

OPINION

Celebrating more than 20 years of pagan pride in Hamilton

By Lyla Miklos

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Some of the members of the 2024 Hamilton Pagan Pride Day committee gather at Gage Park. From left to right: Peter Ivey, Lisa Marion, James Carter, Lorie Baker and Alisha Ivey.

Photo: Lyla Miklos

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Pagan Pride Day has been celebrated across North America since the early 1990s.

Its name owes its origins to the two spirit and LGBTQIA-plus pride movement. As pagan practitioners often face stigma and discrimination, Pagan Pride Day is a time for them to come together to find acceptance and community.

[The Pagan Pride Project](#) was started in the late 1990s with the goal of having pagans “come out of the closet.” Events would be openly advertised, include a public ritual that both pagans and non-pagans would be invited to partake in, and also raise funds for local charities.

Come the 2000s, Pagan Pride gained media attention across North America with celebrations in several major cities across the continent.

[Hamilton’s Pagan Pride Day](#) will take place on Sunday at Gage Park from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Previously known as Harvestfest, Hamilton pagans have come together for this celebration for more than 20 years. The event is free, volunteer run, LGBTQ friendly, open to all and will take place rain or shine. Organizers expect about 1,000 people to attend.

This year’s event will have more than 75 vendors: everything from artisans who craft beautiful ritual pieces for your altar to tarot card readers to retailers with T-shirts emblazed with witchy witticisms.

There will be workshops, panel discussions and rituals led by practitioners from several different pagan traditions. Entertainment will include storytellers, belly dancers, drag artists, folk musicians and a children’s activity area. Pappas Greek and Green Machine will have food trucks on site.

There will be a silent auction with half of the proceeds going toward [Hamilton FoodShare](#).

I spoke with several members of the organizing committee of Hamilton Pagan Pride Day at Gage Park a couple of weeks before the event about what attendees can expect this year.

Committee chair Shannon Desjardins has been organizing the event for three years. Although the “shopping is incredible,” the event is not just a witchy consumer market, but is rooted in something deeper.

I asked the committee members what brought them to their individual pagan paths. There was an overall theme of needing to reconnect with a sense of the sacred that is rooted in nature. Many of the faith traditions they were raised in as children did not provide the spiritual sustenance they needed.

Dustin King who joined the Hamilton Pagan Pride committee last year, said he “found answers more aligned to how he was thinking in a healthy and inclusive community.”

Committee member Alexandria Ditner said she started down the pagan path at six years of age, when she asked her Anglican priest grandfather “why is God a boy?” and was not satisfied with his answer.

James Carter has been a vendor for 15 years, selling wands, incense and witch hats, before helping to organize the event. He was raised Anglican, but in high school he was drawn to the goth kids and made pagan friends. This then led to joining the Society for Creative Anachronism and visiting The Wiccan Church of Canada.

Carter said he discovered a “found family of like-minded people” in the pagan community.

Lorie Baker, a vendor at the event for 21 years and a committee member for three, was raised Catholic and became disenchanted. She then fell in love with Gerald Gardiner’s “Witchcraft Today” and discovered she was already practising paganism in her everyday life by “honouring the seasons and her ancestors.”

For committee member, Lisa Marion the pagan path reaffirmed feelings she had about how exists in this world. “It fit,” said Marion.

If this year will be your first time attending Pagan Pride Day, don’t be afraid to ask questions. The organizers encourage curiosity.

“There is no gate keeping. Take an active part or be a passive observer. There is no judgment,” Desjardins emphasized.

There is a rejuvenating joy in connecting with my local fellow pagans at Hamilton Pagan Pride Day. Making sacred community while partaking in group rituals can be beautiful and transcendent. Finding the perfect ritual tool for your pagan practice or just the right gifts for your pagan pals is both fun and rewarding.

Embracing magic in our modern technological world can be challenging, but I have found that finding the divine in the everyday helps to keep me connected to the world around me and open to a universe filled with unlimited possibilities.

This year’s Hamilton Pagan Pride Day organizers look forward to seeing you by the George R. Robinson Bandshell at Gage Park on Sept. 8. Blessed be!

Opinion articles are based on the author’s interpretations and judgments of facts, data and events. [More details](#)

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