



Hi everyone,

Just a quick note to wish you a Happy Hallowe'en! This is such a rich holiday, so much more interesting and important to us than the mainstream Hallowe'en tradition has taught us.

Hallowe'en originates from ancient Celtic traditions. Most cultures in the northern hemisphere, like the Romans, Celts and others, had harvest festivals around this time. The Celts celebrated their New Year's Eve at this time. They called it called Samhain (pronounced SOWin), and it means "summer's end."

Samhain marked the end of the lighter half of the year, and the beginning of the darker half of the year. The Celts scheduled Samhain using lunar cycle which fell closest to the midpoint between the autumnal equinox and the winter solstice.

On Samhain, the Celts thanked the sun for their harvest, and honoured the sun with a fire ceremony. Druids rubbed dry branches together until they sparked, and these sparks were used to light huge bonfires near their villages. When the fires died down, the head of each household would take embers from a bonfire home to start a new fire in his or her hearth.

The Celts also believed that the ghosts of everyone who had died during the previous year came back on Samhain, along with mischievous elves and fairies, and other spooky spirits. People told ghost stories, just like we do now. Fairies and elves were blamed for lost hair, misplaced personal items, troubled crops and animals, soured milk etc. The bonfires burned bright to frighten these entities away, and each family's new fire offered special protection. Some people dressed in costume to copy the spooks, or scare them away.

Later on the Romans conquered the Celts and, as happens so many times in history, their traditions merged. Romans ate nuts and apples—that's the source of our modern day "treating", and played games like bobbing for apples as part of their harvest celebration honouring Pomona, goddess of fruit. They also tossed apple peels over their shoulders to predict the future, a tradition which still endures.

All of this was still going strong in the 700s in the lands that were previously settled by Celts (England, Ireland and Northern France) and naturally the Church decided it needed to do something about this pagan celebration! November 1 was renamed All Hallows' Day, and November 2 was renamed All Souls' Day. Samhain became known as All Hallow's Eve, which was eventually shortened to Hallowe'en. Folks would go to cemeteries and pray for their loved ones, but they went on telling scary stories, burning fires, eating nuts and bobbing for apples. November 2 adopted a whole new set of traditions once this holiday was brought to Latin America, now known as the Day of the Dead, or Dia de los Muertos.

In the middle ages, folks wandered from house to house in certain parts of England begging for a treat known as a soul-cake (basically raisin bread) or a penny. Some would make mischief, like covering up chimneys and boarding up doors. These are the old-time trick or treaters! Tricksters went around masked so their neighbours wouldn't recognize them, and all the pranks were blamed on spirits.

In Ireland, instead of using lanterns to light up their All Hallow's Eve activities, folks often hollowed out large root vegetables, like turnips. They carved ugly faces and stuck candles inside their veggie-lanterns. When the Irish began to immigrate en masse to North America in the

1800s, they brought all these traditions with them, substituting the local and plentiful pumpkin for the turnip. And the rest is history. By the end of the 1800s, Hallowe'en had become a mainstream tradition in North American cities, with costume wearing and trick or treating.

But Hallowe'en is also a time to celebrate the fruits of the earth, acknowledge the end of the growing season, and prepare for the long winter ahead. Today, Samhain is once again celebrated as a very important festival by neo-pagans and Wiccans. It's a time to honour ancestors, elders, friends and pets who have died. Samhain is also seen as a festival of darkness, which is balanced by the spring festival of Beltane, a festival of light and fertility.

On the metaphysical level, there's a lot going on at this time of year that I can only explain from my personal perceptions and experience. You've probably heard the expression "the veils between worlds are thin" around Hallowe'en, and that's exactly how it is for me. There is simply less separation between the spirit world and our physical world at this time of year.

It has something to do with the transition to winter, the "dead" season, with its cold and darkness. In my travels to the southern hemisphere, the veil is thinner down under during *their* transition to winter. For some reason it is easier for spirits and paranormal activity to manifest at this time; in fact, many psychics and intuitive I know report more paranormal activity during winter months. The spirit world likes our increased awareness of them around Hallowe'en, also, and that may be why it is easier to bring them into our lives, on purpose or by accident.

So have a great time making and wearing your costumes! Enjoy the opportunity to be creative and silly! And of course I know you'll be sure to brush your kids' teeth really well! Here's some additional suggestions for making your Hallowe'en extra happy and meaningful:

1. Take some time between mini-O'Henry's (my favourite!) to think about earth's cycle, and how wonderful it is to be a part of it. Accept the seasons; feel them in your bones, for we are a quintessential part of each one, and, in turn, our lives emulate the seasons. Every season is so beautiful, so unique. The promise and resurrection that is spring, with its fragile flowers, leaf-buds, and pussy willows, and the exquisite scent of May trees and lilacs. Then comes the power and magnificence of summer, with its long days and sweet, hearty abundance; fresh basil and garlic, peaches and raspberries. Now autumn, with its striking sight of yellow and red leaves, and the smell of the leaves and sweet grass at night; how fun it is to crunch in them; how wonderful it is to open your drapes at 7am and watch a sunrise again. And soon comes winter, with its elegant, quiet snowy skies and magical frosted trees.
2. Even though our winters in the Calgary area are long and tough, start now to practice an attitude of appreciation and gratitude. First of all, focus on what you like about winter! Winter is a cozy time for catching up on inside projects, wearing cool hats and boots, playing in the snow, sipping hot yummy drinks, watching movies, marvelling at frosted trees and window panes, and enjoying how very awesome it is to have indoor heating! Throw your heart into the winter festivals with 100% excitement and be grateful for the opportunity to see family you haven't seen in a while. Make plans for what you'd like to accomplish over the winter months, stuff you didn't have time to do in the summer because you were busy partying or travelling or working in your garden. Just accept the fact that it will take you longer to get everywhere and that every excursion will be slower and require more effort. After all, there is truly no point fighting with Mother Nature on this one! How pointless and energy-wasting is that? Winter is going to be long this year...so get into the spirit! Try to limit your urban rushing around and enjoy this season of nesting and resting.

3. Intuitives and psychics should avoid horror films and other media that augments fear. Personally, I don't think anyone should watch this stuff, but intuitives and psychics are particularly sensitive to it. Even if you don't feel that you're intuitive, if you find that a show is too dark or negative, just stop watching it, period; don't question your gut instincts. It's just not right for you and that's that. In meditation, surround yourself with the white light of the Holy Spirit, and summon your favourite archangels to guide your intentions and actions for the purposes of purity and growth. Attend parties or gatherings where the vibe is really positive, relaxed and fun, and avoid things like séances and ouija boards.
4. Take a moment to remember and honour your ancestors and other loved ones who have passed on. Share stories with your family and friends. Write in your journal. Light a candle for them, burn some sage, go to mass, or any other ritual that is comfortable and meaningful to you. Focus on what you loved best and visualize them in your mind as happy, healthy, and young, because that's how they are on the other side.

Happy Hallowe'en!

With love and gratitude,  
Kelly Tait