

# The Pagan Cluster in Calgary: A Short Report on the G8 Protests

July 3, 2002

We arrived from multiple different directions, at different times. We came from Seattle, California, Texas, Vermont, Ottawa, Colorado, Kansas, British Columbia, Alberta, and other parts of Canada. Our first challenge was crossing the threshold, the border. All of us were challenged, questioned, searched. Some of us had to try twice or even three times. But all of us got in.

We brought with us a variety of practical and magical skills: from the knowledge of how to design an ecological garden to the skills of organizing a street action, from knowing how to convert a diesel engine to run on veggie oil to knowing how to facilitate a meeting. We were welcomed, supported and taken in by the wonderful Witches of Calgary, the organizers of the action, and by Kelly and Marie, the practicing permaculturists who opened their home to hordes of us staying and making magic.

We arrived into a city drenched in fear and hostility, with everyone from the media to the school board portraying the protestors as dangerous, malevolent, and violent. Teachers and students were ordered not to talk to us. An 'expert' lectured the judges and magistrates of the city, telling them we were coming to kill cops, among other warped fantasies. People who might have rented spaces to us were warned we would bomb them or burn down their homes.

The organizers of the action were working nonstop, trying to combat the propaganda and arrange for spaces and infrastructure in an extremely hostile environment. They welcomed us and we tried to see what we could do to support them. And as the cluster gathered, we wove our magic, trancing together, reading tarot cards asking for guidance and information. We clarified our intention: "Our intention is to consciously use the energy and actions of this week to shift the ground beneath the fortress of power-over and undermine its foundations so that it crumbles, opening space to seed loving cultures of beauty, balance and delight.."

We were told to go on the Summer solstice to the statues of the Famous Five in Olympic Plaza. The Five were the women who brought a court case that established that women in Canada were legally 'persons'. They stand around an inscribed circle which was just big enough for the group that gathered. We created a magical drain, a vortex to suck away the fear that clouded the city, and a positive pole, a tree of life to draw in positive forces.

Over the next two nights, we tranced to the Reclaiming Clanhouse to build our magical

group mind, and decided to use the proximity of the G8 summit as an opportunity to enter the Fortress itself. We could enter the Fortress, we found, through the Fortress within, because each of us has a Fortress inside of us. The path we took started as a passage through the clanhouse. Many of our friends around the world joined us in this working, as did a number of the action organizers and legal team. We found the Fortress full of prisoners that needed to be released before we could bring it down. A green haze, green twining vines, tunneling rabbits and prairie dogs were some of our allies in bringing it down, but mostly we understood that it will fall when the ground beneath it shifts and the spell of compliance that knits its stones and concrete together is broken.

Throughout all the following, various members of us were offering Permaculture workshops, direct action trainings, trainings for the unions, making art and props, attending spokescouncil meetings, doing uncountable interviews with the media, and generally carrying out all the usual organizing activities associated with an action.

The next day, the actions began with a permitted, family march sponsored by the Unions. The Cluster participated, but we felt somewhat scattered. Some of us were part of the Bread and Puppets pageant, others were simply walking and marching.

On the Full Moon, the Witches of Edmonton led us in a ritual, with support from the Calgary Witches who found a beautiful, safe space with a full Chartres labyrinth. Many, many people from the action attended. Out of the labyrinth, a chant emerged:

We are the rising of the moon,  
We are the shifting of the ground.  
We are the seed that takes root,  
When we bring the fortress down.

We released our fears and grief, charged moonstones and seedballs made in permaculture workshops, and danced the spiral under the Full Moon.

The following day, we were part of the action at the GAP, and marched off and had an impromptu spiral dance back at the Famous Five when it was over. By the evening, during the Showdown at the Hoedown-the unpermitted march to protest the huge party the city of Calgary was throwing for press and delegates to the G8, we had better cluster banners and were able to march together and start a spontaneous and very powerful spiral dance outside the stadium grounds at the end. After the circle was opened, a young man was heard to exclaim, "What was that?"

We rose very early the next morning to participate in the snake march, the most confrontational action of the day, which moved through the streets of downtown Calgary during rush hour with the goal of creating economic disruption. As people gathered, the cluster led a spiral dance. The march was peaceful: the police simply stood back, blocked traffic ahead of us, and let us take the space. People on the march made an effort to apologize to drivers, to leaflet and open discussion with passersby. The Unions supported the march, and came out with their flags and banners. The cluster planted the seed balls and led another spiral at City Hall. At 10 AM, after hours of marching, we all stopped and at that point the march split into 'green' and 'red' groups-green to do leafletting or go on to the planned die-in, 'red' to continue with

confrontational actions. We were asked by the Anti-Capitalist Convergence if we would come on the 'red' march as support for their plan to block intersections with anarchist soccer. Those of us who still had some energy had short careers either as players, rooters, or Anarchist Soccer Moms, but we were eventually all exhausted after hours of marching in the hot sun and went on to the Carlos Giuliani memorial performed by Bread and Puppets, and the die-in. Then we went to the picnic organized by the Labour Council and Council of Canadians, where the Calgary Witches had created a beautiful healing space, with massage (definitely needed by then!) and Reiki and food and water.

Afterwards, a contingent of the cluster joined a caravan of over a hundred cars that drove out to Kananaskis, and after some tense negotiations (and some lengthy meeting process that was, depending on your take, either an empowering impromptu blockade or a disempowering, painfully long meeting) we had yet another spiral dance, third cone of the day.

On Thursday, we had organized our own ritual action, Earth People, which began with a circle near our favorite Famous Five. After casting a circle and calling directions, about sixty people covered themselves with mud, losing their powers of speech and normal locomotion. The following prophecy was read:

When eight kings in a fortress meet  
Trading greed and lies  
Out of asphalt and concrete  
Beings of earth arise

Grunting, dancing through the street  
Ancient powers awake  
In everyone they touch or meet  
Hidden chains now break

The kings trade lies and costly gifts  
Protected by their walls  
But when the ground beneath them shifts  
The mighty fortress falls

Fertile compost out of blight  
Living seeds take root  
Of beauty, balance and delight  
Trees bear living fruit

No army can keep back a thought  
No fence can chain the sea  
The earth cannot be sold or bought  
All life shall be free!

The army of Earth People stalked, danced and slithered through downtown Calgary, followed by winged Beings of Liberation and beautiful banners proclaiming "Resist!" and "Insurrection!" Alarming and delighting the public, they stopped at the GAP and at major oil companies to perform a dance ritual of awakening, rising, uprooting the anchors of corporate power, and planting seeds. Drumming and chanting built the

energy to a peak again and again, and the Earth People succeeded in completely taking the streets. Mesmerized members of the public followed and the action became an impromptu snake march, with amazing energy. It ended at Eau Claire market with a spiral dance, and then a procession down to the river and a ritual bathing. At the moment the circle was opened, raindrops fell and thunder and lightning filled the sky.

After returning to what passes for our normal state of consciousness, eating and showering, we went back to the convergence center for the debrief and led a closing circle and spiral dance.

The following night, after a last permaculture workshop for around twenty people and a last set of media interviews, we went back to the Fortress in trance with much of the cluster and many of the organizers. The trance was long and complex and maybe we'll try to write up the notes later-but the essence was that the Fortress is huge, with many chambers and aspects, but that we have begun shifting some of its energies. One yearling bear was killed up at Kananaskis by the military this week, and the bear's spirit came with us as an ally. We tried to go up the stairs into the higher levels of the Fortress, but found ourselves drifting in confusion and decided the time was not yet right. We found a crack in the walls that let us enter the structure of the fortress itself. We entered a tunnel that was very old, that existed in multiple times, especially the Roman Empire. In one chamber, we were stirring a cauldron of black stuff, like oil or like the dark lava flowing under the earth, until the vortex became a spindle revolving. The Ancestors from the Burning Times were with us. And then many of us took hands, jumped into the cauldron, and fell through into another world in which we were birds circling around the towers of the fortress, weaving a cocoon of binding and transformation.

We're thinking that in the next action we might need to work with air. We've held the energy of water, of the living river, since Quebec. In January, at the World Economic Forum, we brought in Brigid's flame and the energy of fire. In this action, we held earth. So air seems to be next.

The actions were small this time, never more than 5000 people, but for Calgary, everyone says they were big. And this one was never called as a major international mobilization-in fact, there was a conscious call put out for people to focus on their home communities instead of using huge resources to converge on Calgary. Some very positive things came out of the actions. Ties and connections with the labour movement (at least in Canada) were strengthened, and the unions gained valuable experience in direct action they may put to use in their own struggles. The global justice movement in Calgary was strengthened and organizers here will have a stronger base to build on. The actions were extremely peaceful, in fact, some of us would have liked more of an edge of confrontation (which is not at all the same thing as violence.) However, the utter politeness and calm of the protests may have done more than anything else could have to delegitimize the G8 and point out the obscenity of their militarization and the \$300 million dollars they spent on security.

And for the Pagan Cluster, we were able to deepen our magic, our ability to create a magical group mind, to openly share our work with the whole action in a transparent way, and to create an action of our own that turned out to be one of the most exciting

moments of the week.

Many thanks to all who participated and who gave us such great support, especially to Tarra who found housing for many of us, found the space for the Full Moon ritual, and did countless other acts of organizing and kindness, to the Edmonton Witches who created the Full Moon ritual, to Kelly and Marie who let their home be taken over for weeks, helped organize, plan and teach the permaculture workshops, and supported us in our border trials and everything else: to the organizers and legal collective who helped us with everything from Immigration to traffic tickets, and to all who gave us magical, practical, financial and moral support!

-- *Starhawk*

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