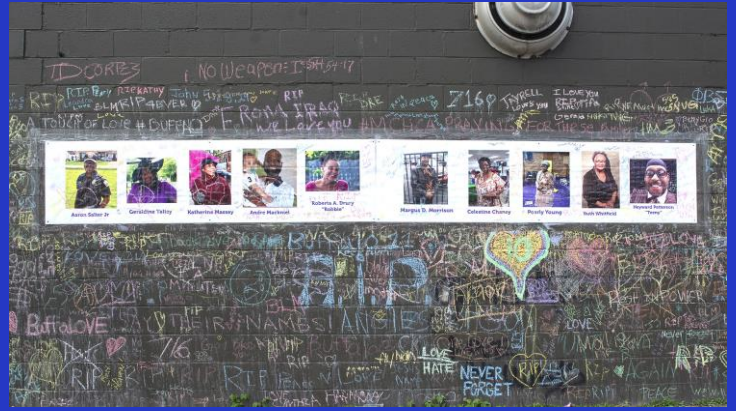


# 2023 Local Content and Service Report to the Community



Within two weeks of the May 14 racist mass shooting, WBFO launched a weekday program, “Buffalo, What’s Next?” to unapologetically confront what led to the mass shooting.

**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 community 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 The Bridge) are a valuable part of Western New York’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 2023, Buffalo Toronto Public Media provided these vital local services:**

- BTPM provided in-depth and trusted local reporting through its WBFO news team. In particular, it provided critical reporting on continued inequities for our Black and Disabled communities and highlighted the region’s vibrant culture. Our Learning & Engagement team worked directly with educators, created meaningful community events, and provided essential tools to immigrant families with young children.
- BTPM launched two new digital series for middle-school children to spark interest in local history and guide learners through virtual field trips.
- Our classical musical station provided a monthly, live performance series that is free and accessible to the community as well as a series of free, interactive performance events for 8 to 12-year-olds that explore composers, performers and instruments.

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

- The award winning daily WBFO radio show that launched within two weeks of the May 14, 2022, racist mass shooting in Buffalo changed its name to “What’s Next?” and expanded its scope to examine inequities on Buffalo’s East Side as well as across Western New York.
- Our “Driving While Black” series on WBFO spurred the Buffalo Common Council’s Police Oversight Committee to take on the inequities the reporting and data analysis illuminated.
- Our ongoing efforts around the overdose crisis provided the community with critical information about how to recognize an overdose, provide training to save lives, combat stigma, and make resources available.

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. This year has been the most productive and impactful since before the pandemic.

## Education

A generous grant from the New York State Education Department allowed us to expand our educational programming and outreach in new and impactful ways. The Learning & Engagement team updated and published dozens of free educational resources from WNED PBS's catalog of historical documentaries, including the **War of 1812** and **Frank Lloyd Wright's Buffalo**. In addition, the team undertook the monumental task of updating curriculum and family resources for 60 **Reading Rainbow** episodes and made them available through PBS Learning Media and the Reading Rainbow website.

The NYSED grant also made possible the creation of two new digital series meant to spark curiosity among middle-school-aged students. **Let's Go!** is a series of virtual field trips and **Compact History** connects students to stories of the past. These series, which include educational resources, are available on YouTube and on PBS Learning Media for educators, parents, and students to use, for free! The Learning & Engagement team also relaunched its popular Writers Contest and received over 200 amazing submissions. The team pursued and received the ability from NYS to provide educators with CTLE credits for participating in qualifying opportunities, such as the launch event for Compact History.

## Entertainment

Our audiences can trust our entertainment to be cultural, educational, inspirational, and enriching, whether it's Masterpiece on WNED PBS, **Sacred Classics** on WNED Classical, **Mindful Music** on WBFO or in-person events like our premiere of **The Niagara Movement**. This year, we were able to provide original programming, including The Niagara Movement, and two new digital series for middle-schoolers, Let's Go!, and Compact History. We also launched a new live television and streaming series for DIY enthusiasts with Now We're Cooking LIVE and Now We're Creating LIVE. We added to our radio offerings with Mindful Music, locally hosted by Karl Shallowhorn, and the **Docu-Hour** on WBFO. And on WBFO The Bridge, we launched local shows with popular DJ Crespo, John Wawrow, and The Scene, which features local musicians hosted by local artist Chelsea O of Stress Dolls.

## Engagement

In addition to participating in community events such as the Pride Parade, Juneteenth celebrations, the Puerto Rican Parade, and PorchFest, Buffalo Toronto Public Media worked with Buffalo Public Schools, BOCES, and City Hall to present the "**Educational Day of Healing & Restoration**," a day-long event for students to mark the anniversary of the May 14, 2022 mass shooting in Buffalo. The event was streamed on YouTube and made available to schools across the region. It featured a healing circle, book readings, poetry reading and spoken word performance, dance performances, music, and a reflective discussion.

## Culture

In 2023, Buffalo Toronto Public Media launched a monthly series of free concerts in its intimate performance space in the WNEC Classical music library. Each month, these performances “sell out” and allow the community free access to live music. BTM also uses the space for a live performance series aimed at promoting awareness and appreciation of musical diversity among youth ages 8 to 12 years old, targeting children living in underserved communities within Buffalo and Erie County.

WNEC PBS premiered its original documentary, “**The Niagara Movement: the Early Battle for Civil Rights**” in November and held a premiere screening for the community in October. The powerful, hour-long documentary delves deep into a national crusade that forged the civil rights landscape for the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. The film explores the Black elite and intellectual society at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and examines the heated national debate and conflict three Black leaders – sociologist W.E.B. De Bois, publisher William Monroe Trotter, and educator and orator Booker T. Washington – had about how best to foster equality and opportunity for Black Americans. The film premieres on PBS stations across the country in February 2024.

The Content Creation team was selected by PBS to create a new digital series called **Brave Spaces**, an eight-part video series that shared LGBTQ+ stories of triumph, transformation, and celebration. Hosted by model, writer, and trans educator, Devin-Norelle (ze/zim/zis), Brave Spaces took audiences on a journey into LGBTQ+ communities to highlight brave individuals and groups shattering barriers and claiming their own spaces. The series is available on the PBS Voices YouTube Channel.

BTM partnered with the theater department at Niagara University to produce our first-ever radio play, **It’s a Wonderful Life**, in December. Theater students performed the play, live, in our studios for a sold-out crowd, and BTM staff performed the Foley work. The recording, including the Foley work during the performance, was then edited and aired on WBFO four times throughout the end of the calendar year.

## Civic Involvement

Following the anniversary of the racist mass shooting on May 14, 2022, “Buffalo, What’s Next?” took a hiatus to expand its scope. It relaunched as “**What’s Next?**” and now examines inequities across Western New York and amplifies the voices of all parts of the shared community. On both “What’s Next?” and its regular reporting, WBFO continued its coverage and examination of the deadly blizzard at the end of 2022 that killed dozens of Buffalo residents and paralyzed the city for days longer than its suburbs. WBFO continues to investigate why Buffalo’s death toll was so high, why it took so long to plow out the streets and sidewalks, and whether the city is prepared for another large-scale weather event.

In late fall 2023, WBFO launched a series of investigative reports examining the rates Black drivers are stopped by police compared to other drivers. The investigation used publicly available data and BTM’s data analyst contributed to the reporting by Holly Kirkpatrick, which showed that Black drivers are 3.1x more likely to be stopped by police than white drivers. The results have spurred action by the City’s Common Council, which gave the report to the Police Oversight Committee.

## Let's Go!

With grant support from the New York State Education Department, Buffalo Toronto Public Media launched an original digital-first video series guiding young, curious learners through virtual field trips. Host Chrisena explores behind the scenes with experts at exciting sites throughout Western New York, such as the Burchfield Penney Art Center, The Colored Musicians Club, the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park, Corning Museum of Glass, the Buffalo Niagara International Airport, and more!



With each episode, the BTM Learning & Engagement team creates support materials for educators to leverage the video with their students. They make those materials available for free on the BTM website and on PBS Learning Media. Lessons are turnkey for educators and are tied to NYS educational standards and apply to a range of subjects, including social studies, math, art, and English language arts. For example, the “Inclusive Theater of WNY” episode provides Teaching Tips, Vocabulary for students, and seven ready-to-use activities: Defining Inclusion, Give Them Props, Let’s Warm Up!, Performance Process, Tell Me a Story, Theater Jobs, and Up for Interpretation.



## Compact History

Compact History, a Buffalo Toronto Public Media original digital series, connects 4-8th grade students to the stories of the past through the social, archeological, or geographic connections they experience today. The episodes will help young people better understand the relevance of historical moments and begin to see themselves as history keepers and makers.

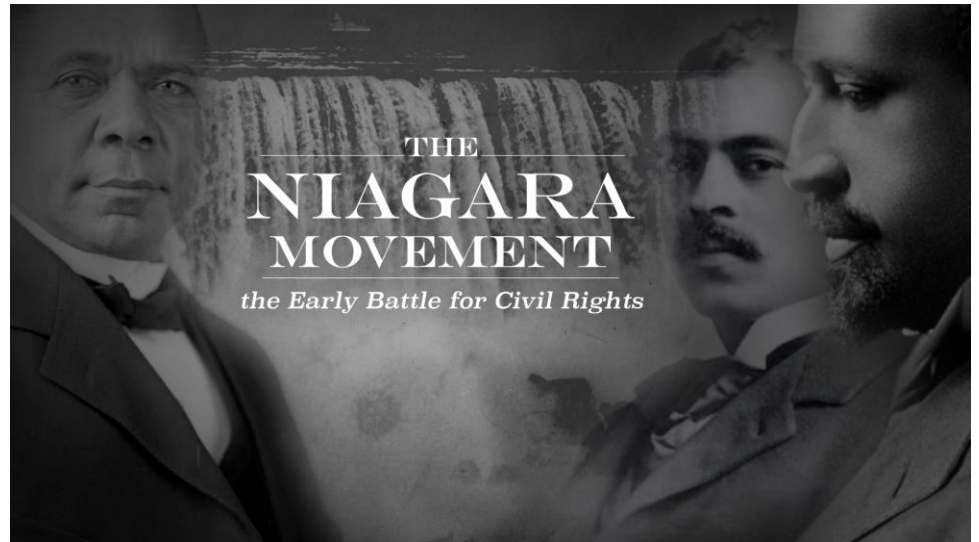
Compact History’s host, Cory, is a time-traveling middle school history teacher who journeys beyond textbooks telling stories that transformed our world. He uses a “time portal” to discover connections between local historical events and their national impact.

The first episode, “Democracy’s Ancestors: The Haudenosaunee Legacy Revealed,” launched the series in December 2023. In the episode, Cory travels to a longhouse and learns about the Great Law of Peace, an ancient telling of the formation of the Haudenosaunee confederacy, the oldest participatory democracy still in existence. Cory reveals that the US Constitution was inspired by Indigenous people.

Like Let’s Go!, Compact Science provides educational resources for educators to use. With the first episode, the Learning & Engagement team provided nine materials for us in the classroom.

## The Niagara Movement

The Niagara Movement: The Early Battle for Civil Rights, a powerful hour-long documentary by WNED PBS, delves deep into a national crusade that forged the civil rights landscape for the 20th century and beyond. The film explores the Black elite and intellectual society at the turn of the 20th century and examines the heated national debate and conflict three Black leaders — sociologist W.E.B Du Bois, publisher William Monroe Trotter and educator and orator Booker T. Washington — had about how best to foster equality and opportunity for Black Americans. The film premiered on Monday, November 6, at 9 p.m. on WNED PBS and Buffalo Toronto Public Media’s YouTube Channel.



The film, produced and directed by Emmy Award-winning and two-time Oscar-nominated filmmaker Lawrence R. Hott, spotlights the early battle behind the civil rights movement that sprang forth as a repudiation of the methods of Booker T. Washington, then the most prominent Black leader in America. The end of Reconstruction brought about oppressive Jim Crow laws and widespread lynching. Washington pandered to white society with his conciliatory philosophy of racial segregation and industrial training for Blacks instead of other advances. The film captures the far-reaching impact of the short-lived Movement — disbanded only four years after its inception — which laid the cornerstone of the modern American civil rights movement, eventually morphing into the NAACP.



## It’s a Wonderful Life Radio Play

In collaboration with the Niagara University Theater Department, Buffalo Toronto Public Media produced “It’s a Wonderful Life” as a radio play Dec. 16 in its studios. The performances were recorded and broadcast on WBFO throughout the holidays. This project brought back the “old-school” feel of a live radio play, complete with a studio audience, voice actors, and Foley sound effects.

“Everything old is new again,” said Tom Calderone, President & CEO of Buffalo Toronto Public Media. “With the growth of podcasts, especially since COVID-19, radio plays are making a comeback and we’re perfectly positioned to bring it full circle for our community both as a live, in-person event and as a radio broadcast.”

Buffalo Toronto Public Media is deeply engaged with our community at every level -- attending community events, creating community events, providing services for our community, and supporting students, educators, and families.



Student visits  
to studios



Attendance at  
community events



Free concerts in performance  
space



Screening event at  
local museum



Event in partnership with local college

