

Constitution

1. The name of the society is "*Heathen Freehold Society of British Columbia*", hereafter referred to as "*the society*".

2.1 The purpose of the society is the furtherance of the original heathen or pagan tribal religion of the native speakers of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family (including *Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, Danish, German, English* and others), who are also known as the Germanic, Teutonic and Nordic tribes, and the ancient religion's modern variants, (including *Heathenism, Odinism, Theodism, Forn Sed, Asatru* and others).

2.2 The society will fulfill this purpose by various means, as feasible, including the creation of *gilds* specializing in various traditional cultural expressions such as the arts, crafts, language and spiritual and religious practice.

2.3 Central to furthering Germanic religion is the *Weoh Gild*, or priests' guild, whose purposes are to:

(a) keep *troth* with the Germanic gods on an ongoing basis, on behalf of the society, by performing traditional rites on at least three of the days and seasons known as the *holy-tides* that were sacred to our ancestors, including:

- i) *Yule*, on or about December 21, in the lunar month containing winter solstice,
- ii) *Summermal*, on or about May 1, the anniversary of the society's founding,
- iii) at least one other holy day, as feasible, such as any *thing* or *althing*;

(b) perform whatever community religious rites are required or requested by the members or the public, including but not limited to the witnessing of oaths, marriages, birth and naming rites, last rites, funerals, rites of passage or other such religious customs;

(c) offer pastoral ministry services, as deemed appropriate, to Heathens in institutional settings in British Columbia, including hospitals, schools, jails, and the military,

- (i) liaison with other Heathen organizations, if any, in Canada, in order to develop national guidelines for Heathen institutional ministry in each of these areas,
- (ii) liaison with and consult other organizations or government agencies directly concerned with institutional ministry in general;

(d) to preserve and protect whatever *weoh* and holy relics, such as the society's Oath-ring, that are necessary to perform its religious duties;

(e) to develop a curriculum of Germanic priestcraft;

(f) to work to increase knowledge and awareness of Germanic religion and priestcraft;

2.4 Important to the full revival of Germanic religion is the establishment of *holy ground* and *sacred forests*. The society shall engage in fundraising efforts towards the goal of purchasing one or more parcels of property in the province of British Columbia, and the building of structures upon them, with which and upon which to fulfill the society's purposes. With such property, the society shall, as feasible:

a) establish holy ground, or *frithgard*, upon which members, public Heathen, and the public in general may peaceably alight to practice the religion or participate in the society's holy rites and events, thereby reducing the society's dependence on rental facilities,

b) construct traditional Nordic structures (such as long-houses, *hofs* or mead-halls) in which the folk may gather, worship or practice, and for educational purposes,

c) construct modern facilities in which to house administrative offices, class rooms, libraries,

workshops, studios, certified kitchen areas, washroom and shower facilities and dormitories, for use by members and the public while visiting a property,

d) offer to the society and the public facilities for specific cultural projects (such as replica Viking ship building) which meet the approval of the *Witan*, *thing* or *althing*,

e) designate a segment or parcel of land, as feasible, as a *sacred forest* in the tradition of the ancestors, establish a perpetual covenant to preserve the land and its natural ecosystems, and reestablish the tradition of *Irmingsul*, the living World Tree,

f) establish a sustainable *working forest* segment or parcel appropriate for the ritual extraction of small amounts of lumber for building projects (such as hall construction, Maypoles, craft-poles, shipbuilding projects, firewood for sacred bonfires, and so on),

g) establish permitted *places of business*, run by the society and participating guilds, with which the society can raise funds to fulfill its charitable purposes,

h) establish a *certified winery* in which to ritually produce honey mead or other wines or traditional ales used by adults as holy sacrament during select holy rites including *blot*, *husel* or *symble*,

i) establish a perpetual covenant on a segment or parcel of land, as feasible and permitted, to become Canada's first *Heathen graveyard* and, if possible, mausoleum, and moreover always endeavour to make burial or internment feasible for low income families who may wish to finally rest there.

2.5 The society further exists to:

(a) offer a positive network of support for individuals and kindreds in their personal pursuit of Heathen ways of life,

(b) promote fellowship and further learning,

(c) foster communication between Heathen individuals and groups,

(d) and create goodwill by contributing to local communities.

3. The society is further charged to pursue knowledge regarding the ancient Germanic tribes and the modern revivals of Germanic Heathenism, as well as to share that knowledge with others and preserve it for future generations.

This provision shall remain unalterable.

4. The society on the whole must remain true to the Nordic, Germanic and Teutonic gods exclusively, maintaining fidelity and keeping troth with our gods and ancestors until the end of time. The accurate transmission of our trow, our custom, culture and religion to future generations depends on our fidelity to the ancestors.

This provision shall remain unalterable.

5. Statement of Belief - Members of the society share the following articles of belief:

5.1: Reality of the Aboriginal Germanic Gods

We revere the old gods and goddesses of the Germanic tribes, who were known by various names throughout the ancient Teutonic world.

5.2: Spiritual Significance of Culture

We recognize that every part of life has spiritual significance and thus it is the whole of Germanic culture that we hold dear. This belief that one's relationship with the gods permeates every aspect of life is behind the foundation of the society's gilds.

5.3: Everlasting Troth of the Society

Votes should be wielded by those members who have sworn an *oath of troth* to any of the Germanic gods and goddesses. In this way the society will never lose site of its original purpose.

5.4: The Society as Frithgard

The society is a *frithgard*, a sacred space where peace, fellowship and goodwill prevail, and thus is more welcoming to the gods and spirits of the ancestors.

The meetings and gatherings undertaken by the society and its gilds, and its public forums and publications, are considered to occur in a sacred frithgard.

It is each our own individual responsibility to keep the peace hereby established.

5.5: Kinship of Germanic Tribes

With respect to the distinct cultures of the Teutonic tribes throughout time and around the world, that on the whole, every branch of the Germanic, Teutonic or Nordic cultural tree is a member of the family of our folk, and therefore is recognized and welcomed.

5.6: Divine Ancestry of the Folk

The gods themselves are among the earliest ancestors of our tribes, or the gods have intervened at various points in our development.

The Germanic tribes are regarded as family by the gods.

5.7: Holiness of the Ancestors

The ancestors are worthy of our ongoing reverence. Recognition is given to their efforts and for the sacrifices they have made in order to give life to the living generations.

The spirits of the ancestors watch over us at all times and commune with us, especially by way of the the holy rites of *blot*, *husel* and *symble* .

5.8: Holiness of Kin

The family is sacred, a living embodiment of our ancestral heritage.

Heathen families should be offered support by their communities if needed and encouraged to wax.

Our troth, a promise to the ancestors, is made good when our families thrive.

5.9: Holiness of Elderfolk

Our elderly, or elderfolk, are worthy of special respect and consideration. Being our living ancestors, their wisdom and insight is invaluable to the kindreds and communities of which they are a part.

5.10: Holiness of Kinderfolk

Children, or kinderfolk, are perhaps the most important of society members, being central to families and many kindreds. Children are our link to the future, our legacy, and the *Joy of the Ancestors*.

5.11: Worthiness of Greater Community

By coming together as a greater community the ancestors and gods are honoured and the society's objectives best achieved, ensuring the continuity of our traditions into the future.

5.12: Worthiness of Precedent, Custom and Tradition

Members practice, as best as can be determined by each individual, the religion of the ancient Teutonic peoples or a modern variant that is nevertheless rooted in the lore and informed by the spirit of Teutonic culture.

5.13: Worthiness of the Holy Thew or Noble Virtues

It is essential to strive to live up to the highest ethical standards. These standards, illustrated in lore, custom and tradition, embody all that is best expected of us by the gods and ancestors.

With respect to the different variants of the modern practice of Germanic religion, many members may believe in the *Nine Noble Virtues*, which are (in no particular order): 1. Honour; 2. Fidelity, Troth or Loyalty; 3. Hospitality or Generosity; 4. Industriousness; 5. Self-reliance; 6. Perseverance; 7. Courage or Boldness; 8. Truth or Honesty; 9. Discipline.

While other members may take a less codified approach with belief in *holy thews*, which by and large reflect the same virtues but which may not be recorded or written down. The holy thews are sacred customs, beliefs, traditions and ways of behaving by which Heathen may better attune themselves with the living, with the gods and with ancestors, and which are passed down orally or by natural social dissolution.

5.14: Holiness of Oaths

Holy oaths are considered to be heard by the gods and ancestors when they are sworn.

To be true to one's word is among the highest virtues.

It is through our web of sacred oaths that we are forged into a greater community.

5.15: Holiness of Blot

Blot is the rite of votive offering, libation or sacrifice by which gifts are offered to the gods, ancestors, wights of the land or other spirits.

By performing blot, the gift exchange with the gods and ancestors is completed. In this way we acknowledge and give back, if even a little, the gift of life we have been given.

5.16: Holiness of Husel

Husel is the sacred feast of communion with the gods and ancestors, by way of which we recognize and honour our shared community, and embody the collective spirit of the folk of which we are a part.

Husel is a necessary part of the celebration of the *holy-tides* and the holding of our troth.

5.17: Holiness of Symble

Symble is a rite of utterances before the community and within the sight of the gods and ancestors wherein gifts may be given and oaths are sworn, *yelps* and *boasts* are given and sacramental mead, or other symbolic beverage, is consumed.

When our words and our deeds coincide at symble, good luck and the weal of the community is the natural result.

5.18: Holiness of Earth

Wilderness is sacred to society members, who believe in the divinity of Earth, or Jord, Mother of Thor . Like our Heathen ancestors, we believe the gods alight most happily upon a sacred grove in a wild place.

All creatures great and small each play an invaluable role in the unfolding of the *Web of Wyrð* .

To preserve and protect the natural world of which we are a part is primary among the god-given responsibilities of humans.

5.19: Holiness of Wights

While we hold troth with the Germanic gods and goddesses foremost, we believe there are many other spiritual and corporeal beings, called *wights*, worthy of our reverence and devotion including *disir*, *norns*, *fetches*, *landvaetr*, *light-elves* and *ancestor spirits*, and possibly including certain beneficial *etins* and *swarthy-elves*.

5.20: Freedom of Individuals, Households, Kindreds and Tribes

Every woman or man is one's own master, is self responsible and has the inherent right to pursue his or her Germanic religion as seen fit. Each household is likewise entirely responsible only to itself. One household may have a traditional tribal hierarchy, another may not. Every one is a freeman or freewoman within the domain of the society, whatever her or his rank or degree at home.

5.21: Worth of the Weoh Gild

5.21.1 Each person is responsible for keeping his or her own troth, according to good conscience. Each household or tribe should perform its own holy rites wherever possible. Every person is capable of communion with the gods and ancestors or other wights. We nevertheless believe the Weoh Gild holds the important role of embodying the collective trow of the society as a whole.

5.21.2 The Weoh Gild, in the performance of holy rites on behalf of and in the name of the society, should wherever possible and practical cleave to tradition, as closely as can be ascertained. And where it may not be possible to determine with certainty the exact nature of some religious custom, the Weoh Gild should ensure any innovation is in keeping with the spirit of Germanic culture.

5.21.3 The Weoh Gild is founded upon the belief that:

- (a) hospitality and generosity are among the greatest virtues to the Germanic Heathen;
- (b) those of Germanic, Teutonic and Nordic heritage should be given every opportunity to learn about the religion, history, and culture of their original peoples, and that welcoming them as guests to society events is among the best ways to offer that opportunity;

(c) every free person is welcomed as a guest to society events in order to learn about tribal Germanic culture;

(d) The poor, who may not be able to donate money or pay admission to attend an event, should never be barred on account of their poverty;

(e) one real worth of the celebration of the holy-tides lies in the experience of goodwill, fellowship and holy communion that is directly fostered at society events;

(f) the best way to teach of the ancient and sacred origin of many modern holiday customs is to physically demonstrate, as closely as possible, the total cultural and religious context in which those customs originated by observing the ancient holy days, or holy-tides;

(g) above all, that our tribal gods and ancestors are pleased and honoured when, after a thousand years of being forsaken, the holy-tides are properly observed once again by communities of modern Germanic folk as they rediscover the elder trow.

Therefore the Weoh Gild shall not fail to conduct, as feasible, holy rites which are open to one or more local communities in British Columbia.

5.21.4 Further, the Weoh Gild holds true that:

a) Canadian government and *common law* owe their ultimate origin to the tribal law of ancient heathen Anglo-Saxons, and other Germanic tribes, and can therefore be considered, at least in part, a Heathen cultural survival;

b) Modern Heathen in institutional settings should be afforded the same rights and privileges that adherents to other religions enjoy under the common law in regards to religious freedoms and access to pastoral or counseling services.

Therefore it is important that the Weoh Gild also make pastoral services available, as feasible, in institutional settings.

Provision 5 is alterable.