

The Acadia First Nation Youth Center has been in operation for fourteen years, originally opening in 2000 as a drop in center. In 2003, the Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve Program was implemented and funded by First Nations and Inuit Health for Acadia First Nation. The ASHOR (Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve) program is a two year half day program aimed at enhancing child development and school readiness from within the community. The programming and curriculum is developed from the six basic components of the ASHOR program objectives which include, culture and language, education, health promotion, nutrition promotion, social support, and parental involvement.

For the 2013-2014 calendar year, five children graduated from the AHSOR program and entered the public school system. The upcoming 2014-2015 calendar year there are currently five children enrolled for the first year program and one for the second year program. We are pleased to be able to offer an environment that enhances the development and learning of children in those most important early years of life from within the community.

In January, September 2013, and again in September 2014, North Shore MicMac District Council have provided funding for all staff working in the Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve program. The funding has been provided in all thirteen sites in the Atlantic Region to become certified in Early Childhood Education with NBCC online education. By the end of 2015 all staff working within the ASHOR will be ECE certified in Acadia First Nation!

The after school program runs daily Monday to Friday from 2 pm to 5 pm for school aged children until the school year is finished funding is provided by METS (Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat). There is a healthy snack provided daily for children coming home on the bus. The children have supervised access to the inside of the building, as well as a fenced in play area that houses typical play ground equipment as well as a natural play park. There is an optional homework hour and activities for children who wish to participate. On Monday evenings for a ten week period we are offering Acrobatics classes for children aged 2 ½ years old and up.

In the evenings the Youth Center is used as a drop in center for the children and youth in the community, they are free to come and go as they please to use the facilities. The center is available to them as a support network, a social place, and a fun, safe, and secure facility for the youth to gather. Drop in hours of operation are Tuesday to Friday 5 pm to 9pm and Saturday 12 pm to 8 pm.

During March Break and summer school vacation the Youth Center runs a day camp program with twenty seats available for children on reserve. Each day camp week is broken into themes with activities and outings centered around each daily/weekly theme. Summer of 2014 we were fortunate to be able to take children on day trips to Upper Clements Park, Oakland Farm Zoo, and the Port Royal Habitat. With the help from a summer student acting as a Community Liaison Officer between Acadia First Nation and the RCMP we were able to visit the Yarmouth Rural Detachment and take the children on a tour of the police station. The RCMP were able to make multiple site visits this summer and offer workshops to the children on safety, bullying, 911, and the importance of the work that the RCMP do. We are looking forward to another year of programming in the community, and creating lasting learning opportunities and memories with everyone.

For more information please contact Rena Falls at (902) 742-6928.