

Interlochen Public Radio
Issues/Program narrative — 2023, Q1 (January, February, March)

By Ed Ronco, news director
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The implementation of new beats in our newsroom meant expanded coverage of northern Michigan's economy this quarter. Political and governmental coverage remained strong, thanks to not only MPRN's Lansing bureau but also efforts at IPR to bring local lawmakers on the air, and attention on the Camp Grayling expansion proposal. That story in particular (Camp Grayling) transcended a number of subject areas, touching on government and the environment, among others. We also saw some small growth in our coverage of race, identity and culture.

In the quarter ahead, we plan to add a reporter dedicated to covering climate change, and continue growing our existing coverage areas.

Below, find a listing of the subjects we covered and summaries of that coverage underneath each heading.

Arts, Entertainment, Recreation

An uneven winter spelled trouble for local winter sports enthusiasts, and we covered the disruption to cross-country skiing. We also heard about a new curling facility in Traverse City, a new comedy festival, struggles for a local theater company, how climate change is affecting mushing in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, competitive high school cooking, and the burning of an enormous paper snowman — a ritual in Sault Ste. Marie.

Law and Justice

The deadly shooting at Michigan State University on Feb. 13 brought conversations about gun control legislation to Lansing. The January killing of Tyre Nichols in Tennessee led Black Michigan lawmakers to reintroduce police reform bills. We spent some time on the air with Mardi Link from the Traverse City Record-Eagle unpacking the upcoming trial of five defendants accused of trying to kidnap Michigan's governor. A Michigan Supreme Court case involving a family in Leelanau County reframed an important property tax rule in Michigan. And on Beaver Island, residents expressed concerns about increased traffic stops — calling them harassment.

Environment and Agriculture

The environment is a centerpiece of IPR's coverage. This quarter, we heard about wolf populations in the Upper Peninsula, concerns over lead ammunition and its effect on eagles, cougar migration (and mythology), delays in the regulatory process for the Line 5 tunnel project, northern Michigan's member of Congress opposing the expansion of Camp Grayling, and a Mackinac Island ferry going fully electric. We also covered a public meeting in Bellaire over the future of Michigan's fisheries, and aired a long interview with acclaimed author Dan Egan about phosphorus in the Great Lakes.

Medicine, Health and Social Safety Nets

This is a broad subject area. We heard about efforts to tally the population of people experiencing homelessness, grants to help at-home care for rural children, a partnership to expand dental health care in Native communities, safety nets for veterans in suicidal crisis, and the busy — and sometimes harrowing — world of a perfusionist in Petoskey. And of course, we kept our eye on COVID-19 numbers in the state.

Business and Economy

Here, too, we saw expanded coverage thanks to the establishment of a beat. Our coverage spanned from worker shortages in northern Michigan (and the complicated puzzle of solutions), to big plans for growth in Mancelona and Onkama, to the slow post-lockdown recovery of tourism in our region. We also looked at housing and health care issues in Petoskey, the repeal of Michigan's right-to-work law, and a mother-son duo making a go of it in the nonalcoholic beverage market.

Education

We don't have a dedicated education reporter. Still, we covered a change of mascots in Manistee, the impact of the MSU shooting on a local college, the legacy of a former president of Interlochen Center for the Arts, an enrollment spike at Petoskey's community college, and a high school steel drum band heading to the Big Easy for Mardi Gras.

Politics and Government

We're very fortunate to have excellent coverage from two great correspondents in Lansing, via the Michigan Public Radio Network. They steadily covered the goings-on in Michigan's capital city, where both the governor's office and the Legislature are under Democratic control for the first time in four decades. Beyond their coverage, though, we heard interviews with northern Michigan lawmakers about the governor's budget proposal, analysis of a flap over committee assignments in the opening days of the legislative session, and federal funding for a new Beaver Island ferry. We also covered local government issues, from the departure of Charelvoix's police chief (and the naming of a replacement), to growing opposition toward the proposed expansion of Camp Grayling.

Race, Identity and Culture

We spent some time at the Dennon Museum, exploring a new exhibition about BIPOC identity. We heard about new plans to manage cultural resources on Isle Royale. Folk singer Crys Matthews told us about the intersectionality of social justice and music, our *Points North* podcast unraveled the mystery of an underwater crucifix, and we heard a wonderful conversation with Kenny Pheasant about efforts to preserve and grow Anishinaabemowen, the original language of the Great Lakes.