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To whom it may concern:

It is my pleasure to provide a brief description and background of the ATEP. The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) is focused on enabling the academic success of Aboriginal children by increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers with an understanding of Aboriginal perspectives, worldview and histories in communities in Northern Alberta. ATEP is an off-campus elementary teacher education program involving community based collaborative cohorts. The program exists because of close partnerships with other academic institutions and communities throughout Alberta, including Blue Quills First Nations College, Northern Lakes College, Portage College, and Maskwacis Cultural College. ATEP is a degree completion program; students will enter having already completed 60 credits of transferable course credit or as after-degree students. While this program is intended for Aboriginal students, all students are encouraged to apply.

The structure of the program is community based in philosophy and the cohort model creates a tight knit student community. The community-based model has proven to be highly successful for students and they are able to remain in their community as the intent of the program is to allow students to complete their (BEd) in Elementary Education while maintaining community, family, and cultural connections. This is extremely important for students, as their intention is to attain their degree in their home communities and then teach in their home communities. The opportunity to study in their home communities has proven to be an essential factor in student retention and success. With a retention rate of 90% and a graduation rate close to 95% the structure of ATEP is the reason why the program has graduated 205 teachers since the beginning of the program.

With a target start of September 2017, ATEP is focused to start a pilot Urban Secondary Cohort on the main University campus. This will be the first of its kind for ATEP. This pilot project will see a cohort of students complete a four-year Bachelor of Education degree in secondary education. Students will attend classes on campus but will be able to experience the personal attention that makes the ATEP cohort model such a success. Smaller class sizes, structured programming, tutoring sessions and the cohort model are all designed to provide the best opportunities for student completion. This new initiative also addresses the need to provide opportunities for the growing urban Aboriginal population. Many Aboriginal students that attempt to complete an education degree at the University of Alberta leave the program for many factors: feeling of isolation, class sizes and the lack of support – from academic support to

cultural support. The Urban Secondary Cohort seeks to address these feelings of isolation while providing the academic and cultural supports necessary for success.

What makes ATEP unique is we offer the same courses as the regular on-campus education program, however, ATEP asks its instructors to incorporate Aboriginal content and teach using Aboriginal perspectives and methods as much as possible in course design and delivery. ATEP is a community-based program and with this mandate we work within community with Elder and community leaders for support for our students. The success of the program is in part a result of the attention we pay to student support. We engage Elders as mentors and co-instructors, and program sites have offered support through Indigenous ceremonies. Offering ATEP within our students' home communities is a vital reason why ATEP has excellent student success and retention. ATEP has embraced alternate modes of delivery and is a leader in distance delivery within the Faculty of Education. The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program graduates are working within their communities as role models and teaching professionals. The long-term success of ATEP will be measured by the impact that each of our graduates will have on the students they will teach in their professional careers. Having Aboriginal educators is a critical factor in the success of Indigenous youth.

Blessings,



Angela Wolfe
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