



Transcript Episode 19: Looking back and forth

00:00 Frigga: *There he is! Hello, Greg.*

00:03 Suzanne: *Hello, Greg.*

00:04 Jens: *Hi, Craig.*

00:05 Rich: *Hello, Craig.*

00:06 Jochem: *Hi, Craig.*

[start tune]

00:17 Suzanne

Hello everyone, and welcome to this first episode of season three, episode 19 of The Wyrd Thing Podcast. So this is our first episode for this season, and today we thought we'd do something a little bit different. So I'm Suzanne, I'm half your hosting team for today, and co-hosting with me today is Jochem.

00:41 Jochem

Hello.

00:42 Suzanne

And we also have the rest of the team with us. So, we have Rich.

00:46 Rich

Hello.

00:47 Suzanne

Jens.

00:48 Jens

Hello.

00:51 Suzanne

And Frigga.

00:52 Frigga

Hi, hi.

00:53 Suzanne

So to start our season three off, we thought we would do something a little bit different. We've done now 18 episodes of The Wyrd Thing podcast, exploring lots of aspects of intersectionality, of identity and looking at the impact of that on contemporary heathenry. So we thought today we look at some of our episodes in more detail. Some of the episodes that have made members of this team have a bit of a think. Some perhaps, that we're still thinking about. Jochem, would you like to



start us off? Do you have an episode that maybe we've explored, that has continued making you think. Or that you found surprising at the time that you learned from?

01:40 Jochem

Yes. And then I go back to one of the first episodes of our first season, episode three on accessibility. And it was the two of us talking about, of course, accessibility. And at a certain point you asked Frigga and me the question, what about negotiations? What is an event? What should I do? Or what am I willing to accept a certain level of discomfort to be part of an event? And I think the question was based on the knowledge that we all know that an event can't be 100% accessible. Because most heathen organisations, or most heathen groups, are small groups, don't have an excess of money and other resources.

And at the moment you ask me this question, I realised that some access needs aren't negotiable. For example, I have a couple of food intolerances. And if we talk about an event that takes a couple of days, then an organisation saying: "Yeah, well, this is too complex for for us, we can't accommodate you". Which can be an answer, of course. But that would mean that I can't participate, and that isn't a matter of my willingness to accept some this discomfort, this is basic access level needs.

However, some some other issues might be negotiable. For example, shortened rooms that aren't wheelchair accessible. So than I could attend the accessible, I don't know, lectures or workshops or parts of the programme. And leave the, the other parts of the program leave it aside. That was a thing that added new information for, for, for me.

04:05 Suzanne

Thank you. Yes. I mean should it be that all accessibility is non-negotiable?

04:12 Jochem

I think that is a really tough question, that can't be answered with a simple yes or no. And that's another thing I realised when we recorded this episode, and we talked about the issue, that it is always personal. It's depending on the person with the access needs, on the group that is organising the event, on practicalities like venue, and money also. But most of all, it's depending on the persons involved. And I think it's so important that an organising team is talking *with* people. So they can discuss needs and discuss what might be negotiable and what is just a set basic needs that can't, can't be changed.

I think in the end, my answer is - after this long introduction - is that the basic thing is: talk about it *with* the people concerned. And not a simple 'yes, it should be met' or 'no, it isn't necessary'. I think the discussion is essential.

05:38 Suzanne

Thank you. So Frigga, Rich, Jens, what are your thoughts on that? Would there be a point maybe in the future where accessibility is something that all events at the moment with that element of negotiation, but to a point where that's expected rather than has to be the responsibility almost on the person to negotiate?

06:02 Rich

I think we always for the events like the one I'm at the moment, we always strive to do what we can, but not just accessibility, but food intolerances, a quieter space. If people don't want to watch



the television or have any noise or anything. But there is still within that a limit, because we're limited by the funds of the organisation and what we can do. So it's how to approach that within reason. And sometimes it's a case by case thing where someone has limited mobility or something like that. But we can resolve this.

But in other locations we're going to in the new year. The word is about having a lift installed, but we haven't heard whether that's happened. But that would make it much more accessible for people as well. But then again, most, most older buildings that were staying in have instant accessibility things because they don't have a ramp and have like 2 or 3 big steps straight away, which is immediately a problem for people in wheelchairs or, you know, mobility scooters. So that's another thing to consider in the future. So it is complex, and I do agree with you saying that it's a case by case basis.

07:12 Frigga

And to me it's a mixture. But I guess I say the same as you say in different words of the willingness of an organisation. And I hope that we in the future grow in to that more organisations find more accessible venues and become more aware of more things. And as I said - and I think we have said that in previous episodes - and we will say that again, it's always in reason. And if there's going to be an event which is totally not accessible. Just be honest about it!

07:47 Jochem

Yeah.

07:48 Jens

I would like to call it not negotiation, but just talk about it. We had the episode with Richard, and one thing I took away from that was, I don't know what a blind person actually needs for accessibility. I have some ideas in my head, but I don't really *know*.

And of course, the funds are limited and an organisation can't make an event accessible for people needing wheelchairs, for blind people, for deaf people, and so on, and so on. So we need to allocate these funds in the right way. And if you're not affected, you don't know what's actually needed there. So I think negotiation has a bad undertone to it, like people need to fight to get their accessibility. But if we just say we need to talk about what people actually need to make events accessible for them, that sounds hopefully better and this more useful.

08:44 Frigga

Thank you for putting it in these words. Yes.

08:47 Jochem

Yeah, that was the difference I tried to make. Some things are just needs and can't be dis-, dis-, discussed. Other things might be really nice if it were there. Yeah.

And Suzanne, to your question, should everything be accessible? When we look in a bigger picture, we have the treaty by the United Nations on Disability, which was set in 2006, and a lot of countries have signed it by, by, by now. And that means that basically everything should be accessible.

And living in the Netherlands, which only signed this treaty in 2016 (ten years after), we noticed that for a lot of organisations, or owners, or whatever, it is really difficult to make it happen and to automatically think about people with disabilities. So basically, still a lot isn't accessible. And that



that should change. Again, what Frigga says within reason. But people should think about it, that it is important and then be clear about what they can offer, and what they can't offer, or what they do offer concerning accessibility, and what they don't.

10:25 Frigga

Yeah. And then it comes down, I think we discussed that also in one of our episodes, it's a shared responsibility of organisations and people with special needs. Yeah, I think I can expect that an organisation - specific if they use the word inclusive - that they pay attention to it and working towards better accessibility. And at the same time, I think that, yeah, I will open my mouth if needed. And if people listen to you, that makes it a lot easier. And if they are open for it and you get a warm response if you bring up something, makes it a lot easier.

11:07 Suzanne

You were speaking there about listening to people, listening to their experiences, listening to what will help them most. And Rich, I think, you're thinking about the... - when we talked previously about this episode - thinking about the episode that made an impact on yourself, and one that maybe helped you reflect or learn on things in a different way about that sort of listening to other people's experiences?

11:35 Rich

I think it was the episode 14 with Robert Lewis was the one that really I found very thought provoking. And you can probably tell, because I do less speaking and more listening during that episode. Robert talked about his gradual stages of coming out and how he felt comfortable in some situations, but even in inclusive organisations he still didn't feel *that* comfortable. And it was when he attended an all male, all masc sort of pagan and heathen event. And the sense of joy and not just being with loads of hot guys - I'm not trying to say that - I'm saying he was there because it was just people were able to be expressed as sexuality as much or as little without, you know, just, just be completely who they wanted to be. And it never occurred to me that in situations where, even in inclusive organisations, people still hold themselves back. Even in the most inclusive spaces, people *still* have to do that. And that was both thought provoking, but also kind of sad as well. So that I thought was very, very interesting. So it give me some a lot of food for thought.

12:43 Suzanne

In terms of how different that experience is.

12:47 Rich

Well, yeah, just thinking about how some people can, you know, be alone to be in certain events, but how, you know, even in, in inclusive groups, people still have to hold themselves up. Because there's still a lot of fear that there will be judged, or they will be disrespected, or they can't express themselves as freely as they perhaps want to. Because, you know, just of societal overculture. And it's presents a challenge to groups: How do we make places more comfortable and more acceptable? Or it's not just saying we're accepting. How do you demonstrate that? And there's no easy answer to that, but something we should strive to do. Certainly.



13:25 Jochem

Yeah.

13:26 Suzanne

No. And carries echoes of what Jochem was saying about how these experiences are deeply individual. And what is a comfortable space for one, may not be as comfortable, or may make another one wary. Because of their past experiences, or because of their current understanding of what, you know, to keep themselves safe or to keep themselves... to have that at least neutral experience at an event that they would have to, you know, not bring the whole of their identity to that space?

13:59 Rich

Indeed. But there's something also that Jens said the other day. We were talking about the inclusivity in the place where I work, my day job. And they're having this campaign or this sort of slogan about inclusivity called 'Bring your whole self to work'. Which on its surface was like, well, that's, yeah, that's seems nice, you know, you shouldn't have to hide who you are. But Jens, I think you had a comment on that and you said: 'Well, actually, no. People might not feel comfortable doing it. You don't *have to*, you don't have to come out to all your colleagues.' And I think really what the phrase really means is: *You can bring your whole self to work if you want to, but you don't have to.* And I think that it was the 'must' and 'you should' is the, the wrong takeaway from that. But I do take the point that even in, even in that it never considered that: 'Well, maybe I don't want to be open about my sexuality. I don't want to tell anyone, regardless of what I do. And with who.'

14:52 Suzanne

Mm. And the implications for that for, like, big heathen events as well.

14:57 Rich

True. You know, people, sometimes they're comfortable being as open as anything. And it's not, it's not even an age thing. Because I've known some older queer heathens who were very comfortable to tell you anything, you know. Absolutely. And then there's younger people who are... Usually you think, it'll be the other way around. Different generation, they're going to want to hold back. But maybe there was a past carrying: No, I don't care, I don't care what people think. Whereas, you know, younger people still perhaps discovering a sense of identity, feel more wary in some ways. But I'm seeing that gradually change. But it is a very slow process.

15:35 Jens

I think there are a lot of different facets to that. And what I remember from that episode with Rob was also: sometimes it just feels good to be part of the mainstream, and a queer person is not really in the mainstream. Often very all inclusive heathen event of just a very mixed set of people where most people are not queer by definition.

And it's just more relaxing sometimes to be in this mainstream position, which is what people don't really value if they have that all the time. So it feels nice to have that sometimes and maybe, ah, probably we don't need to have this relaxed feeling on an all inclusive event. But then it's nice that some other people admit: 'Okay, there is something you can't have here and you have it somewhere else'. And not this: 'Oh, you don't need this anymore. We're so inclusive! Everything's



great here.' 'Yeah, but I'm still outside this mainstream thing and I don't feel *that* relaxed as other people are.'

I remember my reluctance about this 'bring your whole self to work' (especially with work), because I'm also slightly afraid that especially employers might use this to manipulate people. So you create this intimacy for... for a reason. It's a work relationship, full stop. It's quite a lot of my life, but it's still just a work relationship. And if they *suddenly* turn over from after decades of expecting me of kind of a 'don't ask, don't tell' culture to 'bring your whole self to work now', I just don't trust that. And I think there might be something behind that I don't want. And maybe I also just don't want to change that... I'm 50 now and I spent most of my job life this kind of 'don't ask, don't tell'. Well, I'm not doing that anymore. I have a picture of my husband on my work desk. Maybe I just don't want to change, but it's also a too big a change in a too few years for me.

17:40 Suzanne

And I guess it comes down to what feels safest for that individual.

17:45 Jochem

That. And if I could comment, this 'bring, bring your whole self at work'. If the policy changes, suddenly everything is all on any Monday, I get suspicious if they truly understand it. I would be careful to share being gay or being a, a heathen at work. People don't, don't know and that feels safe. And if they would know what, what kind, kind of jokes could I expect? Would they understand the cultural aspects of being gay or being a, a heathen and all that kind of stuff? It's not just the facts on itself. It's so, so much more.

18:36 Frigga

Yeah. And it sounds to me a bit like: 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions'. I mean, the people who come up with this idea, are they fully aware of what they say? But can you expect of all the people working there that they can make that mind switch in just a little while? I think these things needs time and needs dialogue.

19:02 Suzanne

Mm. I think, yeah, what you were saying there, Frigga. It's... For me it's not as simple as putting a new poster up saying: 'hey, bring your whole self to work'. Because the culture underneath that hasn't changed from one day to another. And it's the same, you know, maybe going to a big heathen gathering or going to a kindred, if they suddenly announce: 'oh, we're inclusive now', are there other things alongside that tell me that they are, you know? Are they being able to moderate their in-person and online spaces in the way I would expect an inclusive organisation to do that? Rather than just sort of writing the word upon their the website and saying: 'yeah, we're definitely inclusive', but the culture doesn't change.

19:52 Jochem

Yeah.

19:53 Frigga

Exactly. And I think a lot of people don't realise that. I mean being inclusive, to learn more about it is the main reason I started to talk with you, guys, about a podcast. Because I realised I still need



to learn so much. Yeah, that's what The Wyrd Thing podcast means to me is that it provoked my thinking and makes me more aware of a lot of things. And if that applies for me, it applies to other people. And hopefully we can, you know, make our little... how to say that...

20:26 Jochem

The world a little better?

20:28 Frigga

Yeah, that we make the world a little better. And hopefully we make other people also aware of things. And that's the response I get so now and then, that they are really glad: 'Oh, but it's so great that you guys talk about that!' So again, it's the dialogue. We need this ongoing dialogue. And as an organisation, I think that is also being aware of that, that if you call yourself inclusive, it's the first step and not the end. And you can't lean back. No, it needs a lot of work. And I think that can be fun, because as with other things, it is often that people have the feeling that they have to give up something. And to me, it's the other way around. How can we make it better for a lot of people? And how can we do that in a way that it is fun? Also, you can approach it from the point of view that it can give you a good feeling if you do something for somebody else.

21:23 Jochem

And research shows that organisations who do inclusivity and diversity, well, they are more successful organisations.

21:36 Frigga

I can imagine that. The more variety, the more creativity!

21:41 Jochem

Exactly. Yeah. And happy, happy people working for the organisation.

21:48 Suzanne

Frigga, you were talking there about the reason why The Wyrd Thing podcast kind of came into being, that it was ways to explore inclusivity and to maybe raise your own awareness. Other episodes that we've covered, topics that we've covered that have been impactful on you and changed perception that you've had.

22:10 Frigga

I think all of them! [Laughs. The others laugh too] And all those talks we had. There was something with: 'Oh, I never thought about that!' or 'Oh, is this how you guys feel or you people feel?' But if there is one episode that *really* had quite some impact on me personal, is the one about poverty. And I did not anticipate it on that. It still has an effect. [Jochem: Mm] It is a subject that is not so much talked about and I live with a minimum income now for 20 years. And I think most of the things Jochem, Devon and me talked about in that episode, I *know* and I'm aware of. But I try to leave it somewhere in the back of my mind, because otherwise I get discouraged. It makes me desperate, because there is no way out of poverty. And one of the things Devon put in words that he makes the distinction between the financial poverty, the lack of money, and on the other side, being rich with spirituality, with friends. And I can relate to that so much. If I



look outside and, you know, there is flower in my garden blooming. To me that's wealth, that's a beautiful thing.

And the other part, the financial part, why this episode has an impact on me, is that - and actually recently I have to think about a lot of things in my life - is that I cling onto material stuff. The clothes I don't wear in my cupboard, which are laying there for already 20 years. Why? Yeah, poverty! Do I ever be able to buy new clothes if I give these away? Can I buy these things back? And realising that, even if I talk about it now, I feel a knot in my stomach.

But that's not a reason not to do it. So I have looked through my cupboards and I took out the clothes I haven't been wearing for maybe 20 or 25 years, which are still good. And I pass them on. You have this charity. Most likely it's in your countries as well: where you can bring clothes and other stuff. And it will be passed on to people who might have even have less money than I. And it makes a difference that I could pass it on. But it's not easy to become aware of these things and really have to feel what it does to you.

24:42 Suzanne

Mm. It sounds like that did make quite an impact and reflection and realisation in your own thinking.

24:48 Frigga

Yes, definitely it did, and that's a good thing. And I hope that, as I said before, that we can, yeah, somehow make a bit aware. And the other thing I did, is ask for something if I could pay less for the membership fee. It was difficult to do that and I didn't realise *how* difficult it can be, and the shame and the guilt you feel. Yeah, I feel ashamed that I have to ask for that. And I feel guilt: yeah, but if, you know, I buy a little bit less of it. But what it comes down to buy a bit less is food, and food for my cats, and stuff like that.

25:26 Suzanne

So, Jens, thinking about an episode that, maybe a topic, that we've covered in our last 18 or two seasons of episodes of topics exploring inclusivity. Is there an episode that has impacted yourself, your thinking, or one that helped you look at something a little bit differently?

25:46 Jens

I could reply with Frigga already said: in a way all of them. There is a difference between the ones in which I was participating and in the ones of more or less. I mean, we're all somehow involved in all episodes, because we talk about them. But obviously when I'm hosting an episode or participating in the recording, it's more intense.

But the one episode which fascinated me most, in which I was barely involved, was the one with Jay. About trans persons. The one thing which stuck in my mind most was his talking about trans euphoria, which I found quite fascinating. And also partly recognised myself in that. So he said it's - or maybe you said that in the recording, Jochem - it's like having a second puberty, but it just feels so... You feel it so much more intense, because you reflect it more and things like that. [Jochem: Mm] And of course, there is the hormonal type of which I have absolutely no experience at, because I never took additional hormones of any kind. At least not that I'm aware of. [Jochem laughs]

But I think I know part of the feeling, because when I had my actual puberty, I... There wasn't someone to fall in love with or there wasn't someone I allowed myself to fall in love with, because I



hadn't sorted out my head up to that. So I did that when I was 20. And I had this interesting experience at, I think, my brother's birthday, to which I came with my first partner at that time, and we simply have been kissing a lot. And I... One of the women there was quite annoyed by that and said: 'Oh, could you please stop behaving like teenagers?' And I thought: 'I didn't do it when I was a teenager, I'm doing it now. And I don't really see a point stopping like that when I'm in love. I want to kiss that person all over and don't care if there are people thinking "that's silly, you should have done that as a teenager". Well, I didn't, so I do it now - for the rest of my life, if I can.'

So, I think the hormones and all these body changes add to a different level. I don't say understand that. But it was interesting to see where I recognise parts where I hadn't expected there, because I'm feeling, I'm self-identifying so cis... Yeah, I think I'm completely out of that. And then I suddenly realised: 'no, there are things which I recognise very well from a slightly different perspective'. [Jochem: Yeah] And also the episode was very informative for me about trans people and several aspects of that, so I highly recommend it. But this trans euphoria was my personal highlight on that.

28:40 Suzanne

And it's certainly we, we have certainly touched on a lot of different, hugely varying topics over the last 18 episodes. And what their impact is in terms of inclusivity, in terms of diversity and how that enriches contemporary heathenry. How it develops and creates it better communities, more strong communities. We're talking there about how often companies who are diverse and actively supporting inclusivity and looking to value those differences, are much stronger in terms of being able to come up with those different ideas and valuing the people who are there. And I think the same is true for our heathen communities as well, that we are stronger when we are, we have those differences and we feel safe enough to be able to talk about it.

29:35 Jochem

Suzanne, is there an episode that you want to highlight here?

29:41 Suzanne

Yeah, I think for me it's one very, very close. It's just at the end of our first season when we had the episode 'Hail Steve!' and we were looking at the nature of the gods and how our current communities, whether the current cultures that we have, especially within the inclusive heathen communities, whether they then influenced the nature or aspects of the gods. And that is something that I'm still thinking about, you know, a season and a bit later now. I'm still pulling apart the ramifications of that and I'm trying to understand what kinds of things might be different, how much that influence goes to ways the gods might inform, but we also influenced them and their aspects. Yeah, that that is still a big thought for me, and I'm still unpicking that one [Jochem: Mm] and trying to find out, you know, what implications that has, not only for myself but for my... the inclusive communities that I'm part of and for contemporary heathenry and where it might go in the future, where the gods take us and where we take them in the future. That was a big thought, and I'm still thinking that thought [laughs], quite a lot.

31:00 Jochem

[Laughs] Yeah, I can imagine. It is a great thought indeed. And I think Frigga had another episode she would like to mention here.



31:09 Frigga

Yep, it's the episodes - am I correct? - 13 and 14 of the second season with Ross Downing.

31:16 Jochem

Let's say 13A and 13B.

31:19 Frigga

Yes, of course. We made that mistake from the beginning. [Laughs] And we will keep on doing that. Indeed, it's part one and part two.

31:27 Jochem

Yes.

31:28 Frigga

Yeah. I just liked him ranting.

31:32 Jochem

Yeah.

31:34 Suzanne

So big. It was two episodes. [Laughs]

31:37 Frigga

I liked him talking about his research with these young girls. And approaching heathendom from a very different way, and maybe not even approaching heathendom, but liking the rooms and stuff. And a lot of what he said I was aware of. And on a personal level, it was to me: 'Okay, I love it, that I hear finally somebody saying, could we maybe focus a bit less on weapons and Vikings, and more on trees and, you know, stuff like that?' So that is why to me it's, yeah, I really enjoyed the episodes. [Laughs, Jochem laughs too]

32:15 Suzanne

Mm. So, thinking ahead now to what we have planned for the rest of season three. We have a little bit of a different format this season. So our first season we explored topics within the team. The second season we invited guests, experts to join us to listen to their personal experiences, to boost those voices and to give diverse voices a platform to be able to say: 'Actually, this is my experience, this is how I understand things'.

So for our season three, between the team we're looking at three topics, and we'd like to cover each of those in three episodes each. So looking at a really deep dive into some of these areas, which from our discussions so far, they're interlinked, they're endless ways of being able to understand these experiences. So our first three episodes will be episodes 20, 21 and 22. Our overarching topic for those, we'll be looking at ancestors and ancestry. Frigga, would you like to talk to us a little bit more about what your plans are for those three episodes? Just to give a little bit of a taster for our listeners.



33:33 Frigga

Yeah. Talking with people and listening to people, quiltbag people... Also as a seidr woman, I have worked a lot with ancestors. But I always say the most obvious you often miss is that there must be a lot of quiltbag people amongst the ancestors, and I would like to perform a ritual with the L-G-B-2-key... No, I miss all the letters as a dyslect, so let me stick to quiltbag. The quiltbag people amongst the ancestors and the living quiltbag people.

What does that part of the ancestral field need? Because I also can imagine there are a lot of ancestors amongst them who - to say it friendly - haven't had an easy life. So there comes the subject talking about ancestors from and with a few people amongst them. Jochem, we are going to perform a ritual in a couple of weeks. And I would like to talk with you how we see the ancestors, how do we approach them? There will be an episode on our experience with the ritual. I'm really looking forward to it.

34:49 Suzanne

Mm. I'm very much looking forward too, to those episodes and looking at that... the intersection between LGBT people and ancestors, and contemporary heathenry as well, and how those come together.

So for our second group of three episodes, episodes 23, 24 and 25, we will be looking at a little bit more of a deep dive into the environment and the land, looking at the relationship that we have to it, looking at the ways that we can relate to it, what value it has to us, and how we might view that and value it as individuals.

And our last three episodes for this season, episodes 26, 27 and 28, we have some guests planned. (We're hoping we're able to get a hold of them for everybody to listen to.) And we're looking at inclusivity in organisations and how leaders of our organisations that are around currently, how they view inclusivity, what kind of plans they have for their organisations in the future, what things they would like to see and how they would like the culture within those organisations to develop to be more inclusive, maybe to be more accessible.

So on that note, we've now given you a little bit of a sneak preview of what we have planned for the rest of this season. We've also maybe talked through a few of our favourite highlights, the few of the points that have made us think over the last two seasons. So folks, have been any episodes that have made you think, then do get in touch with us and talk those over. If there's any points that maybe that you've listened to an episode where that knowledge wasn't something you previously had and it's made you think a little bit about those different experiences? Do get in touch and let us know.

You can find us on our social media accounts, and you can also find us on our website at The Wyrd Thing. I would like to thank the whole team for joining us for this first episode of season three. So, folks, will you come and join us all for our next episode where we look at these deep dives into those three topics for the remainder of this season. So it's goodbye from myself and from Jochem.

37:14 Jochem

Bye bye.

37:15 Suzanne

And Frigga.



37:16 Frigga

Bye bye.

37:18 Suzanne

And Rich.

37:19 Rich

Farewell.

37:20 Suzanne

And Jens.

37:21 Jens

Goodbye.

37:22 Suzanne

And we'll talk to you all next time. Bye for now.

[end tune]