

PAGAN DIGEST



THE IRISH PAGAN SCHOOL
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WELCOME TO THE DIGEST!

There's a lot of stuff available online, but one of the things that's been pissing me off about current Pagan resources is that folk can't tell what's quality, reliable, and recommended... and what is just going to add more owl shite that you only have to unlearn later.

So, we decided to commission some of the top Pagan minds (all of whom are reputable published authors) to write unique, fresh articles on general Pagan topics which we can then supply to our members.

In this way, our lovely authors get paid and supported (by us and by you, if you are a Pagan Digest subscriber!) to create the best Quality Pagan Resources on a regular basis, and you know you are only learning the good stuff so you don't have to waste any of your time or energy with the rest!

To make it accessible and sustainable, we have created a simple, inexpensive monthly subscription membership that you just enroll in at the Irish Pagan School, and you can access a pleasantly formatted digital PDF file each week containing (at least) one of the following Pagan Digest pieces:

- An Article written especially for you by a published Pagan author (there will be TWO author articles available per month)
- Author Answers - one of our authors will write an answer to a Subscriber's Question (there will be at least ONE of these per month)
- Resource Review - a written review of what we're reading, and whether it's worth your time and money... or not (at least ONE of these per month).

To submit your Subscriber Suggestions for author/topic, or ask a Subscriber Question, or request a Resource Review... just email us now through Eolas@IrishPaganSchool.ie with 'Pagan Digest' in the Subject Line!

Lora O'Brien

Co-Founder, the Irish Pagan School

AUTHOR ANSWERS

We haven't received any Subscriber questions yet (see above for how to submit them), so I'm going to answer a community question from the list.

"My name is Chelsea, I was born in Canada to an American mother and a Canadian father. I live in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. I am of mixed English, Scottish and Irish ancestry (and a smattering of other things thrown in). I grew up in Canada and England and the US, and spent a few years in my twenties living in Belfast.

My biggest question about Irish paganism has to do with ancestry and cultural appropriation. For a few years I've been researching and digging for what a nature based, ancestral spiritual practice might look like for me, and I'm really keenly aware of how much cultural appropriation happens in neopagan and new age practices. I live on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Ta'an kwachan council, and I do a lot of thinking and work to respect Indigenous perspectives and rights to this stolen land ("Canada"). I am also a person who wants to connect authentically with my own ancestry as a way of working to heal some of the trauma and sickness of generations of being colonial oppressors on this continent, and I'm seeking a spiritual practice that isn't yet another act of appropriation on my part. What do you think of people of mixed ancestry (and in my case, it's mixed English, Scottish and Irish - but as I've looked back into my family history where I can find the info, it is more English than either Scottish or Irish), pursuing an Irish pagan path? Some of my (English) ancestors oppressed some of my (Irish/Scottish) ancestors. How do I honour my ancestors in that context? ... (cont.)

(cont.) ... How do i honourably develop a relationship with Irish or Scottish paganism when I know that many of my ancestors were part of a violent system that literally stole land and resources from other of my ancestors, and even worked to eradicate the exact spiritual practices that I now seek to learn?

Maybe this is a big question. But I'd really value your perspective on this, as it's a big reason why I've treaded very carefully in investigating this potential spiritual path.

Thanks for what you do, I'm part way through your free course on Irish pagan practice and I'm really appreciating your work and approach."

Hi Chelsea, (I'll make sure they get a personal copy of this reply)

First off, thank you for your thoughtful question. I know it came in a while ago, and you found my video on YouTube since then and have considered it answered [Irish Paganism - Cultural Appropriation vs Cultural Appreciation - <https://youtu.be/8oC3dUqEXaY>]. However, I wanted to revisit it to be clear on some thoughts that have occurred to me since.

Everybody has ancestors who were violent, who were part of a violent system that stole land and resources from other of your ancestors. That is humanity's history, and there's NONE of us with perfect pure innocent and blameless family lines. For the most part, everybody also has ancestors who worked to eradicate native spiritual practices in some way. Looking to connect to Irish ancestry, you must be aware that we certainly have all of these things, and that a huge majority of those ancestors will have been Christian, and probably Catholic.

Everybody also has mixed ancestry! Again, there's no such thing as 'pure bloodlines' , whatever that is supposed to mean, in the vast majority of cultures and countries. Certainly not in Ireland, we are a people of immigration and emmigration, it is in the very blood and bones of us. It is in our oldest stories, our teaching tales. It is in our ancestral trauma.

It is in our most recent history, with many Irish people still traveling and living abroad due to economic tourism or emigration. My own brother, and his Scottish partner, and their son, are living in Perth, Australia.

I also believe that everybody has more than just blood ancestry – there is also social ancestry (community and chosen family), and spiritual ancestry ('past lives', transmigration of the soul, etc.) to consider. I detail this best in my Irish Ancestry class at the Irish Pagan School. I think anyone who wants to, with any ancestry, can pursue and practice an Irish Pagan Path. In fact, I base my entire life's work around connecting people authentically to this form of spiritual practice, regardless of who their family was or is – Authentic Connection to Ireland is much more than just a business tagline for me!

You have touched on the key element though, the deal breaker for me, which is awareness of cultural appropriation. Unfortunately, part of the colonial heritage – as well as much of modern Western society – is an ingrained attitude of entitlement. I don't have that, I want that, so I am entitled to take that and do what I want with it. As you so rightly point out, much of NeoPaganism is this way – a pick n mix of whatever the tradition's creators, or individual practitioners, need or want, taken from various indigenous cultures and traditions (and often horrifically mangled and commercially repackaged to appeal to the lowest common denominator, in the process).

The way to avoid this is just as you are doing: Awareness – take nothing for granted, question and examine the sources and roots of everything you encounter. Learn from native sources – avoid the mixed bag approach as much as possible and learn what you can from the heart of the culture you wish to connect to. Immerse yourself as much as possible in the culture, and support them wherever you can. This is about walking and working in Right Relationship, wherever possible, and giving more than you take. – *FIN*