

WitchCamp Council News

June 2016

The WitchCamp Council serves the vast array of Reclaiming WitchCamps. Guided by the Reclaiming Principles of Unity, we provide a forum for information sharing that enhances the health and growth of the unique individual camps and the collective web of camps. We meet two times a year online and once every two years for an in-person/skype meeting that involves representatives from camps and guilds in Europe, the UK, North America, and Australia. At our online meeting in March 2016 we engaged in conversations on many diverse and rich subjects.

This newsletter has been created in order to share some of these discussions with the many camp communities that make up our flourishing web.



Winter Witchcamp labyrinth 2016: Baba Yaga's hut on chicken legs

March 2016 WitchCamp Council Online Meeting Participating Camps and their Reps

Aurora Borealis Witchcamp, Central Alberta, Canada: Jane Pawson and jenika juxtaposed
BC Witchcamp, Southwestern British Columbia, Canada: Ten Crows and Hawthorn
California Witchcamp, US: Phoenix LeFae
CloudCatcher Witchcamp, New South Wales, Australia: Jane Meredith and Susanne Rae
Dragonrise Witchcamp, UK: Raven Edgewalker
Earthsong Witchcamp, Melbourne, Australia: Sue Dunwoody and River Fireseed
Free Cascadia Witchcamp, West Coast of US: briar sparkle sparkle sparkle
Phoenix Witchcamp, Northern Germany: Shira
Redwood Magic, California, US: George Franklin
Spanish Spring Camp, Spain: Miguel
Spiralheart, Artemas, Pennsylvania: Orion Watersong
Teen Earth Magic, California, US: George Franklin
Tejas Witchcamp, Wimberly, Texas: Morgana and Wren
Winter Witchcamp, Western Wisconsin: Max Gries and Paul Eaves

Participating Guilds and their Reps

Heretics Guild, UK, Europe and US: Fortuna
PORTAL, Portland, Oregon: Dawn Isidora
ROOTS, Ontario, Canada: Kim
CRAFT, Bay Area, California: Phoenix LeFae

Witch Camp Council Continuity Reps

Raven Edgewalker
Chelidon

We will lift each other up! Literally and magically, teens learn to support and lift one another, a stark contrast to the competitive put-down culture most of us grew up with. Photo by George Franklin and courtesy of Reclaiming archives.

Teen Earth Magic (TEM): A Witchcamp Profile



At each of our meetings the WCC shares heaps of information through camp and guild check-ins about each participating group. To give a sense of the scope and richness of our wider camp community, we wanted to share a longer profile of one camp each newsletter as well as snippets from the rest of the camps. This issue's camp profile is of Teen Earth Magic by George Franklin.

Teen Earth Magic is Reclaiming's first magical intensive for young people – an annual retreat weaving magic and Earth activism. Begun in 2008 as a short retreat, TEM has expanded to a full witchcamp for teens age 13-19, and for young adult mentors ages 18-25. TEM is an opportunity to explore our relation to the Earth and to one another. We practice ritual creation and group facilitation, hone community and magical skills, bond with people facing many of the same joys and challenges, and find out about ourselves as we head into the world in ever new and more

adventuresome ways.

As campers return and join our Mentors path, people tap into what each has to offer from our hearts – which might be leadership and service, mentoring younger folks, skill-sharing, kitchen-witching, or something unexpected and mysterious – to help create our camp.

Our camp is based in Northern California, but campers and teachers from a number of communities around the Reclaiming network have taken part. Group-building and trust exercises are part of our work, and we aim to create lasting connections among Reclaiming's young people. Teen Earth Magic is strongly supported by parents, who help with cooking, transportation, and in-camp support.

Teen Earth Magic Through the Years

Teen Earth Magic began in 2008, when teachers, parents, and campers from Witchlets in the Woods family camp decided to organize an Earth-based teen retreat.

The first year, twelve teens worked with the legend of Savitri and Satyavan, visited the Yuba River, did rituals and magic, and built group bonds.

In 2009, 24 teens and young adults focused on the life-story of the salmon, native inhabitants of Northern California's rivers and creeks. Most camps since 2009 have worked with stories of the land.

2010 again drew two dozen teens and young adults for the Pentacle of the Great Turning, inspired by the work of Joanna Macy.

Recent years have seen 25-30 teens and young-adult mentors follow the Journey of the Bard, the Life of the Butterfly, and Sweet Magic of the Beehive.

Contact us: email teenearthmagic@gmail.com or call (510) 589-0897.

Teen Earth Magic: the Workbook!

Teachers from Teen Earth Magic have created a workbook featuring dozens of exercises, ritual outlines and ideas, and guidelines for starting a family camp. Many exercises include Solo Working sections that young people can do on their own or with a few friends. There is no better introduction to serious Earth-based magic than the TEM Workbook!

Download our current draft – 300 pages of teen magic! – by contacting us at <http://www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/tem/>

Camp News From Around the World compiled by Paul Eaves, Winter Witchcamp

CloudCatcher WitchCamp is in their 5th year in 2016. This year they were full with 54 campers, 6 orgs, and 6 teachers, the biggest camp ever! This year is the story of Tam Lin. CCWC is situated in the hinterland of the Goldcoast, Queensland, Australia in the northern part of ancient Volcanic Caldera magical, regrowth rainforest. It has become their home. The CloudCatcher community stretches across Australia and campers from many backgrounds and ages come together on the mountain to weave strong magic, growing Reclaiming magic in Australia. Typically there are about 1/3 new campers, with an overall camper age range of 18-65. On their Organizing group they aim for (and usually achieve) a spread of ages, geographical locations and backgrounds that represent the Camp demographic. They have offered an organizer scholarship to an organizer from Earthsong, they blog from camp and they run a WCC tea party to publicize the work of the WCC.



EarthSong is held each year in September in the Victorian countryside, about 2 hours' drive from Melbourne. We welcome campers over 18 years of age from all over Australia and internationally. Our ratio of new campers to those returning is about 1:3. This year we will be delving into the myth of Demeter and Persephone with a teaching team of seven and three daily paths offered. We welcome Dawn Isidora as our continuity teacher for the next few years.

California Witchcamp is working with the story of Rhiannon this year. The venue for camp is the Mendocino Woodlands State Park near Mendocino, CA. The camp is in the midst of a second growth Redwood Forest about 15 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. The camp is currently full at 120 campers, but people are welcome to join the waitlist. This camp is their 20th year. There are typically one-quarter to one-third new campers. Over the last few years there has been a bower team that has done not only the Priestessing of the bower, but other offerings on consent and sexual magic in other realms, including the Chocolate Ritual.

Dragonrise Camp has a camp every two years and are in an 'off' year right now, taking time to review, chat, build connections, dream and incubate for the start of the next cycle - which will begin around September time with a call for teachers for 2017, particularly those with experience working with children at camp. Their new home venue is a gorgeous Druid-owned site in rural Shropshire which is between West Midlands in England and Wales. They will be finalizing dates shortly for next year's camp. After their last camp there was increase in interest in Reclaiming Core classes, and they hope to be offering an in person Elements class in Glastonbury and Totnes this year - which will be the first Elements class for many years offered in the UK.

Phoenix Camp takes place in Northern Germany. Over May Day weekend they hosted a family friendly hang out time known as the Friends of the Phoenix which allows people to bring their kids. Their next adults only camp is scheduled to take place from the 21st to the 25th of September 2016, and the intention is: "In times when Aine and Morrigan bless the Earth Goddess Anu with light and shade, the community gathers. We free our power to change the world, with Aine, Morrigan and Anu. Morrigan gives us the power to act, Anu will hold us and Aine will heal us. Morrigan, Anu, Aine." Teachers have been selected exclusively from the local community now and are not getting paid. Optional offerings are offered instead of path and all evening rituals are planned and executed by the community.

Tejas Web Camp held their 15th camp "Through The Looking Glass" during Samhain season 2015. 52 folks were onsite, which included 6 teachers and 3 onsite organizers. Tejas Web camp had been sleeping since 2009, so they were very excited after their regional Dandelion 2014 to realize that there was enough energy and interest to wake it again. There will be a regional Dandelion again in 2016, camp again in 2017. There was an organizer exchange with Winter Witchcamp, and they hope to do one again at their next camp. At least 15 campers came from out of state/country, many were first time campers. There was a great diversity of age, 20-something to late-70's. There was a good turn out of folks who identify as male, and many from the queer community. There are no kids at camp: campers must be 18 or older to attend. That's one reason that there is an alternate year Dandelions, where there is a great turnout of kids and much multi-generational fun.

British Columbia (BC) Witchcamp takes place in late August at Evans Lake camp near the city of Squamish, about an hour north of Vancouver; this area is traditional unceded Squamish First Nation territory. 2016 it is the Bees and Eleusinian mysteries. Discussions about diversity and related issues have taken place during at least the last two camps. Currently some campers have formed a liberation working group to work on diversity/access

issues. Building relationship with the Squamish Nation community living near Evans Lake is also a long-term project. There has been a long tradition of having a live auction during talent show which raised a lot of money. There was a camper-led initiative last year to raise a comparable amount of money beforehand so we could have a talent show without the live auction. This initiative proved successful, and is continuing this year in an online fundraising perk format; campers can donate specific amounts to claim certain rewards. The campaign just got underway recently.

[Spiralheart Witchcamp](#) takes place at Four Quarters Interfaith Sanctuary located in Artemas, PA. Their 2016 story is Medusa, as Athena's Shadow Self. This myth has been re-storied based on research that suggests Athena and Medusa were originally the same entity, an ancient Death Goddess most likely originating in Libya. The 2017 story will be Tam Lin. Spiralheart is a camper-led camp and tries to balance their desire for skill building and continued learning with the recognition of the skill inherent in our own community. They do this by inviting 2 paid guest-mentors from outside of the community, to offer 2 skill-based paths each year, and by putting out an open call for camper-led paths to the wider community.

[Aurora Borealis Witchcamp](#) organizers are in the midst of planning their 3rd camp and are returning to Long Lake Outdoor Educational Centre Sept. 29th to Oct. 3rd which is north of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in the boreal forest. They are continuing their visit to the elements with this year being fire. They will be looking at the cycles of fire in their rituals, path work and/or workshops. The intention for the 2016 camp is: "We have evolved for ages with fire. Fire has cooked our food and helped create tools. Fire taught us that we also share the spark, bright flame, ember and ash in the cycles of our lives, our relationships and projects. Now wild fires can burn uncontrollable and sour gas flares are seen across the land, capitalism consumes and the climate grows hotter. People burn bright and burn out. It's time to come tend the hearth fires and the cycles of fire in our lives, to honour the renewing power of fire and find our place at the hearth."

[Free Cascadia Witchcamp](#) registration is full! They have quite a long waiting list and are celebrating abundance. This year again they have prioritized elders, POC folks, and families, as well as working to find a magical balance of returning and new campers! Their 2016 camp will be held on a private land on the West Coast of the US that is lush and water abundant, and mostly wild and with very little infrastructure. Their site choice this year was made with a commitment to making it as accessible as possible which includes acquiring large tents and raised beds, an electricity source, and porta-potties. They are working to deepen their relationship to kids, parents and families, which means looking at how camp is structured and ways to integrate kid magic and family support. Their theme this year will be centered around the water cycle and prayers for water.

[Winter Witchcamp](#) takes place on a snow covered island in Western Wisconsin, USA. They were at capacity this year with 58 campers and 22 staff. The staff included 5 weavers, 7 teachers, 6 kitchen witches, 2 bower priestesses, 1 organizer scholarship witch from Tejas camp, and a joybligations (volunteer) coordinator witch. They generally have about 2/3 returning campers and 1/3 new. They tend to be over 40, many campers with disabilities, most are white, many are queer, and there are a wide variety of gender identities and expressions. Since WWC started working with the Pentacle of the Great Turning in a 3-year commitment from 2015 through 2017, they have drawn a number of younger campers from the west coast and locally. The paths this year were "Bones and Roots: Body Magic"; "Edge Magic of the Winter Hag"; and "Rewilding Sorrow: the Healing Power of Grief." Entering their 15th year, dates for the 2017 camp are February 16-20, the story is "We are telling our story: a World Tree journey with Freya," and teachers have just recently been announced.

[Redwood Magic Camp](#) arose from Witchlets in the Woods family camp in 2013 as more and more families wanted a family Witchcamp experience. This camp brings together 60 people of all ages in the redwoods at Mendocino Woodlands State Park in Northern California. Redwood Magic is a do-it-yourself family camp. They co-create what happens at this camp which could include morning paths, workshops, swimming, crafts, rituals, singing and drumming, a talent show, a dessert buffet - maybe even some sleep! There are a few Reclaiming teachers invited to help anchor ritual and perhaps paths, but everyone can make offerings during the course of camp.

Witchcamp Culture in Australia by River Fireseed

I write this on the eve of National Reconciliation Week sitting on land of the Wurrundjeri people of the Kulin nation (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia) who were the original custodians of this place and who are still working and waiting for us to catch up, so that we can reconcile our injustices towards the many nations of this land. The maxim of Reconciliation Australia is "Reconciliation is at the heart of our nation's future."

As Reclaiming witches in Australia, we were born, we live, and we practice magic on stolen land. (Some of us

migrated here, but we still practice magic on stolen land),

So how do we reconcile that?

We know that the bones of our ancestors older than 200 years are all buried on far flung lands. Most of them in Celtic (and I use that term broadly) or northern European lands. We also know the bones of the ancestors of the people of this land for upwards of 50,000 years lie here in this Southern land.

Many of us in the EarthSong and CloudCatcher communities are humbled by that knowledge and wish to find a way to work toward a deeper appreciation of the past so that healing and true reconciliation can begin. There are some in our communities who are uncomfortable with hearing the truths because they or their familial line wasn't directly involved with the atrocities of the past - believing we need to move on and stop being ashamed of our past. Most of this is because many of us have a growing edge around accepting that we are born of privilege.

For no matter how diverse our genders may be, how economically, socially, and educationally deprived we may feel, or indeed how hard it was for our parents or our parents' grandparents to struggle to make it in "The Lucky Country" we still have privilege.

We can acknowledge the mythos of the very hard lives that some of our ancestors had---be they convicts, farmers, merchants, fortune hunters, or the religiously persecuted---often economic refugees, all escaping to find a dream where gold, food, amnesty, religious and economic freedom abound if you work for it. But we have difficulty acknowledging that our oppressed ancestors were privileged above the aboriginal peoples of the many lands we now call Australia.

Until we have a deeper understanding of the truth of our past and come to terms with the fact that our recent forefathers and foremothers symbolically, and sometimes literally, were unconsciously involved in genocide of the original people and the theft of their land and culture, there will always be a skeleton in the closet. It is only our privilege that gives us the luxury to ignore the past.

The notion of cultural non-appropriation is close to the hearts of many members of our communities. We always acknowledge the people whose land we work on at our camps and in our public rituals. Some of us have sought permission from elders to practice magic on their lands, which thankfully has always been given.

At witchcamp this year a small group of us began discussing privilege and appropriation. Indigenous people of this land always acknowledge where they were born and their father's and mother's countries. So we started our discussions with that, acknowledging our own heritage and where we were born using the indigenous name of place if we knew it. This was a beginning step with the underlying premise if you acknowledge who you are and where you come from you won't need to appropriate the culture of a living people. These discussions will continue at EarthSong WitchCamp and I believe will deepen and grow in size.

Working with indigenous culture and on indigenous land is about building relationships. This year EarthSong is paying an Elder from the DjaDjaWurrung tribe for a smoking (cleansing) ceremony, story-telling, and a 'Welcome to Country' which was a traditional welcome and mark of respect between tribal groups and nations. It is a service not an appropriation and will open the camp. For the last few years we have auctioned a handmade necklace at EarthSong and donated the money to the Dja Dja Wurrung language fund--another way to build relationships and tithe to the people of the country we work on.

Hag shrine at Winter Witchcamp

... And the rest is done with mirrors: Why WCC?

Compiled by Fortuna of the Heretics Guild

One of the purposes of the WCC Newsletter is to show the actual, active value of WitchCamp Council to the greater Reclaiming and Pagan community. The most direct way seemed to be to ask those vigorous witches who act as WCC representatives for their camp---and who often have a history of sparking, starting, growing, teaching and facilitating Reclaiming Witch Camps around the world---the question, "How does the WCC benefit, impact, or relate to your camp?"

We know the wonderful quote from our dear departed Terry Pratchett: *"The natural size of a coven is one. Witches only get together when they can't avoid it."* As witches representing our camps and guilds during the



WCC meetings twice each year, we beg to differ!

"It helps me stay connected to the world of witches. It also shows what's up with other camps, which is sometimes what should be up with our camps. (It also makes me want to go to all the camps! Goals!)" --Wren, Tejas Web (US)

"Support! We aren't flapping around by ourselves trying to invent and reinvent the wheel. There are passionate, clever, creative and experienced people on Witch Camp Council willing to help make witch camps everywhere viable." --Jane Pawson, Aurora Borealis (Canada)

"WitchCamp Council reminds us that we don't exist in a vacuum. Organizing a camp can sometimes feel daunting, so it's great to remember that there are many witches out

there doing this work too. One example is sharing our various approaches to work around land relations and justice for Indigenous, Black, and People of Color communities. Through WCC we support each other, learn from each other, and build community, connections, and an ever-growing web of magic across the planet!" --Max Gries, Winter Witchcamp (US)

"Our twice a year meetings remind me that we are part of a transformative international magical movement as well as providing useful info on such things as bowers, after camp care for campers, the evolving nature of camps, camp tea parties, and the latest day to day fashions of witchcampers." --Paul Eaves, Winter Witchcamp (US)

"WCC reminds me of my connection to a world wide community of like minded people, where I cherish both our similarities and our differences, where i find strength and challenge. Thank you all!" --Shira, Phoenix Camp (Germany)

"In a tradition that prioritizes community, WitchCamp Council is a valuable way for our camps to be in relationship with one another - not through conformity, but through genuine connection - supplying support, insights and camaraderie to one another." --Dawn Isidora, PORTAL Guild (US)

For more information on the WitchCamp Council, check out our website: witchcamp.org

WitchCamp Council Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/WitchCamp-Council-367428246608646/>

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If you have any questions or comments about this newsletter or the WitchCamp Council, please email us at witchcampcouncil@gmail.com

Contributors to this issue: Paul Eaves, George Franklin, Fortuna, River Fireseed, Max, Tyler, and the time and energy of members of the Witchcamp Council.