

# 2020 Local Content and Service Report to the Community



*Pre-pandemic visit to a local library*

“Thank heavens for Buffalo Toronto Public Media. We are so grateful to have beautiful music, as well as enlightened, in-depth reporting and interviews. Keep up the great work!” -member in East Aurora, NY

**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, 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 broadcasted programming, in-person and virtual events at the station and out in the community, and opportunities to engage in lively discussions about the state of our region.

**In 2020, Buffalo Toronto Public Media provided these vital local services:**

- BTPM leveraged its subchannel to broadcast “Learn at Home” programming during the early, uncertain months of the pandemic. The programming and educational materials were available on our website and weekly emails pushed the schedule and content out to thousands of educators and families.
- Our NPR affiliate used its air, website, and social media to bring trusted health information to its audience. This included both medical and mental health.
- Our classical music station partnered with our local philharmonic orchestra to bring recorded concerts to our audience while in-person concerts weren’t possible.

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

- “Learn at Home” reached thousands of educations and tens of thousands of students with turnkey educational solutions when school systems were brand new to remote learning.
- Our weekly interview with a local physician gives thousands of listeners access to trusted health information with questions submitted by listeners, and our series of Facebook Live mental health conversations drew hundreds of participants who asked insightful questions about mental health during the pandemic.

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, which was particularly important in 2020.

### **Education**

Our educational initiatives span every project, including our national PBS program “The Warrior Tradition” which aired nationwide in November 2019. Working with local educators, we created [seven lesson plans](#) for students from elementary through high school. We also created a discussion guide for our community to use to hold community screenings and discussions. WNED PBS held a local preview screening event that was attended by several hundred community members. The panel discussion included a local indigenous filmmaker who made [a short film](#) for the project that featured Carson Whitehead, a Seneca artist whose artwork was displayed in BTPM’s gallery during the event. Two young Seneca women performed an opening ceremony and land acknowledgement prior to the event’s start.

### **Entertainment**

Our audiences can trust our entertainment to be cultural, educational, inspirational, and enriching, whether it’s Masterpiece on WNED PBS television, the Big One at 1 on WNED Classical, Science Friday on WBFO or in-person events like Kid Fest. WNED PBS held its annual Kid Fest for our region’s children both in Western New York and Southern Ontario. The festival expanded to two days the Canadian side of the border and set aside an evening dedicated to children with sensory processing issues on the American side. The events included character meet & greets, live performances, crafts, games, and educational opportunities.

WNED Classical deepened its partnership with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, adding a feature with BPO’s Musical Director JoAnn Falletta in which Falletta spends a few minutes every weekday morning talking about everything from the season’s highlights at the BPO to her insights on all things musical. During the first months of the pandemic, the partnership allowed for recorded concerts to be broadcast on the radio station when in-person gatherings weren’t permitted.

### **Engagement**

Engaging with our community is integral to the mission of Buffalo Toronto Public Media, and the pandemic only heightened the need for that engagement. Following protests locally and nationwide in the wake of the police-involved deaths of Black Americans, BTPM held a series of virtual community conversations about race. Three local experts engaged with almost 500 attendees to explore how racially-charged issues are covered in media, the importance of African American storytelling, and the devaluation of human beings.

After several in-person shows at the beginning of the year, our art gallery, [Horizons](#), had to stop holding in-person shows. Instead, the gallery partnered with the Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology (BCAT) to present its first virtual show. BCAT compiled and captured its Buffalo high school students' artwork with a special mission of healing and support that was displayed in the virtual gallery on our website, promoted on our television and radio stations as well as on social media.

In December, the gallery hosted the Buffalo Public Schools annual Peace Project show. In a school year when so much stress, remote learning, and a switch to a virtual gallery could have cancelled the show, instead, the show grew larger – and the spirit of the students and their educators shone through. Students expressed what peace means to them through the visual arts, dance, and theatre. The exhibition celebrated all that is good about humanity and the world as well as things students feel we need to change.

### **Culture**

One of the silver linings of the pandemic has been the extra time to pick up new hobbies. WNEB PBS invited our audience to paint along with the late Bob Ross and Lauren Pantos, a Certified Ross Instructor (CRI). Hundreds joined in from across WNY, Southern Ontario, and across the United States to take part in the events and learn Ross' techniques in detail.

BTPM also invited our audiences to take part many other virtual events in a wine class, tea tasting, a Lucy Worsley history event, a conversation with Lidia Bastianich, a cooking demonstration with America's Test Kitchen's Jack Bishop and another with Confucius Was a Foodie's Christine Cushing, and multiple screening events.

### **Civic Involvement**

WNEB PBS continued its exploration of the waves of immigration that have built Buffalo over the past 100 years with two television broadcasts as part of Making Buffalo Home. "[Making Buffalo Home: A Refugee's First Year](#)" showed the challenges faced by new Buffalonians who have fled their former homes for the United States. "Making Buffalo Home: Immigration in a Welcoming City" dives into the ways that policies impact how welcoming a city is for immigrants. The two-year, multi-platform Making Buffalo Home project aims to help the region develop a better understanding of the shared opportunities and challenges faced together by long-time residents and new immigrants and refugees.

Veteran WBFO reporter Mike Desmond had already gotten pictures and video of several aspects of a protest in Buffalo's Niagara Square as police started to clear the area just before an 8 pm curfew. He had positioned himself on the steps of City Hall in front of the line of police and was filming as police officers pushed a 75-year-old man who stumbled, fell, and almost immediately started bleeding from his head. Within moments of [the video](#) being posted, it went viral around the world and requests from other news organizations poured into the newsroom. The video has been seen more 85 million times.

## WNY Conversations About Race

WBFO launched a [five-part series](#) on race relations in July, bringing together people to talk about equity, white privilege, systemic racism, and diversity, as part of the station's Racial Equity Project. Inspired by the intimate style of NPR's Story Corps, the discussions featured a person of color in dialogue with someone who was not. Facilitated by WBFO reporter Thomas O'Neil White, the conversations featured people with different backgrounds but similar occupations or fields of interest.



## No Child

WNED PBS partnered with the Chautauqua Theatre Company to bring the powerful one-person play, "[No Child](#)" to the small screen when it couldn't be performed during the summer season. Written and performed by Nilaja Sun and captured on camera in the studios at WNED PBS in Buffalo under strict safety guidelines. "No Child" is a breathtaking solo show exploring the New York City public school system. Sun fearlessly transforms herself in rapid-fire succession into the teachers, students, parents, janitors, security guards, and administrators of a NYC high school. Sun demonstrates how a determined woman can change the lives of countless others in this tour de force, crackling with wit and wisdom and showing us the transformative power of art.

## On Stage with Buffalo Opera Unlimited

Buffalo Opera Unlimited and WNED PBS joined together to present a multi-part series that brought local opera talents to television. The "[On Stage with Buffalo Opera Unlimited](#)" series featured local singers performing arias from Faust, Die Fledermaus, Carmen, The Magic Flute and many more. The 30-minute shows were taped in the WNED PBS studios at Buffalo Toronto Public Media using strict safety precautions.



## BPO Musician Portraits

The BPO and JoAnn Falletta partnered with Buffalo Toronto Public Media to present “[BPO Musician Portraits with JoAnn Falletta](#),” a four-part musical showcase of television specials on WNED PBS featuring select musicians from the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.



These intimate concerts, introduced by JoAnn Falletta, feature performances from principal cellist Roman Mekinulov and pianist Eric Huebner, cellist Feng Hew and violinist Shieh-Jian Tsai, harpist Madeline Olson, and BPO concertmaster Nikki Chooi.

The televised performances expand upon the long-time partnership between the two organizations, as well as reaffirm the commitment both organizations have as major stakeholders in the Buffalo cultural community and Western New York at large. The series allowed the community to continue to enjoy the music of the BPO even while the pandemic prevented in-person concerts.



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.



WBFO held a series of Facebook Live events with mental health professionals.



Daniel Tiger and Clifford the Big Red Dog visited patients at Oishei Children’s Hospital in February 2020.

*“I appreciate the news being presented in a realistic, bipartisan, and fair manner. It makes a massive difference to me. My son and I have enjoyed many stories together through podcasts and newscasts throughout the year.” –member in Gerry, NY*

*“We really enjoy the wonderful selection of music on WNED Classical. Particularly uplifting in these distressing times.” - member in Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON*

*“I cannot tell you what a comfort it has been to watch Rick Steves’ half hour shows Monday to Friday on WNED. It’s the only way I am able to travel abroad in these times! Please keep them coming.” -member in Toronto, ON*



Two young Seneca women performed an opening ceremony and land acknowledgement ahead of a screening event for “The Warrior Tradition,” a WNED PBS documentary that aired nationally in November 2019.