

2020 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



"WDSE/WRPT has been invaluable during the past year. Between the pandemic and election uncertainty, people needed a trusted source for reliable news and educational entertainment. It's also been a comfort to see local programming still connecting the communities we live in as we've been limited in our ability to get out and connect with others face-to-face. The station is the backbone in our local media landscape."

-Annie Lepper

Vice President of Operations and Marketing, MPECU

Community Driven • Community Centered • Community Supported

WDSE•WRPT enriches and inspires the community through lifelong educational opportunities grounded in the traditions of public media and tailored to the needs of our local communities.



Since 1964, WDSE•WRPT has worked to build relationships with individuals, families, and organizations in our community through national programs, local programs, and local events that illuminate, inspire and enrich as well as entertain.

Our organization is now reaching new audiences by making our content available, both live and on demand, through multiple digital platforms.

In 2020, WDSE•WRPT provided thousands of hours of classroom education, general education and entertainment for children and the curious life-long learners in Northeastern Minnesota, Northwestern Wisconsin, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and our bordering, Canadian neighbors.

This was done through four on-demand platforms; 2 new digital live streams with 1.7 million views on local YouTube and Facebook videos.

WDSE•WRPT's local services had deep impact in the Northeastern Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin area.

Serving diverse audiences:

WDSE•WRPT is teaching viewers about local Native American history and culture through Native Report. After the killing of George Floyd, we convened many conversations and shared new perspectives to better acknowledge and understand systemic racism.



2020 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT IN THE COMMUNITY


WDSE•WRPT's viewing area reaches beyond our defined broadcast area, spanning three states and two countries. On any day of the year, WDSE•WRPT provides programming centered on education, arts, nature, health, local, national and international news, and entertainment to a geographic area encompassing 23 counties and districts. In the past year, WDSE•WRPT prioritized investing in technologies and staff to increase and enhance audience engagement and growth, delivering community-centered programming to a wide and diverse population.

WDSE•WRPT enriches and inspires the community through lifelong educational opportunities grounded in the traditions of public media and tailored to the needs of our local communities. While we are known for our early learning educational programming, we believe people never stop learning, and are proud to provide quality programming to expand horizons at every age. The past year has provided new opportunities to serve the needs of our viewers as the COVID-19 pandemic has limited in-person learning and engagement opportunities.

WDSE•WRPT is a key component of a strong, vibrant, informed community. This is especially true in uncertain times. We actively and creatively partner with area organizations and businesses to nourish our communities and maintain an enthusiastic base of over 9,000 members. As opportunities to come together became fewer starting in the spring of 2020, WDSE•WRPT is proud to have continued to provide common ground to explore, engage, inform, and celebrate.

As WDSE•WRPT develops local programming and events, we listen to and reflect the stories of our viewers and the communities we reach. We are committed to doing this through listening to the diverse voices across the region, noting our history and sharing current events, celebrating the arts, and capturing moments of every day work and play that make up what it is to live in the Northland. These are the stories that make up our community.

The heart of our work is our community. We sought diverse voices and perspectives to speak to critical issues through civil dialogue around local and state government affairs, as well as environmental and cultural issues. We discovered more about our community members, who shared their individual stories and how they contribute to the richness of our region, deepening the impact of our programming on a personal level.




Almanac North is a news and public affairs show, which started in 1992. New episodes air almost every Friday night year-round. The goal of the program is to raise awareness about important regional issues, to inform viewers about organizations and issues that are directly impacting community, and about Northeastern Minnesota Culture. Almanac North is a critical lifeline for the northeastern Minnesota community to hear more than soundbites about what is really happening in the region through an in-depth conversation format.

This year, Almanac North was one of our region's primary sources for thoughtful analysis and updates on the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the unrest around the death of George Floyd. Both events had far-reaching impacts on our communities. We added extensive analysis and dialogue around systemic racism, including a screening and dialogue with the filmmakers of *I Can't Breathe: A Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial*, remembering the 100th anniversary of the lynching of three black men in Duluth, juxtaposed with the community grief and ongoing trauma over Floyd's death and police brutality. This screening led to two additional specials, *Almanac North: Focus on Systemic Racism*. We accomplished all of this at a time when we had moved much of our production off-site to keep our staff and our guests safe, which required much more post-production and learning new technologies to do remote interviews.

This year, WDSE•WRPT partnered with the nationally recognized **Catalyst Content Festival**, which recently moved to Duluth. Our participation was both to promote the incredible talent and venues our communities have to offer visiting filmmakers, bringing economic impact to our communities, as well as highlight and educate local content creators and build the voices of independent storytellers in our communities.

Drawn to Write explores the stories behind the story as local author Felicia Schneiderhan sat down with regional authors and illustrators to learn about their inspiration behind the words on the page and the beautiful accompanying artwork. Viewers learned about the process behind writing books and visit the artists in their studios as they create the images that appear in the final, published illustrated books.

For 38 years, **Doctors on Call** has been a go-to source for answers to our viewers' health questions. Impact: As evidence emerged about the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic, WDSE extended the season of the long-running show with eleven episodes focused on viewer questions about the coronavirus. The program was intended for a general audience to help improve their knowledge of this deadly disease. Our doctors are trusted by this community and *Doctors on Call* was a place that viewers knew they could go to get direct answers without political spin. Viewer interest was very high for this special programming, as illustrated by our Household Nielsen ratings almost doubling during the COVID Specials run, with dozens and dozens of questions received each week.



For many years, WDSE•WRPT has partnered with the **Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra** to broadcast one or more live performances per year. In May 2020, we intended on doing that again. Then COVID-19 came along. Impact: With COVID making an orchestral and choral performance to a live audience of 2,000 impossible, WDSE•WRPT did some creative thinking. We collaborated with the DSSO to rebroadcast 4 weeks of previous concerts to bring a sense of normalcy and escape to our viewers, while collaborating with individual orchestra musicians and other regional musical performers to record Mister Rogers' "Won't You Be My Neighbor" theme on smart phones and zoom and then edited them together to create a virtual chorus. Nominated for a 2020 Regional Emmy, "Be Our Northland Neighbor" reminded us how connected we all are as Northlanders, in spite of physical distancing.

Nobody understands gardening in Zone 3 and 4 like **Great Gardening**, the Northland's only TV show that's focused on the unique gardening joys and challenges in this region. Impact: Great Gardening is one of our most popular programs, with Nielsen ratings consistently at the top of its time slot above all other networks in our area. It is a form of respite and joy for viewers and in this time, we believe, it is even more critical as viewers become overwhelmed with the news of the day. Here we offer inspiration for what you can do alone in your own back yard. This program interweaves pre-produced stories with a live in-studio call in show. This year, due to COVID-19, the questions for our garden experts were done entirely remotely to keep our staff safe and model physical distancing. We asked for questions online a week ahead of time and prerecorded through Zoom off-site, while interweaving segments featuring beautiful garden tours and interviews with gardeners who we filmed the previous summer and fall.

INSIGHT with Mark Oppenheim is a series that highlights local nonprofits and brings attention to the work that they're doing in the community. Each week, host Mark Oppenheim sits down with a leader from these area nonprofits to discuss the nonprofit's role in the region, including their successes, challenges, and hopes for the field.

Intersections are five-minute stories highlight community members from across Northern Minnesota with inspiring and enriching stories about overcoming adversity. This celebration of the human spirit showcases the amazing, and often untold, stories of our fellow community members.

In its 3rd Season, **Making It Up North** continued to explore stories of people who have broken through to thrive in their own spheres. We met creative artists, artisans and entrepreneurs engaged in honing their skills, following their passion and realizing their dreams. Making It Up North nurtures and celebrates the entrepreneurial spirit found in Minnesota's Arrowhead region. The 10-episode series builds trust and relationships with new generation of small business owners and encourages growth in the state's maker economy. We also created a series of Makers' Meetup events, which were hosted at a local establishment to watch the premiere of new episodes. Every week creators featured in the show, along with community members, connected and networked while supporting this local business.



Minnesota Legislative Report has been welcoming lawmakers to talk about legislative issues for 49 years, the region's longest-running public affairs program. The program provides information for viewers about important legislative action at the state capitol. When COVID-19 forced lawmakers to do most of their business virtually, Minnesota Legislative Report pivoted to a Zoom format with lawmakers joining us from their homes or offices. Host Tony Sertich, a former Speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives moderated the program from his home, welcoming Republican and Democratic lawmakers during the 5-week run of the program. This virtual format had a surprise benefit of helping us welcome more lawmakers than in previous years, as they could join us from wherever they were, rather than having to come into our studios in Duluth. We intend on continuing having Zoom guests, mixed with in-studio guests in a post-COVID world, to serve more of our viewing area.

In its 15th season, **Native Report** is an entertaining, informative magazine style series that celebrates Native American culture and heritage, listens to tribal Elders, and talks to some of the most powerful and influential leaders of Indian Country today.

The Playlist Presents are five-minute features highlighting local emerging bands and some of their best songs. These pieces introduced new and emerging musicians to the region in short segments, both through broadcast and online.

The Slice is a short-form series that captures stories from across the communities that we serve throughout Northern Minnesota. The stories chronicle the unique and everyday events, passions and hobbies that create the fabric of the Northland experience. Subjects include local history, fashion, nature, indigenous culture, the arts, and community renewal. The strength of the series is that it's able to share a diverse snapshot of local culture through stories that typically wouldn't be a fit for a traditional long-form program. The series finds success on-air and online because community members see themselves, their families and their neighbors reflected in these often untold stories.

From Grand Portage to Sandstone, Northern Minnesota is dotted with small towns that are packed with big stories. Narrated by storyteller Kevin Kling, with music by Grammy-award-winner Jon Vezner, WDSE•WRPT's new documentary, **This Town**, looks at the stories behind some of these towns and at the people who are continuing these communities' stories into the future. This Town was a collaboration between WDSE•WRPT and local filmmaker Mike Scholtz. This collaboration put a new spin on our documentary productions and was rewarded with a 2020 Regional Emmy Nomination for Best Historical Documentary, bringing humor and intimacy to the past and present of these small communities. One of the stories featured in this documentary was for a small playground in the Native community of Ball Club, MN, inspired and led by youth in that community. After broadcast, we received a number of inquiries from viewers wondering how they could support this effort.

Twin Ports Tonight was intended for a general audience and to bring new viewers to WDSE. Host Andrew Kirov led an ensemble team whose irreverent brand of humor highlighted the unique characteristics of those of us who claim the Northland as their home. These entertaining half-hours include interviews with notable locals as well as sketch comedy performances. WDSE worked with Andrew Kirov and his creative team of actors and musicians to broadcast 4 episodes of a local late-night-style talk show. The production was recorded in front of a packed house each night at the Zeitgeist Theater in Downtown Duluth.

Duluth NAACP Collaboration – “Disinfecting Misinformation” Panel

As information – and misinformation – went viral in the early days of COVID-19, the Duluth NAACP hosted a live Zoom panel of BIPOC health professionals to address myths around COVID-19, as well as discuss racism's role in health disparities. WDSE•WRPT partnered to broadcast this panel over the air and to host coverage on our online platforms.



Doctors on Call: COVID-19 Specials

Fourteen episodes were added to the end of the *Doctors on Call* regular season in the spring of 2020-nearly doubling the length of the season-to provide regular access for our region to ask medical experts about COVID-19.

“You had an excellent show tonight – you had good experts. Thanks again!” – WDSE Viewer



I Can't Breathe: A Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial Documentary

In June 2020, George Floyd's killing and the ensuing worldwide protests converged with the 100th anniversary of the Duluth lynchings. In reflection, WDSE•WRPT shared DanSan Creative's *I Can't Breathe: A CJM Memorial Documentary*. The documentary was supplemented by a conversation between Carl Crawford, Duluth's Human Rights Officer, and the documentary creators centered on issues of race in our community.



Native Report

Celebrating Native American Culture and Heritage

Hosted and produced by enrolled members of tribal nations, *Native Report* shares the stories of Native leaders and elders from around the region and continent - from a Native lens.

Reach in the Community:

Since 2005, Native Report has been shown on 193 channels across the United States, in 69 different markets (including four of the top 10) and 28 states.

In fiscal year 2020, Native Report saw more than 51,000 video views, and 6,000 engagements on Facebook. It also earned an average 1.3 Nielsen rating in the WDSE WRPT viewing area.

Partnerships:

Registered members of tribal nations and other Native organizations across North America

Impact and Community Feedback:

“This is a rare Native-produced series and it has been essential for building cultural understanding in our community.”

“I regularly watch this show and love learning more about Native American culture.”

“Wonderful show. Very well produced and informed. 100% recommend.”



“As urban Indians, Native Report is one of the premier ways for our family to stay connected to diverse issues across Native communities. I can attest to WDSE WRPT’s long commitment to producing high-quality, educational and entertaining programming. Programs like *Native Report* bring fresh perspectives and deep reporting to our airwaves, and they are the reason WDSE WRPT has been a pillar of our community for decades.”

- Kristine Rhodes
 - o Anishinaabe, Bad River and Fond du Lac Bands of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - o Principal, Asemaake LLC