribal Drum. Before I even had a chance to play this Drum, it fell from my back and the skin broke. It was then that I felt the pain of the heart. I soul journeyed for ten years to heal this Drum. Along the way, I met with many of this land's First Nations. I grew into a lead Drummer and celebrated on many occasions with the multi-cultural community - slowly working with the Drum rhythms.

Three years ago, on my happy Birth-day, I was in Dance celebration around the Aztec Drum, after

feasting at an Ethiopian restaurant, the Queen of Sheba. My friends had offered me many gifts that evening. When I came home I realized I had forgotten all of my gifts - I had to go back and get them! The experience has haunted me. That same evening I had a dream. In this dream I was shown the whole land and landscape. There were many people journeying, I saw rows of people walking, but did not know to where. Many gave up, some passed on, and some I carried on my back. After a long night of travelling I came to a place, then I heard voices. They felt like guardians. They gave me a ticket and said: "Now you can go". After a heavy journey of travelling I said: 'Where'? They answered: 'To meet your Mother'. I looked at my hand, the ticket was on a piece of rock, on one side there were numbers, symbols, and on the other was a word/a name ... I awoke from this dream shouting this name. I remembered how a few years back I had found beautiful Zulu songs by someone with this same name. I remembered meeting this woman at one of our African Drum festivals. So I gave her a call and shared my experience. Since it was my Birth-day, she gave me an African straw broom and said: "I am leaving for South Africa in two weeks and I invite you to come". Like a miracle, everything fell into place so I could travel. And that is how I was shown my way back to my birthplace. I spent two weeks with the Zulu tribe in their most sacred and humble environment. I received endless blessings from the Land, the crystal creeks, the children, the roots and the people. I shook hands with the Zulu king, and prayed for the Water. Then we all saw it arrive, slowly nourishing the dry earth; everyone's heart was quenched from the thirst. Rain had not fallen for many months and everyone had been despairing. I found that the word/name

given to me in my dream is a Zulu name that translates to "The one who gives Thanks". This was my journey of gratitude. I realized that having come this far in life, I now had to go back to complete the sacred hoop of remembrance and giving back to the place of origination.

I like telling this story to people who are wondering about their birth place and initiations. I believe there is much wisdom for everyone at birth.

DD: I know your birth name is Biljana, and you have written that your ancestral medicine name was 'Water Spirit (Ghost) Woman. How did you gain the name 'Birthing Star'?

BBS: My family named me Biljana. In Macedonian it means 'medicine' - I came to realize that it is the 'medicine in all things'. "Water Spirit (Ghost) Woman" as a name, was bestowed on me by First Nation people in a sacred ceremony, at the beginning of my initiations and healing through the ways of the 'sweat lodge' and journeys along the four directions of the Medicine Wheel. At the time, I was told that an old woman walks with me, that this is an old woman's name. For those ten years of healing and journeying around the sacred hoop, I prayed with this name. I held the First Nations Drum and learned and sang the medicine songs; while praying for Water. It was a time of remembering some of my past lives, when I walked in moccasins. My prayers spread in the name of peace to World Waters. I reflected on the pains of the Lakota people and the Ghost Dance tragedy; which still echo within the people today. I also vision quested with this name. After many years of communing with the people, a spirit led me to move to the Humber River near Old Mill, Toronto. I did not know at the time that this was sacred land and that it belonged to First Nations people. This is the Land of the Thunderbird! And, while helping a friend, I found the Thunderbird mound!

It happened when I attended a sacred First Nations meeting- we were all called by the Thunder-

bird sacred ways to this, one of the oldest historical sites, 6,000 years old or more; preserved by the First Nations Historical Society. This mound is linked by celestial pathways to the Bear & Serpent Mound in High Park and the Serpent Mound in Ohio. Linked with Niagara Falls - I am humbled at the depth of this place. It was sad that when the peacemaker came to this mound generations ago, the people did not hear his wisdom, they sent him away. We all knew that now was the time of the peacemaker's prophecies coming to light!

I was asked and offered tobacco by the First Nations director of the historical society and received the blessings of the Elder Mothers to do an Ancestral Feast Ceremony at the most sacred time of October 15. On the same day, ceremonies were being performed on the other mounds linked with this one. We were there to initiate peace through the sacred lineage of ancestry. It was truly an enlightening and humbling experience. As a white woman, conducting this ceremony meant a tremendous shift in the ways of healing and ascending. Many of us prayed, offered and feasted with the ancestors. The Thunderbird was initiated, once more it rained! After three years of praying and working at the root of this place, my soul journeys shifted. During this time, I had felt the old wounds, held them, prayed, sang, and painted... I did my offerings with gratitude. I had also had to accept the wounds that others had caused me. On my last visit, I had to part with the "old woman", my ancestral name and its identity, I had to let it go to the mound. It was like leaving an essence of me to merge with the Earth. At the moment of the 'give away' at the foot of the Thunderbird I heard my new name "Birthing Star" - it is to be my New Hope and a way to continue my walk of rebirthing. There were children on the mound during that ceremony, they made a bridge; I was touched and transformed by their curiosity and presence.

A week after this transition, Spirit guided us to a New Land. We found 28 acres in the Haliburton Highlands. My partner and I had been looking

for land for the past year – this was it! My sacred works with the Thunderbird place were now completed, and I could enter on my new hoop of sacred journeying. We call it the ‘Birthing Star’ Land!

DD: On the inner plane everything is in sacred motion as every thought and form whirl and dance together, but it is hard to capture that constant fluidity. Yet, *your* painting technique has a whirling inter-dimensionality that allows you to *express this interrelatedness of Spirit and form* in your art. You talk about this as taking your visions and weaving them onto the canvas as *Soul Medicine Portraits*. Can you elaborate?

BBS: Exactly, it is my day to day movement, openness and remembering. When I am open to my lifeline; there for my breath and body; mind and heart fluidity; I can easily shape / shift this fluidity, and it depends on the power of the intention and thought. I look at each blank canvas as an opportunity to grow and deepen my understanding and soul experience. Also the way I perceive the World. While producing my art, I follow a spiral path of remembering; I do a whirling dance and incorporate sound and body awareness movements. I explore universal / natural / creational rhythms. Every painting is a sacred act, and I engage in a ceremonial approach. Where the wind / the breath will lead me, I feel this in my body; I develop a body / understanding / language / relationship. At times, while painting, I also need to take time for meditation intervals. When I am open, I can be a seer, I can pull in the luminous fibers and show how they weave interconnectedness and consciousness, represented by a face on the canvas. The story is spinning and I just follow. It is a process of deep listening & witnessing. Sometimes for portraits, I reflect on mythological stories and work with symbolism from every culture and wisdom way. It is in the process that I find understanding. I rarely draw my image and then paint. I say ‘guide me’ and then I follow.

DD: You talk about how life is "breathing" with sound, energy and light within the many patterns of evolvment, throughout the manifestation of life. Can you elaborate?

BBS: It is like the Navajo myth of Grandmother Spider, and *how she holds the whole Creation within her web*.

I stay close to the essence; the centring place; the balancing point, the place of gravity....

And within that process; after some time of weaving, we come to a place where we see the relations, have perspective, receive vision, find the image within the pattern, reveal the painting. Creation is a vast space of multi dimensional expressions. I like to call in and work with the harmonious patterns to create a symphony: my painting. At times, I hear the pain and the chaos - that is when I trust and forgive and let go, while transforming.

DD: You paint very long hair in several of your paintings / vision boards. What does long hair mean to you?

BBS: I paint the life force, the luminous fibers, the breath I am traveling upon. It is like a Grandmother Spider holding one strand and weaving a web. I often work with small brushes to keep this consistency. You see this in my older painting series.

I do have a long hair- yes. Perhaps that is what you see in my work, or maybe you sense the similarity. There is a First Nations saying: *‘the longer is your hair the closer are your thoughts to the Creator’*. I relate to this wisdom. My hair also helps me in sensing the energy, feeling the earth and my subtle bodies. I painted somewhat long hair on “The Resurrection” painting and on the Moon Goddess at “Divine Play” painting. Maintaining long hair requires a meditative approach.

DD: Can you tell us about remembering the *rooted system of our Mother Earth Medicines* and how it

was related to your experiences with First Nations songs and ceremonial ways? How does it incorporate *co-weaving with All Relatedness*?

BBS: In the way of the Creator, everything has life force, energy patterns, light, sound, vibration, and a place within the circle for their name and medicines. Everything in nature is following the road of evolution, and emanates from the centered place of the four elements. Shamans, Medicine People, Druids, and others from around the World have explored this rooted system, therefore gaining a great understanding of this energy. To be a shaman is to be one that is able to choreograph this energy in the way of highest good, in the way of serving and bringing forth a medicine; giving an answer for the patient, community, and village. All First Nations around the world remembered the roots and the essence of this place, and then preserved it in the way of songs, dances, drawings, medicine bundles, sacred tools & intentions. Medicine songs, for example, can heal when sung and also guide one on a personal journey. The thought process is very important when singing, also the intensity and the freedom of expression. When I sing a 'Wild Flowers' song, I pray for the wildness in Nature, for preserving the Natural untamed aspect. It is also about the instinctual way of nature. I sing for the return of the wild flowers.

We can also intentionally reflect with All Relations when seeking guidance on day-to-day basics. For instance, say I am looking for insight on a certain issue, and I have some sort of opinion on this. I go for a walk and I see an Eagle soaring in the sky. Naturally the Eagle is closer to the Creator and reflects that truth in me. Perhaps it is telling me I am in a good place with this issue, I have a vision and should follow my way. But instead, if I see a sheep on the road, then maybe I am too closely following others. Maybe I need to step away for a moment and further contemplate my inner knowing.

There is also power in the place and the way medicines are historically rooted in their design-

ated locations. We see the truth of this in actual practices and communal sharing. That is when the light shines upon everyone. All living things have of this light, which crosses, mingles, and is exchanged in the way of Divine Play.

DD: You speak of resonating with the medicines of the Earth from the many forms of life: plant spirit, animal spirit, bird, trees, and beginning to understand the patterns of our deep alchemical mating. Can you elaborate?

BBS: Yes, for example the Celts call it the Wisdom of Trees. Our ancestors, by communing with the Trees developed a deep understanding of the nature of Tree. Every Tree has its parts: roots, bark, leaves, etc., and each of these parts has its own healing properties. Also we learn by observing the way Tree grows and sways its branches; develops a trunk; where it grows ... Observing all of these aspects helps in the development of the Tree's Myth. When we get to know this wisdom, we find its goddess, planet, element, further exploring Tree on a metaphysical plane. Do you know that according to Celtic astrology, everyone has a Tree associated with his or her month of Birth?

In first Nations astrology, we find the Wisdom of Animals. It works the same. When observing animals, their nature and life patterns, movements, habitats and myths we find associations which might influence us; or perhaps help us on a personal level, while reflecting, finding vision, developing insight. This is working with the energies of the Earth. Everyone born has an association with power animals, as allies. First Nations have elaborated ways of relating to animals as clan symbols.

We all know of the astrology of the stars and celestial influences and how complex and enlightening is the understanding gained by following the movements in the sky. Over the years, I had worked closely with the Mayan people as well, and developed a deep understanding and respect of the Mayan calendar. It is a very precise cycle of counting based on the movements of the Moon,

the 13 energies and the 20 signs. I encourage everyone to explore in this direction and perhaps find your Nawal, your Mayan sign. In truth, there are 5 energies / wisdom signs that stand with us, which is the Maya Cross. I find it very helpful in bringing me closer to my personal myth.

I like to say that Creation communicates with us by this means. In a way, being close to the Creator means deep listening and following of these patterns, observing, keeping records etc. The language of nature can tell us much about ourselves, our life style, also it can answer global questions and find solutions.

DD: Besides your paintings, you also have developed other artistic expressions. Can you tell us about your Poetry Weaving, Storytelling, and being a Water Ceremonialist?

BBS: When I am open and I feel with the flow, then artistic expressions come naturally and spontaneously. I practice and speak from personal experience and association with the truth in the World. Poetry weaving is a heart-centered practice, also Dance. I am a percussionist, play the Flute, Drum, the Didgeridoo, sometimes the Harp. My partner Trevor had awaked the passion of the Didgeridoo in me. We also make and sell 'one of a kind' Whirling Wisdom Didgeridoos. I recently started sculpting and making African Udu Drums. We do sound scape journeys and incorporate the crystal and Tibetan bowls as well.

All this is a way of light working for me and tuning in to my highest artistic expressions, to my Creator within. Practice and play. Way of spontaneity and freedom.

Ceremony on the other hand is a way of giving thanks, giving back to the Earth/cosmos; a place of gratitude and prayer while following a certain rhythm; a ritualistic practice. I am a keeper of a World Water Altar consisting of waters gathered from the most sacred places of Mother Earth, carried and offered in prayer by many medicine people, friends and on my personal travels. In

ceremony, we bring this Water as One and make a statement for Peace and healing of World Water.

I have also practiced and shared in ceremonial Dances with the Aztec and Mexican people, shared in the lodges of many nations. It is a good way of learning a tradition and also practicing light working with others.

Above all I am a Mother and that is quite an artistic expression.

DD: Part of your work revolves around *communicating consciousness* with our young generation. Can you describe how this manifests and its importance at this point in time and a bit about the process of *honoring, harvesting and communicating consciousness*?

BBS: In today's society, children often have been pushed to the side. They have become more and more distant from the Natural environment and have entered a virtual world, on the computer or indoors within city walls. I have also witnessed on numerous occasions that, for public gatherings and ceremonies, children are not allowed.

Having children in gatherings, ceremony, communal events is, I believe, essential. They hold the answers in the creative web of life. They are the keys to our global awakening. Children should be met with open heart and equality; they are wise ones and ahead of us in the line of ancestry. Every decision should be made in a way that honors the child and meets its need. They come first. Many authors have written on the Indigo, star or crystal children. We have this generation of children among us; as yet very few of us are ready to listen.

Some of my initiatives with working with children, in the way of honoring, harvesting and communicating consciousness, involve building peace gardens in school environments and community places. This is a fun and creative process that involves hands-on work in the arts with planting a peace tree, building a stone circle, etc., slowly integrating sacred work within the curriculum - the natural ways of creation and peacemaking.

These projects are linked with the International School Peace Gardens. In this way, children from around the world have a chance to share resources, friendship and visions of the future.

Also being an artist educator, I am always looking for a way to bring spirit and art together while sharing multicultural knowledge, tradition and spirit.

DD: What three things would you like your son to know from you?

BBS: First would be the honoring of his own nature; to be conscious about his body, mind and spirit. To have the ability to love and play, to listen to his own needs, to understand his inner emotions, to express freely and explore the soul's journeying; to make conscious decisions in life and to understand how these might reflect on the rest of the world.

Second would be the ways of Nature; the ability to connect with the natural environment, to understand the interconnectedness along the line of evolution and Spirit; to respect and protect; to learn from all cultures and seek equality among all people.

Finally, to not be afraid to face challenges or take the initiative; to acknowledge mistakes and find creative solutions; and therefore, to explore creative thought and freedom of being!

DD: You live in Ontario, Canada. What makes Ontario the best place for *you* to live in the world?

BBS: To truly answer your question, I must say that life circumstances and spiritual travel have determined my way. Each individual has its evolutionary path of soul journeying and higher purpose, which defines its way with Creation and its own truth, dedicated to the service of humanity. The decisions I made along the way were to synchronize with my higher learning potential and to bring me in harmony with this planet. There is still work to be done and things to be experienced in this Country. Also the birth of my son, Justin, has anchored my truth and destiny to this country.

I also love and appreciate other countries that I have visited, especially Macedonia. I imagine being able to create a window so that I might share my residence there. I also have to say that the diversity of cultures and friendships in this Country contributes strongly to my liking, especially the freedom and comfort that we Canadians have to work and live with; the presence of peace and the somewhat balanced economical standards.

DD: You will be attending the upcoming GAIA Gathering in Canada. What do you see to be the importance of this event and more generally the importance of gathering, doing ceremony, celebrating and playing together?

BBS: The importance is exactly in gathering, doing ceremony, celebrating and playing together; also, learning from each other, hearing each other's life stories and life perspective; tuning into high expressions and visions. To inspire! We must remember and find one another in the Oneness; to celebrate and elevate Mother Earth to its balanced ways. Also trade light working in the many forms of expressions. The theme of the next gathering is WATERS. I would like the opportunity to share the importance of Waters from my personal perspective of soul journeying and visual arts; and perhaps display an altar, consisting of World Waters where we can come and take a moment to send a communal prayer and contribute a sacred item.

What I would like to see more of at Gaia Gathering is, us coming together and practicing our ways in a Natural environment. Outside the walls and buildings; to be supported by a nearby Tree; to feel the wind as we share around the fire and listen to the Earth while exchanging. If we are to re-balance Mother Earth, we must bring our awareness back to her. Also, much healing is channeled through communing with Nature. There are many artists and performers in the community who need outdoors to share their craft. Also, we have many people in the community who have and offer beautiful land and lodges for these kinds of events and gatherings.

At the last Gaia Gathering in Toronto, I was one of the art vendors. I would like to take this opportunity and invite people to come, meet and mingle with us; we offer our skills and crafts bringing many blessings. Some of us travel long ways to trade and promote our light and we are eager to meet and hear you.

DD: You are currently co-building and creating a 'Birthing Star' creative center on some forested land in the Haliburton Highlands. Can you tell us about this property is and the plans you have for it?

BBS: Yes, thank you. My partner Trevor Rogers and I consider ourselves proud guardians of 28 pristine acres of land, in the Haliburton Highlands / Minden Highlands, adjacent to Crown Land. Every cell of my body celebrates this sacred union. We call it Birthing Star Land! Our goal is to build towards sustainable living and to support the creation of all sacred and artful expressions.

Since its beginning, I have felt a new kind of energy infused with light and love that has been forming and slowly showing its divine glow. I am so excited to learn and deepen my ways of listening to the language of nature. To stand with it, while finding our way! I feel we all need to remember to make a space within ourselves, for Nature to live through us. I believe in permaculture and the networking webs and pathways that can support each of us. The ways that can produce life and food, light and ecosystems that speak with a creative spark. A place for fairies too. Similar to the one in the Birthing Star painting's image of geometrical energy forms; I feel this place is within each of us!

We wish to continue our conversation as a community; in a way that furthers our exploration, sharing, healing and celebration. With this Land comes a new hope. On it, I see manifesting space that will support all cultures and sacred traditions. There will be studio space for diverse art forms, painting, sculpting, stained glass, etc. We also want to build communal spaces, sacred lodges; tree houses; straw bale constructions, an art trailer... For the main home structure, we are planning to work with red

granite rock of which there is an abundance on the land. Mostly, we intend to build with materials from our land. The list goes on and on as we count the days of the coming years and foresee much fruitful work. If you love spending time in Nature, you are invited to come and talk to us as we will have many initiatives on the go...

DD: What is your favourite current or past project? Why?

BBS: The creation of my artworks and the Birthing Star Land initiatives; for the Light that emanates through them. They bring me joy and fulfilment; a place where I can explore, become, heal and create; a way to understand myself and the Natural World. They bring me new hope and visions a continuing harmonious future; a place where I can shine my light, growing and building. Hopefully, I can contribute to the world with my light, my centring and perspective. To guide and share with other people along the road.

DD: What motivates you in your core? What gives you joy?

BBS: I had found much love, harmony and synchronicity within me. And yet most of the time the world outside is filled with ignorance, war, pollution, politics, superficiality, etc. In truth, I like to live in a place that is harmonious and balanced, to see the beauty within manifested all around me. I believe in this vision. It is one of my motivations. Children also reflect so much light, love and innocence that it moves my core. All the expressive art forms that I explore bring me to the essence, to the freedom, to the flow, while communing with the Divine. Hands-on work with the Earth and Dance awakens my body, strength and vitality. Besides spiritual and intellectual work, physical work is essential for growth/evolution. Then I feel the layers in my core.

Witnessing injustice and cruelty, world pollution, etc., has moved me to act in a revolutionary way. I have to stand with the truth, bring in the Winds of Change! Challenges in the environment and at home have motivated me a great deal, directing me

to find my own visions, to find diverse creative ways to deal with issues. The concepts of birthing have a tremendous transformational power in the ways of experiencing / handling things, of marking trails to new horizons, beginnings, landscapes.

All the beautiful things and life forms (butterflies, crystals, flowers, animals, goddess nature, stars), their Universal light motivates me, because I recognize their beauty, individuality, and presence within me. To be of service and help to others, in that way I see my truth shining through.

DD: Having worked in a variety of traditions, can you tell us about having a spiritual mosaic and how it impacts your perspective?

BBS: Naturally It has brought me close to home and to my own culture. What does it mean to be a Macedonian woman? Walking in this world with my Macedonian ancestry, heritage, and ways of communing? A deep part of my journey was about remembering the history. One aspect was clearing the karmic pain that was bestowed by the Ottoman Empire. Further back in history, Macedonian people were swept by Alexander the Great's winds of conquests and travels that would unite many nations. I had to transcend some of the consequences, make peace, remember that this time around we are to celebrate in equality.

Far from home, I have developed a great respect for the "Sisterhood of the Shields", which consists of 44 ancient medicine women from around the World: "Shaman women", traditional wisdom keepers and teachers who, over time, have guarded the wisdom of feminine ways and the ways of understanding Mother Earth. The sacred knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation on the female side. And that is very significant. Some of the teachings say: *"We came from the Stars and to the Stars we will one day return"*. Also they say that *"back in time there was a great peace, much of the sacred knowledge, as seeds, had been hidden in clay pots around the most sacred places on the Earth. And the time will come when we slowly discover these sacred pots and seeds, then the truth will be known to us. That time is also the time when*

people will communicate great distances with the speed of the light". We see that wisdom coming true now, as the world web spreads with the speed of Internet communications. We see people from diverse cultures and traditions coming to meet, celebrate and live together, especially in the eastern countries.

I feel fortunate that I meet and work in ceremonial ways with many cultures. To share sacred knowledge and personal myths, stories of creation, ways of movement, universal truth, praying together. I am deeply touched by the simplicity and humbleness of some cultures. Others touch me with their strengths or their ability to come and dance together, to make fire. I treasure the times sitting around this multi colored circle, celebrating in the honor of 'the names', sharing the wisdom of the seeds, and our common joys and pains. Every culture has gifted me with a new perception of the light, with a new thought, or with a seed that grows within me and helps me on my soul journey. Each encounter has been healing for me, has answered part of the riddle, or brought me that one piece of the puzzle if you may. And vice versa.

When two people come together, there is God residing amongst them. That is truth. True peacemaking and healing comes when we are able to meet and sit with our diversity and yet recognize the same pain / light. Especially when coming from diverse cultures and life styles.

In my painting "Water Spirit Woman", I reflect on my journey praying with water and being a woman carrier of water. That also speaks to woman in a prenatal nature, of the new children. I painted the sacred pot, the seven stars and the Rainbow Bridge. Meeting with diverse cultures is making bridges, celebrating while recognizing the rainbow light. This image and a sacred place reside within each of us!

DD: Of all the books that you have read, what five would you recommend to our readers?

BBS:

- All of Lynn V Andrews medicine books, beginning with "Star Woman";
- The Ringing Cedars Series, Anastasia ways of living with Nature by Vladimir Megre
- "The Serpent of Light" , the movement of the Earth's Kundalini by Drunvalo Melchizedek and his books on sacred geometry and flower of light.
- " The Wisdom Of Trees"- by Jane Gifford
- " And Yet They Fly"- by Billy Maier, book on the extraterrestrial intelligence and facts.

DD: What new project are you working on and people can look forward to hearing about in the next year? Is there a specific website or blog where people can go to find out more about you and what you are doing?

BBS: My web site offers a great source of information. The **Art Gallery** page features my Visionary Art.

You may read words of wisdom at the **New Blog**; here are offered workshops, upcoming projects and events. Also there is a section on our Didgeridoos. I have dedicated a 'communal fire' category- where I invite you to share your work and passions.

Be sure to visit the **Healing Art Project** page, which is a global movement in collaboration with the "Bringing Heaven & Earth" foundation in California.

The **Online Store** features unique transformational tools and blessings that will further deepen your journeys within: Art Prints, Greeting cards, my "Life's Prayer" DVD and my "Intuitive Sessions" services. <http://www.biljanaart.com/>

DD: Do you have any final words you would like to leave with our readers?

BBS: I'd like to thank each one of you for meeting with me through these sacred reading pages. My gratitude goes to the staff of Aontacht, the Druidic Dawn, for creating a space for me to share my work and passions.

I am looking forward to our next Gaia Gathering where we can meet in person and continue our light working in creative and communal ways.

All my Relations!

DD: Thank you for your time and for sharing your perspective. We look forward to hearing more about your journey and the Birthing Star creative centre as they evolve.





What is the Importance to Pagans of Gathering, Doing Ceremony, Celebrating, and Playing Together?

We asked Pamela Fletcher, who was instrumental in the founding and management of the Kaleidoscope Festival and who is now one of the Directors of the **Canadian National Pagan Conference (GAIA Gathering)**

Why come to together? Why gather? Why attend a Festival? Why come to together? Why gather? Why attend a Festival? Why come together? Why gather? Why attend a Festival? *Like gathering of old, clans come together to meet, trade, create new relationships, meet life partners, buy magical items we cannot find, visit with loved ones we may only see once or twice a year and celebrate and honor the Gods.* Why come to together? Why gather? Why attend a Festival? Why come to together? Why gather? Why attend a Festival? Why come together? Why gather? Why attend a Festival?

Why is doing ceremonies together important? What can we gain from doing ceremonies together? Why is doing ceremonies together important? What can we gain from doing ceremonies together? *Performing ceremonies with others creates a sense of unity and harmony that can be sent out into the universe in greater strength and connection to the Gods.* Why is doing ceremonies together important? What can we gain from doing ceremonies together? Why is doing ceremonies together important? What can we gain from doing ceremonies together?

How does celebrating and playing together help us individually and as a community? How does celebrating and playing together help us individually and as a community? *Coming together brings a greater understanding of each other, allows us to both teach and learn, it cuts down ignorance that can cause rifts, broadens our horizons and furthers our spiritual paths.* How does celebrating and playing together help us individually and as a community? How does celebrating and playing together help us individually and as a community?

What does Gaia bring to paganism in general, and to Canada specifically? What does Gaia bring to paganism in general, and to Canada specifically? *Figuring out what makes Canadian Pagans different opens us to identify our similarities and in a country this large it's important for Canadian Pagans to feel connected and not alone, especially in rural areas where access to information and other Pagans can be limited. (Gaia chairman - Dominique Smith)* What does Gaia bring to paganism in general, and to Canada specifically? What does Gaia bring to paganism in general, and to Canada specifically?

Gaia Gathering 2013 - Gatineau Quebec - May 17-20, 2013

The Theme reflecting the Waters' Depth: Composing a National Identity reflects the waters that unite us across Canada as we look into the past, present and future of Canadian Paganism. What have we done? Where are we now? And what do we hope to become and what makes us uniquely Canadian Pagans?

Special Guest - [Dr. Brian D. Hayden](#) professor and author of *Shamans, Sorcerers and Saints: A Prehistory of Religion*. Full conference registration - \$110 with single-day and part-day registrations available. Purchase tickets online via credit card or paypal.

[The Four Points by Sheraton Hotel & Conference Centre Gatineau-Ottawa](#) is offering a rate of \$129 per night through April 16. 1-800-567-9607 and identify yourself as being part of the "Canadian National Pagan Conference".

For more information - www.gaiagathering.ca

Friday afternoon opening ritual and meet and greet. Saturday and Sunday are for panel discussions, roundtables and workshops with entertainment at night! Monday Annual General Meeting (AGM).



The Tale of the Holly King and the Oak King

Franco Minatel

©ChipmunkNotesTamia

As we were approaching the holidays surrounding the winter solstice where we were singing about decking the halls with boughs of Holly, I thought to myself, where does this come from? Then that got me thinking about when we celebrate the summer around the Solstice day, the celebrations of old which consisted of bonfires. Where does this come from? Please keep in mind this written from a Northern Hemisphere perspective. You folks down under will celebrate the opposite holidays.

As a Pagan or a rather Polytheist, I hear several stories over the years surrounding the Oak King and the Holly King and when one is killed and reborn and I hate to say that so many of them are incorrect. Then again, people are allowed to believe what they wish but I would like to set the record straight. As I am also an astrologer and one of the first things I noticed is there two sets of celebration surrounding modern Paganism: the first is the Lunar cycles and how we celebrate the Esbats or the moons of the year, thirteen full and thirteen new moons, the second set are what are labelled as the Sabbats or the eight solar celebrations. The eight are Ostara (Vernal Equinox), Beltaine, Litha (Summer Solstice), Lammas, Mabon (Autumn Equinox), Samhain (Hallowe'en), and Yule (Winter Solstice) or in other words, the solstices and equinoxes and the cross-quarter holidays.

We will examine the Sabbats with their relation to the Holly King and the Oak King. In order to understand the eight Sabbats, one must understand who the Oak King and Holly King are. They are none other than Light and Darkness.

Vernal Equinox (March 21st - 0° Aries): This is the celebration of Light and Dark being in harmony. I have some Pagans say that the two brothers battle each other and here is when the Darkness is defeated. Really?!? Equinox - can you see the word "equal" in there? Nobody is conquered, they are at equilibrium. This is when the "battle" between the two is at its strength. It is a time of high energy and of the concept of killing off the old and bringing in the new. Many ancient Pagan celebrations consisted of burning straw men at this time, when they took dried corn/wheat from last year's harvest to burn at this time. The Christian myth of Jesus dying on the cross (of the year) and rising again came from these ancient rituals of when we tilt from dark to light.

Beltaine (May 1st - mid Taurus): This is the time when the Holly King dies. Darkness dies in order to give way to Light. The Oak king defeats Holly king! This is why this time of year is a celebration of procreation and why the gods were mating along with the humans during this time. This is a time of sex, and the life bringing energies associated with it. In ancient times, people were not allowed to marry until June. If you are still questioning why the Holly king or the Dark Lord, passes during this time think to the opposite holiday when it is the other way around during Samhain or Hallowe'en. Remember this is a wheel of the year.

Litha or the Summer Solstice (June 23rd - 0° Cancer): Hooray! The Oak king reigns supreme and we celebrate the Oak King or the Bright Lord with

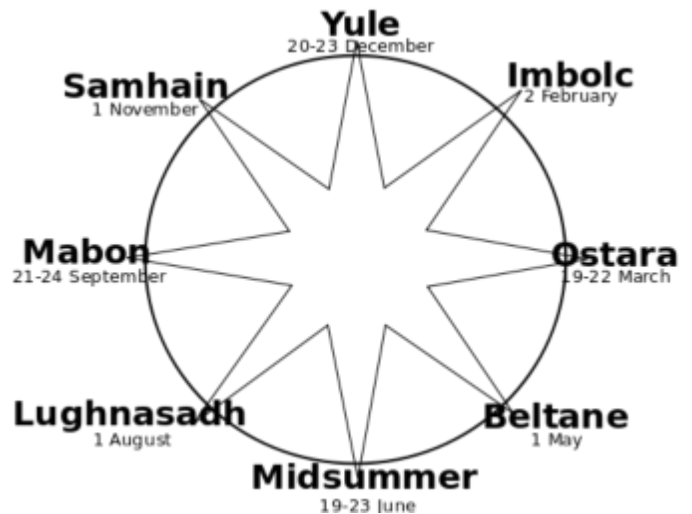
bonfires. Long live the King! Today is the longest day of the year. People in the Northern regions celebrate the light and brightness of summer. As we celebrate the light and creation, however I need to point out that many Pagans forget that on this day the Dark Lord or the Holly King is reborn. Many do not even acknowledge his birth or honour what he will bring us later in the year. One must think forward to Yule and keep this in mind when we discuss the Summer Solstice as a day of growth and fertility. One must look to the subsequent holiday to see what it brings to us.

Lammas (Aug 1st – mid Leo): This is the day which is opposite to Imbolc where we celebrate the anticipation of the Light. Here we celebrate the first harvest or the first kill of the season. What is this, other than the Holly King's first victory by the killing off of the crops for the first harvest. The Holly King strikes his first blow to the Oak King's reign. We take the crops of the season in this, what can be termed as, a mini-death. During this time we still bask in the warmth of the Oak King's summer but things are starting must die and we feast on what has died!

Autumn Equinox (September 23rd – 0° Libra): This is the celebration of Light and Dark being in harmony once again. The little brother has grown up and is as strong as his older brother. The Darkness does not conquer Light but the Darkness is getting stronger. This is a time of thanksgiving as the Light does start giving way to the darkness and we start reaping the rewards of a dying Earth. The Oak King's light is starting to give way. He has trouble hanging on. We give thanks to the Oak King for all he has given us. How many of us give the Holly King or the Dark Lord thanks for the abundance he brings us through the Oak King's flesh?

Samhain (October 31st – mid Scorpio): the Final Harvest or Hallowe'en. Many people realise that this is the Oak King's death. However, I've been at rituals that celebrate his death and rebirth. This is not his rebirth! He is dead until the Winter Solstice! During this period it is a time for darkness to reign. The days get shorter and the nights grow longer.

This is at time for us to withdraw and hide in solitude. This is why the "holiday season" can be very difficult for many to endure as we start celebrations before the Winter Solstice. At this point the Oak King, and all light, is dead and we must retreat to the Holly King's realm, underworld, to be reborn. It is a time of reflection and solitude. How can a corpse decompose when someone is pumping embalming fluid into you during this time?



Wheel of the Year.

By

[The Wednesday Island](#)

Winter Solstice (December 21st – 0° Capricorn): the rebirth of the Sun or the Oak King. On this day the light is reborn and we celebrate the renewal of the light of the year. Oops! Are we not forgetting someone? Why do we deck the halls with boughs of Holly? This day is the Holly King's day - the Dark Lord reigns. He is the god of transformation and one who brings us to birth new ways. Why do you think we make "New Year's Resolutions"? We want to shed our old ways and give way to the new! The Christians celebrate the birth of the Son who in more ancient times was the Sun or Son (Mithras, the Sun God, son of the good god, Ahuru-Mazda) as it was the same concept. This is a

Light-Dark not Good-Evil

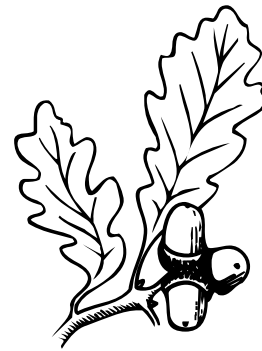


discussion on its own but nevertheless it is the same concept. Astrologically, this time is ruled by Saturn. Saturn rules Capricorn which is the sign that starts at the Winter solstice and where celebrations with food, gift exchanges happened during the Roman celebration of Saturnalia. The masters would serve the servants in a celebration of role reversals. Nevertheless, this was a celebration of abundance and renewal.

Imbolc (Feb 2nd - mid Aquarius): This day has been secularised into "Groundhog Day" when the groundhog tells us when winter ends. Originally, it was the day of the Goddess Brigit, later Christianised into St. Brigit. This a time when Darkness still rules but the light is coming into power and it is celebrated by the celebration of candles which was Christianised into Candlemas. The darkness or the Holly King still rules but the Oak King or light is growing in power. In Pagan, celebrations the sacramental wine is replaced with honey and milk.

As one can simply see, the struggle of the Oak and Holly King is that light and dark and the life and death is more solar than some arbitrary day. Many Christian holidays have come to be associated with more ancient Pagan holidays such as St. Brigit's Day and St. John the Baptist day (Summer Solstice) but in the end they are no more than solar celebrations.

One concept that must be kept in mind is that the struggle of light versus dark is not one of good versus evil. In the Pagan mindset, the struggle of light and dark is of one of birth and regeneration. Like the harvest, one thing that grows will die and what dies will grow again. It is about how we choose to grow and die and how we choose to be reborn. As the sun is reborn on the Winter Solstice day, we too are reborn. As the darkness reborn on the Summer Solstice day, we too start to die on that day. It is cycle that we live from year to year. Death is not bad - it is just an opportunity to be reborn. Do we die forever? No! We are reborn with the light, in one way or another. So next time you are in a Sabbat, you can use the following chant "The Wheel of the year go round and round, round and round, round and round"





The Wild Earth

Stories of our World

Seeking the Sacred Keystones: Entering the Wild

Alison Leigh Lilly

Seeking the Sacred Keystones: Entering the Wild
by Alison Leigh Lilly

In ecology, a 'keystone species' is an animal or plant that plays a vital and unique role in an ecosystem that is disproportionate to the size of its population. In my last column, I explored this ecological concept in-depth to discover how we can incorporate keystones into our spiritual practice, inviting the flora and fauna of the local landscape to be active participants in our sacred community. I introduced five types of keystone species -- predators, mutualists, engineers, providers and cultural keystones -- and the unique insights and wisdom teachings they have to share...

~

Every landscape is unique. Each place has its own soul, what the ancient Romans called its "genius loci." No matter where we live, whether in the rolling hills of a rural countryside or squeezed between skyscrapers and high-rise apartment buildings in the middle of a city, we are part of a more-than-human community of plants, animals, rocks, waters and winds that shape our relation-

ship with our environment in profound ways. Keystone species act as guardians of these diverse and complex landscapes, nurturing the health and vitality of all by ensuring that the many beings who share these places remain in dynamic balance with the cycles of life, death, decomposition and regeneration. Because of their special role, we can work with keystones as guides and messengers from the natural world who bring valuable insights to transform our lives and ground our practice in the living, sacred land.

Yet nature is teeming with complexity, and every landscape is different. How do we seek out and meet these powerful allies? Where do we go to find them, and how do we know when we've discovered them? How do we befriend the keystone species in the places where we live?

The first and most important thing to understand is that 'keystone' is not just a simple label that we can stick onto a particular plant or animal. The 'keystone-ness' of a species is not an intrinsic quality, but an aspect of its relationship with the larger ecological community in which it lives. In other words, a species might be a keystone in one place, but not in another. For instance, in most of its

range, including in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and in British Columbia, Canada, the sea otter is a keystone species which plays an important role in sustaining the vast underwater kelp forests off the coast by preying on sea urchins. After being hunted almost to extinction, the re-introduction and recovery of sea otters in these areas had a significant impact on the environment in only six months. Farther north among the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska, however, their return hadn't brought about the same level of change even after five years, leading some scientists to question the sea otter's role as a keystone in this particular region.

There are many reasons why a species might be a keystone in one place but not in another, including the availability of different food sources and competition from other predators with overlapping ecological niches. Discovering which plants and animals are keystones in our local landscape requires discernment. We need a more subtle understanding of how all of the living beings in our area form a single, yet complex community.

Learning From Mother Nature

To start developing this understanding, nothing beats hands-on experience of the wild and wonderful lands that we call home. Before rushing to your favorite library, local bookstore or internet search engine, step outside and spend some time directly observing the natural world around you. Don't worry too much about being able to identify every species and subspecies that you encounter; that will come later, with a lot of time, practice and patience. Instead, for now pay attention to the kinds of relationships and interactions that you see. Recall the four common types of ecological keystones: predators, mutualists, engineers and providers -- do any of the animals or plants that you meet seem to fulfill these roles? Ask yourself questions like, How is this landscape shaped or altered by the activity of the animals that live here? (the engineers), or What examples of cooperation and interdependence can I find? (the mutualists), or What are the most common food sources avail-

able here, and what animals might eat them? (the predators). Remember that a place doesn't have just one keystone; there may be many different species fulfilling different roles, all sustaining the thriving balance of the ecosystem in their own unique ways.

As you begin exploring the natural world in your area, you might notice that some plants and animals are much more common than others. Some of these will have an obvious and important impact on the environment -- for instance, in the Pacific Northwest, evergreen trees like Douglas fir and Western redcedar dominate the landscape even in the gray, rainy winter months, providing shelter and food for many different animals. Although these species are important to the health of the environment, they're usually not considered to be keystone species because they are so common. Instead, they're what ecologists call 'foundation species' because they provide a strong and stable foundation on which the rest of the ecological community is built, like the broad base of a pyramid. In contrast, a keystone species acts like the keystone in an arch, a single stone that nevertheless supports the weight of the whole structure. Keystone species are much less common than foundation species in terms of their population, even though their importance to the environment might be comparable.



Grey wolf Photo [Gunnar Ries Amphibol](#) 2009

A good example is the gray wolf, an apex predator that requires a large territory in which to hunt. A wolf pack, averaging between 5 - 10 wolves, might cover a territory of about 14 square miles. In the same area, there might be between 200 - 400 deer (a common ungulate prey of the gray wolf) and several hundred thousand trees, depending on the type of forest, its age, the local climate and soil, and other similar factors. In this food pyramid, it's easy to see how a common type of tree might act as a foundation species, while the gray wolf is a keystone that helps to keep the deer population in check and so protects the health and biodiversity of the entire forest. As an apex predator, the gray wolf sits at the top of the food pyramid -- in the same way a keystone sits at the apex of an arch! This is why scientists often consider apex predators to be the quintessential example of a keystone species, even though many other types of keystones have since been discovered which have just as much importance and influence in an ecosystem as predator keystones do.

What all this means is that, when we first begin exploring the natural areas where we live, we are much more likely to directly encounter foundation species than keystones, simply because foundation species are so much more common. Foundation species are like familiar friends and neighbors. We quickly come to recognize their presence with ease -- the soothing, invigorating smell of Douglas fir needles, the feathery shadow of the western hemlock's branches, the undulating fronds of kelp and seagrass along the shore. Keystones, on the other hand, are gatekeepers to mystery. Like the gray wolf and other apex predators, they can be elusive, ranging over a broad territory. They are the hidden guardians of the land. We might see them only rarely, but omens of their presence are everywhere if we can learn how to attend to the natural world around us with mindfulness and recognize the many subtle signs.

Learning From Our Mistakes

When you begin the challenging work of seeking the keystones, look for what is hidden -- what unseen influences might be shaping the landscape

in crucial ways. But also look for what is missing. Few landscapes of pristine wilderness untouched by human influence now exist in the world, and chances are that your local ecosystem has been disturbed in one way or another by human habitation, cultivation or exploitation. Because the importance of keystone species in their local environment is complex and nuanced, we often don't realize that an animal or plant is a keystone until it's too late and its existence has already been endangered by human activity. Only then do we see how drastically the landscape begins to change without that keystone to protect and sustain it.

This is particularly true of predator keystones. We humans have a long and ugly history of driving other predators out of our territories if we perceive them to be a threat to our safety or livelihoods. Keystone predators like the gray wolf and the cougar are often perceived as dangerous pests that can threaten domestic livestock like cattle and sheep, and they're often blamed for far more deaths and injuries than they actually cause. Likewise, orcas (also known as killer whales and sometimes called the "wolves of the sea") were once hunted regularly because they competed with human fishermen for precious marine resources. And yet, as fellow apex predators, we humans also have a strange fascination with the strength, power and mystery that we perceive in these creatures. We might hunt them for their fur or other physical attributes which they possess that we perceive as beautiful or valuable. Or, we may hunt them for sport because of the prestige we associate with conquering and killing a powerful, dangerous animal. In either case, the populations of predator keystones can be quickly depleted before we realize the consequences of our actions.

Predators are not the only keystones that come under threat from humans, however. Provider and engineer keystone species can offer valuable natural resources that we have often been eager to exploit for commercial gain. For instance, overfishing and poorly managed fisheries that introduce disease and genetic weaknesses into wild populations have threatened many kinds of fish that were once abundant -- including salmon, an important

keystone engineer. At the same time, we've built dams to redirect water for irrigation and to harness the great power of rivers as hydroelectricity, while polluting those same waterways with chemical fertilizers and pesticides that we use on our farmlands and the waste run-off of our manufacturing and other industries. All of these problems upstream prevent salmon from fulfilling their role as keystone engineers bringing much needed marine-derived nutrients to inland ecosystems, which both impoverishes these landscapes and interferes with the salmon's natural life-cycle. In other words, between ocean overfishing and upstream degradation, we're burning the candle at both ends and endangering a vital keystone as well as the ecosystems that depend on it.



Conservationists, environmentalists and naturalists are often keenly aware of which plants and animals are under threat in their local ecosystems. Many local, state and national parks offer guided ranger programs and other educational opportunities to teach the public about the importance of keystone species in the area. Attending these types of programs, or even getting involved in local conservation efforts as a volunteer, can be a great way to deepen your exploration of the keystones. These activities not only get you outside in the natural world, observing and interacting directly with the land in a powerful, visceral way -- but they also put you in touch with local experts and engaged members of the public who can share their own insights and experience with you.

Embracing Cultural Keystones

Exploring the natural world directly through careful observation is the best way to begin working with keystones of the sacred land and discovering what secrets they have to share. You may have noticed that I've focused mostly in this column on only four of the five types of keystone species: predators, mutualists, engineers and providers. However the fifth type -- cultural keystones -- can also become great allies in the work of grounding our spirituality in the living earth and bringing our spiritual practices to bear on how we can live ecologically everyday. In my next column, I'll share even more tips for building relationships with the many cultural keystones that can inspire and guide our spiritual work.



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Sighthill Stone Circle

By Duncan Lunan

The first astronomically aligned stone circle in the UK for over 3500 years was built in Sighthill Park in Glasgow, in 1979. It began as a Jobs Creation project in 1977 with the brief to build a copy of an ancient site, either Stonehenge or Callanish, out of modern materials, in one of the city's parks.

In that form it attracted no applicants, and when I was asked to become Project Manager in 1978, the first thing I had to do was convince the Parks Department and the Manpower Services Commission that it wouldn't work as described. The layout of each ancient site is specific to its latitude and to its local skyline; furthermore the rising and setting positions of the Sun and Moon at significant times have altered, because the tilt of the Earth's axis has lessened by half a degree since the Neolithic era, and the rising and setting positions of the stars have altered still more due to Precession of the Equinoxes.

To create a monument which would work in the present day I would have to find a suitable site and design a structure according to ancient principles. Having won that battle, I then argued that we should go the whole mile and build it in stone, making it a tribute to Professor Alexander Thom, Dr. Archie Thom, Dr. (later Prof.) Archie Roy, and Dr. Euan MacKie, all experts in archaeoastronomy who were prominent staff members of Glasgow University. Sadly, only Dr. MacKie is still with us, Archie Roy having died in December 2012.

The Principal Landscape Architect for the city gave me a choice of eighteen possible sites, and by far the best for astronomical alignments on a clear skyline was the newly designated Sighthill Park, on the Broomhill overlooking the M8 motorway and due north of the city centre. Historically it was almost ideal. Glasgow Cathedral to the southeast was built on an ancient Neolithic site, and in the 18th century when the Broomhill, Summerhill and Sighthill were a huge dairy farm, the drover's road called 'Dobbie's Loan' still ran from the Cathedral to the base of the Summerhill pointing straight to midsummer sunset. Summer Solstice fairs were held on the Summerhill until stopped by the church in the 17th century, and from the Summerhill, the midsummer Sun rose over the Sighthill. Dobbie's Loan then ran westward towards Byres Road, not surprisingly, but projected west, the line meets the river Clyde at Knappers (as in flint-knappers) in Clydebank, where a huge Neolithic complex was excavated in the 1930s.

Soon after finding the site I was joined on the Project by the late John Braithwaite, afterwards Scotland's only maker of astronomical telescopes until his untimely death in February 2012; and Gavin Roberts, now Principal Teacher of Art at Airdrie Academy, who documented everything from then on photographically. The story of the circle's design and construction is told in our book, "The Stones and the Stars, Building Scot

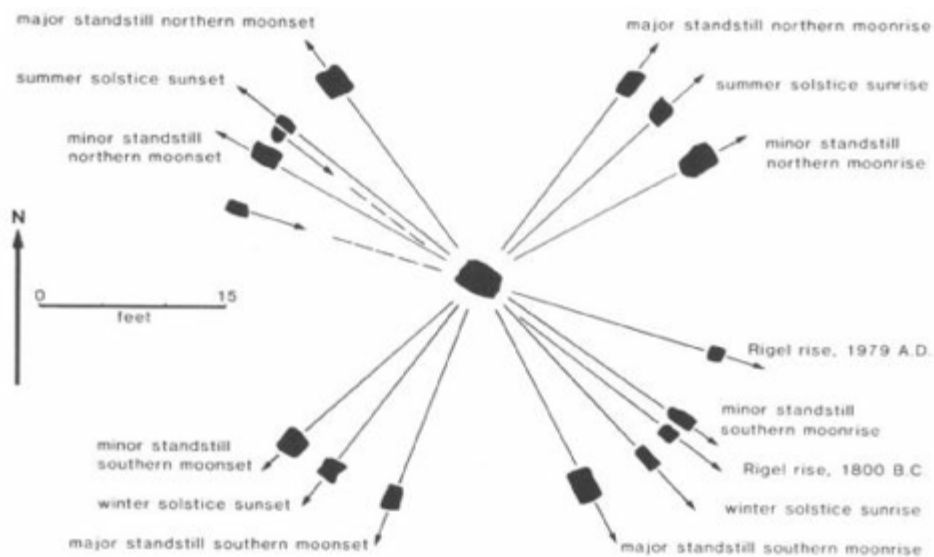
land's Newest Megalith", published by Springer in November 2012.

The whinstones for the circle came from Beltmoss Quarry in Kilsyth (known as the Back of the Hill Quarry, it was the last one in Scotland still using black powder). On Professor Thom's advice the largest stones were allocated to the lunar alignments, marking the Moon's most northerly and southerly rising and setting points every 18.61 years at the Major Standstill, and the corresponding ones 9.3 years later at the Minor Standstill. As the prehistoric stone circles were built with the highest technology available we felt we should do the same, and the solar stones and star stones were flown in by Royal Navy Sea King helicopter, at the spring equinox of 1979, starting with the midsummer sunrise stone and proceeding sunwise around the circle. Local schools were given the morning off and the operation was watched by hundreds of cheering children, with Professor Thom in pride of place among them. Appropriately, from inception to that point had taken just a year and a day.

As a goodwill gesture the quarry had denoted five spare stones, and one of those was needed because one of the bigger ones broke during transport into Glasgow. John Braithwaite and I proposed a phase 2 in which two of the remainder would be

used to mark sunrise and sunset at the equinoxes, and the other two would support an explanatory plaque, saying what the circle was, to whom it was dedicated and how it works. Within days of completing phase 1, however, the project was denounced by the newly elected Conservative government, and work on it was stopped. The circle wasn't landscaped into the park until 1982, and then the plans were misread and the stones were partly buried, while the last four stones lie unused nearby to this day, and there's nothing to tell anyone what it is or what it's for.

That hasn't prevented astronomical observations being made, and the solar events, the Major Standstill lunar ones and the rising of Rigel have all now been documented on site. The Rigel alignment is intended to date the circle for future archaeoastronomers, and a similar alignment for 1800 BC is to show that we understand what the ancient builders knew. Had the calculated alignments been perfect, not much would have been learned, but because they aren't (due for instance to increased atmospheric refraction over the city), it's possible to demonstrate that the ancient builders could have achieved the accuracies which are claimed for them, by naked-eye observations alone.



SIGHTHILL, A MODERN MEGALITH
GLASGOW
ASTRONOMICAL ALIGNMENTS



In 2001 a project was started to regrade and complete the circle, and funding for it was initially agreed with the City Council, then postponed and finally cancelled. Interest began to grow again in 2010, however, and with the book about to be published at last, there were growing hopes towards the end of 2012. On November 26th, however, my wife and I were called to a meeting with Development and Regeneration Services, to be told that the circle would be demolished almost immediately, to test the ground for possible contamination, in order to show that Glasgow was serious about bidding for the 2018 Youth Olympics.

A petition was raised by our friend Mandy Collins and has gained nearly 3300 signatures at the moment of writing, plus another 600 supporters on Facebook, while media backing for the campaign has been excellent and it has cross-party political support. It has become clear that the circle means a great deal to a great many people, for various reasons including spiritual ones, and in particular that the Pagan and Druid communities have been using it for private and ceremonial purposes, even though that wasn't part of the original intention.

My wife Linda has now started her own ALL Seed Group, which uses the Stone Circle for meetings and rituals on occasion (<http://www.anluchtlonrach.net/seed.asp>).

The issues concerning contamination have now become somewhat clearer: there was a chemical factory on the site in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, and although the ground was tested and pronounced clear in 1978-79, preliminary soil samples indicate that below the circle's foundations there is 'made ground' which may well be contaminated. If the area is to be redeveloped, clearing that will require the destruction of the park. The new object of the campaign is to ensure, if we can, that the circle is retained or replaced in its present location at the end of that process.

Linda and I remain very grateful for all the support we've had hitherto. To back the campaign, please go the website, www.sighthillstonecircle.com, and sign the petition under 'Save Our Stones'. Letters to Glasgow City Council would also be helpful. For any enquiries please contact me on duncanlunan@talktalk.net.

Celtic Cosmology

An Introduction

Luke Eastwood

As a general rule, it would be fair to say that most non-pagans have little or no understanding of pagan theology/cosmology. In the absence of any information to the contrary, they often tend to be rather fearful and perhaps unwilling to investigate. This being the case, they would more than likely be surprised to find out that there is no unified theology or cosmology within Paganism, moreover they'd be surprised to learn that several quite different streams of belief and practice exist. Within Paganism itself, the most well-known cosmological system is the Hermetic tradition i.e. that of the ancient Greeks, in part derived from the Egyptians. Combined or intertwined with this is the Jewish mystical school of Qabalah, elements of which are to be found in Witchcraft, Alchemy, Freemasonry, Golden Dawn etc.

Much of this esoterica made its way across Europe to the British Isles via the Greeks, Romans and later on the Normans and the influx of Hermetic refugees caused by the crusades and the eventual fall of Byzantium. However, within Europe there are two indigenous streams of Paganism that have survived (partially) with relatively little outside influence, these being Norse and Celtic cosmology. In both cases this is most likely due to the physical isolation of being on the fringes of Europe and in the case of Scandinavia, the extreme weather probably deterred most invaders or would-be colonists.

What remains of Celtic cosmology is somewhat fragmented, for several reasons. Due to the colonisation of Europe by the Romans much of Celtic culture was almost completely eliminated - e.g. in Cisalpine Gaul, Gaul and Iberia where the Celtic languages and religious practices quickly fell into disuse.

In the British Isles, Ireland in particular, the influence of Roman culture was much weaker which enabled Celtic language, custom and religion to outlive the Western Roman Empire. What is now England was heavily Romanised, however some elements of Celtic culture did survive although this was again diluted by the influx of Germanic and Norse invaders from the 5th BCE century onwards.

The arrival of Christianity had an obvious impact on Celtic religion more so than it did on any other aspect of Celtic life, however dating of Pagan burial sites in Ireland shows that Pagan practise continued alongside Christianity at least into 8th century BCE. A brief comparison between Roman Catholicism and Celtic or Norse Paganism clearly indicates that much of the celebrations and customs of Paganism were simply assimilated or re-assigned by the Church, probably out of necessity. So, in a distorted form, much of Paganism has in fact survived into current times.

Further to the above, Norman and subsequent English colonisation of the entire British Isles forced the remaining Celtic countries into retreat and eventual collapse of their systems of government, agriculture, language and culture in general. This culminated in a ban on *Cymraeg*, *Gaeilge* and *Gáidhlig* which lead to the destruction or loss of much of the written and oral culture of the Celtic people.

So, unlike Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism or Christianity for example, there is no one text or set of texts that embodies the theological or cosmological system of the Pagan Celts. What remains is a partial picture of Celtic belief, which has been used to reconstruct Celtic Paganism in the modern era – a process that is still continuing today.

In common with the pre-Socratic model of the 4 (or 5) elements, Irish culture relates to the physical world in terms of 4 and 5 but also 3 and 9. There are four cities mentioned in the *Yellow Book of Lecan*, from which the Tuatha De Danann came – each in one of the cardinal points of the compass. Four druids were associated with each city, as were four hallowed objects, the treasures of the Tuatha De Danann. Although the text is not explicit, the most

common directional association is that shown below.

Falias	Lia Fáil (stone)	North
Gorias	Spear of Lugh	South
Murias	Cauldron of Dagda	West
Findias	Sword of Nuada	East

Earth	Ulster	Battle
Fire	Munster	Music
Water	Connaught	Knowledge
Air	Leinster	Prosperity

In addition to the 4 main compass directions, the Irish cosmology includes 5 others – roughly translating as: above, below, outside, inside and through. These 9 directions correspond with what is known as *Dúile* (9 elements), which includes the familiar air (sky), fire (sun), water (sea) and earth (land).

These 9 elements of *Dúile* relate to the cosmos (*Bith*), the 3 realms within the cosmos and the 3 cauldrons within the human body, with 3 of these elements relating to each cauldron. This is most easily illustrated by the table given below, that I have borrowed and modified (from Searles O'Dubhain).

Dúile	Body Part	Direction	Tool/Property	Cauldron
Cnaimh (Bones)	Cloch (Stone)	Thuaidh (North)	Lia Fail	Coire Ernmae
Colaind (Flesh)	Talamh (Earth)	Faoi (Under)	Nemed (grove)	Coire Ernmae
.Gruaigh (Hair)	Uaine (Plant Life)	Amach (Outwards)	Ogham and Herbs	Coire Ernmae
Anal "Breath"	Gaeth (Wind)	Oithear (East)	Sword of Nuada	Coire Goriath
Imradud (Mind)	Gealach (Moon)	Isteach (Inwards)	Well of Segais	Coire Goriath
Drech (Face)	Grian (Sun)	Dheas (South)	Spear of Lugh	Coire Sois
Menma (Brain)	Nel (Cloud)	Thrid (Through)	Inspiration	Coire Sois
Ceann (Head)	Neamh (Heaven)	Os Cionn (Above)	Torc/Halo	Coire Sois

The *Dúile* and the 3 cauldrons of wisdom (*Sois*), vocation (*Ernmae*) and Warming (*Goriath*) relate to the head, body and blood of a person, which in turn is related to the 3 realms of sky, land and sea. Hence it is clear that 3 was a very important number in Celtic cosmology - 3 cauldrons, 3 realms and 9 (3 x 3) elements. Indeed this continued to be a theologically significant into the Christian era and even today the trefoil (3 leaved shamrock) is a symbol associated with Ireland.

The 3 realms of sky, land and sea are representative of the upper world (*Magh Mór*), middle world (*Míde*) where we usually find ourselves and the otherworld (*Tir Andomain*). Personally I would say that these three realms co-exist here and now in the same space, it is a matter of perception that shields us from seeing the greater reality. In the Welsh tradition these 3 realms are near enough the same but are shown as 3 concentric circles - *An-nwn* (otherworld), *Abred* (middle) and *Gwynfyd* (upper), with the space beyond (*Ceugant*) being the infinite or godhead.

The 3 realms are alluded to in Celtic myth, the otherworld in particular and it is also represented by the *Bile Buadha* or Tree of Power/World Tree, which is similar in concept to the Norse *Yggdrasil*. The sacred tree or *Bile Buadha* relates to the 5 ancient provinces as described in *Settling Of The Manor Of Tara*, each of which had its own *Bile*. These are roughly the same as the 4 modern provinces (shown earlier) with the addition of *Míde* or Meath - the sacred tree *Craebh Uisnigh* being located at Uisneach the 'navel of Ireland', sacred and royal centre. So to the 4 provinces shown earlier we can now add:

Uisneach - Centre Spirit Míde Kingship

This Celtic concept of the universe unifies the 3 realms of existence with the human existence via *dúile* (element) and the *coire* (cauldron) but it also connects via the *Bile Buadha* to the 5 provinces and cardinal points. Connecting all of existence is *neart* or *nwyfre* (Welsh) which roughly means life-force or the spirit that flows through all things. This

whole concept can be described as *Dán*, which is somewhat similar to the Chinese concept of Tao - everything is interconnected, everything is animated by spirit.

This belief is clearly illustrated by Brehon Law which gave usage of the land among the community (*tuath*) rather than our modern concept of ownership. It also treated animals as persons to the extent that a hen could be punished for trespass, snatching and wasting or bees must provide honey as compensation for stinging a neighbour or passer-by. This view of the world and all that is in it as deeply connected is beautifully described by the ancient poem the *Song of Amergin*. Amergin, the Milesian (Gaelic) *Ollamh* or chief druid is also credited with the ancient tract *The Cauldron of Poesy* which is a metaphysical discourse on the 3 cauldrons and the 9 elements.

This view of our existence endured through the Christianisation of the British Isles and indeed through colonisation by the English. Clear evidence of this is the survival of belief in the *Sidhé* and the otherworld in folklore and literature. As late as the end of the 1800s the Gaels of Scotland preserved their language (*Gáidhlig*) and beliefs, although superficially Christianised. Alexander Carmichael saved the sayings and practices of the last generation of islanders and highlanders who retained these traditions in his collection *Ortha nan Gaidheal* (Carmina Gadelica). One of the best examples of this being a direct reference to the three realms:

Neart mara dhuit	Power of sea be with you
Neart talamh duit	Power of land be with you
Neart néimhe	Power of sky
Mathas mara dhuit	Goodness of sea be with you
Mathas talamh duit	Goodness of land be with you
Mathas néimhe.	Goodness of sky.

This deep connection with the realms of existence is borne out in the seasonal cycles of the Celt and their respect of the sun, moon, stars and the earth and all that lives upon it. Their most important celebrations were tied to the natural cycles and to

the deities of the land itself, a model which has fortunately been retained and is commonly understood (in various forms) by Pagans as the 'eight-fold wheel of the year'.

So clearly we can see that Celtic cosmology has a unique view of the world that has somehow survived the contraction of the Celtic world. Unique as it is, it is perfectly possible to integrate this worldview with the more common classical tradition. The Irish Order of Thelema does exactly this and thereby combines indigenous belief and practice with the generally more familiar hermetic structures.

In my own practice I work within a framework of the 5 elements and the 3 realms and 3 cauldrons and I find that the two models are entirely compatible in an Irish context when considered in terms that I've outlined above.

At the end of the day, finding a meaningful and practically workable spiritual experience is more important than the restrictions of theological dogma. Although I do not advocate a 'pick and mix' approach to spirituality - without disrespecting or defiling discrete magical and spiritual systems one should be free to work with what one fully understands in a way that is beneficial to the connection with spirit, deity or whatever you might define as cosmic. Although the ancient Celts were hardly syncretic they clearly recognised the interconnectedness of all existence, like the branches and the roots of the cosmic tree that stretch into the furthest reaches of the universe. I am sure that were they around today they would embrace tolerance, shared wisdom and be open to the positive influences of the world that surrounds them.

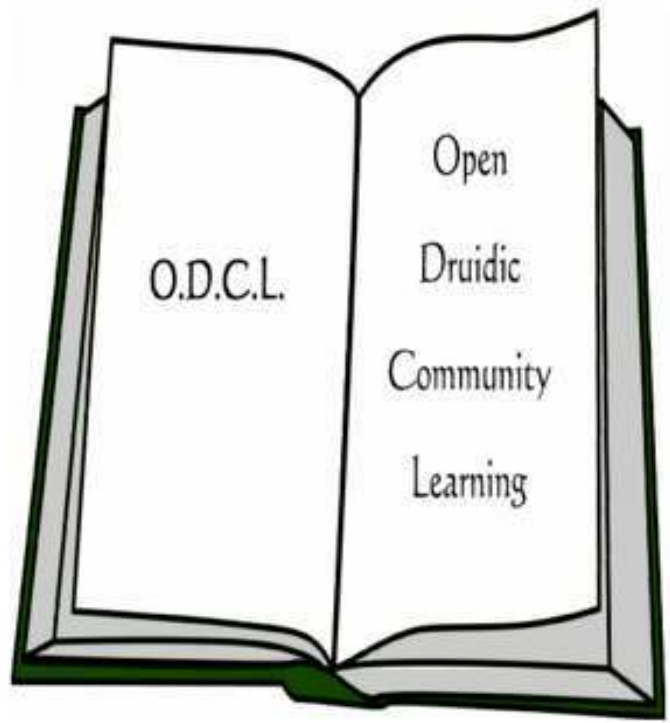
Luke Eastwood

Is an open resource which offers various supplementary courses which are related to contemporary Druidic practices and studies online. The various authors of the courses presented here are all Celtic and Druid related teachers working in their respective fields.

Do you have a course, would you like to contribute and share it with Open Druidic Community Learning (ODCL), for the benefit of Druidry?

For courses presently available,
and further details: -

<http://www.druidicdawn.org/odcl>



Bardic Whispers

Expressions from the Soul

The Dance of Chaos and Order

When geese fly over, they often appear in a V-formation
But each formation is unique
As each appears in a slightly different layout
And at the viewing perspective, order prevails

From the individual bird perspective
How it got to be where it is
in that logical formation is based on
the constant chaos of wind.

And within the chaos of the wind that is buffeting the bird?
There is the continual dance between
the fairly enduring properties of the land
and the ever changing movement of energy caused by climatic patterns.

Order built on the machinations of chaos
Unpredictable whirls building the order of the flying wedge
Yin and Yang....Form and Energy
Dancing

Renard
February 3, 2013

The Goal Of The Blue Raven Goddess:

Triad of Wisdom that is based on Mark Townsend's Book "Path of the Blue Raven".

"The Goal of the Blue Raven Goddess".

- To Be More Alive,
- Awakened,
- And Divinely Sensitive.

Faith:

- Asks Deep Questions,
- Demands Spiritual Honesty,
- And Utterly Honest.

Druidistic And Christian Myths Are:

- Intertwined,
- Interdependent,
- And Complementary.

Church Culture Is:

- Perfection Driven,
- Success Oriented,
- And Literalistic.

Three Approaches To Understanding:

- Western Religious,
- Eastern Philosophical,
- And Nature Based.

Wise Trees Are:

- Strong,
- Rooted,
- And Ancient.

Smooth Courses Are Often:

- The Most Life Crushing,
- Soulless,
- And Emotionally Draining.

What One Can Not Control:

- A Person's Emotions,
- Thoughts,
- And Personalities.

Religious People Tend To Be:

- Extremely Rigid,
- Dogmatic,
- And Controlling.

3X3



Do They Hunger?

Why do you hunt them, the Gargoyles
in their frozen world?

Why do you sketch their skyward profiles?

How do you surprise them, these winged beings
from the Ancients Songs,
and steal their shadow?

They do not escape *you*.

They do not scurry willy-nilly
behind a Moon, a Star, a Dream.

They do not travel with the High Winds
They do not dance with the Low Winds

Yet, they have escaped the gazes of so many

These Immortals

They have escaped Time and Hell's miasma

They have written their last contract in
the stone of their soul, the granite of their wings

Hidden behind a silence, a forgetfulness so static
They echo sacred whispers from the Ancient Songs

Yet, there you have found them in their apnoea...

Believer, you see them
and through your hyper focus
you bring us to them

Do they hunger?



Ravished by the Light - Lucie Marie-Mai DuFresne

Listen! Can you hear them? The children are coming. Don't go out ... not now ... it's not safe!

It's late at night, mid november, and Whitehorse is in the grips of a cold snap, -40C and dropping. I have no intention of going out but a friend has been offered a Saami drum for sale and she needs to know where the closest bank machine might be found. I know of one not too far from our hotel and we decide to brave the cold. As we hurry along the deserted street, we compare impressions of this Yukon town and the circumpolar women's conference we are attending. It's different ... women from all around the northern pole are gathered to share experiences, hopes, dreams and strategies for a better life. Inuit, Eskimo, Saami, Russian, Siberian, Greenlander, Scandinavian, Chinese, Canadian and American, we have two things in common: being women and living in the North. Its quite an experience and this is only the second day.

I'm there because I'm in the midst of a three year research project on cultural tourism in the Yukon

and I've been seduced by the rawness of the landscape and the people relative to my home in the southeast of Ontario with its urban sprawl and new growth forests. Here in the north, humans are NOT in control, no matter how much they may brag. The land demands humility and will have it of you ... no matter what.

As we leave the comforts of the hotel, one of the local native women we have met warns us. Don't go out, its not safe. We don't understand. We say we are well bundled up in our fur coats and heavy boots. We're not going far. We're not likely to meet anyone. She shakes her head and signs and wishes us luck ... while commenting on 'southerners' under her breath. We look at each other, giggle, and brave the cold.

As we almost run to the bank, I tell my friend that my greatest regret so far is that I have not seen the Northern Lights. Its the right time of year, but there have been none since we arrived. She agrees, its strange.

She gets her money and we start back. Suddenly, we both stop. We can't move, we can't talk, we can hardly breathe. I feel seriously drunk and can hardly remain standing. I look over at her and see that she is having the same problems. She also looks almost ashamed. Then I understand: my nipples are so hard I want to scream, my nerves are humming on the same frequency as the rushing, whistling, cracking inside my head. My eyes won't focus and my mouth is dripping. My friend is enveloped in electric green and blue veils that shift and stream and flow. I think of Star Trek and alien abductions and force fields. And I try to keep on breathing.

Suddenly, we both shudder and gasp and then start laughing. "Where are our men when we need them", I say. She laughs again and we both start running for the hotel. The next morning's news tells us that the Northern Lights have been particularly strong disrupting much of northern communication for most of the night ...

Months later, as I prepare a class on Inuit myths for one of my university classes, I read old indigenous tales of the Aurora: they are the souls of dead infants calling out to potential mothers; they can be dangerous for women if the Manabai'wok, the invisible giants that live in the high heavens and come down to dance at night, find them beautiful and choose to ravish them; that even men can disappear if they inadvertently step onto the trail of souls and are thus drawn into their dance to the land of plenty, the afterlife.

Yes, my friend and I were ravished, ravished by the lights that came down to earth and embraced us. Maybe we were lucky, too old to be abducted, too innocent to be afraid, too daring to reject what happened to us. We live to tell the tale, to keep the stories alive. When the sky sings, don't whistle, don't call them... they're much too ready to come down

Lucie Marie-Mai Dufresne



Your
Business Card
Could go here!



The Formulary

RECIPES FROM THE COMMUNITY

Ancient Use of Sandalwood

Fàilte (*Welcome*)!

5 Powerful Uses for Sandalwood

Sandalwood is known to be one of the oldest materials used for aromatic and perfumery uses; it has been used for at least 4,000 years. The ancient Egyptians used sandalwood to embalm bodies. Indian temples are built with sandalwood in order to keep white ants at bay. Sandalwood is also used in Indian meditation ceremonies. In Ayurvedic medicine, sandalwood was used for respiratory and urinary infections and for the revitalization of skin; in Chinese Medicine, sandalwood was used for skin complaints, stomach ache and vomiting. The Japanese used sandalwood to honor Buddha.

Distillation of Sandalwood Oil

Sandalwood essential oil is obtained from small pieces of wood from matured sandalwood trees by a process known as steam distillation. Ideally, wood from the trees which are around 80 years old should be used to extract sandalwood essential oil. However, considering the rarity of this species, people often extract the oil from trees that are anything between 40 years and 80 years old. In fact, the relatively older sandalwood trees will not

only enclose more quantities of the essential oil, but its aroma too would be more potent or rich.



Western Sandalwood - Photo [Cgoodwin](#) 2008

The Benefits of Sandalwood Oil

1. Sandalwood is a sedative oil, hence its use in meditation, as it induces a feeling of deep peace

2. Sandalwood is also
 - a. anti-infectious
 - b. a decongestant
 - c. anti-depressant
3. It has been used in the healing process of major burns victims, due to its antiseptic properties
4. The oil is useful for chronic bronchial infections and for treating coughs
5. Sandalwood is effective in helping sciatica and lumbago.

made from natural plant extracts. Both have a pleasing smell, but only essential oils offer the benefits of aromatherapy. Essential oils are also significantly more expensive than fragrance oils, since they are highly concentrated and must be harvested with great care.

Aromatherapy is becoming increasingly popular among those who are interested in alternative medicine, I invite you to contact me to discuss ways in which Aromatherapy and essential oils can assist you to better health.

I have had great success using Sandalwood essential oil in a carrier oil for several clients who are suffering from depression.

Slán go fóill (goodbye for now),

Faye

People who are new to aromatherapy often confuse essential oils with fragrance oils, but these two products serve entirely different purposes. Fragrance oils are synthetic scents that have been created in a laboratory, while essential oils are



Celtic Sage Holistic Therapy Inc
Your Alternative to Mainstream Medicine

The Goddess Chronicles:

A Travelling Art Journal



The Goddess Chronicles was born out of a deep desire to create something collaborative with other women around the world. Since finding my tribe, I have felt the shift within me as an artist and as a woman towards embracing the divine feminine within. My spirit has awakened and I live now to be more receptive, authentic, and to honor my creativity.

The Goddess Chronicles is an intention to hold the highest vision of *all* women through expressive and artistic creations. There is a change that is stirring in the souls of women around the world more than ever! I would like to document a small piece of this evolution for younger generations of goddesses. My hope is that The Goddess Chronicles will help girls and women alike recognize the profound love within to expand their creativity and cultivate living an authentic and happy life!

The Goddess Chronicles started in the United States but quickly became an international collaboration! Initially there was to be one traveling art journal. I soon realized that logistically it would not be possible. In just two days the Goddess Chronicles reached over 30 participants. The response has been just absolutely AMAZING! This

tells me that many people around the world are craving to collaborate and create!

I just simply could *not* turn away those hearts that deeply resonated with this idea! At final count I am working with 62 participants and 13 traveling journals. Readers will find artwork from participants all over the globe. The Goddess Chronicles spans from coast to coast of the United States, and is in Canada, Colombia, Puerto Rico, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Australia and Israel! If you would like to follow along where The Goddess Chronicles is currently in its journey around the globe you can find updates at sofiadabalsa.blogspot.com

The theme of this traveling art journal is Goddess Chronicles that inspire young and old; girls and women with messages from the heart to DREAM BIG.

Participants have free reign to create their masterpiece. They can use collage, watercolors, pencils, crayons, stickers, stamps, pockets, fold-outs, cut-outs or all of the above! Pages can be done alone or can be done with a partner. Participants have agreed to complete one or two pages within a two

week time frame and mail to the next participant. to empower young girls!

When the book is full, it will be mailed back to the point of origination with Sofia. At this point the book will be professionally photographed. I will be making photo books for all who want to own this special piece of art. The energy surrounding this project is intense, I believe that The Goddess Chronicles will sell in volumes! Part of the proceeds of every book sold will go to Girls Inc. in San Antonio, TX a non-profit organization established

The original Goddess Chronicles traveling book will be donated to empower young girls at Girls Inc. in San Antonio, TX for years to come! My hope is that each time a young girl sits to view The Goddess Chronicles it will inspire them to reach for their dreams!

Sofia Dabalsa
sofiadabalsa@gmail.com



The Elora Tarot Project

The Elora Tarot Project is the collaborative creation by sixty-five visual artists of a stunning, *new* eclectic/pagan Tarot Deck. Each artist has designed and created one or more of the Tarot Cards using their own unique vision and inimitable style.

This has resulted in original works of art corresponding to the 78 Cards in a Tarot Deck, 22 Major Arcana and 56 Minor Arcana.

From the beautiful and historic village of Elora, Ontario, Canada, **Shelley Carter**, respected Tarot enthusiast and reader, is the co-coordinator of this ambitious project.

"I have always been enthralled by the art of the Tarot". Furthermore, she says she was inspired to develop *The Elora Tarot Project* after attending a 2011 Tarot Tour and Convention in France and Italy during which she met a number of fellow

Tarot enthusiasts who had successfully self published Tarot Decks.

Knowing her own village of Elora to be open to new ideas and bursting with creative energy, Shelley Carter divined that the time was ripe for the creation of a local Tarot Deck. "One might even say, it was in the cards".

"I started *The Elora Tarot Project* in the fall of 2011. I conducted several information sessions about the history of the Tarot and gave examples of Tarot Art from other Decks over the past year and a half."

The Elora Tarot Project has provided a powerful opportunity for the artists in the village to work together. Included is art from established and emerging artists, ranging in age from teens to octogenarians. Also included are a father and son, a mother and daughter, and a few husbands and wives.

"There are several things that are particularly interesting about the Elora Tarot Deck" says Shelley Carter, "one is that it represents the diversity of artistic styles and talent from this one little village of 3600 people. Another, is that, although there are such a great diversity of styles, the images look great together!"

"The environment of Elora is very spiritual. There is a lot of aboriginal history here, and then there were the alcoholic *spirit* on which Elora was founded!" Elora is famous for its historic distillery.

In many instances, the artists worked together, they supported each other to stretch themselves beyond their usual style and scale.

Each original art piece corresponding to a Tarot Card was rendered in single or mixed media including paint, clay, glass, textiles, collage, photography and mosaic.

Many of the artists have had Tarot Decks of their own. "I have read for many of the artists over the years at various venues. We are an open and receptive community, and we live an alternate spirituality.", says Shelley.

"There were many "coincidences" and synchronicities in the creation of the Deck. One of the Cards was created by a Coven of Witches, by consensus. Not an easy task! A good many of the contributors would describe themselves as pagan, and some have been actively involved in the pagan community."

"There are 22 Major Arcana and 56 Minor Arcana. I rolled the project out in stages. Major Arcana first, then Court Cards, then Aces, then, it was a big decision whether or not to go for the 36 remaining Pip Cards or not. I could have kept them in the style of the Marseilles tradition, in which the Pips are not illustrated, but there was enough interest that all the Cards are illustrated and not just graphic rendering of say 4 cups."

The Card images will be 3"x5" on Cards 3 1/2"x5 3/4". This is a little larger than a standard Tarot Deck.

"I chose to create the High Priestess Card because she is my favourite Tarot Card, but also because, as the Keeper of Secret Knowledge, the High Priestess is a good one for the Tarotist/coordinator, since I hold the Tarot Knowledge. My daughter (Naomi) is the model for the card. She is travelling the world for a year, so the Card was one of our last projects together."

"I also did the 2 of Wands...it is a picture of my son, Severin, taken by my partner, Mark, in the Elora Gorge. My son, at seventeen, represents the meaning of the Card very well. The Card is all about finding your life path and following your inner compass, and setting out on new ventures." enthused Shelley.

The highly anticipated public unveiling of the seventy eight, 18"X 30" mixed media original canvases and three dimensional work, will be featured at the Wellington County Museum and Archives from September 14 to November 3, 2013. The Elora Tarot Deck will launch on opening night and be available for sale at various venues and through the website. For more information and to follow the Project's progress, go to www.eloratarot.com

Shelley Carter with additional material from Lisa Du Fresne

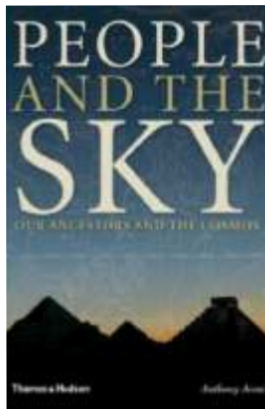
Tarot Card Photo(detail):High Priestess

Artist/creator: Shelley Carter

Model:Naomi

Photographer:Sophie Hogan

Reviews



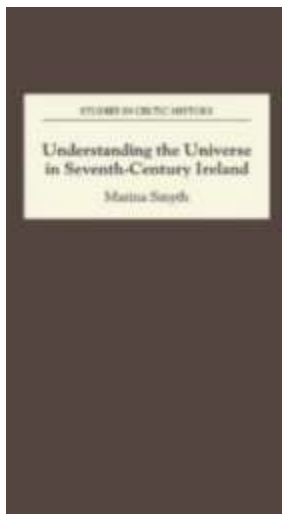
People and the Sky:
Our Ancestors and the Cosmos
Anthony Aveni
ISBN Number: 978-0-500-05152-8

Review Nigel

Although one might consider this not to be a book relating to the Celts, as it covers a wide spectrum of cultures. Nonetheless, 'People and the Sky; our Ancestors and the Cosmos', should interest the modern Druid. Seeing that classical authors indicated Druids held knowledge about the stars.

Written in a very entertaining and readable style, exploring how the view of the night sky affects different aspects of humanity from around the world. Ever wondered how the cosmos is woven into mythology creation myths? Or how early hunters and gatherers including farmers used the stars in the cosmos to guide their earthly pursuits. Even the art of indigenous and classical time keeping methods were achieved, or how the people in Oceania navigated across open seas successfully by the use of star Knowledge. To the construction of homes and cities once built in sympathy and harmony with cosmic phenomena, bringing subtle understanding allowing communities members to walk in a sacred manner, in balance and harmony, knowingly or otherwise. This is just a little of the cosmic feast which Professor Anthony Aveni has shared within his published work, many more delights concerning the Sky awaits its earth bound reader and observer.

Anyone interested in the Cosmos, and how it has been shaped by human minds, from various regional cultures over time. Albeit for practical, religious, sacred and scientific purposes, this publication is indeed recommended.



Understanding the Universe in
Seventh-Century Ireland
Marina Smyth
ISBN Number: 978-0851153131

Reviewed by Nigel

This is a revised version of a 1984 PhD dissertation undertaken by Marina Smyth for the 'Studies in Celtic History' series, originally submitted to the University of Notre Dame, Paris.

The contents of the book concentrates on the concepts and perceptions, of how the universe within 7th century Ireland was viewed, imagined or thought about from a philosophical and theological level. Extracted from various prime Latin texts these being, *De mirabilibus sacre scripture*, produced by the Irish Augustine c.654-655 AD/CE; *Commentary on the Catholic Epistles*, Anonymous prior to 708 AD/CE; *Libra de Ordine Creaturarum*, where a native origin is suggested prior to 700 AD/CE; *Egloga Moralium in lob* by Lathcen mac Baith c.595 AD/CE; the *Hisperica Famina* credited to being influenced by Isidore of Seville c.650 AD/CE, and finally *Altus Prosator* attributed to ColmCille.

Well written and presented, readable even with its extensive references for future study and collaborations to the authors findings. Those of greatest interest are the scholarly tweaking out of insular and native views of the cosmos, some of which covers its many working parts, from the base ele-

ments to the later and more favourable concepts, of earth, sea and sky.

I would highly recommend this book; it might be a little pricey (print on demand), but the insight and knowledge which can be gleaned from Marina Smyth work, is well worth it. It also brings about a new understanding of how we might view the inhabitants of Ireland during this period with a new light.



Astronomy in Ancient Britain and Ireland
Clive Ruggles
ISBN-10: 0300078145
ISBN-13: 978-0300078145

Reviewed by Nigel

There appears to be little evidence in the historical archive relating to Druids and Celts to their celestial observation of the sky. If one subscribe to the opinion their knowledge was derived for an earlier period where a continuity of oral knowledge passed from one generation to another exists.

Clive Ruggles research into stellar alignments of monuments in Britain and Ireland is an interesting read with facts and figures relating to alignments of stone avenues and circles together with some burial mounds. A revaluation of previous theories thought supported by Thorn and Hawkins comes under scrutiny. One thing which becomes clear is the merging of stellar observations, monuments and rituals assists to form a cosmological world view. Highly recommended.

Community Events Calendar

Listing your event is free and you can submit up to five entries at a time. Note: We reserve the right to edit or omit entries. To submit, please send an e-mail to admin@druidicdawn.org with 'DD Event Listing' in the subject line. Include the date, title of event, location (including country), a short description and any contact details.

Note: Inclusion of events here does not imply endorsement from Druidic Dawn, *Aontacht* magazine or its editors.

General on going events for 2012

Anam Cara - Weekly Meditation Group

'A Weekly Meditation Group to be held in Oswestry, (UK) to explore everything from the Breath technique; mantra/ chanting' to hopefully movement and shamanic journeying.' To participate and for further details, see <http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/1070>

NEW MOON MEDITATIONS every new moon, Denmark; ring 004575757131 for next meditation:

We'll make a circle and connect with the powers of Earth and Sky, I will then play channelled harp music from a time past, and the participants will be guided into some deep mediation to the Holy Grail within our hearts. Go beyond time and space to previous incidents/ present problems/ diseases. See them, solve them, let go. Afterwards we'll discuss what happened, and I will aid with my clairvoyance. To participate and for further details, see <http://www.sosha.dk/kurserUK.html>

NYMÅNEMEDITATIONER I BRYRUP: Ring for tilmelding og nærmere tidspunkt

Vi vil danne en cirkel, forbinde os med Himlens og Jordens kræfter og jeg vil spille kanaliseret musik fra en svunden tid på min harpe, under det første nummer vil mine hjælpere fortælle mig om den første meditation, derefter vil jeg videregive den til cirklen som en guidet meditation, med den forskel, at meditationen først påbegyndes når jeg atter begynder at spille på min harpe og undervejs vil mine hjælpere følge alle deltagerne og støtte dem. Jeg vil spille mens deltagerne rejser til deres destination i den anden virkelighed, derefter vil jeg bede deltagerne vende tilbage samme vej som de kom fra, takke deres hjælp-

ere og vende tilbage til cirklen. Her vil hver enkelt deltager have mulighed for at fortælle om sine oplevelser, hvis nødvendigt, vil jeg gå ind og hjælpe med mine clairvoyante evner. Dernæst holder vi en pause, hvor vi får noget te og noget godt at spise. Så fortsætter vi med endnu en meditation.

<http://www.sosha.dk/kurser.html>

Pathways

A named Pathways, in Ellesmere, Shropshire, on the Welsh borders. The time together will be used to discuss anything that anyone wants to about spiritual pathways. All are invited, from those who have a clear idea about where they are going, to those who are just curious, and all explorers in between. Come to raise questions, talk about books you are reading, workshops you have attended, stuff that is coming up, etc. Self-advertising is allowed/encouraged, if relevant to the spiritual pathways subject. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month in the Function room of the Ellesmere Hotel. Parking is plentiful very nearby. Meet in the bar from 7.30pm; go to the room from 8pm. If you are late, come in anyway! There is no charge, and the drinks are cheap.

Ellesmere is part of what is locally known as the Shropshire Lake District. The energy of the town is given by the fabulous Mere in the edge of town. Future meetings might include a walk down to the Mere and through the public gardens. This is the beginning of something new, and the direction will evolve with time.

If you need any more details, you can contact John and Rachel on jpathways@hotmail.co.uk Or see <http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/1698>

March

March 23rd 24th: Alban Eilir (Ostara) with the Red Oak Grove **New Jersey, USA**, for further details

<http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/185> or <http://www.redoakgrove.org/upcoming/index.html>

March 24th: Spring Equinox Ritual with The Shining Lakes Grove ADF, **Michigan, USA**; for further details

<http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/184> or <http://www.shininglakes.org/schedule.html>

March 30th: The World Drum in association with the British Druid Order at Avebury, **Wiltshire, UK**; for further details

<http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/872> or <http://www.druidry.co.uk/events-calendar/>

April

April 6th: Lecture: King Arthur and the Gods of the Round Table, with the Nervii Nemeton the mother grove of the New Order of Druids **Belgium**; for further details

<http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/182> or http://nervii.druidcircle.net/index.php?option=com_eventlist&view=eventlist&Itemid=3

April 8th-10th Walking between the worlds: Our Shamanic Witness to the Universe, with Caitlin Matthews, **Birmingham, UK**. For further details <http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/211> or <http://www.hallowquest.org.uk/index.html>

April 12th-14th: The World Drum in association with the British Druid Order at Cae Mabon , **North Wales and Anglesey**; for further details

<http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/872> or <http://www.druidry.co.uk/events-calendar/>

May

May 4th Open Beltaine Ritual with the Nervii Nemeton the mother grove of the New Order of Druids **Belgium**; for further details

<http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/182> or http://nervii.druidcircle.net/index.php?option=com_eventlist&view=eventlist&Itemid=3

May 10th-12th: Calan Mai (Beltane) With the Red Oak Grove **New Jersey, USA**, for further details

<http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/185> or <http://www.redoakgrove.org/upcoming/index.html>

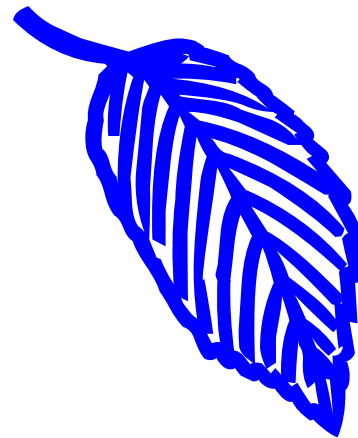
June

June 7 – 9: Spirit of the West Druid Gathering **Western Canada**; for further details

<http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/594> or <http://www.druidgathering.ca>

June 21-23rd: Alban Hefin (Litha) with the Red Oak Grove **New Jersey, USA**, for further details

<http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/185> or <http://www.redoakgrove.org/upcoming/index.html>



DRUIDIC DAWN CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Aontacht - Summer/Winter Solstice 2013

We hope *you* will participate in the *Druidic Dawn* by being *part of* the next issue of our magazine. Send us your News, Events, Reviews, Editorials, Articles, Essays, Recipes, Devotional Pieces, Photos and other materials to us at: aontacht@druidicdawn.org.

Be Part of Our Next Feature Interview

We specifically would like everyone to have the possibility to take part in the forthcoming interview with **Caroline Williams**. Caroline is a trained and qualified counselor in New Zealand specializing in addiction, trauma, and homicide where she weaves the psychological underpinnings of her counseling career with the gentle wisdom of over 15 years experience of training with the *Order of Bards Ovates and Druids (OBOD)* to work with what she calls '*Druid Therapy*'.

She does this by leading workshops (e.g. 'Grail Questing' and 'The Handless Maiden - Journey into Wholeness'). In addition she support individuals through one-on-one therapy sessions which weave animal oracle cards, myth, cups of tea and psychology together to create change and increase connection. She works with bringing the idea of the Druid Healer back into our culture, in an inclusive way, but still holding the gifts of modern learning to create a space of growth and safety.

We love to hear everyone's perspective, and we value all questions received from our members. Take a moment out and become an important part of *Druidic Dawn*!

So send in your questions that you would like to ask. Don't be shy! We love to hear every perspective, and we value all questions received from our members. Take a moment out and become an important part of *Druidic Dawn*!

Basic Guidelines:

- i Submit original work only. Essays & articles should be between 1,000-2,000 words (footnotes and bibliography included). There is not a word limit for poetry, however, please do not submit epic verse.
- ii You may submit multiple pieces. Only electronic submissions are accepted and should be either compressed (.zip/.rar) and attached (preferred for photos & artwork), or pasted into the email body. Document submissions should be in Plain Text (.txt) or Rich Text (.rtf) formats only; Photos/artwork as .jpg or .png.

Please cite your sources and clearly mark when using UPG [Unverified Personal Gnosis] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unverified_Personal_Gnosis)

- iii Articles should be relevant to the Celtic/Druidic communities (refer to Subject Areas below) and must match the theme of the issue (if the issue is themed).
- iv Run a grammar/spell check on your work before submittal.
- v Keep work in a friendly manner. No racism, bigotry, violence or hatred.

Subject Areas:

- Pre-Christian: Discussion of history, anthropology, archeology and more, but also of the current Reconstructionist or Traditional movements happening today.
- Modern Druidry: Discussion of Druidism within the last 300 years; includes Revivalist and Neo-Druid.
- Modern Celtic: Talk on surviving beliefs, folklore and superstitions still alive today on the Celtic isles, i.e., Fairy Faith.
- Celtic Christianity: Looks into this truly beautiful and unique branch of Christianity.
- Inter-Faith: How people incorporate other cultures into their Celtic/Druidic practice, or getting along with those of other faiths.

The deadline for ALL submissions will be 15 May 2013, as we are looking to have distribution by 21 June 2013. Submissions can be sent to aontacht@druidicdawn.org

Note: International copyright law will protect all materials published. However, submitting your work will not guarantee its publication. Also note that as *Aontacht* is a free publication, which generates no profit, you will not be paid for your contributions.

You do not have to be a member of the *Druidic Dawn* community to submit to the newsletter.

Please submit contributions directly to the editorial staff via email to: aontacht@druidicdawn.org

Refer to the writer's guidelines, before you submit contributions or inquiries. Below are our upcoming issues in case you'd like to get ahead on submissions. Be sure to specify which issue you are submitting to.

Contents

Below is the theme for the next issues

Volume 6, Issue 1

Plants

Totems, guides, our spiritual relationships with plants, use in divination.

Deadline May 15, 2013

Volume 6, Issue 2

Indigenous Beliefs and the Land

Relationship with Mother Earth, the Elements, Sacred Motion, Protecting the Land

Deadline Aug 15, 2013

Volume 6, Issue 3

Women in Druidry

Individual Women Druids, the Female Perspective, the Divine Feminine, Working with Goddesses

Deadline Nov 15, 2013