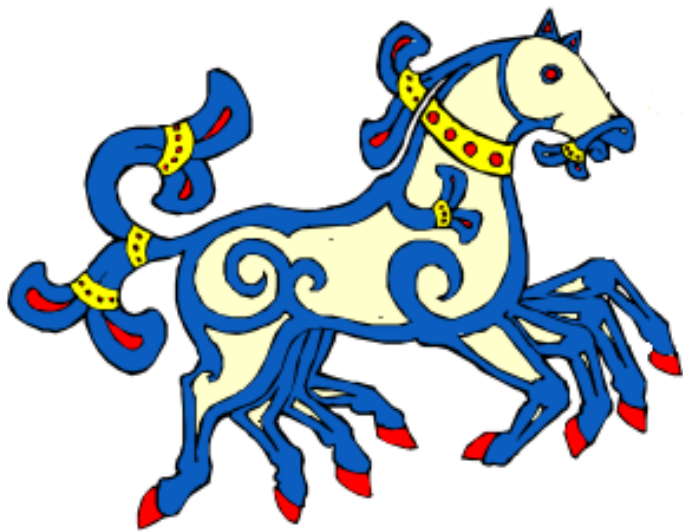


Intro to Freehold Heathenry



British
Columbia
Heathen
Freehold

Contents

Introduction	2
Chapter 1: Cosmos.....	3
Chapter 2: Common Deities.....	7
Chapter 3: Types of Spirits.....	15
Chapter 4: Common Fainings	18
Chapter 5: Ethics & Behaviour	22
Chapter 6: The Soul and Afterlife	26
Chapter 7: Introduction to Heathen Magical Practices.....	29
Chapter 8: Structure of the Freehold.....	32
Conclusion.....	36

Introduction

In this self study package, we will explore the basics of Heathenry as practised by the British Columbia Heathen Freehold. We will begin with some basic terminology and then explore the basic cosmos and tenets of Heathenry. In this brief introductory course you will learn about the gods and wights worshipped by Heathens, how we worship them, and when. You will be introduced to our system of ethics and morality, how we view the soul, and what we think happens after we die. At the end is a chapter describing the types of magic commonly practiced by Heathens of the past and in modern times.

We will begin with the common terms that are used by Heathens. This is by no means an exhaustive list, further terms will be discussed in each relevant chapter.

Wyrd is the Heathen concept of fate or destiny, yet it is infinitely more malleable than fate in a Christian context. Wyrd is best described as the driving force of all previous actions pushing us forward. Every action and choice made by every individual from the highest of the gods to the lowest bacteria contributes to the course of Wyrd. Wyrd is most frequently depicted as either a web or tapestry being woven by the Norns beside the Well of Wyrd.

Frith is a just peace within a community. Not simply the absence of violence but the conditions for each person to live a prosperous, safe, and happy life. Unjust taxes or laws intrude upon frith as much if not more than bandits and warfare. Frith could be achieved through either violent or non-violent means, if outlaws are around they should be captured or killed, if unjust laws abound they should be resisted, unjust taxes would not be paid. Frith is the state of being that is every persons' right, assured safety from their community but not intruded upon unjustly.

Grith is the peace between communities. Grith is not guaranteed as it relies on the cooperation of two or more communities for common interests. Grith is what enables trade, travel, and exchange of ideas. While Grith is a good thing for the communities involved occasionally disputes make Grith impossible and hostilities erupt.

Chapter 1: Cosmos

From the Germanic Lore we learn that the Cosmos was viewed as consisting of multiple worlds, most commonly conceived of as nine worlds by the Norse peoples of Scandinavia or seven worlds by the Anglo-Saxons. These worlds are most commonly described as residing within the roots and branches of a world tree called Yggdrasil by the Norse. These worlds are the homes of the various spirits, gods, and giants of the Heathen world-view.

From the Prose Edda we learn that the Icelanders believed the cosmos began as an empty vastness called Ginnungagap. To the north a realm of Ice formed called Niflheim, while to the south a realm of fire was born called Muspelheim. These two realms continued to expand and fill Ginnungagap until they met, and where they met two beings were formed: Ymir the first giant, and Audhumla the primordial cow. Audhumla in time licked the salt blocks of Niflheim and shaped the first god Buri. While Ymir slept, he spawned various giants and monsters from his own body, these would go on to be the giants and trolls of legend and myth. Buri took an unnamed giantess to wife, and had a son named Bor. Bor took a different giant maid as wife and had three sons: Odin, Vili, and Ve; or Odin, Honir, and Lodur. These three brothers went on to kill Ymir and form the remaining realms from his corpse, the seas from his blood, the clouds from his brain, and the trees from his hairs.

Upper worlds

At the top of the tree we have Asgard the highest realm and home of the Æsir, this is where the majority of the gods live. The Anglo-Saxon cognate is Osgard, it is not directly attested but is instead reconstructed by modern practitioners. The rainbow bridge Bifrost connects Asgard to the realm of men.

Vanaheim is the next highest realm and home of the Vanir, the second tribe of gods from Norse myth closely associated with magic and fertility. The Vanir are not attested as a separate tribe from the Æsir in Anglo-Saxon Lore, and as such do not have a separate home.

Alfheim is the realm directly above Midgard, it is home to the Elves, powerful nature spirits that ensure the fertility of the land and prosperity of it's inhabitants. Alfheim is the theoretical cognate for Anglo-Saxons, like Osgard it is not attested but reconstructed.

Central Worlds

Midgard is the realm of humans, and at the centre of the world tree. All the entities and beings of myth interact with Midgard for good or ill. Called Middangeard by the Anglo-Saxons, it is the only realm directly attested by original Anglo-Saxon sources.

Jotunheim is the realm of the Jotunns (Frost Giants). In Norse lore, these entities are at best indifferent to humanity and the gods and at worst hostile. The Jotunns are largely independent beings with some allying with the gods, even marrying into the Æsir, while others are constantly trying to deceive and destroy them and all their work. The Anglo-Saxon cognate is Eotenhame, and its denizens the Eotens or Ettins.

Svartalfheim is the realm of the Dvergr (Dwarves/Dark Elves). These are powerful spirits associated with mines, and refining the riches contained within them. The Prose Edda says that the Dwarves came from the maggots that ate Ymir's flesh, being gifted with reason by the gods during their construction of the worlds. The Dwarves were respected for their skills as craftsmen and feared for their avarice. In Anglo-Saxon lore they were called Dweorgs, with a theorised name for their home being Dweorghame.

Lower Worlds

Hel is the realm of the dead, ruled by a goddess of the same name. This realm is equivalent to the Greek realm of Hades, and other underworlds in various mythologies the world over. It is seen as being mostly a continuation of this life surrounded by all the past ancestors of one's family. The English cognate is Hell, for which we have few resources that are not slanted by Christian interference. There is also the term Neorxnawang theorised to have been a place where the dead existed without the toil and troubles of this world, perhaps a part of Hell.

Niflheim is the land of ice, one of the primal worlds that existed in Ginnungagap. It is not reported to be regularly inhabited after the creation. Muspelheim is the land of fire, and home to the Muspelli (Fire Giants) of Icelandic myth. These two realms and the denizens who lived there are not known to the Anglo-Saxons.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

The Anglo-Saxons had another realm which may complete their seven worlds, Wyrmsele. This is only seen in a Christian context as a place of suffering and damnation, it is not unreasonable that it originally referred to a place where the cowards, oath-breakers, murderers, and others who transgressed the laws of Wyrð or Frith would suffer for their crimes.

Recommended Reading

1. Poetic Edda
 - a. Voluspa, stanzas 1 - 20
 - b. Vafthrudnismal, stanzas 1 – 39
 - c. Rigsthula, entirety
2. Prose Edda
 - a. Gylfaginning, Sections I - IX

Confirmation

How many worlds in Norse lore? _____

How many worlds in Anglo-Saxon lore? _____

Where do most of the gods live? _____

Where do humans live? _____

Where do the dead reside? _____

Chapter 2: Common Deities

The gods of Heathenry are many and varied. We will discuss the most common gods and goddesses in this chapter. The Norse divided the gods into two tribes: the Æsir who were associated with culture and civilisation and the Vanir who were associated with fertility and nature. Remember, there are many more gods and goddesses, if you wish to learn more then read *Our Troth: Volume 1* or ask your sponsor for other reliable resources.

The Freehold Pantheon consists of thirteen deities. These form the core of Freehold Heathen Practice, but there are dozens of other Heathen deities that are not mentioned here.

Gods

Odin

Odin is the All-Father and head of the pantheon. He is reported to be the father of many of the other gods. Depicted as a one-eyed wanderer that hanged himself from the world-tree to gain the knowledge of the runes. He is viewed as a god of magic, warfare, kingship, and criminals. Assisted by his ravens Huginn and Muninn, who travel through all the worlds and report back to him each day what they saw, and his wolves Geri and Freki, who accompany him wherever he goes. It is said Odin survives on wine alone, feeding his food to his wolves. One of the most attested gods, Odin has more than one hundred by-names and plays an integral part throughout most of the surviving lore. Odin is never called King in any primary sources, instead many of his bynames implied various aspects of Kingship. While Odin is the Head of the Pantheon he has not always held that place. Originally Tyr was King of the Gods like his Graeco-Roman counterparts Zeus and Jupiter. Half of those who die in battle are claimed by Odin to reside in Valhalla, where they maintain their readiness to fight at Odin's command. He was known to the Anglo-Saxons as Woden and to the Continental tribes as Wodan. Wednesday is named for Odin.

Ingui-Frey

Ingui-Frey is the god of fertility, and priest of the gods. Claimed as the progenitor of the Swedish royal family, Frey is viewed as having a vested interest in the success of individual humans. The Norse viewed him as one of the Vanir, a tribe of deities distinct from yet interwoven with the Æsir. Frey was given the Lordship of Alfheim as his tooth-gift, this indicates a strong relationship between the Elves and the Vanir. He is most frequently depicted as riding a golden boar, or his magic ship that folds up to fit in his pocket. The most famous myth involving Frey is the courtship of Gerd, during which he offered his sword, that fought without the owner holding it, as Bride-Price. He was known to the Anglo-Saxons as Ing and Ingui depending on dialect. To the Norse he was known as Yngui-FreyR, Yngvi, or simply FreyR. The Yngui and Yngvi variants are both pronounced Yngui and are a remnant of a time when ‘v’ and ‘u’ were the same letter.

Loki

Loki is the god of change, mischief, and the outliers. He might originally have been an aspect of Odin, only being recorded in the Norse lore. A controversial figure in the lore, he is also controversial in modern Heathenry. In the Icelandic tales he is a Blood-Brother of Odin, travelling companion of Thor, and the cause and solution to most of the gods’ troubles. Loki is the father of Hel and her dangerous brothers Fenris and Jormungand, he is also the mother of Sleipnir, Odin’s eight-legged steed. Some modern Heathens believe that Loki is a traitor due to an Icelandic myth where Loki causes the death of Balder, whom Frigga had tried to make invincible. While not his finest moment if true, there are other versions of that myth from Denmark in which Loki plays no part. The Freehold holds him as a bringer of necessary and sometimes painful change.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Njord

Njord is the god of sailing and merchants. Njord's connection to the seas and sailing lead naturally into his being a god of wealth and fertility. He was the father of Ingvi-Frey and Freya in Norse myth. The most prominent myth featuring Njord is his marriage to the giantess Skaði. As compensation for the death of her father, she was to choose a husband by looking only at the feet of the assembled gods behind a screen: this may be an allegory for the close proximity of the mountains to the seas due to the fjords. Njord is not directly attested by any other culture, however the Proto-Germanic earth goddess Nerthus appears to be derived from the same source.

Thor

Thor is the Protector of Midgard and Defender of Mankind. The god of the common person, those who provide for society most frequently called on him to protect them and their crops. Thor is best known for his many adventures in Midgard and Jotunheim, defeating giants and protecting the civilised world from the ravages of nature. Thor's many adventures alongside Loki were responsible for most of the growth and change in the Norse Myths. He was known to the Anglo-Saxons as Thunor and the Continental Tribes as Donar. Thursday is named for Thor.

Tyr

Tyr is the god of Frith, honour, and justice. He is the god of warriors. He is best known for being the only god brave enough to place his hand into the mouth of Fenris as surety that they would release the wolf if he could not break his bonds. Tyr is theorised to have been the head of the pantheon prior to the Migration Age, a time of limited warfare and glorious duels instead of the wars of conquest and destruction that were necessitated by the challenges of the Migration Age. He was known to the Anglo-Saxons as Tiw and the Continental Tribes as Ziu. Tuesday is named for Tyr.

Wayland

Wayland the Smith is considered the greatest smith in all Germanic myth, half of the heroes and gods wield blades that he crafted. His most famous myth is that of his capture by King Niðhad who took the ring Wayland's wife had left and gave it to his daughter Bodvild; during his captivity he killed the king's sons, turned their skulls into goblets, eyes into jewels and teeth into a brooch. Wayland eventually escaped using wings he had forged in secret. Wayland's vengeance may seem harsh to our modern sensibilities, but he was a captive god to a cruel and vicious king. He was known to the Anglo-Saxons as Wēland, the Norse as Volundr, and the Continental Tribes as Wiolant.

Goddesses

Frigga

Frigga is the Queen of Heaven, and wife of Odin. She is the mother of Balder. The only goddess to be attested in every Germanic culture, she was worshipped as the goddess of marriage, family, prophecy, and protector of children. She was said to know all, but not discuss the future even with her beloved husband. However, she was not above using her knowledge to manipulate her husband and others into achieving her goals. She was known to the Anglo-Saxons as Frige, the Continental Tribes as Frija. Friday is most likely named for Frige.

Easter

Easter is the Anglo-Saxon goddess of renewal, rebirth, dawn, and spring. A very important goddess to the Freehold, Easter is featured prominently in some of our own modern lore. She was so important to the Anglo-Saxons that her name continued to be associated with the Christian holiday of Passover. Many of the traditional festivities may trace their origins back to her worship. Easter may also be related to a class of Ancestral Mothers called the Austiahenae, or Mothers of the Eastern Tribes. Easter's name is derived from Proto-Indo-European *H₂ewsós meaning dawn or east. The Anglo-Saxons had two variants of her name based on dialectal differences *Ēostre* and *Ēastre*. The Continental Tribes may have called her Ostara. Easter is named for her.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Freya

Freya is the goddess of sex, magic, and fertility. She taught Odin the practice of Seidh and learned Galdor from him. The sister of Ingvi-Frey she was also brought to Asgard following the Æsir-Vanir War. She is said to drive a chariot pulled by cats, own a falcon cloak that allows her to fly, and wears the precious necklace Brisingammon. She is featured in many myths, usually as a prize the giants wish to claim from the Æsir, however due to the trickery of Loki such a thing never happens. Freya gets first pick of those slain in battle and takes half of them to Folkvangr, to serve as her warriors. She also leads the Valkyries who choose the slain on the battle-field. Freya has many other names, such as; Valkyrie, Gullveig, and Heidi. She was called Freyja by the Norse, possibly Freo by the Anglo-Saxons, and possibly Frowa by the Continental Tribes. Friday might be named for Freya, though it is more likely named for Frigga.

Hel

Hel is the ruler of Helheim, and goddess of death. She welcomes the dead into her realm and leads them to the halls of their ancestors. She is the daughter of Loki and the giantess Angrboda. Her brothers Fenrir and Jormungand are monstrous enemies of gods and men, though she is an ally that provides shelter and peace after death. Hel's appearance is described as half living and half corpse; this represents her deep connections to the grave and those who have gone into her embrace.

Nerthus

Nerthus is the Earth herself, the mother of all that walks upon her surface and nourisher of all who thrive by her mercy. Nerthus was traditionally addressed by the local language term for the Earth, however the Freehold uses the oldest recorded version of her name to emphasize her continued importance to Heathens from the oldest of times to ourselves. She might have been known as Erce and Eorth to the Anglo-Saxons, Jorth to the Norse, and possibly Erda to the Continental Tribes.

Skadhi

Skadhi is the goddess of hunting, skiing, winter, and survival. She was born a giantess who married into the Æsir as recompense for the slaying of her father Thjazi. While she initially desired Balder as her husband, she agreed to choose her husband solely by his feet. She settled for Njord as the sand had smoothed his feet and made them the most beautiful of all the gods. Thus, a mountain goddess was wed to a sea god, likely a metaphor for the close proximity of mountains and ocean due to the fjords - a story which is as meaningful here in BC as it was in Scandinavia. She is unattested outside of Norse sources.

Other Deities

Sunna

Sunna is the goddess of the sun. It is her bright passing by which the ancient Germanic Peoples measured the day. Contrary to the Mediterranean peoples who swapped the genders of the sun and moon, the Germanic Tribes maintained the Indo-European tradition of feminine Sun and masculine Moon.

Mani

Mani is the god of the moon. It is his constant change by which the ancient Germanic Peoples measured the month. In Norse myth he kidnapped two children that were being mistreated by their father, and it is their dancing that causes the waxing and waning of the moon.

Ægir

Ægir is the god of the sea. Though he was recorded as being a giant, he is a great friend of the Æsir. It is in his great hall that the grandest feasts are held, for he is the best brewer of mead and ale. Possibly known to the Anglo-Saxons as Eagor.

Rán

Rán is the goddess of the depths of the sea, and she is the wife of Ægir and mother of his nine daughters who each ruled over a type of wave. She and her daughters collected those who died at sea and welcomed them into their hall. Possibly known to the Anglo-Saxons as Ranu.

More Deities

A few other members of the Æsir that are also worshipped by the Freehold or that are important to several myths. This is still not an exhaustive list of Heathen Deities.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Heimdall is the guardian of the Bifrost bridge between Asgard and Midgard.

Idunna is the keeper of the Apples of Immortality, and wife of Braggi.

Braggi is the god of Poetry, possibly a mortal skald that was so renowned he was welcomed as a new god after death.

Baldur is the destined king of the gods following Ragnarok.

Sif is Thor's wife, and a goddess of the grain harvest.

Seaxneat is the divine ancestor of the Saxons.

Recommended Reading

1. Poetic Edda
 - a. Voluspa, stanzas 1 - 20
 - b. Vafthrudnismal, stanzas 1 – 39
2. Prose Edda
 - a. Gylfaginning, Sections X – XXXVII
3. Modern Lore – Hvergelmir International [Móðguðr's Welcome](#)

Confirmation

How many Tribes of gods were recognised by the Norse? _____

Which god is most closely affiliated with Protection? _____

Which goddess would you appeal to for assistance with Love? _____

What gender is the Sun? _____

Who is the cause and solution to most of the gods' troubles? _____

Who brews the finest ales and meads? _____

Chapter 3: Types of Spirits

Heathenry contains many kinds of spirits; some helpful, some indifferent, and some malevolent. The general term for any of these spirits is wights; in the broadest definition even humans, dogs, horses, and gods are wights. Please find here a brief introduction to the many varieties of spirits you may encounter.

Ancestors

The Disir (ON), also called the Idise (OE), Matronae (Latin), or Mothers are the spirits of our female ancestors. They are frequently appealed to for protection and prosperity by Heathens, they have a vested interest in the prosperity of their descendants much as our living ancestors do. It is for this reason that Ancestor worship should take a high precedence within the household cult.

Male ancestors can be appealed to for guidance and advice, but they lack the ability to touch the world after death. There is much debate surrounding this, because it seems unfair that men are permitted to rest following death yet some women are expected to continue serving their living family. Some say that this imbalance is a result of women's ability to give life, thus transcending the veil between worlds even while they live this power is expanded after death.

Worship of ancestors was common from the earliest times, and remains so today. Even many secular people in western civilisation believe that relatives continue to look after them from the grave. The gifts we offer them vary greatly, as do their personalities. The ancient Anglo-Saxons had a custom of burning grains beside the graves of loved ones as a means of feeding them in the next world. They would also offer favoured drinks and food, flowers and decorations. Many of these customs survive today, despite their official ban by Christian authorities.

Wights

Wights in specific usage tend to be the spirits of nature who are generally indifferent to humans, but can build powerful friendships with those who give them the respect and honour they deserve. These nature spirits are called Elves in Anglo-Saxon lore, as well as having specific terms for each class in Norse lore. Elves are generally equivalent to the Celtic fae; they can be capricious to those who break their unknowable laws and extraordinarily helpful to those who respect their domain and give the necessary gifts.

Dwarves are even more mysterious than the Elves, they reside beneath the earth and rule over the precious resources contained within. They are regarded as the best craftsmen in all the worlds. Dwarves can be powerful allies to those who can approach them correctly and dangerous foes to those that fall afoul of their laws. All the best treasures of the gods and kings were crafted by the dwarves.

Cofgods are spirits of the household, these wights live with and help humans in exchange for a share of the household food and drink. Along with the Mothers, Cofgods formed the centre of the household cult. They are known as Kobolds in Germany, and are referred to as Hobs or Brownies in Modern Britain.

Valkyries are the battle-maidens who choose the slain, they take these souls to Asgard so they might be chosen by Freya or given to Odin. Freya is the leader of the Valkyries, the others also ensure that the warriors chosen have food, mead, and recreation in Valhalla or Folkvangr. Seeing one of these fearsome women is considered an omen of imminent death.

Monsters

The giants are a race malevolent towards humanity as they view us as interlopers in the wild places of their high-mountain passes, and other dangerous locales. While they can be propitiated into allowing our peaceful passage through their domains, and some are allied to the gods, they should be avoided by those without the experience to properly interact with them. A prickly and proud race they do not suffer insults from mortals lightly. The giants are forces of the primal powers: floods, wildfires, rockslides, and avalanches are how they express their wrath.

Wyrm are greedy capricious beings, commonly called dragons now. They live beneath the earth and eat the souls of people like them, guarding their precious treasures. While capable of flight many also burrow to travel within the world. Wyrm can also curse people to insanity, being blamed for many mental health issues by the ancient Germanic peoples.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Recommended Reading

1. Poetic Edda
 - a. Hymnskvidha
 - b. Thrymskvidha
2. Prose Edda
 - a. Gylfaginning, Sections I – IX
3. Beowulf (highly Christianised, but still retains heathen customs and beliefs)

Confirmation

What beings form the pillars of household cults? _____

What race of beings guard and protect nature? _____

Who claims the souls of the battle-dead? _____

What limitation do male ancestors have? _____

What class of beings were blamed for mental health issues? _____

Chapter 4: Common Fainings

Faining is a general term for a ritual at which Heathens make offerings to the gods. If a Kindred or individual is offering a live animal then it is called a Blot, and the animal should be consumed as part of a feast for the Kindred. The feast at a Faining whether or not it's a Blot is called a Husel. Near the end of each Faining, after the feast, is a set of ritual drinking rounds called a Symbol. Symbols typically have three structured rounds: the first round, called the Bedes, is dedicated to the gods, the second, called the Myne or Minni, to the wights and ancestors, and the third, called the Bragafull, is for oaths, boasts, and toasts of members.

Major Fainings

Yule

Yule is the beginning of the Freehold Liturgical Calendar. Yule is a midwinter celebration to commemorate the end of the Wild Hunt and the lengthening of days. Yule is one of the three ritual dates that is recorded in both Anglo-Saxon and Norse source material as a major Holy-Tide. In Anglo-Saxon sources we learn of Mothers' Night, dedicated to the Ancestral Mothers', this was recorded by Bede to be the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon year. In Norse sources Yule is a time for gathering as a community to share a feast and make offerings that all might survive the winter. Recommended Deities: Odin, Freya, Frigga, or the Disir/Mothers.

Eastertide/Sigrblót

The Anglo-Saxons celebrated Ēostre at the full moon following of Ēostremonath (aligns with the Jewish Paschal full moon), a festival dedicated to a goddess of the same name, who ruled over rebirth, rejuvenation, and new beginnings. Sigrblót means Victory Blót and was celebrated at the same time as the Anglo-Saxon Ēostre, it is a festival marking the end of winter and the beginning of summer. At this time the Norse would make offerings to ensure success in the campaigning season. Sigrblót/Ēostre is one of the three festivals that both Anglo-Saxon and Norse sources recognise as major Holy-Tides. The Freehold has adopted the name Eastertide for our modern celebration, as a modernisation of the ancient Anglo-Saxon name, while also acknowledging Sigrblót as an alternative name. Recommended Deities: Odin, Tyr, Freya, or Ēostre.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Midsummer

Midsummer is a common folk celebration throughout Germanic countries to this day. It is a time to mark the pleasantries of summer and the recreational activities it affords us. While there are no surviving attestations of the ancient Germanic peoples celebrating Midsummer, the Freehold has chosen to include it as a modern celebration, due to its prevalence in Modern and Mediaeval Germanic Countries. The likely reason there was no major Faining during Summer in ancient times is that most of those who could vote in a Thing/Moot would have been away, raiding, trading, or exploring during the season of war and commerce. Recommended Deities: Loki, Tyr, or Wayland.

Winternights

Winternights is the last of the three major Holy-Tides found in both Norse and Anglo-Saxon sources. This is the end of summer and the beginning of winter, the third and final harvest festival of the year. A time to celebrate the great bounty that we have received from the Earth, we gather with friends and family to give thanks. The specific dating of Winternights seems to have varied yet it was always tied to the end of the harvest season. For this reason, the Freehold has settled on Thanksgiving as our date to hold Winternights; this aligns with Canadian agricultural practices and traditions celebrating the harvest each year at this time. Recommended Deities: Freyr, Skaði, Hel, or Odin.

Minor Fainings

Dísablót

Dísablót is a festival honouring the Disir in Scandinavia. Tribal customs placed it either before or after Yule. The Freehold has opted for the early spring date. While the name of this ritual varied widely between Germanic Tribes it seems to have been a fertility rite, making offerings to the Disir or Vanir to ensure fertility of the fields and crops within them. In Anglo-Saxon England the rituals conducted in Solmonath (roughly February) included burying cakes within the fields to ensure prosperity. Recommended Deities: Disir/Mothers, Frigga, or Freya.

Æcerbot

A Ritual derived from an Anglo-Saxon Charm recorded in the 11th century. The date is set to coincide with the modern Earth Day, to acknowledge Nerthus, the Earth Mother, and all her gifts in an appropriate Heathen Context. Recommended Deity: Nerthus

May Day

A European folk custom, May Day was the traditional end of Spring and beginning of Summer in England. May Day has many other names throughout Europe including; Walpurgisnacht, Beltain, and Witches Night. In some cultures this marked the end of the Wild Hunt. The practices while only recorded post-conversion likely trace back to Heathen roots. Recommended Deities: Freya and/or Ingui-Frey.

Lammas

The term Lammas is Old English for “loaf mass” where the first loaves of bread made from the current year’s grains were shared and eaten by the community in early Mediaeval England. Though not directly attested from pre-Christian sources, the customs and practices associated with Lammas strongly imply pagan traditions carried forward into Christian times. The Freehold has chosen to participate in this practice. Recommended Deities: Thor, Tyr, or Ingui-Frey.

Einherjar Blót

The Einherjar Blót is a modern Heathen celebration in honour of those who have fallen in battle, it coincides with the Commonwealth Remembrance Day that commemorates the end of the First World War. While this Faining has no historical equivalent, the members of the BC Heathen Freehold wish to give honour and remembrance in our own custom to those who made the greatest sacrifice for us. Recommended Deities: the Einherjar

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Confirmation

What is the name of Heathen ritual toasts? _____

How many Major Fainings do Heathens celebrate each year? _____

When is Hausblót? _____

Chapter 5: Ethics & Behaviour

Heathen ethics are not absolutes, they are relative to the relationships involved. Lying to your mother, brother, wife, or boyfriend is a greater betrayal than lying to a stranger or enemy. Offering hospitality is a greater gift to a stranger than to a friend or family member.

Relationships

Relationships are an indicator of proximity to others, both physical and emotional. The two broadest categories in Heathen thought are Innangard and Utgard. Innangard is those inside the metaphoric walls of your community, these are your friends, family, and neighbours. The Utgard are those who do not belong to your community: strangers, enemies, and outlaws. There are divisions within each of these broad categories that reflect increasing or decreasing levels of closeness.

Within the Innangard we have those to whom we owe the most support and assistance, our family, friends, and neighbours. Family is very important to Heathens, whether that family is by blood or choice. Ancient lore tells us that there are three methods to join a family: by birth, by marriage, and by oath or adoption. All three routes of entry are equally entitled to the same respect and loyalty by the members of the family, each individual may belong to multiple families. The well-being and prosperity of our families directly contributes to that of ourselves. Family make up the first level of proximity within the Innangard, and takes precedence over all else.

Friends are those with whom you have built a positive relationship, through shared interests, exchange of gifts, and support in times of difficulty. Friends may become family through marriage or the swearing of oaths. Friends are owed loyalty and support; this does not mean blindly supporting them in all endeavours, one should tell them when they are making mistakes. Strong friendships build strong communities, support your friends and visit with them often if you seek to have a resilient Kindred. Friends are the intermediate level of the Innangard.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Neighbours are those others within your community, you may not interact everyday but you are vital to the success and prosperity of each other and the community as a whole. While you need not go out of your way to support them directly, you also should not undermine them intentionally. You should not steal from or attack your neighbours without cause, they are within the Frithyard of your community. Neighbours may become friends through regular interaction and exchange of gifts. Neighbours are the outer level of the Innangard.

The Utgard is those outside of your community, however it is defined. The Utgard is owed no loyalty or allegiance, though they should be afforded Grith unless they prove unworthy of such. Strangers are those whom do not belong to your community, they should be afforded no ill will unless they prove themselves to be hostile. While strangers are not within the Frithyard their property and person should be respected. Strangers may become friends or neighbours.

Enemies are those who have proven themselves hostile to the community. Typically, they belong to another community that is competing with your own for finite resources or prestige. Enemies should be afforded no protections, for they will provide you none.

Outlaws are the worst part of the Utgard; for they are those who were once part of the Innangard, but through their treachery have been cast outside the protections of Frith. These vile beings are not typically welcomed back into Frith or Grith unless they provide compensation for their wrongdoings, even then they do not typically regain their lost status.

Oaths

Oaths are the building blocks of communities. A fulfilled oath to accomplish a great deed brings honour and worth to the one who made it and those who witnessed it. Failure in an oath may bring honour or disgrace, depending on the difficulty of the oath and the earnestness of the attempt. Unwise oaths should be discouraged for the heavy price that failure can exact on those who make them. Some oaths need to be broken, any oath that risks your life or health unjustly may be broken. Scyld is the way to repay a broken oath, it is compensation to the recipient of your oath for your failure. Scyld is not necessary if your failure was due to circumstance, only if you have broken your oath.

Worth

In a Heathen context, worth is the value of your contributions to the community. These contributions can be of direct benefit to the Heathen community such as: contributing to event planning, cooking for an event, providing Seidh services to the community, planning and leading rites, or any other way you directly improve the life of those in your community. Your worth also increases through indirect contributions to the Heathen community such as: being a valuable member of society, representing Heathenry in a positive light to your friends and family, running a successful and ethical business, or any other way you contribute to the benefit of the overall community. Your worth is determined by the community, when you brag of your achievements it is your peers who assess their worth.

Worth is not the value of your life, it is the value of your contributions. Heathens believe that all should contribute to the betterment of society, as Odin is quoted in Havamal 71, “The lame man rides a horse, the one-armed drives a herd, the deaf man fights and is battle bold, ‘Tis better to be blind than on a pyre, no one is helped by a corpse.” This means that all should contribute as they are able, and the community should care for those that need help in return. None who contributes is without worth.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Recommended Reading

1. Eyrbyggja Saga
2. Poetic Edda
 - a. Havamal
 - b. Volundarkvidha
 - c. Fafnirsmal

Confirmation

To whom do we owe our highest obligations? _____

What is the term for those who are owed Frith? _____

With whom do gifts build the tightest bonds? _____

How can one become family? _____

Is it ever acceptable to forswear an oath? _____

Who measures the worth of a Heathen? _____

Chapter 6: The Soul and Afterlife

We have many myths about what might happen to our souls after death. We also have quite extensive resources regarding the components of the soul. This is just a brief introduction to these concepts.

The Soul

In Heathenry it is more appropriate to speak of a soul complex rather than a single unified soul. The components of the soul work together to bring a body to life and make it more than a simple collection of matter. The Lich, or Lyke, is the physical body, this is part of the complete self. The Hama, or Hamr, is a spiritual body which is tied to the Lich, and performs many corresponding functions, where the Lich protects against disease the Hama protects against possession. The Mod, or Minni, is the mental body, this is the connecting element that binds the Lich and Hama together along with the rest of the soul complex. Wod, or Oðr, is the animating force that energizes the Lich, Hama, and Mod. Will, or Villi, is the desires and focus of the soul complex. Fetch, or Fylgja, is the term for an external piece of the soul that protects the remainder, it is similar in concept to the spirit guides and familiars of other cultures: for most people the fetch is uncontrolled, but some are able to develop control over their fetch and send it to do their bidding.

Helheim

Hel is the name of the underworld and the goddess who rules over it. This is the principle place where the dead reside. It is a place where men and women can rest after their lives, reconnect with long lost relatives, and watch their friends and family. Within Helheim there is a place, called Nastrond or Wyrmsle, where those who were outlaws, murderers, and other criminals are disposed of to prevent their taint from staining the family lines. Hel herself has a great hall where she entertains noble guests and those worthy of recognition for their great deeds. The grave mound was viewed as a gateway to Helheim, as were certain caves and wells.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Death in Battle

Those who died in battle far from home were typically buried near the field of battle, and thus not brought home to the family mound. As they could not find their way into their family hall in Helheim they were given the compensation of going to Asgard, and residing either in Folkvangr if chosen by Freya or Valhalla if left for Odin. These battle-dead were called einherjar, and each day they would practice for battle in Ragnarok or some other great confrontation on behalf of the gods. Despite popular claims, very few of the ancient Germanic peoples would have chosen Valhalla over Helheim, these were consolation prizes for those who died in war.

Valhalla and Folkvangr were places of constant work by those who resided within, for Odin and Freya sought to keep their charges ready for battle. Each day they would fight and die again, only to be revived for dinner, where they would eat, drink, and be merry to repeat the following day. While some may enjoy it, most soldiers will tell you that constant battle drills get tedious and repetitive fairly quickly, most people would by far prefer the idyllic afterlife of Helheim.

Death at Sea

Those who died at sea were typically given to the sea, as it was too dangerous to bring the body home. Along with those who drowned they were claimed by Ran and her daughters, brought down to Ægir's great hall, and entertained by their hostesses. These souls were to remain separated from their families, yet they would enjoy the company of gods and goddesses at feasts. This is similar in concept to Davy Jones' Locker, a common belief amongst sailors to this day.

Recommended Reading

1. Poetic Edda
 - a. Helgakvidha Hundingsbana I
 - b. Helgakvidha Hojrvardhsonnar
 - c. Helgakvidha Hundingsbana II

Confirmation

What is the animating force called in Heathenry? _____

What is the part of the soul external to the body? _____

Where do criminals end up within Helheim? _____

Who get's first pick of those slain in battle? _____

Where do those who die at sea go? _____

Chapter 7: Introduction to Heathen Magical Practices

Magic is not a vital part of religious practice for most Heathens. While there are specific magical traditions within Heathenry they are not required to honour the gods and wights. Some Heathens find these practices are a key part of what it means to them to be Heathen, others do not. Magic in a Heathen context means either exerting your will on the Web of Wyrð through magical actions or reading the threads of Wyrð to divine the future.

Galdor

Galdor is the practice of spoken magic, using chants, songs, and rhyme to alter the Web of Wyrð in the direction you desire. This can be done in any language from Old English to Old Norse, Proto-Germanic to Modern languages. The simplest Galdor are still used today as Affirmations; when the Little Engine climbs his hill he uses the Galdor “I think I can” to accomplish his goal. More complicated Galdor can extend to long poems such as the Nine Herbs Charm or Meresburg Incantation - the use of story and poetic devices strengthen Galdor. In modern English the use of rhyme and alliteration empower Galdor quite nicely.

Seidh

Seidh is an oracular practice where the practitioner sends their Hama or Fetch out into the worlds to gain knowledge and answer questions. Sometimes they invite powerful spirits or deities to possess them to answer questions directly. Seidh can also be used to directly alter the Web of Wyrð. The key identifier is that Seidhkonnas conduct their work in a trance state while faring forth.

Runecraft

Runecraft is the use of runes to create magical charms such as bind runes, rune rows, and helms, as well as the use of runes for divination. Runic charms can be greatly enhanced with the use of Galdor to focus and direct the power of their runes. Unlike the world of Harry Potter where charms are a type of incantation, in Germanic Magic charms are magical items that have been inscribed or marked in some other fashion with a symbol of power. The key to runic charms is to carefully choose and consider the runes you will use. There are three main runic alphabets used today, the Elder Futhark, the Younger Futhark, and the Anglo-Saxon Futhorc. An expert in crafting runic charms and reading the Web of Wyrð using the runes is called a Runwita.

Other Magical Practices

There are also other types of magic: Wortcunning (Herbcraft) and Leechcraft (Healing Magic). Wortcunning is the use of plants to create potions, poultices, or charms. Wortcunning could easily be incorporated with other types of magic to increase its efficacy. Leechcraft is a general term covering many types of skills used specifically to heal those who have been injured or become ill. It is important to note that no magical practice is a substitute for medical treatments from qualified medical practitioners.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Confirmation

What do we seek to alter or read with Heathen Magic? _____

What is the term for an expert in Runeworking? _____

What is the Heathen term for spoken magic? _____

What is the Heathen practice of faring forth called? _____

What is the name of Germanic healing magic? _____

Chapter 8: Structure of the Freehold

The Freehold is organised as a tribal structure with specific representation for each Kindred and Council of the Freehold, as well as several officers who administer the Freehold's day-to-day affairs.

Membership Categories

The Freehold has multiple levels of membership representing increasing levels of experience and responsibility within the Freehold. Friends of the Freehold are those who wish to be affiliated with the Freehold but are not bound by oaths, they do not vote in Freehold meetings, minimum age of 12. Probationary Members can vote in Freehold meetings, they are not allowed to run for office, minimum age of 12. Full Members can vote in Freehold meetings, they can run for office and lead rituals, minimum age of 16. Wita is the term for any officer of the Freehold, one of the Councils or Kindreds of the Freehold, or is a Thane of the Freehold, minimum age of 18.

Freehold Witangemot

The Witangemot is comprised of all officers of the Freehold, Jarls of Kindreds, Keepers of the Councils, and Thaners of the Freehold. The officers of the Freehold are elected by the Althing of the Freehold. The officers are the Freyr and the Ombudsman. Thaners of the Freehold are respected elders of the Freehold, chosen for their wisdom and dedication. They are non-officer directors of the Freehold elected for life by the Althing. The Witangemot is named for the ancient Anglo-Saxon councils that would advise and choose Kings.

The Freyr is the chief-priest and sacral king of the Freehold, the primary duties of the Freyr are to ensure that the Freehold fulfills its purposes and oversee the other officers of the Freehold. The Freyr chairs all meetings of the Witangemot, Thing, or Althing of the Freehold; represents the Freehold publicly; and defends Freehold customs and traditions. The Freyr is elected by the Witangemot from amongst their own numbers, elections occur every three years.

The Ombudsman is responsible for ensuring fair and equitable treatment of all Friends and Members of the Freehold. (S)he is elected annually by the Althing from amongst the Full Members of the Freehold.

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Freehold Communities

Freehold communities range in size and scope from Hearths to Shires. Hearths are Heathen families with at least one Freehold Member in the household, and are named for the family. Hearths may join a Kindred or remain independent. Provisional Kindreds are attempts to build a local multi-family community and are approved by the Witangemot. Kindreds are fully formed multi-family communities that have at least three Freehold Members. Shires are geographic divisions of British Columbia that allow for easier coordination of support and resources to individuals and Kindreds.

Provisional Kindreds must be approved by the Witangemot - they are an attempt to create local communities of Heathens throughout BC. Only one Freehold Member is required to start a Provisional Kindred. The Leader of a Provisional Kindred is appointed by the Witangemot and is not automatically a Wita. (S)he is responsible for establishing a ritual cycle and teaching new members about Heathenry. Leaders are non-voting members of the Ritual and Lore Council. A Hearth can be used as the centre of a new Provisional Kindred.

Kindreds are fully formed Heathen Communities associated with the Freehold. The Kindred must have at least three Freehold Members, have conducted at least three rituals, and be approved by the Althing. Kindreds have great levels of autonomy; they choose their own ritual schedule, cultural focus, patron deity, and leader. The leader of a Kindred is called a Jarl, Jarls are Witan and voting members of the Ritual and Lore Council. Jarls are priests of the Freehold and may perform Heathen Marriage Ceremonies.

Ritual and Lore Council

The Ritual and Lore Council is responsible for ensuring the adequate conduct of priestcraft and ritual within the Freehold. The RLC is composed of the Freyr, the Jarls, and Expert Liturgists invited by the Keeper as voting members; non-voting members include Leaders of Provisional Kindreds and Student Liturgists. The Council has specific responsibility for setting the Freehold's ritual calendar; establishing ceremonies to mark births, marriages, deaths, and other rites of passage; and safe-guarding the holy artefacts of the Freehold. General tasks the RLC has are to ensure that new members receive sufficient training in Heathen practice. The Keeper of RLC is elected by the Council from amongst their own number for a term of three years.

Council of Guilds

The Council of Guilds is responsible for overseeing the guild program, encouraging the development of traditional skills ranging from brewing, to woodworking, to martial prowess. The Council of Guilds is comprised of the Freyr and the Drightens of the various Guilds as voting members, non-voting members include Gesithas of the Halls and subject experts to advise on specific topics. The CoG approves Guild training programs, establishes new Guilds and Halls within Guilds, and renders traditional skills to the Freehold.

Guilds are established to provide training and services related to a skill or custom, they are each lead by a Drighten selected from amongst the Gesithas if any. Within the Guilds, Halls can be established to focus on a specific topic, e.g. within a Brewers' Guild we might have the Meadery Hall, Winery Hall, etc.

Recommended reading

1. Bylaws of the British Columbia Heathen Freehold
2. BCHF Constitution
3. Thews of your Kindred, if applicable

Introduction to Freehold Heathenry

Confirmation

What do we call a respected elder who is a Wita without an office? _____

What is the title of the leader of the Freehold? _____

What is the smallest grouping within the Freehold? _____

Who appoints the leader of a Provisional Kindred? _____

What is the title for the leader of a Kindred? _____

What is the term for a regional division to coordinate support? _____

What is the body that oversees priestcraft called? _____

Conclusion

This course provided a brief introduction to the tenets, practices, and beliefs of Heathenry. There is much more information, many more gods and spirits to learn about, hundreds of myths, even the most dedicated student takes a lifetime to learn all there is to Heathenry. Some Heathens choose to focus on a specific culture to revive, while others go for a broader practice. Neither is wrong, each must choose a path that suits their own needs.

The Heathen Freehold was established to create a community for all Heathens in BC and provide a common voice for interactions with governments and other religious bodies. It is our hope that you find these to be worthy goals and join us in accomplishing them.