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To: Review Board for the Master of Public Administration Program
The Evergreen State College
Graduate Admissions, Evans Hall 1200
2700 Evergreen Parkway NW, Olympia, WA 98505

Re: Application for the Master of Public Administration Program at The Evergreen State College: A Statement of Purpose

I am an enrolled Tribal Citizen of the Cherokee Nation. In my native language "*Gadugi*" translates to community, and "*Sgadug duhdattlesuh*" is when the whole community comes together. This is the Cherokee way. My desire to pursue a master's degree in public administration reflects these cultural values, particularly the commitment to serving the community, which is deeply rooted in love- love for my family, my Tribe, and my community. For me, channeling this love means walking the path of service, courage, integrity, humility, and leadership. These are values that have been passed down through generations and guide every task I undertake, inform each decision I make, and shape how I engage with the world around me. Pursuing a master's degree in public administration extends beyond a career path; it is a calling deeply ingrained in my Indigenous identity. It's an extension of my heart's commitment to love, compassion, and an unwavering dedication to honoring the legacy of my ancestors.

My journey to pursue a master's degree was not straightforward. I am currently a student at The Evergreen State College, set to graduate with my Bachelor's degree in Spring

2024, an achievement that seemed unreachable in my earlier years. Before my time at Evergreen, higher education wasn't a path I had envisioned for myself. My high school years were challenging, marked by an individualized education program (IEP) that, while supportive, impacted my mental health and self-confidence, casting doubt on my academic abilities. I felt inadequate and doubted my capability to succeed in college. Upon graduating from high school, I was faced with the choice from my parents to either attend college or start working and pay rent. As a result, I enrolled at South Puget Sound Community College, where I primarily took art and adult education classes, but continued to face academic struggles.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 brought significant changes, leading me to pause my college education and spend a year with my family. During this period, I spent considerable time contemplating my life and future goals, which led to the decision to apply to Evergreen. Looking back, this decision unequivocally stands as one of the best I've ever made. My education at Evergreen has strengthened my abilities as a writer and speaker, allowing me to leverage my strengths effectively while also developing skills in areas that need improvement. I have also learned valuable lessons in setting boundaries, recognizing my limitations, and knowing when to ask for help.

My academic experience at Evergreen has significantly reshaped my perspective on education, challenging me to explore deeper and apply critical thinking across all areas of my life. More than that though, Evergreen has given me confidence in my ability to successfully pursue higher education and cultivated a deep-seated passion for learning and advocacy. Having experienced significant personal and academic growth at Evergreen, I realize that my

academic journey extends beyond my current achievements. It naturally progresses to the Evergreen MPA program.

My educational experience at Evergreen has shaped who I am today and is the driving force behind my decision to pursue a graduate degree in public administration, specifically at Evergreen. The program's mission resonates with my tribal values and commitment to the seven-generation principles, an alignment that is both powerful and personal to me. This connection is vividly reflected in a passage from my favorite book, "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer: "The trees act not as individuals, but somehow as a collective. Exactly how they do this, we don't yet know. But what we see is the power of unity. What happens to one happens to us all. We can starve together or feast together." The wisdom captured in this quote aligns with my core values of *Gadugi*, which emphasize the infinite potential of community. In public administration, this concept is not just relevant but essential: our actions impact not only individual lives but the well-being of our entire community. Like trees interconnected at the roots, our decisions have a broad and lasting impact.

In pursuing a Master's in Public Administration at Evergreen, I aim to acquire and refine skills essential for advocating and uplifting Indigenous and marginalized communities. Grounded in my Indigenous heritage, I am dedicated to weaving positive change within our societal fabric, bridging Indigenous wisdom and contemporary governance. I am driven to shape a future where compassion, love, and relational thinking are at the forefront of policy-making and public service. This path is not just a professional choice; it is a sacred responsibility to honor the legacy of the seven generations before me and to lay a foundation for those who will follow.