

An open letter to potential interns from a 2010 graduate from the program:

After successfully going through the internship at Turtle Island I don't believe there are enough words to properly prepare you for the challenge on which you are about to embark. Since being off Turtle Island people will ask me if I got out of it what I expected, and the best way I have come to respond to this question is as follows: "I went into the internship expecting to get "x" but I ended up getting "y" and "z." What I mean by this, is that I got a lot out of the internship, much more than I expected to get, but the experience has so altered my view of reality, I don't think I could even see "x" at this point. So was it worth it? Absolutely. Was it difficult? Incredibly.

That said, it is not all fun, learning and enjoyment. Turtle Island is still a lot like the life you already know. There are ups and downs, good days, bad days, and days you'd rather stay in bed. It is not some paradise where you get to hang out in the woods all day. It is hard work, work like most have never known and the masses (at least in this country) will never know. The work is sometimes beyond mundane, other times so dangerous and varied you are on high alert for 3 or 4 hours at a time just to keep yourself and other interns safe. What I'm saying is life at Turtle Island is still life, you are not escaping the bad, only the scenery and work load have changed on Turtle Island.

What Eustace and I really spoke about when I said I'd write this letter was "the hardest thing for me to adjust to" in order to be successful at Turtle Island. The hardest part was to let go of my own ideas of what I wanted to see done at Turtle Island. Turtle Island is Eustace's vision and I'll use the analogy of it being a large machine. Only this machine consists of time, knowledge, land, animals, people and education. It was hard for me to realize that I was a tiny part of this huge machine. My one year is miniscule to the 25 years it has been around, my ideas and understanding of its existence and goals are limited by my short glimpse of it. Once I realized that Eustace was pulling the levers and controlling the machine, life got a lot easier on the Island. I realized my limited vision could not trump 25 years of experience and vision, and Eustace would best **use** each of us interns to **fulfill** his vision. I had to let go.

So where does this leave you? You had better have goals and plans for what you would like to achieve on your days off at Turtle Island. **IF** you put in the time and planning, Eustace will provide you with the materials, time, guidance and chance to do what you choose. I chose to learn to drive horses, build a cordwood house, cobb out a straw bale house. I hunted, I planted, I gathered. I learned to blacksmith, build fires, make knives, and tan buckskin. But I did all of this on my days off, **after Eustace had put my labor to his best use.** I had to wake up early on days off to try and accomplish what I wanted to **extract** from Turtle Island for the day. I could have slept, I wanted to as well, but I stuck to my goals, and am extremely pleased I did so. You must seek the education and benefit from Turtle Island it will not be handed to you. It is work on top of your work.

Remember this is a live work trade, and you have to earn your keep. Eustace will fit your skill where you will be best utilized. I ended up working on trucks a lot because I already had mechanic experience. Not what I chose to do, not what I wanted to do but it is how Eustace best used me to ensure Turtle Island's success. What I got in return was a year I will never forget, has forever changed me, and left me closer to my ancestry.

In peace

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