

Michelle Fox '98
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
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DONIN: Today is Friday, June 7, 2013. My name is Mary Donin and I am in Hanover, New Hampshire, in Rauner Library, and Michele—let's see. You are in, is it, Hays, Montana?

FOX: Yeah. I'm actually in Bozeman today—

DONIN: Oh, ok.

FOX: —but I reside in Hays, Montana. Which is—

DONIN: And you're class of 1998, right?

FOX: Yes, ma'am.

DONIN: Ok, great. So, tell us, Michelle, how is it that you ended up coming to Dartmouth back in 1994. Was it word of mouth? Was it a high school counselor? Was it somebody you knew? Tell us that story.

FOX: Not really. I grew up in a very small community in north-central Montana located on an Indian reservation. Nobody goes to Dartmouth, or Harvard, or—so, people just don't leave. [Laughs.] And the summer before my senior year, I started—I'd gotten ahold of this catalogue, and I really, honestly, I don't remember if it was mailed to me or what, but it had all of these colleges that were on the east coast. You know, all the Ivy Leagues. You know, different private colleges that were, you know, east.

So, I'd started—I'd wrote to them all about admissions information, because I knew I wanted to go to college and I knew I wanted to leave. And I'd gotten tons of brochures and things. You know, back then that's what they did is they sent you view books and things. And Dartmouth—what really struck my eye when I saw Dartmouth was because of its commitment to Native Americans and the Native American Program.

To make a long story short, that fall I was contacted by John Sirois, who is now a really good friend of mine. He was the Native American Program—he was kind of a recruiter for that. And he contact—

DONIN: He worked for Dartmouth?

FOX: He worked for Dartmouth, yeah. And he's actually, now, he is the chairman of the Colville Tribe in Washington.

DONIN: Wow.

FOX: Yeah. And he was basically like a recruiter. He was the Native American recruiter for Dartmouth. And he called, and I could really identify with him just by how he talked and the fact that he was another Native student who had grown up on the reservation in Omak, Washington.

So, I went on the Native Fly-In Program and it was—wow. It was such a—it was just a total change from anything. I'd never seen anything like it.

DONIN: What is—was that something the college was running, the Native Fly-In Program?

FOX: Yeah. And, you know, up until a few years ago they still—I don't know, they might still have it now, but there's a lot of—that's how they recruit a lot of their Native students, they have a fly-in program and they bring you in for a few days.

DONIN: Is it over the summer?

FOX: No. When I went, it was in the fall. Yeah.

DONIN: So the fall of your senior year in high school, then.

FOX: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And were you there with other—

FOX: Yeah.

DONIN: I mean, they bring in a whole group of Native Americans—

- FOX: They brought in, I think, it was about fifteen of us or so.
- DONIN: Uh-huh!
- FOX: Fifteen to twenty. But yeah, they brought in a whole group.
- DONIN: And you came on your own, not with your family or anything.
- FOX: Yeah, no. You just come on your own, and it was—the crazy thing is that you could tell that the people who made the arrangements weren't—they didn't understand how it works in Montana. In Montana we drive. When we wanna go somewhere, we drive. That's—you know, three hours isn't a big deal. And we live—we're three hours from Billings or Great Falls, either way you look at it, three hours from the nearest airport. There's one of those little, itty-bitty airports in a town called Havre that's just, like, seventy-five miles from us. They actually flew me out of Havre, into Billings, then into Hanover, which was crazy because I had to get on two of—and, I think that was the second time I flew in my life—and I had to get on two of those little, itty-bitty planes [chuckles].
- DONIN: Ooh!
- FOX: But, yeah. So, that's kind of how I got there. I applied early decision and I was accepted, so I knew right around Christmastime where I was gonna go.
- DONIN: Did you consider any other colleges?
- FOX: No, no. I didn't.
- DONIN: So the pull, I assume, was because of the support of Native American students here that attracted you.
- FOX: That was really important to me. And, honestly, I don't think—you know, now, I would think I would have done fine, you know. But back then, I think it would have been very hard for me to go anywhere else that didn't have the support that Dartmouth did for their Native students. That was *really* important to me. And that was really important to why I was able to matriculate and then actually graduate.

- DONIN: So, just to put some context to this, did you grow up on a reservation?
- FOX: Yes, yes. I grew up on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, on a ranch. Cattle ranch. My dad was in the military. We moved back—I think I was, like, three-and-a-half, I don't even remember. I very vaguely remember, even, memories of anything other than living on the reservation. We moved back when I was young. I was educated there. I grew up there. And, you know, my life was very different from many—your typical Dartmouth student, you know. I wasn't prepared to go to a place like Dartmouth. Again, you know, I grew up on a cattle ranch, a working cattle ranch.
- And I actually, now—it's kind of ironic: when I went to Dartmouth, I thought, *Oh, I'm never gonna have to look at another cow again. I'm never gonna have to tag a calf, I'm never gonna have to feed cows in the winter, I'm never—that's it. This is gonna help me so I don't have to grow up and be a rancher.* And here we are, what are we? Almost nineteen years later, and I actually run that same ranch with my husband that I grew up on [chuckles].
- DONIN: Fantastic. Full circle.
- FOX: [Chuckles].
- DONIN: Full circle.
- FOX: But, I guess, with what I've gained at Dartmouth and, you know, my work experience, it's a business and I treat it as such. So, it's interesting, I'm a fifth generation cattle rancher, and that's a lot to be said.
- DONIN: Yeah.
- FOX: There's so much history in that. My—
- DONIN: So you were very brave to leave—
- FOX: Yeah.
- DONIN: —this safe environment, which was basically the only one you knew—

FOX: Mm-hm.

DONIN: —to come all the way across country and enter this totally strange and unfamiliar territory to you. What did your family make of this decision?

FOX: I don't know. I don't even know if they really knew what to think. But I went. You know, that fall—that summer right after I graduated, I had an aunt who lived in Alaska and I went up. I thought, *Well, I'll go up there and I'll work*. Because there's not a whole lot of jobs on the reservation.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

FOX: So that summer before I went to Dartmouth, I went to Alaska and worked for the summer. And that was a good experience 'cause it kinda taught me a little bit about, you know, having to take care of yourself, living away, you know, right? Not being right there with your parents and your family there. You gotta understand: where I—I mean, I lived literally next door to my grandmother, my aunt, my uncle, I mean, my family live in this very small—on this small area. I mean, there's probably eight or nine houses and the road to it is called Fox Drive. The gravel road, mind you.

DONIN: Wow.

FOX: But, I mean, I lived so close to the vicinity of my family, such a, you know—very close to my grandmother and my cousins, in this small community. And I was always smart enough in school, you know, but they didn't—I don't know what they—but I went.

And there were times it was really hard. Financially it was hard, for me. Mentally, you know. My first couple years, you know—one year I had to take off because I didn't have enough money to go back to school. But I was fortunate enough to be able to go back the following year. And I was able to graduate with my class, which was important to me.

DONIN: So, let's talk about what you found when you first got here in the fall of 1994.

FOX: [Laughs.]

DONIN: Just, you know, in terms of your daily life. What dormitory did they put you in?

FOX: I was in, is it Choate? Not Choate.

DONIN: Yeah!

FOX: They looked like—it's those ones that were built, like, in the '60s. No, I don't think it's Choate.

DONIN: The flat white ones that are just sort of boxy?

FOX: Yeah! They're over—

DONIN: Near the River Cluster.

FOX: No, wasn't there. The ones right before that.

DONIN: Yeah, I think you're right. It was the Choates, then.

FOX: Are they the Choate?

DONIN: Yep.

FOX: Okay, yeah. And they look like 1950s, '60s architecture.

DONIN: Yep.

FOX: That's where I lived my first year. You know, everything was just different. I mean, you ate different, you lived different. I mean, I went from, you know, growing up [chuckles] in a double-wide mobile home, runnin' cows and feedin' cows and always having that responsibility. You know, that's probably really what prepared me for that, for the rigors and being able to withstand challenges and being accountable.

DONIN: And to survive on your own in this strange place.

FOX: Yeah. Everything was different to me. Food was different. You know, I'd never seen things like hummus. Bagels? We didn't have bagels in Montana, at that time.

- DONIN: Oh yeah.
- FOX: You know, everything. [Laughs.] Just things I saw, like a salad bar in Montana consists of some lettuce and some tomatoes and onions, maybe an egg. At Dartmouth, there were beans in there, and corn, and little noodles—
- DONIN: [Chuckles.]
- FOX: There were just—things were just very different. Very different. [Laughs.]
- DONIN: Lots of choices in the dining hall.
- FOX: Yeah, lots of choices. You know, there was always something just to experience there. And I tried to do as much as I could, but, again, my first year—especially my first term—I mean, I really struggled aca-—not—[sighs]. I don't know if "struggled" is the word, 'cause I did fine in terms of grades, but I felt that I had to work very hard to be able to stay there because I didn't feel as prepared as some of the other students in my classes.
- DONIN: But it sounds like it wasn't just academic preparation, it was social and personal preparation.
- FOX: No. Yeah, I mean there were so many variables there. One good thing is that actually during that Native Fly-In Program, I met another Native student from Oklahoma. Her name was Janet Johnson and she became—we're, to this day, we're still close. And she became my roommate. And now, to this day, she's one of my best friends. And we came from very similar backgrounds. She came from a small town in Oklahoma, you know, she was a Native student, grew up around her tribal community. You know, all she ever knew was that. And so we had each other.
- There were other Native students there in the Native American Program. Plus, you know, you had all the Native American Studies classes you could take. So that was a big help in—that was a big factor in me being able to finish.
- DONIN: Being able to feel supported and like you weren't alone.

FOX: Oh yeah! Mm-hm.

DONIN: And, so, who became your community? Once you got over the initial sort of adjustment period of the first term—

FOX: Mm-hm.

DONIN: First of all, I guess I should ask you, if we're going chronologically here, did you participate in the orientation, the freshman trip?

FOX: No, I didn't do that. Huh-uh. And I can't remember why. I think I was gone when the stuff came in the mail, but I didn't go to one of those DOC trips, no.

DONIN: Ok. So, you arrived on campus and you were sort of one step behind a lot of the students 'cause they'd probably all met each other.

FOX: Formed relationships. Yeah. But me and Janet, we really stuck together.

DONIN: Great. So who became your larger community? Did you feel any sort of threat to your identity because you were surrounded by all these white kids?

FOX: No, no. You know, it was—the one thing that always struck me as funny is Dartmouth always boasted that they had all these Native students, but what you need to be aware of is that at Dartmouth there's two different groups of Native students. There's the group of students that *really* have ties to who they are. They *are* Native. They look like—and that's a really loose word, because I'm not a—your typical Native today doesn't look like what you'd think they look like, you know. We're all different colors and shapes and sizes, I mean, it's—you know. You look at me and then you look at my husband, he's *very* Native looking, and so—

But, anyway, there's two different groups of Indians at Dartmouth. There's the one group that still has very strong ties to who they are, then you have the other group—and I don't—for lack of a better term, they were the ones who checked the box maybe hoping that would give them an advantage to get into Dartmouth. So.

DONIN: And how are they different from you?

FOX: They didn't have the same experiences as us. You know, when you grow up on a reservation you grow up with really strong ties to your community. You know, you just have a—you see things different. Indian country's very small; you know a lot of the same people. Versus ones that, you know, their great-grandma was a Cherokee and they were told that.

DONIN: But they're not living on a reservation, for instance.

FOX: Yeah. And it's not even that. There were some of them, like, there was another guy who grew up in Touse [sp?] and Albuquerque. You know, they still went home every weekend to see their family on the reservation. That's not it. That didn't—you know, there were still a lot of them in the group that we were most familiar with, that had real strong ties to their community.

But then there were some that, you know, we'd see and they'd never come to the Native American Program meetings or never really participated, so.

DONIN: Oh, I see. So they weren't interested in sort of staying within the Native American community at Dartmouth, they were going out into—

FOX: Yeah.

DONIN: I see.

FOX: And I had very few—I don't know why—I had very few non-Indian friends at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

FOX: I don't mean...

DONIN: That was your choice? Or it's just the way it happened?

FOX: Just the way it happened. I mean, yeah.

DONIN: Yeah.

FOX: I think I have more non-Indian friends now than [laughs] I did when I was in college.

DONIN: Right, right. So, did you—were you attracted at all to the sort of traditional Greek life that was going on here as a vehicle for your social life?

FOX: No. I didn't participate in that at all. I didn't really understand that.

DONIN: And your group of friends weren't interested in participating.

FOX: No. I think eventually some of them—like in the later years had joined one called Tabard or something like that—

DONIN: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

FOX: Some of the men [chuckles] were in a fraternity called Bones Gate. But, no. That was not—I was never interested in that.

DONIN: And did you feel you had support and resources for a good social life and meeting friends just by staying within your group, your Native American group?

FOX: Yeah. But really, at Dartmouth my goal wasn't to make friends. My goal was to finish and not drop out, because you gotta think: for someone like me, especially being from a reservation, your own people are your own worst critic. I had a lotta people assume that I wasn't going to be able to finish there or who doubted that I was gonna be able to follow through on my commitment.

DONIN: Oh.

FOX: So, I really... Going to school and finishing was always my paramount goal. That was always the first thing. The other stuff came second. The social life, activities, that really wasn't all that important to me. I had to study a lot; I had to work a lot. And I had to work to be able to stay there, to be able to afford to stay there, so there were times where I had two part-time jobs. So I had a really different experience because I didn't get to do a lot of the activities and things because I was working all the time, either academic work or

actual work-study and then a job, because I had to support myself. I didn't have a whole lot of help from my family.

While I was there my dad—our ranch actually ended up getting foreclosed on and so my parents pretty much lost everything financially. So I didn't have a whole lot of support there.

DONIN: Right. So you were responsible for earning money.

FOX: Yeah, I mean I had to or I couldn't stay there.

DONIN: Yeah.

FOX: And the way I looked at it is that this was my opportunity to make my life better, and that if I didn't take advantage of it and follow through with it then I didn't really have a whole lot of positive alternatives. So that was always—you know, if anything—if I left, or— If I remember how I thought when I was there, that was it. *I have to finish. I have to do whatever it takes to graduate.*

DONIN: And did you experience any sort of resentment or, you know, lack of understanding from your family and home—

FOX: Yeah.

DONIN: —about why you'd gone?

FOX: Yeah. It's like that. Yeah. I mean, even family and people I had been friends with—I mean, my life was just very different than the existence there. And even now, still, I still feel some of that. Even to this day.

DONIN: People have not forgotten the fact that you left the reservation to go to college.

FOX: Yeah, yeah. They think that somehow that / think that somehow that makes me more entitled to things, and [chuckles] that's not the case. But...

DONIN: Is it the education piece of it that they resent? Or the fact—

FOX: You know what? I think it's two-fold. I mean, I think, yeah, at home there's a term, we call it the crab bucket syndrome. Nobody likes to see anybody else get ahead because they're so oppressed, they're so used to never having anything, of never making their lives better. I mean, really that's like a social norm there. And the ones that do, often seem like they try their darnedest to ostracize them from the group, I guess [chuckles].

DONIN: Right.

FOX: Yeah, you know—now not so much. There's been a few others that have gone on to go to school, but just there's a distinction now between somebody like me. It's like, *Oh, well, she thinks she's this because she went to that school*, you know? It's almost like they try to discount what you've done.

DONIN: Right. Well, let's turn this around, and while you were here on campus, did you experience from the community here a feeling of sort of being an outsider and not belonging?

FOX: You know, in a sense I did, yeah.

DONIN: How did it demonstrate itself?

FOX: Well, I mean, we were just—there was one thing I noticed. I really noticed this my senior year. I was in a senior seminar for, I think it was, an environmental studies course, and there was a couple guys in there and they were your typical Dartmouth, fraternity, you know, elitist, felt like that was their place in the world to be. And just the feeling I got from them by being with them in a senior seminar. There was me and another girl, she was a black girl who was in that class, and we were kind of in their group, and that's the first time there it honestly felt, *These people don't think I'm as good as they are or as entitled as they are*.

Dartmouth was just—it was different. [Laughs.]

DONIN: Very different, yeah.

FOX: Yeah, very different. And I haven't—I was back there probably, oh, nine years ago I think was the last time I was

there. The one thing I remember about it is it didn't change a whole lot. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Uh-huh.

FOX: Everybody—even today, I'm sure you go there and there's people, they probably look the same as when I was there. They dress the same, they look the same, they act the same.

But really I didn't go out and try to, *I'm gonna go out and meet new people and find friends*. No. That was never *that* important to me. I was more like, *I've gotta study and remember what I'm here for and finish*. That was always the goal.

DONIN: Mm-hm. But you became involved—I mean, weren't you at one time the head of the Native American group that put on the Pow-Wow, that ran the Pow-Wow?

FOX: Yeah! Yeah, I became involved in that. I think I was their president.

DONIN: Yeah, I think... I was reading about you, in a quote somewhere—there was a woman on campus as a Montgomery Fellow named [Alyce] Spotted Bear—

FOX: Oh yeah, yeah!

DONIN: —and—

FOX: She was from Fort Berthold? Mhm.

DONIN: Yeah, that's right. Alyce Spotted Bear. And you're quoted in the article, you know, talking about the pleasure of having her on campus for a semester.

FOX: Yeah, that was really important to me, just to see—'cause I could identify with people like her because they had—we really had similar upbringings. There's another one—he's actually enrolled in my tribe—his name was Joe [Joseph P.] Gone and he, my senior year, was working on something there. And so I think that's why I stayed very close to Native—actually, that was another major of mine, was Native American Studies. And I stayed very close to the Native

American Program, insofar as that, you know, we'd go there on lunch, we'd go there on breaks, you know, that was my community while I was there.

DONIN: Yeah, for sure.

FOX: Yeah.

DONIN: Did you feel, or did you get the feeling from others, that you were constantly having to sort of explain who you are and what you're about?

FOX: My first couple years yeah, but by my last two years I [chuckles] didn't even care, to be honest with you. But yeah, the first couple years I felt like that. My last two years I was very—you know, I'd gained more confidence, I knew that I was—I had felt that I was just as smart as everyone else to be—I was just as—I felt like I'd earned my stripes there. By that time I was just like, *I gotta finish*. You know?

DONIN: And you did, and you graduated on time.

FOX: Yeah.

DONIN: Did your family come for graduation?

FOX: No. Yeah, my family couldn't afford to come at that time.

DONIN: Too expensive, yeah.

FOX: Yeah. I actually—I came—and that was what—that was one thing that was really hard for me and still to this day it is an issue for me, that I finished there and nobody was there to see me walk. So that's—even to this day that's an issue that bothered me, because I'd worked so hard to get to that point, and so...

DONIN: Well you had your community of friends here.

FOX: Yeah, yeah. And I actually had finished—so, I actually had to come back and walk. And, you know, by that time I was in a job and my life was very different from college life. You know, I'd been out for about a term.

DONIN: Oh, I see.

FOX: Two terms, actually, 'cause I walked in '99. I graduated in December of ninety—I finished in December of '98, that fall, but I didn't walk until the spring of '99.

So, yeah, that was always somethin' that bothered me, even to this day, that it bothers me, that my family didn't see that, but it is what it is.

DONIN: Well, you got that important diploma, so—

FOX: Yeah! It's hangin' on my office wall. [Laughs.]

DONIN: Nobody can take that away from you.

FOX: No. Nobody can take that away.

DONIN: Yeah. Now, do you think—how did your Dartmouth experience change you?

FOX: [Pause.] Oh, you know—it's—Mary, it's opened—[pause]. You know, I never ever have had any regrets about going to Dartmouth.

DONIN: Mhm.

FOX: You know, thirty-thousand in loans later I still have no regrets. I don't remember the last time I actually, you know, really had to even look for a job.

The experiences that it gave me, the education, the foundation, you know it's really helped me become a successful person.

DONIN: And you've gone back to your community as a successful person.

FOX: Yeah. I actually—today, I run the tribe's corporation.

DONIN: Mm!

FOX: I run about seventeen different enterprises for my tribe, and last—actually, I was a political appointee about three and a

half years ago and I literally walked into an empty building and today we have fifty-some employees, which is huge [chuckles] for a tribal community.

DONIN: So, what tribe do you belong to?

FOX: I'm a member of the Fort Belknap Indian Community, the Gros Ventre tribe [Spells:] G-R-O-S-V-E-N-T-R-E. My mother is a Blackfeet Indian from the Blackfeet Reservation. I was enrolled in Fort Belknap and that's where I grew up, where my father's from.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

FOX: And that's where I identify most with. If anyone asks what I am, I always say that I am a Gros Ventre because that's what I feel. You know, that's where most of anything that I've ever known is, because I'm a Gros Ventre.

Actually married a Blood Indian from Canada. He's Blood, which is also Blackfoot. His mother's actually from the same reservation my mother's from.

DONIN: Uh-huh! But he's Canadian?

FOX: Yeah, he's Cana—well, he's got dual citizenship, so.

DONIN: Yep.

FOX: Yeah.

DONIN: So, this experience you had at Dartmouth. It sounds like you made a commitment to come here and make it through no matter what—

FOX: Mhm.

DONIN: —despite a lot of hardships in terms of financing it—

FOX: Yeah.

DONIN: —and getting through the four years. But the outcome has been a good one for you.

FOX: Yeah! I would never change anything. I guess even more so, I think I probably would have tried to be more active at Dartmouth in other things, you know in hindsight. But at that time it wasn't that important to me. But, you know, just to get more experiences.

You know, I've even changed a lot since I left there in terms of, you know, I want my kids if they go on—which, if they go on I don't know if they'd go on to Dartmouth, and that's not important to me, but I would just hope that they would take advantage of all the opportunities that they would, whether they be socially or something to gain a new experience.

But because of my Dartmouth education, I've been able to do a lot more for them. You know, give them a lot more experiences. They know what it's like to go on a vacation. I never did. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Right. Right.

FOX: They know what it's like—for example, my daughter was struggling in math and so she goes to this—she's been staying with—My mom now lives in Billings, Montana, which is one of the bigger cities in Montana, so she's been able to stay with her grandma and go to Sylvan [Learning Center]. I would have never had that opportunity.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

FOX: You know, there's just things that I'm able to provide for my children that had I not had this—[pause]—broadened my horizons and had this experience, been able to make the kinda money I do, I don't think that I woulda been able to do that.

DONIN: Mmm. And there's real value added to it that you've come back to your community, to your reservation and improved the lives of people around you as well.

FOX: Yeah, I mean there's fifty-some people that are working that weren't working before, it's huge.

DONIN: Right, right. And what would you say to members of your reservation today who might approach you and ask you

about going to Dartmouth because of its connection with supporting Native Americans?

FOX: Definitely. There's actually—there is a girl there right now—I can't, I think she's a '14 or '15, I can't—but she's there right now. Her name is—oh, what's her fir—? I can't think of her first name. Her last name's Horseman. Meriah! That's her name. [Meriah Horseman '13] She actually came and she worked for me last year at the corporation, and that was pretty much why I hired her, is 'cause she was at, you know, she went, or she was going, to Dartmouth. So—

DONIN: That's amazing!

FOX: Yeah. I think she's like probably the second person from where we're from who went there.

DONIN: The Dartmouth network is working.

FOX: Yeah, yeah. [Laughs.] But, no, I would—you know, I don't have any regrets. Out of all of probably the schools in terms of their commitment to Natives and their support system for Native students, I think it's probably one of the best. And, you know, I haven't been anywhere else, but from what I've heard from people who went to Stanford and Harvard and—maybe Cornell is similar, but you know, I have no regrets. No regrets at all. It was an opportunity and I took it, and I followed through and I finished. It was a good experience.

I do have a special place in my heart for Dartmouth. You know, when I think about it I don't think about, *Oh, I had to work so hard, it was so hard*, and I smile when I think about it. You know, I enjoy looking at pictures of, like, the Green. The different landmarks, the Green and the Baker tower and to know that I was a part of that and I was able to walk those halls and be able to be there and a part of that community for, you know, four years. That was an experience that a lotta people don't get, so.

DONIN: Right. Did you get involved politically at all, with any of the issues on campus while you were here? You probably didn't have time.

- FOX: Not really! No, that was never really my thing. No, huh-uh. No, that was—
- DONIN: Yeah.
- FOX: You know, I just was prob'ly like a lot how I grew up, you know, I didn't—my parents weren't very... No, that never really was my thing. There definitely was things to be protesting about, but that just never really was my thing.
- DONIN: And, as you say, you were pretty occupied just getting through classes and—
- FOX: Yeah! I mean, to me, that was always, *Uhhh, I don't have time for that.* [Chuckles.] You know?
- DONIN: Right. Well I suspect your focus was stronger than a lot of your classmates who didn't have the financial responsibilities that you did.
- FOX: I felt like that, yeah. It was strong.
- DONIN: And, let's talk about the academics a little bit more. How did you find it, being in the classroom, other than that unfortunate experience you had in the seminar with the frat boys who were acting like jerks? Otherwise, did you feel well-prepared by your high school when you got here, other than that?
- FOX: No, I didn't. My first year I didn't—my first year I felt like I had to—you know, I didn't—my writing skills weren't as strong as they could've been and I felt like I had to work very hard, especially the first year. By the time I'd gotten to my third and fourth years it wasn't that bad [chuckles].
- The class I remember that I *struggled* with—and it was kinda funny, I joke about it, I almost didn't graduate over it—it was art history. The only reason I took it is because I needed—it satisfied two requirements and it was one of the only classes that did that and I needed it to graduate. And I actually ended up taking it my last term at Dartmouth. And I almost failed that darn thing! [Laughter.] I ended up walkin' outta there with a D, just to be able to graduate. And, *god*, I earned that D. [Laughs.]

But, yeah, but in terms of overall academics, my first year was the toughest, but I think that it was learning how to survive and how to work in that environment, more so than, you know, *I'm not as smart* or *I'm not as*—because I felt that once I had—once I understood how to write a paper and how to communicate, it'd gotten a lot easier. So.

DONIN: That's a common theme, talking to people, that their first year it was really, as you say, it wasn't the fact of how smart you were, it was learning how to perform as a student here, how to write papers. How to—

FOX: Yeah. And, you know, I'm actually in an MBA program right now, it's an online program, and yeah [chuckles]. I was really naïve. I was thinking, *Oh, yeah, it's gonna be easy!* And it seems *harder* than when you're in a classroom setting because you don't have an instructor. You just submit work to these, must be, PhD candidates who don't have a whole lot to do—

DONIN: [Laughs.]

FOX: But it definitely prepared me.

DONIN: Now did you—do any of your professors or instructors stand out as being particularly great or supportive? I mean, did you have any—

FOX: Oh yeah! Yeah.

DONIN: And were they—did you identify somebody as sort of a mentor to you while you were here?

FOX: Well, I had a couple. And, god, I feel bad because I can't remember one professor's name out of the geography department. I'm gonna have to look it up. I don't know if he— I *highly* doubt he's still there.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

FOX: But, of course, Bruce Duthu—

DONIN: Oh, Bruce!

FOX: He was a—yeah, he was. Colin Calloway.

DONIN: Oh yeah! They're both here still, sure.

FOX: Yeah.

DONIN: But that's—

FOX: Frank Magilligan is a geography professor that—he was one of my favorite.

DONIN: That's great!

FOX: Yeah. I think there was—I think his name was George Demko, I'm pretty sure.

DONIN: Oh, I know George Demko! Sure.

FOX: Yeah. And he was—was he the geography chair at one point?

DONIN: He prob'ly was at some point, yeah, yeah.

FOX: And I'm pretty sure that was him. He was great. I really enjoyed him. There's another one who's there, at Native American Studies, he's from Canada—oh, what is his name? God, and he's on my Facebook, too.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

FOX: But definitely most of the NAS professors—

DONIN: Yeah.

FOX: —were good.

DONIN: And good not just in the classroom, but in terms of sort of being accessible to you?

FOX: Oh, yeah! Yeah, definitely.

DONIN: That's great.

So, you've come away with some friends and you've come away with some professors who are on your Facebook. I think that's a good sign.

FOX: [Laughs.]

DONIN: Despite the fact that you were so busy surviving here and working.

FOX: Yeah, it was always about survival there. That was one thing: it was always about survival.

DONIN: Right. So, you said you were back about nine years ago?

FOX: Yeah, they had—I think it was some kind of Native alumni event, and I can't even remember, but I was a part of that. I was asked, and they flew about fifteen of us out there, the actual alumni. And that was the last time I was back there, and so—but yeah, it was—

DONIN: Well, they had the—they celebrated the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the Native American Program last fall.

FOX: Oh, okay. Okay, yeah, then that's probably—

DONIN: And Bruce put that together, and I guess they probably do that every ten years, so you probably were back for the 30th.

FOX: That was probably what it was. Yeah.

DONIN: Okay, Michelle, I think our test here, our test Skype interview has worked out really well.

FOX: That's good. I'm glad I was able to help.

DONIN: Well, thank you so much, Michelle, for getting up so early in the morning to do this!

FOX: Thank you. You have a great day.

DONIN: It was great to meet you.

FOX: Bye-bye.

DONIN: Bye.

[End of Interview.]