



## WitchCamp Council News

### September 2017

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. Every other year we meet once online and another time which is an inperson/zoom meeting that involves representatives from camps and guilds in Europe, the UK, North America, and Australia. At our online meeting in May 2017 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. Please forward this newsletter to any folks you think it would be of interest to.

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#### May 2017 WitchCamp Council Online Meeting

##### Participating Camps and their Reps

*Aurora Borealis Witchcamp, Central Alberta, Canada:* Jane and jenika juxtaposed  
*BC Witchcamp, Southwestern British Columbia, Canada:* Synnove and Seraphina  
*California Witchcamp, US:* Phoenix LeFae and Madrone  
*CloudCatcher Witchcamp, New South Wales, Australia:* Jarrah and Susanne Rae  
*Dragonrise Witchcamp, UK:* Raven Edgewalker  
*Earthsong Witchcamp, Melbourne, Australia:* Sue Dunwoody  
*Free Cascadia Witchcamp, West Coast of US:* briar sparkle and jeanette  
*Redwood Magic, California, US:* George  
*Litha Camp, Spain:* Morgaine  
*Spiralheart, Artemas, Pennsylvania:* Orion Watersong and Babka Stu  
*Teen Earth Magic, California, US:* George  
*Tejas Witchcamp, Wimberly, Texas:* Deanna and Wren  
*Winter Witchcamp, Northern Minnesota:* Carey  
*Vermont Camp:* Aurora Raven  
*Wild Maine:* Simon

##### 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 Rep

Raven Edgewalker  
Paul Eaves

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Revolutionary heart from Vermont witchcamp

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### Free Cascadia Camp: A Witchcamp Profile

Greetings! We are Briar and Jeanette, members of the Free Cascadia Witchcamp organizing body. Jeanette is of Irish Catholic heritage and is an able-bodied hetero-woman of middle class upbringing living on Nuuchahnulth territory working on climate change adaptation plans with the Municipality of Tofino. Briar is a Norwegian-European American queer, male socialized person of the mid-lower classes living on Awaswas Ohlone territory. Our camp is at a crossroads and we are writing to share our questions, lessons and dreams.

Our camp self identifies as living on the outer edge of Reclaiming, while working with its spirit at the heart. Our camp is emergent - we open to big questions, respond to feedback, and try to hold our learnings while striving towards our dreams. To understand our crossroads we must share how we got here.

Around 2004 some long time members of Reclaiming recognized a need within earth activist communities for magic and spiritual connection in the work they were doing. A small Witchcamp was created over a weekend to bring healing and protection to the site of a tree sit in the Southern Cascades. The activists who were present, as well as the witches, recognized the potency of this work. From this grew a desire for a Witchcamp that blended the magic of these worlds.

Free Cascadia Witchcamp, originally Free Activist Witchcamp, is organized collectively by a volunteer team through a modified consensus model. Our budget is guided by radical trust. Our camp is sliding scale with no one turned away for lack of funds, payment is made at camp and our average donation is \$105 for the week. We organize with between 20-30 members, serving 100 campers, our wait list is often upwards of 200

people. Organizers and campers largely live on the West Coast of the colonized land of the US and Canada, though they have also lived in the Midwest and the East Coast.

Our camp struggles with the reality that the United States and Canada are illegal occupations of Turtle Island, perpetuated by ongoing physical and cultural genocide. As people who live on these lands, and a camp that works with spirits of the land, we feel that it is essential we examine our on going role in colonization, and develop relationships with the peoples whose land we live and work upon. We do not have a home site and we are questioning the integrity of doing magic on lands that are not ours, and where we do not have relationships or kinship ties to the peoples whose land it rightfully is.

While we do not have one home, the Wolf Creek Radical Faerie Sanctuary on the lands of the Takelma people, in what many call Southern Oregon, has hosted us many times. The cross pollination has brought powerful Faerie magic and sacred clowning into our circle. Our attempts to build rightful relationships with the peoples of this land has manifested as a tithe to Grandma Agnes Baker-Pilgim, a Takelma elder.

In 2009 we ritually died Free Activist Witchcamp and birthed Free Cascadia Witchcamp. This ritual and naming grew from a desire to heal conflict and harm within our camp, respond to camper and organizer feedback and meet a need for transformation and renewal.

This willingness to change and incorporate feedback is among the greatest strengths of Freecamp. Being responsive and open to the Stars of Possibility, Freecamp again and again experiments with the edges of what has been done.

Our camp has ever shifting edges and no clear model to follow. We have become a queer of center camp, we are open to people of all ages, and we are financially accessible. We are working on our physical, neurological and emotional accessibility, and we working to center BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) folk and to decenter whiteness. There are some bipoc folk in the organizing group, also engaged in this anti-racism work. The group is still mostly white-appearing, and this is a work in progress. We mess up frequently and we keep trying.



Free Cascadia witchcampers

## **Camp News from Around the World**

Compiled by Paul Eaves

### **Vermont Camp**

In August of 2017, the VWC community met in the mountains of Vermont for its 23rd time working magic around the tale of “The Queen of the Silver River-Water wisdom, tree magick and the search for sacred community”. Over the last years, VWC has been experimenting with teachers and ritualists from within our community. Our tale created the perfect container for weaving magic around kindness, heart energy, and in healing trust to ourselves and the world around us. It was adventure in rebuilding and strengthening the foundations of magical practice. The Solar Eclipse ritual on Monday transported us to the shores of Avalon. The campers had a lot of fun as every year at our Magical Faire, the lake and Variety show. The Farm & Wilderness camp provided delicious meals with Mary. We are a family friendly camp from infants, our Pixies up to our elders.

Our Motto this year was “We are the ones we have been waiting for...”

*-Ravyn Stanfield, We Are the Rising Sun.*

### **Teen Earth Magic**

Teen Earth Magic is a dearly beloved youth camp for witches aged 13 to 20. Following elements of the Reclaiming tradition, we as a camp co-create a container of ritual, activism, and right relationship with the land. TEM has traditionally taken place in mid June at a Northern California site, and this year we hope to be returning to our new as-of-2017 home at the beautiful Mariposa Institute in Ukiah, CA.

### **AB WitchCamp**

Aurora Borealis is currently in the fourth year of a five year commitment to the Elements. 2017 takes us to Water, this October 6-9 we will be gathering on Treaty 7 land near Pincher Creek, Alberta, Canada. Our camp intention:

*With reverence to the sacred waters around us and within us,  
we heal ourselves, our communities and the waters of this land.*

*We stand in solidarity with indigenous water protectors and echo the call, “Water is Life”.*

*We are learning to be allies and accomplices in this sacred healing work.*

### **Litha Camp in Spain**

At Spanish Reclaiming Summercamp this year 31 people met to celebrate Summer Solstice in Gredos Mountains, around 2 hours west from Madrid with the guideline of Summer Solstice theme which is: What do I want to harvest from my garden in autumn, how can I nurture and water it, and which weeds do I have to pick so the harvest is abundant? The place holds the Camp since 2011 and therefore has quite some history, because we started off in a lost valley living for a weekend in a huge Tipi, until the Celtic Roundhouse was finished. Since 2014 camp is only in Spanish language as it has turned to be a gathering place just once a year, as Morgaine, founder of the Reclaiming Community has moved to Germany. Spirals are still held, now taught by Sainda and Sauccho in Spanish. Looking forward to next Camp 1 to 3 of July!

### **Redwood Magic Family Camp**

We held our fifth Redwood Magic Family Camp in August, immediately following Witchlets - so some of did back-to-backs in the redwoods - a tough life! Our 2017

theme was Spider, completing our five-year cycle of nature/elemental themes. There were about 50 campers, half adult and half youth. Mainly a younger group of kids, peaking at age 15. Teachers are all volunteers, and we welcome interested teachers to contact us. Cost is minimal - \$300 adults and \$150 youth to age 25. The \$150 covers bare-bones site and food costs, and we count on adult fees to help pay our kitchen team and other expenses. We have had some Spanish-speaking campers, and have tried to do some portion of each ritual in Spanish - a song, invocation, etc.

### **British Columbia Witchcamp**

British Columbia Witchcamp is the longest running witch camp in the world. We hosted our 30th year just this past August 2017. Camp is a 6-day experience that takes place the last week of August. We have an auction to raise funds for scholarship - we give out about 20 \$200 scholarships a year. There are also work trade spaces. BCWC is adults only, with our demographic being mostly white woman-identified folks. However, in recent years there are more POC and nonbinary gendered folks. There is a significant population of alter-abled folks. Camp is fairly accessible and makes a concerted effort to be as inclusive as possible to make it a safe and wonderful experience for everyone who comes. A highlight is the beautiful pristine lake and the warm weather that allows campers to skinny dip and bask in the sun most days.

### **California Witchcamp**

Camp is held last weekend of June for an entire week. 7 nights. California camp is mostly sold out the last few years, thanks to social media and our presence on it. 2/3 approx returning, that shifts every few years. We have newcomers every single year with no elements, so that class is often packed. Pricing for camp starts at \$580 for the early birds and the majority pay \$590 then it goes up in increments from there as the year progresses. Our fee covers room, food and tuition. We have a ten person catering team, that are hired each year, that have been working at camp for 14 years, and we feed our campers super healthy vegetarian gourmet food as much organic as possible. We believe in feeding people a wonderful sustainable diet, free of factory farmed animals. We feel that this goes more in line with the Principles of Unity and really honoring that all life is sacred.

### **Tejas Web WitchCamp, Texas**

Our 15th WitchCamp! We are working with Hekate in the Samhain season of 2017 . "The voices of this Land call us to the crossroads. Guided by Hekate, we cultivate magical tools and deepen relationships with this Land to discover keys to transforming oppression and injustice". We are still finding that one year of Camp/one year of Dandelion is working for our community. It allows families and children to remain connected and we don't have the numbers to pull off both. 2016 was a successful Dandelion and 2017 is again a Camp year.

### **Spiralheart, Pennsylvania**

We are a camper-led camp, with a very hard-working organizing committee and media cell year-round. The RAT (ritual arc team) focuses on planning the ritual arc and individual rituals for about 6 months, including meetings with the path facilitators intermittently, involving them in some of the planning and participation, including opportunities for campers. We generally recruit two resource facilitators with skills our community wants to build, and who facilitate on separate teams with community members. Both the RAT and path facilitation teams have a mix of more and less experienced leadership for skill building (and magical energy!):

### **EarthSong Witchcamp, Australia**

We have a healthy Scholarship program with funds being raised via camp raffle & auction, personal donation, tithing from community workshops and RTits events. This year we anticipate being able to offer in excess of 10 x \$200 scholarships. We are also excited to be offering an Activist Scholarship to someone who hasn't attended a Reclaiming camp before (pre-requisites required). The demographic of our camp is predominantly white female although it is evolving each year with new campers attending and our camp becoming known by wider national and internal communities. Over the past few years the ratio of new campers to returning campers is approximately 1/3.

### **Winter Witchcamp, Northern Minnesota**

As a community, most of us are over 40, many of us have disabilities, most of us are white, many are queer, and we have a wide variety of gender identities and expressions. We have also had a few more people of color and indigenous people come to camp each year, in 2016 and 2017. It seems that our early registration has been helpful in this (7-10 days before general registration is early registration for people of color and indigenous people of the Americas, with a "plus one" person this year). I estimate that this year we have an age range of maybe 20-85 and we may have about 10 people of color and/or indigenous people out of our total of 82 people.

### **Wild Maine Witchcamp**

The first WMW will be held October 8th-14th, 2017. We are working with the Baba Yaga and Vasilisa. Camp will be held on a beautiful piece of land right on the ocean with good physical accessibility, and we have an amazing local witch/caterer coming to cook for us so we're all very excited about the food. Planning is coming along very well with four amazing paths and wonderful teachers and ritual facilitators. As of September we have about 40 folks registered and would love even more wonderful witches at camp! We are boldly stepping into the unknown by offering a pay-as-you-can model our very first year as a camp, this will likely require us to borrow some seed money and more registrations as well as financial donations go a very long way to support our camps future and to show support for this radical financial accessibility. Folks interested in registering, donating, or just plain curious about our new camp are encouraged to check out our website, [wildmainewitchcamp.org](http://wildmainewitchcamp.org)

### **CloudCatcher, Queensland, Australia**

CloudCatcher's growing community comes from all over Australia and the planet. We are an increasingly diverse group including non-binary gendered folk, POC and families with children or teens. We offered 19 scholarships in 2017, raised by auction, raffle and donations. We focus on first time campers, those who have not received a scholarship previously, who are traveling or experiencing financial difficulty in whatever form. Through the generous donation of Australian Teachers and student teachers we have separate organiser and activist scholarships. Work exchange for scholarship is not expected. Our healthy relationship with the pagan network in Australia allows community members to continue to seed awareness of the camp in their various communities. We have a website, camp blog, active facebook page with discussions. The Pagan Awareness Network – journal – Small Tapestry publishes regular camper stories and advertisements for camp. In 2017 we worked the story of the land of the Caldera and began the work of decolonisation. CloudCatcher is conscious to connect with traditional custodians of the land through dialogue with local elders. In 2018 we will work with the story of Hermes and the Bee Maidens.



CloudCatcher is set amongst the rainforest and waterfalls of the Mt Warning Caldera

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### **"Pay as you Can" at Winter Witchcamp**

Carey from WWC

A transformative element for the February 2017 Winter Witch camp was the implementation of our first "Pay as you Can" model. With the generosity from community with their time & finances along with intention and spellwork, we were able to bring in enough funds to exceed our costs and stay in budget. We are continuing this model for our February 2018 camp.

All campers who register have the opportunity to designate their registration amount in support of camp (this also includes those with roles like kitchen, weavers, teachers, bower, etc., some of whom also receive stipends for their work).

This magic allows us to take into account the many variables in our own lives that we bring to the financial part of camp – what will travel cost to get me there, do I need to provide care giving for someone while I'm gone, am I expecting a big pay raise that will let me spend more on my values and fun and development, do I want to support someone else's trip to camp in honor of an ancestor or beloved, am I on a fixed income, did I have a recent medical expense, did I just get a big birthday gift from someone? So many things factor in to what we can pay. For some of us registration for camp has a significant impact to our monthly income. For others it is something that touches or challenges our values about money, our comfort level with communal sharing, or our day-to-day small luxuries. For others of us, this isn't going to be hard at all; money isn't a big deal emotionally or in our budget.

As we have a camp value of exploring accessibility, we are working to hold space for deeper listening and understanding of matters of class and privilege. We choose to open the way for these threads to be present and visible, and we choose to believe that the bounty of campers as a whole is enough to meet the expenses of creating this amazing cauldron. We ask that all hold the space with us by thoughtful choice of what to pay.

When a camper or person with a role registers, they select the amount they are designating to pay for camp, even if that is zero. Overall the costs will be higher this year since we are moving to a different venue with improved facilities. As a general guide, for our next camp in February 2018, the cost will be approximately \$380 for each person. For the full experience, and we are suggesting between \$0 and \$700. We trust the choices of campers, and we trust the abundance of this camp that has operated so well for so many years.

We also have [a “How you can support camp” webpage you can look at](#) to see where we’re at with this year’s fundraising!

(For more on class and economics, check out resources like [Class Matters](#) or [United For a Fair Economy.](#))



Litha Witchcampers in the Gredos Mountains in Spain

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### **My First Witchcamp**

Jane Pawson, WCC rep from Aurora Borealis Camp

The 1st Witchcamp I ever went to was B.C. Witchcamp in 1988. It was at beautiful Loon Lake. The theme, if I remember correctly, was the Pentacle of Life. It was the 2nd year of this camp and catering had to be done by the camp's staff. They had never cooked vegetarian before. Things like lettuce and spinach sandwiches were appearing at lunch. It was also caffeine free in those days. Yikes. We had been learning and singing lots of chants, as well.

The Initiation point on the Pentacle came up. Challenges given by small groups then off to the woods to contemplate, then Raven Moonshadow's drumming called us back to the dock. Pleiades was at the start of the long dock and asked what we had gained on our sojourn. Star was was were the dock branched out into a raft. She asked us if we had anything important to tell her. Raven was at the end of the raft drumming and assisting us in an eyes closed plunge into the lake as our initiation by the waters of Loon Lake. It progressed seriously and profoundly. Then one amazing woman with a wicked sense of humour took her turn. As she jumped a huge leap. In mid air before she hit the water she yelled. "Quick get me a deprogrammer and Julia Child!" Then she submerged. Everyone cracked up. I knew I found my magical home where irreverent humour was embraced.



## **Examining Racism within Free Cascadia Camp and the Lessons Thus Far**

Jeanette and Briar Sparkle

In the last few years the racism in our camp, organizing and ourselves has been unveiled. In big and small moments, actions and structures. It is ever present, harmful and heartbreaking.

In our 2017 organizing cycle, we chose to focus on the story of oil. Also through the organizing year and at camp, we worked to center BIPOC folk and to de-spell whiteness. This work was deep and we hurt our beloveds and friends. We tried to do better. We failed in big ways, succeeding in some respects, and learned invaluable lessons. And we'll try again.

This is some of what we learned:

**TAKE DIRECTION:** Listen to every piece of critical feedback you get from BIPOC folks. It is a gift. Honour that gift. Respond and meet the need or request. You may find reasons to avoid doing so, question these moments.

**IF YOU FEEL DEFENSIVE, REFLECT ON THAT:** Releasing ill-gotten privilege comes with any number of feelings: grief, anger, resentment, shame, guilt. We are witches, we can transform these energies into something that heals us all. Our freedoms are intertwined and when we unlearn the ways we perpetuate oppression and violence, we all benefit.

**IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO NAME AND TALK ABOUT RACISM:** Let us not hide from what is present. Before camp our organizing body read articles and discussed racism in ourselves and our organizing. We sent selected readings to campers ahead of time and encouraged them to do the same. We wove recognition of our racism into the orientation meetings at the beginning of camp, and recognized and held our basic goodness. Over each dinner we read a de-spelling statement, and discussed pre-determined questions relating to our roles in structural violence and ways we perpetuate white supremacy.

**SHARE WHAT YOU HAVE:** Greed got us into this mess and it will not get us out. There is enough for us all if only we share with one another. Those of us that have more because of race, class, gender, ability, must redistribute our resources to those who do not have as much access. This is not charity. It is justice.

**IF YOU WANT PEOPLE TO FEEL AT HOME, MAKE SURE THEY SEE THEMSELVES IN THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM:** We prioritized BIPOC registration and magical teachings that reflected the diversity of our camp. We sought out teachers from a range of traditions and limited the number of white teachers. We learned a key piece of decentering whiteness is having fewer white people in speaking, teaching and hosting as well as decision making roles.

CREATE A SPACE FREE FROM WHITE PEOPLE: A space was set aside as a BIPOC only area, and when that wasn't enough, another was created. We cannot stress enough the pain inflicted by micro-aggressions and pervasive racism. It is essential people have a space to heal away from ongoing harm. If your arm was broken, you wouldn't want be resting in a tennis court.

DE-SPELLING WHITENESS: There is not a single form of whiteness, and breaking down the category of "white people" is important. Similarly, recognizing those in our communities that are mixed race is essential as we work to not invisibilize each other. Finding new ways to accurately name what we mean and what we are working on is important magic. Creating space for our lived experience while also holding the ways privilege and access affect us and others is a way to break the spell of whiteness and the corresponding objectification.

It's important that we name a big unveiling without diminishing the smaller moments. At our 2016 camp, during an all camp ritual Black Lives Matter was named and someone responded with 'all lives matter'. The ritual continued after a brief pause and harm was compounded. At the closing meeting, the next day, we did have a reckoning. An organizer addressed camp and spoke about the comment, and the person who made the comment came forward to take responsibility and apologize. There was an attempt to do so without shaming, and this feels like an important part of an ongoing process.

This year in ritual the same shadow appeared in slightly different words. This time, a camper asked us to stop. In this moment we threw away our plans. Organizers and campers together, with BIPOC folks in the lead, wove a path onward with magic, ritual and conversation/listening combined. The availability of nonBIPOC folks for requests and collaboration was an important part of this weaving. So much harm was done. It was messy. There were no plans and no known ways to make it amends, reconnect and move forward with powerful magic. There is still harm to tend. And we are trying. And we will keep trying.

Ultimately we were successful in getting deeper into what is in our container: long complicated histories of colonization and racism; lived and ancestral trauma; and the reality that no one person knows the way forward. "It is going to hurt... the pain lessens when we are together" (a message from a deep witness during a camp ritual).

What has been reflected to us, that we are bringing forward in whatever is to come, is the importance of facing our foundations, releasing what does not serve us and continuing to align our actions with our values. We encourage everyone in the Reclaiming community to reflect on the ways white colonial culture is wedded to our structures, words, and rituals. May our magic be strong and liberate all.



Wolfcreek radical faerie sanctuary during 2017 Free Cascadia camp.

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## External Intoxicating Substances at Witchcamps

Paul Eaves

During our recent online WCC meeting we had a wide ranging checkin about what are often referred to as "clean and sober" policies at witchcamps. There were numerous topics that arose and here is a summary of those that drew the most interest.

During this discussion, it was noted that "clean and sober" is not stated in the Reclaiming Principles of Unity so its status at camps is more of a custom, a very strong custom in many Reclaiming Communities rather than a consensed upon shared value. One of the last times this issue came up at the WCC the following statement was developed as one of the criteria to be called a Reclaiming Witchcamp; *"Out of respect for the intensity of the spiritual and healing work we do at Camps, we expect participants within the circle of Camp to engage in the transformational work of changing consciousness at will without the use of external intoxicating substances. We are committed to fostering accessible self-responsible communities, supporting people who are in recovery and/or working with the challenges of addiction."* This statement was crafted carefully with input from camp reps and communities about 10 years ago. It was necessary to reflect that camps weren't all in exactly the same place on the issue of "clean and sober". Many camps also seem to have evolved into using the phrase drug and alcohol free. A question arose if we need to tweak this statement or do individual camps need to be clearer or more specific about what their policies are around drugs and alcohol.

Medicinal marijuana was another present topic in our discussion. It is an important medicine for those who use it as well as a legal right in some localities. This discussion pointed out that the drug and alcohol free custom to many, is really less about legal and illegal drugs but rather medicinal and recreational use of drugs. It was a widely shared opinion to make space in camp for medical marijuana as well as limit how its use impacts those in recovery and the magical work of camp. It was suggested that campers who need medicinal marijuana at camp use an edible form.

Drug and alcohol agreements are usually in most camp literature and signed at the beginning of camps. For some campers this seems to be a guideline rather than agreement to abide by. This a problem for some folks who say that it is important that we create our magic with integrity. If campers ignore or break agreements that we have made about drugs and alcohol at camp, this is seen as "a breach of trust, and damaging to the community." While different communities may have different policies or agreements around drugs and alcohol, there was general accord that

each camp must clearly state what their policies are so that campers know what to expect when they come to camp.

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Song by Suzanne Sterling.  
Performed by Willow Kelly, Suzanne Sterling and Ravyn Gerri Stanfield  
at California WitchCamp / Video by Aria + Skye

For more information on the WitchCamp Council, check out our website: [witchcamp.org](http://witchcamp.org)

[WitchCamp Council Facebook page](#)

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If you have any questions or comments about this newsletter or the WitchCamp Council, or wanted to be added to our newsletter mailing list, please contact us at [elvisian13@yahoo.com](mailto:elvisian13@yahoo.com)

Contributors to this issue: Briar Sparkle, Carey, Jeanette, Paul Eaves, Diane Lansing, Jane Pawson, Karen Aria Biswas and the time and energy of members of the Witchcamp Council.

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