

2021 Local Content and Service Report to the Community



“I learned through tradition that being a warrior is not for personal gain, glory or ego — it is a call to serve others.” — D.J. Vanas, “Discovering Your Warrior Spirit with D.J. Vanas”

Buffalo Toronto Public Media is a trusted public media resource that enriches its audiences by providing educational, entertaining programming and services, as well as engaging the Western New York and Southern Ontario communities through cultural and civic involvement.



Buffalo Toronto Public Media and its television (WNED PBS, WNED PBS KIDS, and WNED Create) and radio stations (WBFO, WNED Classical WBFO The Bridge, and WBFO JazzWorks) are a valuable part of Western New York’s and Southern Ontario’s advancement. The stations’ partnerships in the community are symbiotic and essential to the health and vitality of the entire region. We engage with our community in a variety of ways, including through broadcast programming, in-person and virtual events at the station and out in the community, and opportunities engage in lively discussions about the state of our region.

In 2021, Buffalo Toronto Public Media provided these vital local services:

- BTPM held multiple series of community discussions about transitioning back to school after two years disrupted by the pandemic; and mental health and its related issues such as policing, housing, and race; and racial equity and
- BTPM supported the education of our region’s young people through resources for the classroom and at home, such as the Compact Science digital series, lesson plans related to the Suffrage movement, and PBS KIDS STEAM Kits distributed to families.
- Our classical musical station partnered with our local philharmonic orchestra to bring recorded concerts to our audience while in-person weren’t possible for all.

Buffalo Toronto Public Media’s local services had deep impact.

- Our Racial Equity project, Mental Health Initiative, and Disabilities Desk push the conversation forward on race, mental illness, and disabilities in our region, even earning WBFO reporter Emyle Watkins an award from the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State.
- Our weekly interview with a local physician has given thousands of listeners access to trusted health information with questions submitted by listeners.
- Our documentary about the lesser-known heroines of the suffrage movement gave our region renewed pride about our place in history.

Buffalo Toronto Public Media seeks to enrich its local community through education, entertainment, engagement, culture, and civic involvement. Our projects always include elements of two or more of these in combination and are very successful when we partner with organizations in the community.

Education

Underlying all of our local initiatives is the goal of helping to educate and inspire our audience. Compact Science was a digital series we created in partnership with the Buffalo Museum of Science to explore the wonders of science in our own backyard. The series provides parents and educators with entertaining, short videos and hands-on experiments to inspire young people to love science. Our education team created four lesson plans for K-6 students to accompany our original documentary “Discovering NY Suffrage Stories,” participated in a national initiative called Parenting Minutes that provided a series of short videos on key topics related to early childhood and parenting, and connected with regional Boards of Cooperative Educational Services to disseminate the many free services BTM and PBS provide for educators.

To commemorate the 9/11 anniversary WNET PBS made the anniversary episode of Reading Rainbow, “The Tin Forest,” freely available on the program website, YouTube, social media, and the PBS video ecosystem, both for streaming and broadcast. The education team also updated the lesson plans for the program and made it available for educators to use.

Entertainment

Our audiences can trust our entertainment to be cultural, educational, inspirational, and enriching, whether it’s Masterpiece on WNET PBS television, the Oasis of Sanity on WNET Classical, Fresh Air on WBFO or in-person events like Blues Bash. This year, we were able to provide a lot of original local programming, including “Discovering New York Suffrage Stories,” “Susannah Presented by Buffalo Opera Unlimited,” “Oasis Under Glass: Buffalo’s Botanical Gardens,” “Shakespeare’s Greatest Hits” in partnership with Shakespeare in Delaware Park, WNET Classical’s Buffalo Philharmonic Summer Concert Series, and “Discovering Your Warrior Spirit with D.J. Vanas.”

Buffalo Toronto Public Media also launched a new triple A music service, WBFO The Bridge, college radio for adults, to address a hole in our market and to give local artists a way to get air time in Buffalo and Toronto.

Engagement

Engaging with our community is integral to the mission of Buffalo Toronto Public Media, and the ongoing pandemic only heightened the need for that engagement. In addition to continuing our series of how-to virtual events, we also held two virtual community engagement events around the Muhammed Ali documentary series, focusing on engaging with our communities of color. We held a screening of a local documentary about Franklin H. Williams and two virtual events as part of our Mental Health Initiative, focusing on LGBTQA+ youth and housing insecurity for people with mental illnesses.

Our education and outreach team took advantage of the PBS KIDS STEAM Kit initiative and distributed dozens of free activity kits to families in Western New York to participate in hands-on learning at home, a particularly important thing to do when schooling was still at least partly virtual.

Culture

Buffalo Toronto Public Media continued its popular Bob Ross Paint Nights throughout 2021, giving amateur artists an opportunity to learn how to paint from a Certified Ross Instructor, virtually. We also held two virtual tea tastings (one for Western New Yorkers and one for people in Southern Ontario), and an artisan chocolate tasting with a local bean-to-bar chocolate shop.

We celebrated Black History Month with programming on each of our stations, highlighting the contributions of Black people throughout history. Similarly, we celebrated Women's History Month in March, Pride Month in June, and Hispanic Heritage Month in the fall. Like last year, we continued to broadcast Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra concerts on WNED Classical, but our commitment to local musical performance expanded to producing an entire opera with Buffalo Opera Unlimited. "Susannah" transformed our studio into New Hope Valley, TN, and through careful health and safety precautions, we were able to assemble an orchestra to accompany the performance.

Our connections to other local cultural organizations grew stronger and we were able to produce a digital series of soliloquies from Shakespeare's plays with Shakespeare in Delaware Park, the second oldest and one of the largest outdoor Shakespeare companies in the country. We filmed them with local actors in iconic locations around Western New York. We also worked with Buffalo Botanical Gardens on a digital series celebrating their impact on the community called Oasis Under Glass: Buffalo's Botanical Gardens.

Civic Involvement

Buffalo had an historic political year in 2021, making national news multiple times due to its mayoral race. WBFO was front and center, covering it in depths other local media couldn't. On primary day, WBFO blanketed polling places, getting reaction on the ground and documenting the potential for a major upset. The next day, as it became clear that the underdog candidate beat the incumbent mayor in the Democratic primary, WBFO not only continued its extensive local coverage, it also provided content to NPR's 1A about the election. Again, in the fall, as the race heated up with a write-in campaign by the incumbent mayor, WBFO provided extensive coverage of, not just the court cases related to the race, but the issues and differences among the two Democratic candidates. When the candidates refused a debate, WBFO's trusted coverage earned them roundtable discussions with each candidate, allowing for deeper conversations on issues that the voters craved. Following the defeat of the underdog in November, WBFO was able to secure a live, virtual interview with the candidate to talk about what is next for her and her followers.

WBFO also provided live and extensive coverage and local analysis of the change in power in the Governor's office in August. WBFO carried Governor Andrew Cuomo's resignation speech live and followed it 45 minutes of live interview and analysis. It also carried Gov. Kathy Hochul's first address as Governor live and followed that with an interview from our Women's Desk exploring the historic nature of Hochul's new role with Sonia Ossorio, president of the National Organization for Women New York.

As part of the Racial Equity Project, we held two Facebook Live conversations that explored toxic masculinity and how the cultural demands on Black men sometimes deter them from seeking help for mental health issues.

Discovering New York Suffrage Stories

Although countless women worked for decades to obtain the right to vote, most people remember only a few names, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. But what about other important suffragists, especially in New York State, an epicenter for the movement? WNED PBS traveled across the state and the city of Buffalo to explore the stories of four courageous women whose names we don't often hear in the 30-minute documentary "Discovering New York Suffrage Stories," a WNED PBS original production.



The 30-minute program focuses on four women from New York — Matilda Joslyn Gage, Paulina Wright Davis, Hester Whitehurst Jeffrey, and Mary Burnett Talbert. Talbert, who was from Buffalo, elevated the issue of suffrage among Black women around the country, encouraging them to take on the issue of suffrage in their communities. Gage from Central New York worked alongside Anthony and Stanton, drawing from the inspiration of Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) women. Davis owned, edited, and published "The Una," a periodical solely dedicated to the elevation of women. Jeffrey led Black women's clubs in Rochester and regularly crossed racial lines to work alongside white women for the vote. Explore the website at wned.org/suffrage for lesson plans, extras, and digital videos created by independent filmmakers.



Susannah

WNED PBS partnered with the Buffalo Opera Unlimited to produce the opera "Susannah" for television. One of the most performed operas in America, "Susannah" breaks from the norms of the genre, weaving in feminist themes and Appalachian folk melodies.

Written during the McCarthy era by Carlisle Floyd and set in 1955, "Susannah" focuses on 18-year-old Susannah Polk, a wide-eyed, lovely young woman, living a simple and happy life with her older brother Sam.

WNED PBS and Buffalo Opera Unlimited collaborated to conceptualize and produce a full opera in the studios at Buffalo Toronto Public Media. Talented professionals went

to work on designing sets and hanging lights, rehearsing with actors, blocking with a full camera and sound crew, and adding a 27-person orchestra – all while following strict COVID-19 protocols. In less than two weeks' time, the studio was transformed into New Hope Valley, TN, the town church, and the Polk farm. For more information about the production and to see behind-the-scenes photos, visit wned.org/susannah.

Compact Science

WNED PBS launched “Compact Science,” a production in association with the Buffalo Museum of Science, in the spring of 2021, inspiring the exploration of the wonders of science.

The digital series reveals the mysteries of science with engaging, fun demonstrations and explanations. In addition to



videos, available at wned.org/compactscience, YouTube, and the PBS Video App, instructions for the viewer challenge experiments that can be performed at home or in a classroom are on the website. Geared towards children (grade K-6), their families, and anyone with a curiosity of the world around them, “Compact Science” episodes frame a scientific concept with a signature regional connection that celebrates the science and history of the Western New York and Southern Ontario region. Journey to Niagara Falls to explore geology, discover the chemistry at work in sponge candy, learn how density is the key to lake-effect snow, investigate the role of friction through the sport of curling, and more.

Each episode is hosted by Sarajane Gomlak-Green, director of Buffalo Museum of Science Programs & Experiences. Her engaging and curious style leads viewers on a journey of our world through the lens of science.

Discovering Your Warrior Spirit with D.J. Vanas

In a PBS fundraising program produced by WNED PBS, D.J. Eagle Bear Vanas (Ottawa) teaches us to tap into the power of our warrior spirit to build a more fulfilling life. “Discovering You Warrior Spirit with D.J. Vanas” applies Native American traditions and philosophy to the challenges of everyday life, inspiring us to find and empower the warrior in each of us.

The program provides a clear and compelling guide to creating a more rewarding and satisfying life, leading viewers to recognize and use their assets, leverage their own strengths, and have a positive impact on others. The message of “Discovering Your Warrior Spirit” is as timely as it is timeless.

“A warrior fights for something bigger than self, leads by example, and isn’t focused on what they can get but what they can do for others,” Vanas said. “In a constantly changing world, the traditional warrior concept remains unchanged.”

Vanas’ personal path informs his work. Born to impoverished teenage parents, he graduated from the Air Force Academy and became a decorated Air Force captain, a best-selling author, and a sought-after motivational speaker.

Buffalo Toronto Public Media is deeply engaged with our community. Our major projects explored the changes in our region’s population, brought cultural performances to our community when they couldn’t attend them in-person, supported the mental and physical health of our population, and provided events to help our young people and adults be informed and educated.

Back to School: Navigating A New Normal



Buffalo Toronto Public Media held a series of virtual events to help with the transition back to school after two school years were disrupted by the pandemic.



One of the most rewarding developments of 2021 was the strengthening of our relationships with other local cultural institutions.



“Compact Science” provides engaging and fun demonstrations of the mysteries of science, including about the local delicacy sponge candy.

Mental Health and Policing: Do Crisis Intervention Teams Work? Tuesday, Feb. 23 at 6 pm



Buffalo Toronto Public Media’s Mental Health Initiative continued to follow the big issues impacting the community, including the intersection of mental health and policing.



Brief reprieves in the pandemic allowed BTM to hold a couple of its annual event in-person, including WBFO’s Blues Bash (left) and Antiques Home Show (right), a perennial favorite.