



Transcript Episode 2: Inclusivity

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0:11 Rich

Welcome to the Wyrd Thing podcast. My name is Rich Blackett and I am joined this week by co-hosts Frigga Asraaf and Jens Yarlett. This week we will be talking about inclusivity. Frigga, what are your thoughts?

0:26 Frigga

Hi. What my thoughts are? I have a lot of thoughts. Let's just get back a little to when the word inclusivity start buzzing around in heathen circles. And that's only a few years ago. Before that, as far as I can see it, the focus was on anti-discrimination, and anti-racism. And then suddenly there was inclusivity. At first I thought that was a really good idea. Then I was a bit doubtful. But then again, when I looked more into it, I thought, yes, in inclusivity is a good thing, because it is way broader than the focus we had first. Because it is about accessibility in many ways. And though there is a lot of thinking – at least for me, I am a thinker.

01:20 Jens

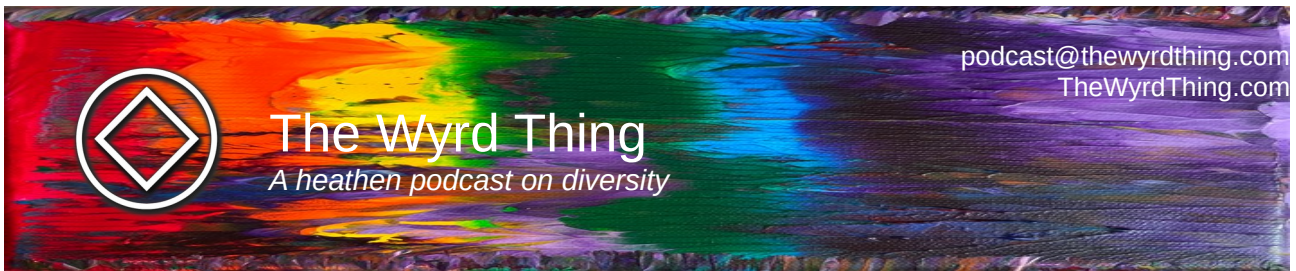
Yeah, I remember as well how this word popped up a few years ago and my first reaction was that I very much liked it. My reaction is still that I very much like it emotionally, it just feels good. The only tiny issue I have there is that ironically in the beginning I think – or I thought – that inclusivity mainly was a label to say we are not these right wing, reactionary people. We are not those, we are different to them. And I think inclusivity is too valuable, too good a thing. It just stands for itself and it deserves to be taken as a goal for itself and not just to show that we are not the others. So it started a bit ironically there, but I think it is really worth of being filled with actual content and substance.

02:18 Rich

It's an interesting thing because when someone says they are anti-discrimination, it's a lot of things about what you are not, whereas I think perhaps the implication with inclusivity is what you are. I think the idea, being from a linguistic point of view, to be literally more inclusive. So we will include these people, we will include that, rather than „this is what we will not have“. This is a very negative point of view. And I think when people had this anti-discriminatory stance, it doesn't really lead anywhere. You are just anti-this, anti-that. It's almost like an older way of expressing political opinions in terms of just political language. So you know of all the groups which are anti-this or anti-that league in the 70's or 80's. You don't find many groups like that really now. You don't find the anti-homophobic league. You know, you find the Rainbow Alliance. You want to do positive things. So it is an interesting use of how language has changed and how activism has changed and goes forward. Is that your experience with that, Frigga?

03:34 Frigga

Yeah, that is my way of thinking, too. But what I still ask myself is if I look around in heathen circles and how people deal with inclusivity is if that shift from anti-discrimination and anti-racism to inclusivity is really made. I agree with I rather talk what I am for and what I stand for than what I am



against. With anti-discrimination and anti-racism, you need to express it in that way. That's why I say inclusivity is way broader. And we have to grow into that, which means it is a learning process. It is now for me about 3 or 4 years that I am really looking into it and I am learning more and more and more and I am still becoming aware of what it is all about. For me it is one of those things: you have to look at yourself. Inclusivity is in my opinion asking that: What is my bias? What is my way of thinking? in a lot of different ways. And all that is what I would love to discuss in this and all the podcasts to come.

04:49 Jens

Yes, I think it is very fast just to change the label. And I think it's a good label. But we need to fill it with more substance, more content. And that's just work which has to be done, exploration which has to be done.

05:04 Rich

I think it's so that people can hear the phrase inclusivity and know what it means straight away. I am going: Are they really? What do they mean by that? Whereas the people got to use it in a meaningful way and we will have a linguistic currency that is understood by the people. We're getting there, but it's not quite there for everybody.

05:26 Jens

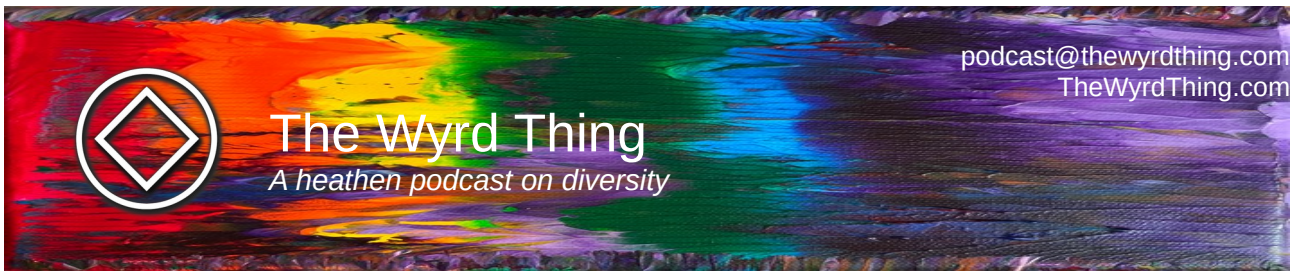
How do you feel about it, Rich?

05:28 Rich

I am very much on the outside looking in. Because obviously everybody in my opinion should want to be inclusive. That to me that sounds like a fine way of going ahead. But I'm not sure how people who have been previously excluded might feel about that. If they feel that they have been patronised a little bit, or just a token sort of person. So I am concerned that somebody who has been excluded from a heathen group, „no, we're very inclusive, come along“, do they just want me as a token, or as a badge: We are inclusive now. Because we have this person now, that's our anti-racism solved. No-one can accuse us of being homophobic because we now have homosexual friend. So that's just fine. Even if the people themselves don't mean that, that could be a perception. I don't know what the solution to that would be. Obviously just talking to people and becoming their friends is a good step rather than having them along as token. But I think it's important that it's not just a token thing, that there is definite steps and policies in groups and actions and deeds as well. That's really my feelings in the groups I have interacted with. So far. A way that is inclusive to everyone who want to be included. Of which of course the flipside is that we do not include those who exclude others. Which is the quiet part of the phrase inclusivity. It is very easy for those on the extreme right to say: You say you're inclusive, but I'm a racist and you won't include me. So you're clearly wrong. That kind of spurious logic trap. What is really meant by that is that people who exclude others are not included. That's really where we are coming from, in terms of the groups I have been involved with. Does that mirror what you guys have done?

07:43 Frigga

I think there are always limitations, there are always boundaries. That's why I think that it's good that it is an ongoing discussion what inclusivity means. Of course you can come up with a definition of inclusivity, that is is accessibility for marginalised groups or all people are welcome, but indeed



there is still behaviour which you will not tolerate. People are discussing about it and listen to people. That's why I always say: Look inside yourself. What is my way of thinking, what is my approach? Am I really inclusive? Or are there still cultural ways of thinking, due to my upbringing, due to the groups I'm in. We need to talk with each other. And we need to talk with the people that this is about. Otherwise again it is the dominant group in whatever way which is talking about. No, we need to talk with. And not only within our heathen circles. Inclusivity is not limited to heathenism. It is way broader in our society.

9:06 Rich

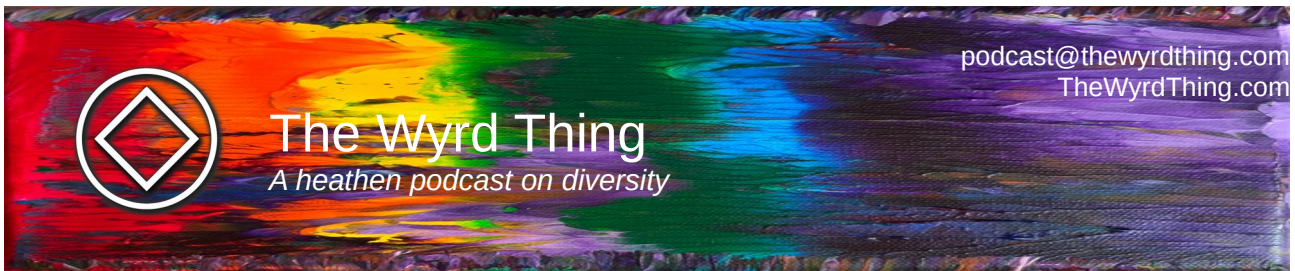
I think that's definitely true. I think of various attempts at inclusivity which have come not within heathenry but which have come completely from the wrong angle with the best of intentions and it has been disastrous. I think of something in the steampunk community to broaden their appeal in one small forum with the best of intentions and it backfired horribly. At least it backfired for a while until we realized that we have done it from a position of colossal ignorance rather than prejudice but still that was a problem. I think the interesting thing about the way that we include people, the consultation, speaking to people is an important part of that. But I am thinking also about the way that rules at events are written. Certain behaviour is not tolerated, if that is written in the code of conduct, that sends a clear message. It's not a matter of „everybody here is cool, everyone is going to do cool stuff“. No, we have to have that written down. Because it will take just one person to abuse those rules. It feels very authoritarian to do that. But I think it's important. Any event has to have a code of conduct. It saddens me that it's required, but it is. At events that you've attended, has there been a code of conduct that people are supposed to adhere to?

10:38 Jens

Definitely. You just mentioned these written down rules. I experienced that they have some kind of flexibility there. And they require some kind of flexibility because you have no idea of what will happen on such an event. So, as an organiser, how you will need to react and you need a safe ground from which you operate. You need to be safe in your decisions maybe exclude a person because they violated the code of conduct. But you don't know what happens before. So this code of conduct usually has some kind of flexibility. The other side of this is as I've experienced that they were not very clearly stating we really want to include – let's just say gay people. It's sometimes written down, sometimes it's not written down. And some organisers seem to think: We want to keep the flexibility there. And we also don't need to explicitly say because it is so obvious: Of course we include you. And on the other hand, with having a history of having been excluded in the past on other occasions and being very cautious there for reasons. It looks like: They have this flexibility. They don't say I'm mentioned. I'm not sure if I am really meant or not. Because it is not really said there. So it helps in the code of conduct to have some kind of flexibility but also very explicitly to say whom you want to include, whom you welcome.

12:14 Frigga

And this is something I haven't realised for a long time. Because in my group and the circles I'm in, as you said it is obvious that all people are welcome. Due to the fact, I am cis-gender, hetero, white, so I never had to think about it. And that is one of the things which is important to me to say as well: No blaming and shaming. I'm not aware, I wasn't aware of a lot of things, I am still not aware of a lot of things. And that's why it is so important to talk with people. Because what I've recently learned much more: It's about safety, people feeling safe. And how we can offer safety to



people, they can only tell themselves. Because we're all from a different angle there. Again: Listen to people.

13:10 Jens

When it comes to the obviousness, what some groups just say if you find things like „We follow the old ways“ for example. And that may sound very neutral to some people. But for a gay person this may mean that they implicitly say: Of course we don't want homosexual people here. Because that's what they may understand by „The old ways“. And if you don't mention it explicitly, just this one sentence „We follow the old ways“ for example, without the counterweight of „We welcome queer people of any kind here“ gives a reason to be cautious. Am I really welcome there? It is a step on the cautiousness as well.

What you said about tokenism: As a gay man, white, I need to explicitly say to come out. As long as I come alone, as I don't come with my partner, then not, but. But as long as I come as a single attendant to an event, I need to tell people: I am gay. So I have the option. I need to decide there as well and I quite often felt uncomfortable without saying „Oh, by the way, I am gay“ and felt even a bit odd about that. But on the other hand, partially I didn't want to be the one openly gay person there at the event. I didn't want to be the token gay just by being the only one. But I was also not really sure how welcoming will they actually be. It's just never mentioned. And if you speak so much about traditions and old ways and so on and you hear all these things floating around, what people derive from Icelandic sagas and so on. It's just not very clear.

14:52 Rich

Yeah, it reminds me of two friends of mine who were looking into heathenry and felt it might be a religious belief they'd be interested to be involved with but everything they had heard, the reputation was it was lots of right wing bigots. That was their perception. That it was all very homophobic and so. And they met a heathen and they mentioned they would like to get involved but you, there is this issue with heathenry. And fortunately the person was involved with the heathen kindred and said. Oh no, you should come to our group. Not only are we inclusive, but we have a gay gothi who will be the person to induct you to the group. Absolutely we are inclusive. Please come along. Don't have that impression. But if they hadn't met that person, they might still continue to have that perception. So I think there is a perception of the aesthetic of heathenry, unfortunately, whether people see it online or expressions of it at various events. Because it has this reputation for being very masculine, but also very bigoted, very exclusive. Even within the pagan community, where I've read comments like: „well, saw some runes, yeah, probably racist, back off“. And literally, it can be as much as that because of certain other toxic elements which ruined it for everyone, for a want of a better phrase. How we conquer that to remove that stigma, I don't know. People have been trying to do that in the last couple of years with deliberately, not to say provocative but very, very clear statements of where they are coming from in terms of inclusivity or opposition to certain political viewpoints. It is very notable that there has been huge, not to say backlash but there have been some very unpleasant comments back from people. And that obviously indicates that there is still this very toxic element within heathenry. Or perhaps not even heathenry, I might say heathen-adjacent. People who like the aesthetics, like the vibe of vikings and stuff. Probably follow a lot of heathen pages but maybe they don't have an altar, they didn't worship, or don't believe in gods or have any spiritual belief at all. They vaguely identify as vikings or something like that. And that's a much, much bigger community out there. And that is perhaps where the toxic reputation of heathenry is even harder to conquer, because these people will never even come to blots or sumbels or anything like that.



17:29 Jens

Just that you mentioned runes – we are from different countries. In Germany it is kind of an ongoing myth that the use of some runes is forbidden. What is actually legally forbidden for very good reasons is to use very definite symbols, some of them runes, which have been used by the nazis. So just keep away from the double Sowilo in Germany. Just don't do it. But some people have the impression you can't use a single Sowilo. But you can't use runes as a writing system if you just skip out some of its letters And the approach to that again is what Frigga said before: keep talking with each other. We need to communicate about this. We need to talk and spread the right information and to talk with each other.

18:26 Rich

I think there is a similar sort of I want to say fake news, but there is a sort of very biased news, a report which has been passed around a couple of years back about how Sweden was going to ban all runes. And they weren't. They were going to ban specific runes in specific contexts by specific people. And in the end they said: well, no, it will be difficult to actually maintain and do this. So it was dropped. But it was passed around by various right-wing groups like „Sweden is banning runes. It is our heritage“ and all this. That stirs up these emotions, this aesthetic appeal. That's got nothing to do with inclusivity, but you can see that instinctual or aesthetic appeal to certain emotions. That is perhaps where people get that unpleasant association with heathenry or anything to do with norse Germanic culture.

19:27 Frigga

Yeah, we always will have the problem with that inheritance of the Second World War. That's why I think a lot of groups have been very aware, and then I talk about 30 years ago, when in various countries groups started a revival, if you can talk about a revival, of heathendom, more or less started again. You can also see here the power of symbols. And if I look back, as I said 30 years ago, people indeed often assumed that you are right-wing when you said that you are a Germanic heathen. And I think a lot of work has been done by a lot of people and that changed. People look different at Germanic heathendom. But the last years, there is this political change again and right wing is rising again. So that has it's reflect on us. And I think just because of that, not only in heathendom, it is even more important to work on being inclusive.

20:35 Rich

Definitely, in our group, we've only done a few, again we're back to tokenism. For Pride month, we changed our logo, we added like a rainbow colour to it. And after a month, we said: should we change it back? No, let's just leave it up as long as we like. Just leave it as that rainbow logo. Maybe six months, maybe a year. We will see what happens. And we got lots of negative comments, but equally we got lots of positive comments as well. So I think it does make a difference to state who you are as openly, even with a symbol. Symbols can be positive for that approach as well. When people see that symbol, they associate something good with it. A long time ago, people would see the CND symbol and had certain connotations with that or they would see a dove symbol and had certain connotations with that. If we can make it so that certain heathen symbols, people know when they see that: Ah well, these are decent people, these are inclusive people, without them having to a little charter explaining how they are inclusive and who they are inclusive with and which people they will include. If they see that, oh well. So we can have that kind language of symbols, of semiotics if we can make it clear that way.



21:55 Jens

I very much approve of companies and organisations hanging out rainbow flags during pride month. It is discussed within homosexual or queer people if that's a good thing or not if suddenly all the big companies are painting everything in rainbow colours. Isn't this just advertisement, how much do they mean it? But as long as these groups and companies and organisations don't act homophobic the other eleven months – then it suddenly becomes bigoted. Don't do it if it really contradicts what you are doing the rest of the year. But even if the organisations or the company is completely neutral the rest of the year and are showing rainbow flags at Pride Month, it still feels good for me and it's still an option to say to them in the other eleven months: So, why did you hang out the pride flag then? So it is quite a statement if you do that and I like it very much.

22:55 Rich

It reminds me of a statement by the playwright Harvey Fierstein who said: Visibility, visibility, visibility at any cost was his viewpoint. Because if you're not visible, then you don't exist and then people can deny you. I mean he was coming from an older generation but certainly he was stressing that visibility was important to him in media, in books, in any format you need to be visible. That was his perspective and that was a very interesting thing to hear. I don't know whether that is quite as relevant today. What would you say, Jens?

23:27 Jens

I think visibility is extremely important. I think we're losing a bit the focus on heathenry. But as Frigga said, it is a broader topic at all. At the moment, Trans people are becoming much more visible than they were in the last years, This leads to the conclusion in some people that they didn't exist in the past. They weren't there, where did they suddenly all pop up from. Whereas the thing just is: They were partially hiding and they didn't have the medical options. So, yes, it was different in the past. But they did exist. You just ignored them.

24:01 Rich

There is a great graph I saw: in the past, in some countries people weren't allowed to be left-handed. They were forced to be right-handed. And as soon as they stopped doing that suddenly all these left-handed people suddenly popped up out of nowhere. No, they didn't. They had always been there. They had just been forced to write the other way. And that was a very simplistic way of understanding that. And of course it is well known probably outside the purview of this podcast, but the history of Trans people and Trans identity goes back as long as there is people. We are recovering more stories from the past, seemingly on a daily basis, when we find a story about a personal letter, personal expressions of their identity. We can bring it to heathenry, talk about Hervors Saga, where a person who is assigned female at birth, a woman, decided to be a warrior and when she becomes a warrior, the language in the saga changes to male. So she is now a man, she is a warrior. So, he is now a warrior and fights very bravely, has this magical sword, all this kind of stuff. And then decides that they want to get married. The tenses then change again. She is a woman now, she is no longer a warrior. I don't know quite what the full meanings are of that, I probably leave that to linguists and historians. But the fact that it is so clearly in the saga there, and this is not someone projecting back, it is a very interesting thing to unpick and receive. And that's before you get to concepts like seidhr and what women's magic were and men doing women's magic and all that kind of complexity. I don't know if the others come across something similar in heathenry.



25:55 Frigga

What pops to my mind when you say that is how our way of thinking is cultural over the years. And if you look back at heathendom, how much in the way we look back is with a Christian way of thinking. And that is so important. And then I come back to you have look into yourself but you also have to look into history. What is cultural, what are the spirits of time through centuries? And we now are moving on. Which means a lot of looking around, listening to people. And then you suddenly realise, why should we limit it to men and women? When came that into being? If you look at nature, there are way more differences and possibilites. So why should we force each other into, like the example you gave, for a long time you had to write with your right hand. What's wrong with writing with your left hand? So what is it that is in our minds and why is it there and are we aware of it?

27:11 Rich

That is a good example. It is important that we understand not only historical stuff but also recent historical stuff because I know there was a survey done of American heathens, 10, 15 years ago. What came out of it, was some interesting things. What you might expect, there was an awful lot of either serving military or police type of people and a lot of men involved, as they probably expected. People political views tended to be center to right, not to say right-wing, but certainly center-right, this is America. However, it was interesting that there was a much bigger acceptance in these groups of male gay heathens as well. Within these same groups, they hadn't expected that to come out of that. And if one or two pivotal people of various heathen kindreds in America who were openly gay and were foundational members of certain groups. Although that's very recent history and hopefully hasn't been lost forever. But certainly in paganism more broadly some groups have been very accepting over the years, Although unfortunately I had a chance to read back some very old papers from late 60's, early seventies regarding pagan groups. And unfortunately some of the prejudice there was, I mean of its time but that doesn't excuse it. It was depressing to read it and I am so grateful how far we've come in terms of paganism. Not just bigotry towards gay people, but towards people of colour. My perception of paganism is very inclusive and welcoming to people. You're both a little bit older than me. What was the heathen and pagan scene back 10, 15, 20 years ago?

29:09 Jens

I haven't been active in heathenry then so I can't really tell you. But what I just would like to pick up because it so much matches my personal experience with the gay people. The general experience of mine is that if people step out of the mainstream in one aspect, there are two general directions they take. Either they become very much more accepting and liberal and tolerant about other aspects being out of the mainstream. Or they try to fit into this mainstream as good as possible in all the other aspects in their life. So you have these occasional very conservative homosexual people who try to fit in as good as possible into the mainstream society, somehow counterweighing the fact that they are homosexual. And you have others who say, I am out of this anyway, who cares about the rest? And it was very similar to me what you said about heathens who step out of the religious mainstream of society, so you step out of it in one aspect and some learn: OK, it's ok to step out of it in other aspects and others are driven back into this mainstream in all the rest of that. It felt extremely familiar from a different point of view to me. So Frigga, please, can you tell us a bit more about heathen history because I am just doing this for 10 years now. So I may be older in years but not older in experience with that than Rich.



30:45 Frigga

I can merely talk about the Netherlands and my own experience. About my own group, there have always been all kind of people been around. Which was obvious to us. There are all kinds of people. For the broader heathen / pagan community in the Netherlands, as far as I know it was the same. Gay people, Trans people, people of colour, which was perfectly normal to me. I noticed years ago in an online discussion on a message board – which is ancient, and it's only about 15, 20 years ago – there was this discussion about what paganism and heathenism was and I found it so interesting to see that some people get upset when they start realising that we are not all having exactly the same view about it. And really get upset about that. And then I ask the simple question: What does it change for you to know that I think in a different way? Are you experiencing your religion different? Are you experiencing your rituals different? And actually to me that is the same when it comes to inclusivity. Is your experience, the way you perceive your rituals, will that change if you use for example gender-neutral language?

32:24 Rich

I think that's an ongoing conversation, it is coming to the fore in a couple of youtubers, where the idea of a single right way in heathenry is very hard to get rid of. Because people coming from a monotheistic faith, even if they have never set foot in a church. They are going to come from that concept of „There must be a correct way to do it. How can we be more correct? Is there a creed? How do I convert? Is there a special ceremony?“ There is nothing wrong with having that impression. That is an instinct people have. And the fact that someone might do heathenry different is unsettling initially. Certainly I was, when I was first involved: „There must be a proper way. These people over there, they are mixing up heathenry with Celtic stuff. That's wrong!“ There is nothing with that wrong at all. Because people have always been syncretic and blending different bits of things. For goodness sake, there have even been Christian heathens for about 200 years, when people were going to churches but also were giving offerings to Odin and Thor and Freya. Which seems completely mad to us now, but people were doing it and felt fine about it. So I think it is interesting to see that as you learn more about polytheistic belief or paganism in a broader sense, you understand that it is much deeper and wider and more interesting than you could ever thought possible. And as you see people developing their own private local practice, I think that's great. I think the danger provided it's within that concept of my private local practice is: I must be homophobic. Well, No, let's not have that. But there is a vast sort of territory where you can be inclusive and not bigoted. But also have multiple different kind of beliefs or pantheons. Because people have always done that. There is evidence of that whether they were Roman soldiers or Greeks or Egyptians or whatever, they had different kind of belief systems going on and the blending of different beliefs, the local practice. Particularly, the Germanic culture was not this monolith. The people up in Tromsø will not be practicing the same way as the people in the Black Forest in Germany. It's just ridiculous, there wasn't this special telegram: This is the way we do blots. OK, we all agreed, excellent, we all sign that. It doesn't work like that. So I think in terms of inclusivity that might take different forms in different groups, depending on the balance of groups. What I have seen online recently is the fact that the number of people, certainly the next generation 18 – 25, who are more confident to be open about their sexuality and identity, and that will feed then into heathenry. And it will be very interesting to see how that develops in all the different groups. But I've said about our generation of heathens, we'll know we've done it right when the next generation is telling us we are doing it wrong. If the next generation says: Yeah, we are now doing things more correctly, we're trying to get away from what you guys are doing. That's it, build a different way. Then we will know it is time to step back. Yes, this is it. This is what we



want. I think we are already seeing that in a number of different ways. On an informal level, there is nothing in concrete yet, but people are developing with all different backgrounds coming together. That is my hope for the future, the things I've seen with the next generation. I don't know whether your experiences have been like that with younger heathens, Frigga or Jens?

36:28 Frigga

Not that specific within heathendom, but when I see young people, indeed for them a lot of things which we had to learn and become aware of are just the way it is for them. And that's a good thing. Let's not forget that inclusivity is also about accessibility and then accessibility is literally accessibility for people with a disability. I think there will be episodes which go way more in it but I think it should be mentioned as well in this one.

37:08 Rich

Definitely. I've seen that in some events that we have run where we have considered accessibility or at least made it clear what is accessible and what isn't. You don't want someone arriving there and find it, „Oh, you said it is accessible but the first thing I see is a staircase. Thank you for that.“ Well, that is very serious. The first heathen event I attended, they said it was accessible, because it has been put in the actual advert by the place they had booked. So they said, we'll just listen to what they have said. Literally, there was a staircase outside, an external staircase. It had been raining, it was treacherous for me, and I am able-bodied. And there was a person who really struggled. The actual owners of the place were quite contemptuous of the fact. We said, you advertised this place is accessible, which is why we booked it. In future events, we've done after that, there was a risk assessment: Can you actually confirm to us what you mean by accessibility?

38:20 Jens

Accessibility?

38:22 Rich

Well, I think he thought that is means free parking, probably. What people mean by that, is it legally defined as a term? It might be in some countries, but I think sometimes what people understand by accessible and what they mean it and what others mean by it, that can be different.

38:43 Frigga

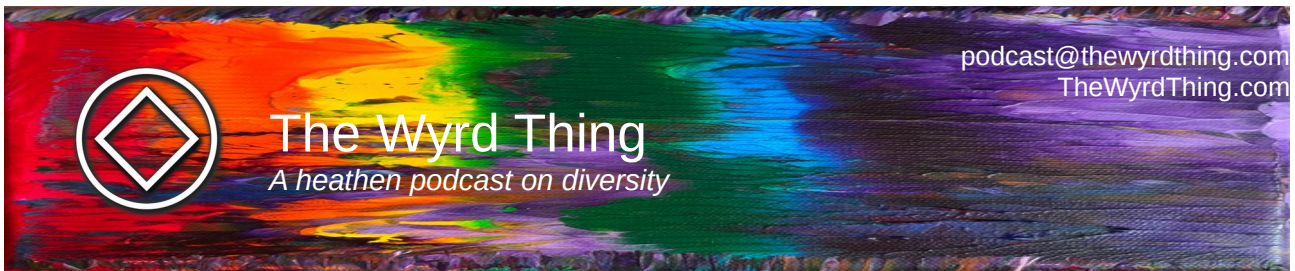
It is different in different countries, that is what my experience is.

38:48 Rich

Or different between different people. What somebody thinks is accessible, is: Is it easy to get to? No, is there a ramp for somebody with a wheelchair? Or: Is there a hand rail who can go some steps? Will there be somebody available to carry my bags up because I don't have the strength to do that? Simple things like this. Will there be sort of Braille or something on the lift control so I know which floor to go to, so I don't need have to have a guide with me to take me back to my room.

39:18 Jens

Accessibility is a good example, I learnt that in our pre-chats, that you really need to be explicit about it. Because there is no black or white, this is accessible or this is not accessible. It is: This is



accessible to whom? And you don't know which disabilities the people might have. You have the same thing, I said: I am gay, I need to decide: Do I tell these people or not? Other people, people of colour are very obviously in a minority. With disabilities, there are the visible and the non-visible ones, and you don't know in advance and don't really know what happens then. So you really need to list: OK, we are accessible in these ways. This is what we can do, this is what we can't do, this is what the circumstances are. You can't just say: We're accessible. You mean, OK, there is this one ramp, but: is it too steep, can the people access all the other places. So you need to know the detail there.

40:18 Rich

For example, somebody might appear to be able bodied, but they might need a C-PAP machine to sleep. Otherwise, they can't sleep. And if they are going to a camping-event, well, will there be power? Can I plug it in somewhere? Well, no, because we're in a field somewhere. It hasn't be considered that they need accessibility because they look fine. But there can be invisible disabilities that can impede people. However, on a more positive side, there was an event I went to where a guy came who suffers from MS, He hadn't told us about that at all. We had some walking events planned and said, we'll change those to include you. Inclusivity. Some he was able to do, some he wasn't. We picked some short walks, things we was able to do. We felt we hadn't really include him very much, these low scale events. But afterwards, he said to us this was the most exercise I've done in a year. This has been tremendous for me. Honestly, it might not seem much to you but I hardly ever go out. I've walked a couple of roads, I've seen a couple of standing stones. It's been fantastic. So we thought we hadn't done very much but sometimes that can be a lot for some people. I wish he had told us earlier so we could have arranged more. But he had a great time. I don't claim we did him alot of good but that was his opinion of the event.

41:57 Frigga

To me, it is important that people are willing to be accessible for disabled people or people with neurodiversity, because it can't always be. But I mean, I have my limitations physically. But if I indeed look at an event and if it's clear whether or not it's accessible, then, if it's not accessible, then, OK, fine, I don't have to look into it. But if I look into it and you get: Oh, this could fun, and then you suddenly somewhere you find out, well , it's not possible, you know, it's a bit disappointing. So it's also here like with all kinds of other things, there are limitations and what is possible and what is not. But I think a lot is possible if people are thinking inclusive and really want to include people with disabilities as well.

42:52 Rich

I think you are raising an interesting point with neurodiversity. Because if it is a big camping event with 100+ people, you can just have an area of the camp site which is the quiet area. Very simple. It doesn't require very much at all, but just actually to do it. So we'll have no families there, no dogs, that's the quiet area. There will be no noise or less noise. So people who suffer from issues with noise processing or sound processing or anything like that, want a place with less stimulation.

43:25 Frigga

And if you read something like that in an advertisement about an event, then you see:, hey, people are aware of it. And only the thought that people are thinking of it and that already gives you a nice feeling.



43:41 Jens

What I like about that story about that person, Rich, is that it also shows inclusivity doesn't mean to include everyone into every single action you do there. There are obvious limits. You can't really include Deaf people into a music concert. So this doesn't mean you can't do any music concert at all because they would be non-inclusive. But the point is that you included him in some of the actions. You've made it possible for him to participate. That's a big part of the point when we speak about this.

44:16 Rich

You mentioned that Deaf people don't go to music events. I have heard that there are Deaf raves that take place in London in the middle of nowhere where they turn the music up so loud that people can feel it through their feet. So they do exist, amazingly. They don't hear the music but they feel the beat.

44:36 Jens

I wouldn't like to participate there. But...

44:40 Rich

No, but for the people who go, good for them.

44:44 Frigga

If you get back to the example of taking a walk, I mean, of course, able people go for a walk and go where I can't go with a wheelchair. That's not what we ask. But indeed, sometimes there is this tiny little bit. We can go somewhere or taken by a car.

45:05 Rich

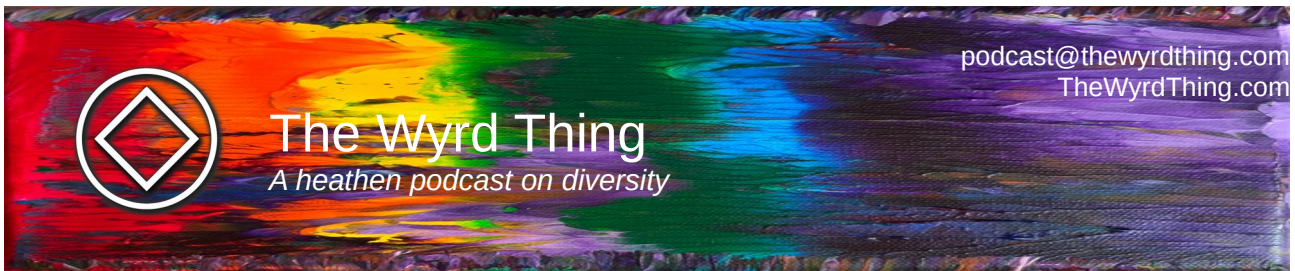
Well, I think we did moderately, what were doing at his visit but I think there are options. I mean, you came to the Asgardian event which in theory should have been dreadful because it was very rainy and very wet. But I recall there was a friend of mine pushing his partner in a wheelchair through very deep mud „No, we'll be fine. „Are you sure?""No, no, it's fine". Through this very wet ground, oh dear.

45:29 Frigga

Asgardian is a very lovely example for me because when I started talking about whether or not to go there, I think I was asked to come over and give some workshops, I said, then I need a mobility scooter and I need to sleep in the house. And to my surprise, „OK; we will arrange that for you.“ And I said, „Wow“. And that happened twice, two years in a row. I came with this tiny mobility scooter and dear, there was a lot of rain and sometimes I got stuck and then luckily people were around and came by and dragged me out.

46:05 Rich

Some big burly vikings came and hoisted you up. Yes, that was actually one of the best Asgardians. Despite the rain, it was tremendous. It was really good fun. I remember asking the person who was running the fast food van. I present very square, very ordinary. „What do you think about the event so far?“ And the lady who was running it, „I have never seen such an interesting mix of people. I've seen little children and dogs and people in wheelchairs and people in full viking



kit. And they all sat around chatting together.“ And I said „Yes, that’s exactly what we want. We want it to be neither the one nor the other. All these different people can come together.“ That to me is a visible example of inclusivity where you can come in just regular clothes or in full viking, however, whatever you present, because you are there people are happy to include you. Would you agree that that would be a visible thing to see? Or would it require, I mean, obviously the actual event organisers, behind the scenes, have to put in place those sort of codes of conduct and all the other things and that would be the visible result of that.

47:22 Jens

I think visibility is very important. You asked before about our historical experiences with heathenry. And I said, yes, it’s just 10 years ago for me so it’s not that historical. But then I thought: Everyone said in the groups where I joined, where I was part of, we’re tolerant, we’re liberal. But there no visible LGBT people there. And this left me kind of insecure. How will they really react? And even after my local group, I told them very soon and they were extremely relaxed about it. They were even so relaxed about it that I felt that I don’t need to say it and in a larger circle, I was again insecure. Will they really be ok with it? It feels so nice in general, do I want to risk stirring this up by coming out as gay? So, visibility is extremely important, but the question is you can’t really force it in a way. So, that needs to happen.

48:28 Rich

On that note, Jens, what would have been that signifier that would have made you feel more comfortable? I have no idea other than having a little poster up saying „we welcome the gays“, chatting might be a bit much, would that made you feel more comfortable or less anxious?

48:44 Jens

Well, hanging up a rainbow flag does help!

48:47 Rich

OK, fair enough. If that works, then yes.

48:53 Jens

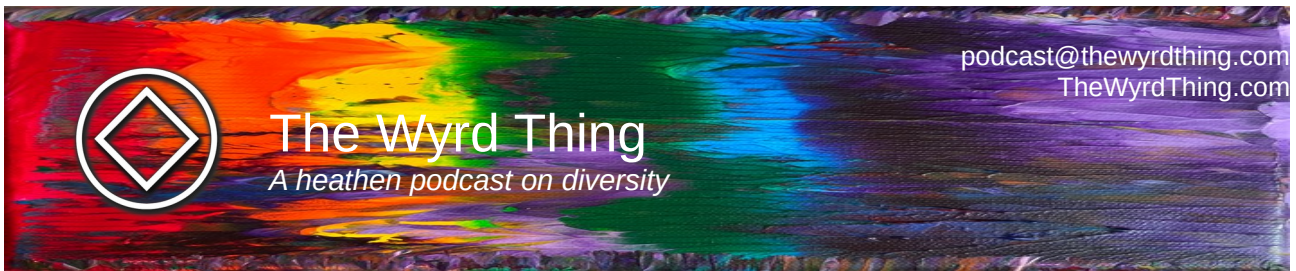
Having some visibly gay people around, but you can’t force that again, would help as well. I remember one occasion when I came with a friend and his partner that suddenly the musical companion of the person who did the Saturday evening concert crawled up to us as breakfast time and asked: „Are there more of us around here?“ So, it is seeing „ OK, I am not the only one“ makes it better but again you can’t force it to happen.

49:26 Frigga

No, It’s visibility but also talking with each other.

49:30 Rich

So visibility without tokenism, I think is perhaps the, it’s not just about doing visibility for visibilities sake. Is there anything else you want to talk on about the subject of inclusivity that we aren’t going to cover in later podcasts?



49:46 Jens

We're going to cover everything in later podcasts.

49:49 Rich

Everything. Exciting. I am excited to hear this. So although there is clearly a lot more to discuss with inclusivity, which we will be covering in future podcasts. I think the takeaway from today's discussion is that inclusivity is an ongoing process of learning and talking to people and not about tokenism but about having those conversations and working with people to be more inclusive, as you go forward. It's not a simple matter of making a statement and that's that. A statement should be step one. Then you ask, what can we do more, how can we include other people? And it has to be a two-way process, because it is not about someone dictating who they include and how they do it. They have to hear how people want to be included, if they want to be included. I think that is the way forward. And giving those signs and indications and symbols that give the initial visibility that there is an inclusive approach taken by the group before you have to ask to see their documents of incorporation. I think we have a lot more to talk about in terms of how this inclusivity works and how to be less wrong. That's not to be completely correct about inclusivity but I think being less wrong is the approach we can take. So thank you very much for listening to episode 2 of The Weird Thing and join us again next time.

[end tune]