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Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
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WOMICK: Why don't you just start off by talking about your life before coming to Dartmouth?

TOPKOK: Okay. Well, I grew up mostly in Oregon but my family is originally from Nome, Alaska.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

TOPKOK: I'm Iñupiaq, which is the indigenous people of that region. So like even though I grew up mostly in Oregon, we spent a lot of time going back and forth, and my cultural heritage has been a really essential component of my life. I have a younger brother, and he's 15 now. So he's starting to look into colleges, which is exciting. [Chuckles.] But definitely like growing up, part of—like my favorite thing was going back to Alaska and fishing and berry picking and all the stuff that we do back home. So, yeah. [Chuckles] I'm not sure, really.

WOMICK: What kind of a high school did you go to?

TOPKOK: So I went to an alternative high school 'cause my mom didn't want to stick me in the public school 'cause it wasn't very good. So it was very tiny, very small. There was about 30 of us in my graduating class. It was very close-knit. And through that high school I was able to do a dual-credit program with a community college. So I actually graduated with my associate's degree as well as my high school diploma, which was a lot of fun.

I didn't really liked high school, honestly. [Laughter.] It was rough, even though like academically, it wasn't that challenging. So I was really ready to like to go to college, and my family like really pushed education and going to college on me even though my parents didn't go to four-year institutions. My dad went to a community college; he's a pilot for a local regional airline, Horizon; so we traveled a lot which was really good 'cause we were going back and forth to Alaska—can get expensive. So, yeah, that was my high school.

WOMICK: So how did you hear about Dartmouth?

TOPKOK: Actually I hadn't. I didn't know about Dartmouth until my junior year in the spring. And I randomly [chuckles] got a letter in the mail asking me to apply to come on the school's Native Flying In Program.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

TOPKOK: And so I looked at this letter, and I was like, I have never heard of Dartmouth. I don't know what this is. And I tossed it in the trash. [Laughter] And that was my first experience hearing about Dartmouth.

When I later told my teacher about it, I was like, "Yeah, I got this random letter from Dartmouth, and they asked me to come visit. But they're all the way out in New Hampshire. And like, I don't know if I want to go to school out there." And my teacher just looked at me, like aghast, "Why did you throw that letter away? Like Dartmouth is an amazing school. You should definitely like look into going there." And I was like, "Oh, shucks."

So I started like researching schools, 'cause I really wanted to go to college, but I didn't know where or even if I would, you know, get into a good college.

So I got this letter again from Dartmouth asking to apply for their fall program. And I was like, Well, why not? So I applied, and I got accepted. And so I came out fall of my senior year and visited campus. And I stayed with a Native student, and she showed me around and like told me what, you know, Dartmouth was like. And I really fell in love with the campus. And especially the Native community was very strong, very close-knit. And that was something I could see myself being a part of. And so I think that was the point where I really knew that I wanted to go to Dartmouth. Certainly didn't think that I would ever get in. [Chuckles.] That was really nerve-racking.

And like definitely the college application process was definitely really rough because neither one of my parents had gone to college. My high school counselors, like even though they knew of these really great schools like Dartmouth, didn't really always encourage it; they were definitely like, "Oh, this is a really difficult school to get into. Maybe you should like look into the state school."

You know so it was like really disheartening in some ways and really kind of a struggle. But I definitely knew I wanted to come to Dartmouth. And so I applied and got in, which was really exciting. My mom was like, “You have to go to Dartmouth.” [Laughter] Like, “There’s no choice.” Which I’m really glad she did. So that’s how I ended up here.

WOMICK: Wow! [Laughter] So did you go on a first-year trip?

TOPKOK: I did. I actually hadn’t planned to, but they kept calling me, being like, “80 percent of,” you know, “the incoming students go on these trips. You really should consider applying.” So I was like, “Oh, I don’t know. I’m not really like a big outdoorsy person necessarily. Sounds kind of weird to like hang out with a bunch of students in the middle of, you know, New Hampshire. Like people I don’t even know.” But I was eventually peer-pressured into it. And it was a really good experience. I was really glad that I came. And it was nice to come out to campus early and like move into my room. My mom came out, too, and helped me move in. I went on my trip. And I think it was really good first perspective of Dartmouth and Dartmouth students. Like my trip leaders were really amazing. And we kept in touch for several years until they graduated. Like my trip group was really awesome and very like diverse.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

TOPKOK: I think that was a really great introduction. It was a lot of fun. We went canoeing, on the canoeing trip.

WOMICK: So you were in The Grant.

TOPKOK: Yeah. So it was like...I had no idea that Dartmouth owned.... ‘Cause we were like—there was one point where we were canoeing down the river. And like, “Now we’re on Dartmouth land.” And I was like, Dartmouth owns all this land up here? I was just like, What? So it was really cool seeing that side of Dartmouth. Not something I really continued as much as I would have liked. I think it would have been really cool to be more involved with DOC and things like that. Yeah.

WOMICK: So tell me about freshman year.

TOPKOK: Freshman year was a struggle [chuckles] I think for like a lot of students, especially being so far from home. You know, I grew up

mostly in Oregon; so coming all the way across to the other side of the country like was a huge step, especially since my family was so close-knit. I knew no one out here when I came. So it was definitely like stepping way out of my comfort zone; like I didn't know if I would make friends or if I would fit in. And it's like, how do finances work? That sort of deal.

And I ended up living in the Choates, which at first I was kind of disappointed. I was like, these are kind of like not the coolest dorms on campus. [Laughter] Like, why am I living here? But then I think it was a really good experience. I had a really great first-year roommate, Kathleen Cunningham. She was awesome. Very like the opposite of me. She was very outgoing and like energetic and bubbly and just got along with everybody. And so she really was fundamental in like connecting me to others and like being a friend to me and helping me out when I didn't know like what to do, 'cause she was from the area. And so I think that definitely really helped me to feel welcome and at home here at Dartmouth.

And eventually like academically it was also very tough. I wasn't used to being in classes like this. I went to community college, but it definitely didn't prepare me for what a Dartmouth class was gonna be like. And my freshman fall I took Intro to Linguistics [chuckles] and it was definitely one of the hardest classes I've taken at Dartmouth. Luckily I had a really great professor, Timothy Pulju. He was always very willing to go out of his way to help. He was really interested in especially Native American languages. So it was really cool to talk with him about my language and my experience as a Native person, like incorporate that into what we were learning, which, you know, all of my professors here at Dartmouth have been really great about. This is something that I really have enjoyed about Dartmouth. But that was definitely the toughest class I took.

And one of the other classes I took freshman fall really changed I think possibly even like the course of my life I took. It was called Indian Country Today with Professor Bruce Duthu of the Native American Studies department. And that was really my first exposure to looking at indigenous issues in an academic setting. Like I'd experienced them firsthand, but he put them in such a perspective that really made me passionate about going home and addressing those issues and like using my education as a way to alleviate some of those issues.

So that's really what has shaped my time at Dartmouth, I think, is working towards the purpose of serving my people and going back home. 'Cause there is a lot of issues within communities in Alaska that affect thousands of people. And people kind of get stuck in these cycles of, you know, substance abuse. And there's definitely like a lack of good quality education and things like that. And so using my time at Dartmouth to really learn and gain skills I need to go back has been fundamental.

Yeah. What else about freshman year? I think that's when I first became involved with Native Americans at Dartmouth [NAD], which has been also a fundamental part of my time here. Initially I was like really scared to like hang around with them 'cause I didn't know how I would be received or like how they like viewed me; whether they would like judge me or say I wasn't Native enough. And that sort of thing. So it was really scary since, like, I didn't grow up in Alaska; I grew up in the lower 48. But there was a lot of individuals, especially the seniors, who were very open and welcoming and really made me feel at home in the community.

And so all four of my years here at Dartmouth I've been extremely involved with Native Americans at Dartmouth or NAD. I'm currently the co-president. And the reason that I ran for that position is to be able to give back some of the support that I have been given over my time.

WOMICK: You mentioned having a really good relationship with your freshman roommate and then there was NAD. Were there any other groups that sort of became your communities during freshman year?

TOPKOK: Those were definitely the two major components. I didn't really branch out too much my freshman year. I was like really very shy. I'm still a very shy person, but back then I was even more shy than I am now. So that was definitely like the big stuff. Just even getting myself involved with Native Americans at Dartmouth I had to step out of my comfort zone and everything. Wasn't until later on that I really looked into other communities. Yeah.

WOMICK: So what about the rest of your time at Dartmouth?

TOPKOK: The rest of my time at Dartmouth has been really amazing, I think, overall, you know, looking back now as a senior, like even though it was really hard, it has pushed me to become a much better person

in a lot of ways. And Dartmouth has given me so many opportunities, resources, funding to do projects that have really been beneficial to me, especially with like internships. I was able to go back to Alaska twice and do internships. And Dartmouth provided a lot of funding and support. And it was through networking with alumni that I was able to get those positions which were really amazing.

The first time I was working at Cook Inlet Tribal Council, which is in Anchorage. I was a legal intern for the vice president and legal counsel. And so that was like really my first introduction to law and policy and has definitely like shaped the career path that I want to go on now 'cause like I definitely do want to go to law school. I think it was through that exposure and through knowing alumni who were able to connect me—that has had a huge impact on my life, I guess.

The second internship I had was at a nonprofit organization called Kawerak [Kawerak Beringia Center]. And that's based out of Nome, Alaska, which is where my family's originally from. And I'm actually going to be going back after I graduate and working for them again through a fellowship through the Tucker Foundation, which is really awesome.

WOMICK: Yeah.

TOPKOK: I'm really glad to be going back there. And if it hadn't been for like Dartmouth alumni, I definitely wouldn't have those post-graduation plans. So, yeah.

WOMICK: How would you say that the Dartmouth community here, or the types of people that you've gotten to know here, compare to the types of people you grew up with?

TOPKOK: [Radiator begins banging in the background] It was definitely an adjustment [chuckling at the banging] coming here 'cause like I grew up, where the people I was around growing up were very—either very urban or very traditional [banging continues]. Like when I would go back home to the village, people were very much like a subsistence-based lifestyle, like going hunting and fishing. [Banging has ceased.] When we would go up to the village, like my grandma didn't have running water. So it's like you have to go haul the water and chop wood and like get the fire going.

And so coming to Dartmouth—that has been like a very big shift in my perspective. And like it tends—like, Dartmouth is a kind of, you know, affluent area and I'd never really been exposed to that. And like there are people here who are very wealthy and very comfortable financially, which is something that I had never really grown up with very much. And so it was like a big shift for me, I guess, in some ways to like learn what that entails and what that's about and the different kinds of lifestyles that people have. And I think it was definitely a good learning experience in that sort of way.

And then also just, I guess, Dartmouth is also a very competitive atmosphere, which I wasn't used to. People here can get very competitive, and like, you know, it's like whose GPA is best? Or like that sort of thing, which was a huge adjustment. But then like, again, like being part of the Native community, I think I found like very similar individuals to myself who had grown up in similar situations and who had strong connections with their cultural heritage that really helped me like thrive at Dartmouth as well; so there's both sides, I guess.

WOMICK: Would you say that the Native community has been your social group, your primary group?

TOPKOK: Yeah, definitely.

WOMICK: Throughout all your time here?

TOPKOK: Yeah. I don't think I would have made it this far at Dartmouth if it hadn't been for the support of the Native community; whether that's students or faculty or, you know, staff who are Native. All [have] been very critical to my time here, helping me find resources, get through classes, whether it was tutoring or taking the time to like sit down with me and like explain something, whether it was professors or students. Or—that sort of thing. Yeah.

WOMICK: How would you describe the relationships you've had with your professors here?

TOPKOK: Really great. I think the professors here are absolutely incredible. I know a lot of my friends who go to a state school or like other bigger schools, like they don't have that same one-on-one relationship with their professors, which has been hugely beneficial for me, especially now, as I'm writing a thesis. Because I get to work one-on-one with a professor; it's really helped me with my

writing and my research skills. And him making the time every week to like sit down, go over all of my little grammar mistakes even. Like it's been really incredible.

And all of the professors I've had here have been amazing. I don't think I've ever had a bad professor during my time, which is definitely not the case for some of my friends who like go to other schools, or even just like other students here. Yeah. Because they've always been very willing to sit down and help me with anything I'm struggling with. I've always really appreciated that about Dartmouth, and it's been critical in my success.

WOMICK: And Professor Duthu, who you're working with on your thesis, was the same professor that you had for that class freshman year, right?

TOPKOK: Yeah! [Chuckles.] So it's kinda like coming back around. He's been really amazing, especially helping me like explore like the legal profession. And my thesis is dealing with a lot of legal topics. I'm actually looking at the Indian Child Welfare Act and how it's applied in Alaska. And I'm hoping through my thesis to be able to give it back to different communities and organizations in Alaska, just to help them understand the issue and like even hopefully make some suggestions about moving forward and how we can resolve the issue. Like, I don't think—my thesis is definitely not gonna fix everything. But I'm hoping that it's a little piece that like can either...that I can build on as I develop my profession or help educate other people or that sort of thing.

WOMICK: Have there ever been any times at Dartmouth where you really felt like you didn't belong here?

TOPKOK: I've definitely had a few of those moments. I think initially with the Native community, I did have a little bit of that. It was really intimidating to first come around. 'Cause I was on their blitz list and sometimes people would blitz out like very negative things and weren't always the most welcoming. And it wasn't until I got to know those people one-on-one that I realized that like, Oh, they're not so bad. They just kind of come off as mean.

There have been times where I've been really worried that I don't fit in; or like that people, I guess, don't want me a part of their community. I think in general it's been more self-imposed on myself rather than the group feeling me that way. And it's definitely not

something I've really encountered the last couple years. It was mostly like my freshman year that that was an issue.

So there were times like I really had to put myself out there and just like make the initiative to be involved in a group 'cause sometimes it was like...I guess they weren't always the ones who were like, "Oh, yeah, you should like come hang out with us." It was kinda like me like, "Hey, can I like hang out with you guys sometimes?" [Chuckles] To like really—and then once you're involved, like people were definitely welcoming, but...

WOMICK: That's a tough step to take.

TOPKOK: [Chuckles.] Yes. Especially when you're a quiet person. So I was like talking with friends, and we were like reminiscing about freshman year, and they were like, "Yeah, you were like that really quiet girl who was like always on the side. We didn't really know who you were." [Laughter.] And I like took classes with them, and we would like study together and now they're like my best friends ever. So...

WOMICK: But, tough to make those connections.

TOPKOK: Yeah, definitely.

WOMICK: So did you choose to join a Greek house while you were here?

TOPKOK: Yeah. I'm a sister of Alpha Pi Omega, which is the Native American sorority. Initially I didn't want to be affiliated during my time at Dartmouth. But when I really saw what the mission of Alpha Pi Omega is and a lot of the good work they were doing, especially within the Native community but also on campus in general, it really matched up with my goals and my values, especially to educate about Native American issues and to address problems in the community and work together to overcome those. So I joined my junior spring. So I've been a sister for about a year. And it's been really good. At the time I joined, it was kind of...not declining, but the membership was kind of low. And so I saw, I think, like a lot of the other people who joined with me, a potential to really expand it and make it grow. We've done a lot of good work, I feel, over the past year. And I'm really glad I joined.

WOMICK: How would you say that's fit into your community here?

TOPKOK: In some ways it wasn't a big branching out from my community because the girls who are a part of it now are also part of the Native American community, so there was a lot of overlap there. But it's definitely become an integral part of my community. And has—and through Alpha Pi Omega I have gotten to know a lot of the other minority Greeks on campus, and be involved with them and learn about the specific issues that affect their communities; I think that's been really good for my own growth and just to see how they address those issues. Like I've been able to learn from that and just take that back to my community, which has been really great. And there's a lot of inspiring individuals within those communities, too, which I've become really close friends with.

WOMICK: So, looking ahead to graduation—which is, like, really soon—

TOPKOK: Yeah.

WOMICK: —what do you foresee your relationship with Dartmouth being after?

TOPKOK: Not something I've given a whole lot of thought to. I definitely hope to stay really closely connected 'cause I do wanna be a resource for incoming students to be able to utilize. 'Cause I think, like, the alumni, especially the Native alumni, have been fundamental to me in like learning about other careers and about resources at Dartmouth and different things I can, you know, do with my life after graduation. And so I hope to be able to come back occasionally and like be involved with the students and help them in any way that I can, just to like return some of that support that I received.

WOMICK: Do you have any friends who have already graduated who are still involved with Dartmouth?

TOPKOK: Yeah. There's a lot of Native alumni and people who I knew during my time here that have since graduated who I definitely keep in touch with and who keep in touch with the community and are always reaching out like, "Oh, there's an internship opportunity where I work. Like maybe you guys should like apply for that," or things like that. Yeah, I think especially for the Native community, people tend to stay really well connected. It's always been really close-knit.

WOMICK: Wonderful. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think that you were involved with Savage Media, right?

TOPKOK: Yeah.

WOMICK: Why don't you talk about that?

TOPKOK: [Chuckles.] So that was—It really started up my junior spring, and I was one of the individuals who really got it going. And our first video was addressing the issue of the mascot, Indian head mascot—

WOMICK: I remember that.

TOPKOK: [Chuckles.]—which was kind of—It's definitely been an issue during my time at Dartmouth. Like a lot of people don't realize how stereotypical or offensive it can be to like Native American individuals. Certainly not like the whole community thinks it's a horrible thing. But there are a lot of us who feel very strongly against it. And so we saw this as an opportunity to use media, which is definitely like an upcoming thing to like address some of these social issues that we perceived. And so I was involved with their first video addressing that.

It was really interesting how the community received it, I guess. 'Cause the community, Native community, has a little bit divided, especially around the name and like the purpose and how we were going about addressing these issues. And so I think it was definitely like an opportunity for the community to like learn and, like, I guess, have a discussion about what are the issues we face, and how do we want to address them?

And I think it's been really great in propelling interest in issues like the mascot and bringing attention to the greater Dartmouth community. 'Cause I think one of the things that I've heard individuals tell me is that NAD can be very exclusive and like kind of keep to ourselves. And so I think this has been a good way to outreach to other communities and like, I guess, raise awareness.

So it was controversial, but I think it was a really good experience and a group that I've really enjoyed being a part of during my time at Dartmouth. It has really made me think critically about how we perceive these issues and how to address them in a manner that brings about change, I guess. So. Yeah.

WOMICK: Have you had any opportunities to dialog directly with proponents of the mascot? I know, particularly, anyone involved with the

Dartmouth Review or some sports teams, who still hold true to the mascot?

TOPKOK: I haven't really.... Oh—could you—I missed the first part of that question, could you...?

WOMICK: Whether you've had any opportunities to talk to people?

TOPKOK: Yeah. Okay. Yeah, I've definitely, on an individual basis, approached people. 'Cause there have been times when I've just been like, you know, in a dining hall and I see someone with the mascot on their sports jacket or something, so I've definitely gone up to the individuals and tried to explain the situation. Sometimes it's had a good outcome, sometimes it's not. [Chuckles.] A lot of people say, "Well, I don't see why it's offensive. Like, I've always viewed it as a way to like honor you guys." [Laughter] And it's like, How...? I don't know. I've had to really learn to curb my own anger, and like learn how to communicate with these individuals and like see it from their perspective as well.

And so like I do try to, if I, you know, see someone with that, like go up to them and just explain the situation, like, "A whole, whole lot of people find this offensive." And try to like, in a nice way, and like educate people, more so than to like condemn, 'cause that's definitely not worked before. [Laughter.]

But it's been really interesting. I think, you know, over my time here I have seen a lot of individuals with like jackets or T-shirts or whatever, and it's been interesting the different approaches that I've seen taken towards addressing that. But I definitely think it's important to educate people about it.

WOMICK: What would you say is the overall campus opinion of the mascot? Just in your opinion.

TOPKOK: In my opinion? From individuals that—I think it kind of depends on what community. I think most people are open to discussing the issue. And like maybe they hadn't realized that it was offensive and they're like, "Oh! I understand, I'm—," like, are definitely willing to see things from other perspectives. But I think sometimes, especially from the Greek system, they tend not to be very open to discussing the matter. And don't see it as offensive in any sort of way and so continue to perpetuate that stereotype. But I think in

general, overall, campus has been much more open-minded about it, which is really great.

WOMICK: So, other than your own house, have you had much involvement with the Greek community?

TOPKOK: Not really. I mean, I've had involvement with some of the minority groups like LUL [Lambda Upsilon Lambda] or SLU [Sigma Lambda Upsilon—Senoritas Latinas Unitas], but not so much with mainstream. Occasionally A-Pi is partnered with like EKT [Epsilon Kappa Theta] to do events like Eat Before You Drink, or with Sig Ep [Sigma Phi Epsilon] to do just like a barbecue, like get to know individuals who aren't necessarily within our own communities. I think that's been really great to promote like cross-campus dialog on issues and just getting to know people. But other than that, I haven't had a whole lot of involvement.

WOMICK: It just wasn't something that was important to you?

TOPKOK: Yeah. Like I never really got into the party scene or going out. And like when I was thinking about coming to Dartmouth I was really conscious of that and the stereotypes around Dartmouth as like a party school. So that kind of worried me a little bit. But like during my time, it's just not something I've been horribly involved with. But I think, you know, certain houses do really great things and the partnerships that I have had with them have been really great.

WOMICK: Ok, which ones haven't we gotten to yet? Location! So, how do you think that being in the wilderness of New Hampshire [chuckles] has affected your college experience?

TOPKOK: [Chuckles.] I think it's definitely impacted, 'cause one of the schools I was looking at was Columbia, and that's right in the middle of New York City. And so I was a little intimidated by coming out to the middle of nowhere New Hampshire. I was like, Well, what am I ever gonna do here? You know, there's this—like, unless you go out and party, there's just—what is there? And so, like, really worried about that.

But I think being isolated has created really strong communities on campus. You definitely really get to know individuals very closely, and I think that's definitely been a positive thing. And it's also been interesting because like my village in Alaska, you can only get there by boat or plane. The plane ride is about three hours' long from like

the nearest big city. So being isolated for me like wasn't a huge deal, I guess, and was one thing that I kind of liked about the school, the fact that—'cause location, I guess, from like an indigenous perspective does definitely shape your identity in relationship with the community and with the land. And so it was something that, I think especially over the past four years, that I've enjoyed about Dartmouth is just being able to just like go away like, five, ten minutes, go for a hike in the woods or whatever. And...yeah.

WOMICK: How do you think being at Dartmouth for these four years has changed you?

TOPKOK: Oh, gosh! It's changed me a lot, I think. I think coming into Dartmouth I didn't really realize how much potential I might have had. I was very quiet, and I didn't...and I wasn't really sure of my capabilities to like effect change or make a difference. And through the support that I've had here from professors and my peers and everybody—and alumni especially—I think I've really come to view myself as someone who can go back to my community and like change things and make things better. And even be a leader. I originally did not want to take on any leadership positions. But a lot of people were like really pushing me to step up outside my comfort zone a little and to like run for co-president of NAD, for example.

And it's been really an amazing learning experience. And I've definitely gained a lot of skills that I never would have otherwise: interpersonal communication, mediating conflicts, and like being put in positions where I have to decide what is morally or ethically the right thing to do. And it's definitely like really made me think about those things, and the direction I'm going in my life and what I want to do with my life. I think I'm definitely a different person now [chuckles] than I was freshman year.

WOMICK: Those are some pretty big changes.

TOPKOK: Yeah. Not all of them have been good. But I think overall I've become a much better person. It's been challenging, though. I think it's brought out some of the best in me. At least I hope. [Chuckles.]

WOMICK: What about your relationship with your family and friends from home?

TOPKOK: I think it's been a really difficult thing to maintain while I've been here. I definitely—my friends from high school I don't like really have a relationship with anymore, which has been difficult. I've made a lot of friends here, definitely. But a lot of those old relationships have kind of fallen away, which is sad, but I guess part of life.

I have definitely like.... I think I'm much, in a way, closer to my family now in some ways 'cause I have faced a lot of challenges. And I've always fallen back to my family, and they've always been there for me and supported me and pushed me to keep going like if I was struggling academically or emotionally or whatever. They're always right there to, you know, remind me of like the bigger picture, and, like, "You know, you really need to get that degree. And like once you're done, like you'll look back on this, and it will be like nothing." [Chuckles.] And I think that's definitely what has gotten me as far as I have.

So even though I haven't been able to like go home a lot, especially for breaks where I've had internships during my off-terms, I have hardly been home, but in some ways, like my relationships, especially with my mother and brother, in some ways is much stronger than it used to be.

WOMICK: What would you say has been the best thing that's happened to you since coming to Dartmouth?

TOPKOK: Hmm... best thing? That's a tough question. I think the best thing has been the connections I've had with the students as well as alumni. 'Cause they have opened up so many opportunities for me and like really believed in me and pushed me to do the best that I can, even when I didn't believe I could do that myself. And so forming those connections and friendships I think are definitely—been the most positive part of being at Dartmouth. And my connections there are definitely going to last past graduation I think, or at least I hope. I think when you're looking back at my time here, that's the part I'm going to remember, those connections that I've made with other people.

WOMICK: It seems like you've been lucky to have a really stable community throughout all four years here.

TOPKOK: Definitely.

WOMICK: So, I guess with that in mind, how do you think the community beyond your own has changed, or not, since you've been here?

TOPKOK: I'm not entirely sure. I think like even the community I've been in has definitely changed over time as new classes come in, and everybody has their own idea of the mission of the community or like the purpose or goals or what they even want to get out of the community. And so that way it's definitely shifted...not either good or bad necessarily.

Yeah, I'm not entirely sure, I guess, but I think overall any changes that have happened have been good ones. I think we all continue to learn and grow from things that we go through and like the controversies or the problems that we faced. Yeah.

WOMICK: Great. So I think we've gone through most of the questions that I had on here. But is there anything I haven't asked you about or anything that you'd like to talk about that we haven't covered yet?

TOPKOK: No. I think we've covered pretty much everything. [Chuckles.]

WOMICK: Okay. I'll turn these off then.

[End of Interview]