

## From Newspapers to Books

Bob Downes pens historical fiction “Windigo Moon”

By Susan Koenig

Current Contributor

You may know Robert “Bob” Downes as the inimitable former co-owner and editor of *Northern Express*, a weekly lifestyle publication for the Northern Michigan region that covers arts, entertainment, news, restaurants, and opinions. But do you know him as the consummate traveler? The biker? The non-fiction novelist? The historical fiction writer?

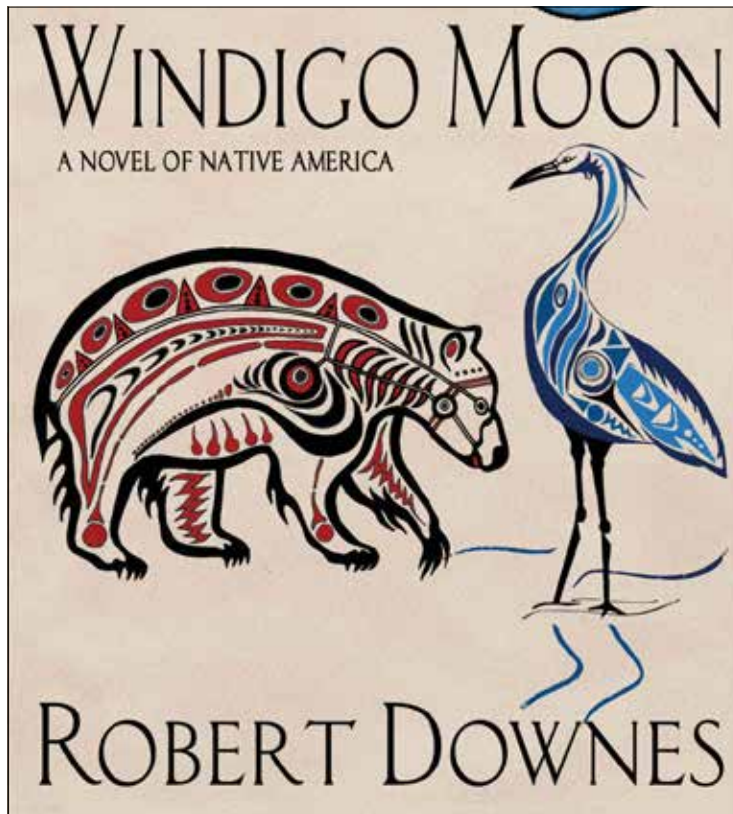
In an age when Baby Boomers are considering slowing down and retirement, Downes—who turns 65 last month—keeps redefining himself.

A native of Grand Rapids, Downes graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in journalism and a minor in photography from Wayne State University in 1976. Afterward, he worked as a reporter and editor at various newspapers in the metro-Detroit area, with a 10-year stint (from 1983 to 1993) in hospital public relations at Munson, which is what first drew him to Northern Michigan.

In 1991, Downes got back into journalism, co-founding the *Northern Express* with his best friend, George Foster (an accountant). Believe it or not, the first few issues were

created in Downes’s kitchen, but the publication has gone on to become Northern Michigan’s largest weekly newspaper, with a readership of 75,000 each week. Downes served 22 years at the helm of the *Express*’s news-desk, until he and Foster decided that it was time to sell their publication in 2013.

Meanwhile, Downes had already stepped into the world of book publishing in 2008 with Planet Backpacker: *The Good Life Bumming Around the World*, a memoir of his five-month solo trip abroad, across continental Europe and through Egypt, India, and Southeast



“Windigo Moon: A Novel of Native America” is the newest book by local author, Bob Downes. Image courtesy of Bob Downes.

Asia. Much of that trip was spent on a mountain bike, as Downes is a former Ironman triathlete and an ardent cyclist. (Of note: He has also cycled in Australia, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, England, Ireland, Italy, Nicaragua, Peru, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and much of the United States, including a 2,700-mile trip over the Rockies and across the Great Plains, from Seattle to Michigan, in 2016.)

In 2014, he published his second book, *Biking Northern Michigan*, which is packed with funny stories, cycling tips, history, and dining spots; it includes more than 35 bike routes and 56 maps and illustrations. (And yes, he includes Benzie locales, like biking around Crystal Lake.)

That year, he also won first place in Art-Prize’s international writing contest, which was sponsored by the Great Lakes Commonwealth of Letters and the Cascade Writers Group. (His winning entry, “The Raid,” is an excerpt from his latest book, *Windigo Moon*.)

In 2015 came the publishing of his third book and second memoir, *Travels With My Wife*, in which Downes chronicles a seven-

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## Jobs, Homes, and Beer—Oh My!

North Channel Brewing Company opens in downtown Manistee

By Aubrey Ann Parker

Current Editor

A new attraction opened up last month in Manistee: North Channel Brewing Company, located across the Manistee River from the downtown area and next to the drawbridge. The brewery is originally the brain child of Ron and Dawn Ford of Grand Rapids, and many in the community are hoping that the brewery will breathe some new life into downtown Manistee, just as Stormcloud Brewing Company has done for downtown Frankfort over the past four years.

There are many reasons that locals are getting excited, and it is not just about the beer—the Texas-style food is different than anything else around; the brewery will feature live entertainment several nights of the week; and the project has rehabilitated a 100-year-old building in a derelict part of town. Additionally, 14 new housing units will soon be available above the brewery in the same building.

So, to review: jobs, homes, and beer, oh my!

### Why Manistee?

The Fords first came to Manistee in 2002, when they were driving the Lake Michigan coastline looking to find a summer place. At the time, Manistee had a microbrewery on River Street, and the Fords considered this a perk of choosing to vacation there, according to the brewery’s website. By 2012, the brewery

had long-since closed, and the town was suffering the effects of the housing bust and the Great Recession. However, over this same decade, the craft-brewery scene had exploded.

Ron Ford and his son had been home-brewing for about two years at this point, and they thought that Manistee was the perfect place to open a craft brewery since, at the time, there were no breweries between Ludington and Traverse City. Then Stormcloud opened in June 2013 in Frankfort and was very successful, so the idea for a Manistee brewery continued to gain steam in the Ford household. With a 29-page business plan, they secured partners: Aaron and Erik May (brothers) and Phil Johnson.

The concept for the brewery was—and still is—to mix creativity and science. They wanted to produce high-quality beverages and gastropub food at a reasonable price using as many locally sourced ingredients as possible.

### A Dozen Taps

Bill Joslyn is the head brewer, and there are 12 taps that are



Benjamin Tomaszewski, a native of Manistee, is excited to be serving at the new North Channel Brewing Company in Manistee. In this picture, he is holding the massive Bacon Slaw Burger with homemade potato chips and a pickle, a definite must-try when you visit. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

made on-site. Joslynn moved back to Northern Michigan from North Caro-

lina specifically for the position with North Channel Brewing Company. Joslyn first began home-brewing in 1990, when he was living in Northern Michigan and working as an artist. In 2000, he was accepted into the Master Brewers Program at the University of California-Davis, and later that year, he began working at Boulder Beer in Boulder, Colorado. By 2003, Joslyn had moved to The Saint Louis Brewery (Schafly Brand) in St. Louis, Missouri; he later spent a few years at Oskar Blues Brewery in Longmont, Colorado, and in Brevard, North Carolina.

Joslyn’s plan is to make “classic-style beer with locally sourced ingredients,” according to the *Manistee News Advocate*. He expects to make 400 to 500 barrels in the first year.

The beers currently on tap consist of:

- **Salt City Blonde (5.9% ABV):** “Designed to be an easy-drinking, balanced beer with a simple grain bill—2-row along with Pilot Malt House malted White Wheat and malted oats.”

- **Cap’n Piles Pilsner (5% ABV):** “Pilot Malt House Pilsner malt, along with Saaz hops, create North Channel Brewing Co.’s first lager.”

- **Pier Michigan American Pale Ale (5.3% ABV):** “Our second beer

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# Get Moving with Paul Oliver's New Hires: Arthur Adkins, Jacob LeBlanc, and Raechele Ramirez

Questions & Answers with community faces

Winter in Northern Michigan means snow. And snow can get slick. And slick means that you might fall. If you fall, you might need some help “regaining your movement” afterward. Good thing that Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital in Frankfort (a part of the Munson Healthcare System) has a sports medicine and rehabilitation department that offers physical therapy and occupational therapy—in addition to wound care, sports medicine, hand therapy, craniosacral, aquatic therapy, speech therapy, post-operative orthopedic rehabilitation, and post-stroke rehab—at four locations in our area: on the first floor of the POMH hospital; on the basement floor of Crystal Lake Clinic in Benzonia; at the Crystal Lake Clinic in Interlochen; and in Empire, next to the Empire Family Care facility.

POMH's physical therapists treat all orthopedic, neurological, and vestibular conditions at any of these four locations; they also have a therapy pool for aquatherapy at the Benzonia location. The speech and language pathologist treats pediatric to geriatric patients, working to improve speech, language, and cognition, at the Frankfort hospital location. In addition, the team can do home assessments and rehab, if patients cannot make it in to one of the offices.

We are very fortunate to have these amenities way out here in the “provinces” of Benzie and Leelanau counties, otherwise we would have to drive all the way up to Traverse City.

Just in the last six months, POMH's physical therapy department has hired three new, young faces, which means that we have three new, young faces who have moved to our Benzie County community—Arthur Adkins, Jacob LeBlanc, and Raechele “Rae” Ramirez.

Often in this Q&A segment, we like to highlight young Benzie Boomerangs—those who grew up here, moved away to get an education or some life experience, and then brought their skills and talent back to this community. However, this time, we are highlighting three brand new faces who have moved here specifically because they liked our area and there were jobs available here.

So, continuing with our interview series on impactful Benzie County characters, *The Betsie Current* caught up with Adkins, LeBlanc, and Ramirez during their lunch break.

**ARTHUR ADKINS: ATHLETIC TRAINER**  
Arthur Adkins is a certified athletic trainer. He grew up down state, about 20 minutes from Flint. Adkins graduated in 2008 from Clio High School, where he participated in bowling and some soccer. He then graduated with a Bachelor's of Science degree in athletic training and exercise science from Saginaw Valley State University in May 2016. He then went on to work for ATI Physical Therapy in Ypsilanti, where he pioneered new

relationships with physicians and specialists, becoming an integral part of the community



From top: Arthur Adkins is the new athletic trainer; Jacob LeBlanc is the new physical therapist; Rae Ramirez is the new physical therapist assistant, with Myiana, her therapy dog. Photos by Aubrey Ann Parker.

and establishing links between the health-care community, schools, staff, parents, and student-athletes. Adkins is skilled in working with several audiences, ranging from youth to geriatric, and he excels in injury-prevention and sports-specific strength and conditioning. He also has additional training in gait analysis to improve running times and efficiencies. Adkins says that he has always liked Northern Michigan, so he began looking for jobs up in this direction. He was hired by POMH just last month, in November, and he

has two main roles: the first is to help out at the Betsie Hosick Health and Fitness Center with the Active Steps and Journey classes, and the second is to be the athletic trainer for the varsity and junior varsity sports teams at Benzie Central High School. He is currently living in downtown Frankfort.

**THE BETSIE CURRENT:** How did you get interested in being an athletic trainer?

**ARTHUR ADKINS:** I like that I get to work with a more motivated group of people. They really want my help, because they want to be active. I actually started off in pre-nursing, but what I found there was that a lot of people didn't want your help, but they ended up blaming you if they didn't get better.

**CURRENT:** What is your favorite part of your job?

**ADKINS:** I like working with the students at Benzie Central. But I also really like working with the older crowd at the [Betsie Hosick Health and] Fitness Center. It's great to see them get out and be excited to work out and do stuff. It's funny, because I've actually taken a few classes there myself, in trying to get to know people, and they were encouraging me when it got difficult for me to do this or that. They're all just very kind and fun.

**CURRENT:** What kinds of things do you like to do for fun, in your free time?

**ADKINS:** I like to shoot my bow and guns; four-wheeling; riding dirtbikes, snowmobiles, motorcycles.

**JACOB “JAKE” LEBLANC: PHYSICAL THERAPIST**

Jacob “Jake” LeBlanc is a physical therapist who has lived all over: Oklahoma, Ohio, Texas, Missouri, and Michigan. He graduated in 2011 from Great Lakes Adventist Academy, a private boarding school in Cedar Lake, near Mount Pleasant. He then did both his undergraduate and graduate studies at Andrews University, near Berrien Springs, Michigan. He recently did an internship at Munson Hospital in Traverse City and finished up his studies in August; he was hired by POMH this past October. He is currently going through training to be certified in lymphedema, and he expects to finish that certification in February. LeBlanc and his wife, Bonnie—a freelance artist who specializes in watercolor and sketches—now live in Elberta.

**CURRENT:** How did you get interested in being a physical therapist?

**JACOB “JAKE” LEBLANC:** I've always had an interest in medicine, and I really liked the idea of putting exercise with it—that seemed to fit well.

**CURRENT:** What is your favorite part of your job?

**LEBLANC:** I like seeing people get better. I like to help people to have a more mobile lifestyle. I like having time to interact with my patients.

**CURRENT:** Why did you want to get a job in Northern Michigan?

**LEBLANC:** My brother-in-law and sister-in-law live in Traverse City, so it was nice to have family around when I was doing my internship at Munson. My wife and I really fell in love with the area, because it's just so beautiful, so it was great to find a job up here.

**CURRENT:** What kinds of things do you like to do for fun, in your free time?

**LEBLANC:** Fly-fishing, hiking, weight-lifting. Really, I dabble in a lot of different things.

**RAECHELE “RAE” RAMIREZ: PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT**

Raechele Ramirez, who goes simply by “Rae,” is a licensed physical therapist assistant. For the most part, she lived in Comstock Park, Michigan, near Grand Rapids, but her family did a stint in Missouri while Ramirez was in high school, before moving back to Michigan. She graduated in 2012 from Zeeland West High School, near Holland. She then went on to Baker College of Muskegon, graduation in June 2015, upon which she moved to Holland to work for Full Potential Physical Therapy. That is, until a friend referred her to the Munson Healthcare System as “the best place to work.” Ramirez started looking for jobs up here, and she was hired by POMH in June of this year. She now lives Benzonia, and—as a hockey enthusiast—she was very excited to learn that there is a free, community ice-skating rink during the winters in the Benzonia park, next to Mills Community House.

**CURRENT:** How did you get interested in being a physical therapist assistant?

**RAECHELE “RAE” RAMIREZ:** We moved around when I was in high school, so it was hard to do sports. But I was able to participate in Science Olympiad. I really loved the sciences, and I still do—I'm still pretty nerdy. My mother has a nursing background, so I knew that I wanted to do healthcare, but I wanted to do something that was different from nursing, to contribute something else to my family. Once I got into the physical therapist assistant program, I just loved it, and I knew it was a good fit. I really like that there is a more holistic approach to physical therapy; I'm not just telling people to pop pills.

**CURRENT:** What is your favorite part of your job?

**RAMIREZ:** I really like working with senior citizens. I'm certified in kinesiotaping and aquatherapy, which I fell in love with at my old job. I like when I get to do outpatient stuff and work with people one-on-one, get to know them. Not just “hi” and “bye” after surgery.

**CURRENT:** Tell us about your little friend.

**RAMIREZ:** This is Myiana, or Myia for short. She's a certified therapy dog, and she's here in the Benzonia office every Monday through Friday with me. Sometimes I take her to the [Paul Oliver] hospital, too, so we can play BINGO with the current patients in POLAR. The patients love her! She has been a valuable asset to the clinic, because multiple patients have stated that, after they receive some depressing news in regards to their therapy or they have an unexpected surgery, she is there to cheer them up. She is calm and loves hugs, and she occasionally gives kisses.

**CURRENT:** What kinds of things do you like to do for fun, in your free time?

**RAMIREZ:** I am an avid snowboarder, so I'm really excited about living close to Crystal Mountain. I'm a big Red Wings fan, a big hockey fan—really, I love all winter sports. My boyfriend, Andrew, is trying to move up here. He has been my guinea pig while I've learned various skills, like kinesiotaping. We've been dating for two years; he actually was my patient before he was my boyfriend. He's a lacrosse player and a hockey player, so I couldn't help myself! He's also a die-hard Red Wings fan, and so my Christmas gift from him this year is season tickets, so we'll be going to lots of games together!

*Appointments at any of the four POMH rehab locations can be made Monday-Friday, between 7 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. by calling 231-352-2231.*

**Editor's Note:** Aubrey Ann Parker performed these interviews. She is co-owner and editor of *The Betsie Current* and is currently the social media coordinator for POMH Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation.



# Beer

Continued from page 1

ever produced, with a vast majority of Michigan ingredients, including malt from Pilot Malt House and Michigan Copper Hops from Mi Local Hops in Traverse City.”

• **Manistee’s IPA (6.4% ABV):** “2-row malt forms the backbone of this beer, along with some rye malt, added for complexity and a bit of spiciness. Michigan Copper Hops were added during the boil, and Citra was used to dry-hop, making it a balanced, yet hop-forward IPA.”

• **Drawbridge DIPA (8% ABV):** “2-row and CaraPils lead the grain bill, and Azacca and El Dorado hops provide aroma and bittering, respectively.” (*Editor’s Note: We noticed that both the IPA and the DIPA were not too heavily bitter, which we liked.*)

• **Dockside Bock (6.2% ABV):** 2-row malt along with several varieties of roasted malt (some from Pilot Malt House) for color and flavor, combined with Michigan-sourced Saaz (Michigan Hop Alliance) and Copper Hops (MI Local Hops).”

• **Sawmill Stout (7.7% ABV):** “Our first stout—2-row, malted and flaked oats, and a host of dark malts lay the groundwork for this big, malty beer.”

• **Nitro Chainsaw Stout (7.7% ABV):** “Our first stout, but this version is on Nitro; 2-row, malted and flaked oats, and a host of dark malts that lay the groundwork for this big malty beer.”

• **High-Bluff Porter (6.5% ABV):** “Our first porter. Slightly sweet, slightly bitter, nicely balanced. Pilot Malt House 2-row, PB Toast, Toasted Brown Malt, Caramel Malt, along with Black Malt from the U.K., lay the groundwork for this malty beer.”

Every beer on the menu lists what percentage of malt and hops are Michigan-sourced ingredients. There are also two ciders: a hard cider and a blueberry cider. Jacob Walsh, the bar manager, says that they will be selling liquor shortly, with creative cocktails.

## Southern-inspired Food

As for the food side of things, Carl Eskridge is the general manager and executive chef. His idea was to serve Texas-style barbecue and Southern-inspired cuisine. For instance, they have alligator bites on the menu all the time, and sometimes some rattlesnake. They have fried pickles, Southwestern shrimp, jalapeno

cornbread, and pork carnitas tacos. The restaurant is currently going through 40 briskets per week, in addition to the baby back ribs and chopped barbecue pork that comes out of the smoker.

Bobby Elkins is the sous chef. He is originally from Fort Wayne, Indiana, but has lived in Manistee for quite awhile now; he worked for seven years at Manistee’s Little River Casino and two years before that at Battle Creek’s Firekeeper’s Casino, which he says is a completely from-scratch kitchen. This was good preparation, he says, since 98 percent of what comes out of the North Channel kitchen is made from scratch, too—the potato chips, the tortilla chips, the sauces, the dressings, almost everything.

Elkins says that Eskridge wrote the menu, and Elkins helped to tweak it.

“We’ve been fine-tuning it together,” Elkins says. “For instance, we wanted the brisket to be absolutely perfect before opening.”

Every benchmark that they have set so far has been surpassed, Elkins says, and so their benchmarks are going up every week, as their food has been in high demand. And there is no wondering why—it is good. And it is different from what most others in the area are serving.

“There are a couple of places nearby, like Ludington, that are doing Memphis-style barbecue,” Elkins says. “But we are doing Texas- or Louisiana-style, with a heavy dry rub. I call it ‘mop barbecue sauce,’ because it’s thin. And coffee is the main ingredient.”

The burgers are ground in-house, and they contain 50 percent chuck and 50 percent brisket.

“Most places you go, the blend is 70-30,” Elkins explains. “And we use a heavy grind—some would call it a ‘rough grind.’ You know how typically a beef patty at a restaurant is like a meatloaf-like consistency? Well, ours is heavier in texture, more like a steak.”

When you go, make sure to order the Bacon Slaw Burger, which comes with homemade bacon jam, creamy Southern coleslaw, crispy-fried shaved onion, and white cheddar, served on a brioche bun with lettuce, tomato, and onion. Just make sure to grab a napkin or two, as the huge, super-tasty treat takes two hands to grip and oozes with each bite. Seriously: the coleslaw is the creamiest slaw that this writer has ever tasted, and the bacon jam is delightful—to make one quart, it takes two bounds of bacon, seven jalapenos, and one red pepper. But the result is “all sweet, no heat,” Elkins says. (The jam has been so popular that they are thinking of bottling it and selling it.)

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# Moon

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month, round-the-world trip with his wife, Jeannette Wildman, back in 2011. “Readers say that *Travels With My Wife* is as much a love story as a travel adventure... Funny and informative, it’s a primer on backpacking as a low-cost style of adventure travel that has been embraced by hundreds of thousands of wanderers of all ages,” reads the book’s description on Amazon.

### From Non-fiction to (Historical) Fiction

Just three months ago, in September, Downes published his recent opus, *Windigo Moon: A Novel of Native America*, a fictional account of life in the Upper Great Lakes region (Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Western Ontario), set 400 years ago.

*Windigo* is Downes’s first full-length foray into the world of fiction, but the epic has its roots in a short story that he wrote and put aside 25 years ago, until his daughter urged him to enter the 2014 Art Prize writing competition, which he won.

The tale that began with a native Ojibwe hunter in prehistoric Upper Peninsula, now, in novel form, spans 31 years—beginning in 1588 and encompassing the Little Ice Age, the first fatal contagious diseases that accompanied the “Wdjibbon (the “shadow men” or “men without color”)—and an epic love-triangle story, not to mention the trials, tribulations, exploits, and customs of the native population during that era.

The Ojibwe (also known as the Chippewa), the second-largest tribal group in North America, were leaders of the huge territory from the Hudson Bay to the Great Plains and were never conquered by the foreign invaders. Thus, during his extensive research for his novel, Downes was amazed that no one had written about native life in this area before the onset of white “civilization” and the loss of tribal lands.

Downes calls the devastation of the tribes “a disaster of Biblical proportions.” Prior to 1600, the Ojibwe numbered from 20,000 to possibly 100,000, but by the time the British traders appeared in the 1760s, the population had diminished to a few thousand—this after an 11,000-year habitation. Violent events, dispersals, and relocation; diseases against which the tribes had no immunities; tribal warfare and horrific conditions of severe climates—all conspired to destroy the culture.

“As much as possible,” says the author, “I tried to base many of the incidents on historical anecdotes or anthropological observations of other tribal peoples. I put as much history as I could into *Windigo Moon*, but, ultimately, it’s a work of fiction about people banding together during tough times.”

Downes researched more than 50 books, becoming immersed in and inspired by the life and mores of the time. Among others, he credits particularly: Charles Mann’s *1491*, David Grann’s *The Lost City of Z*, and Tony Horowitz’s *A Voyage Long and Strange*, as well as expressing gratitude to the many people who helped in his research, including his Anishinaabemowin-language instructor, Isadore Bebamikawe-Toulouse, for his efforts to preserve the native language and culture.

Phillip Bailey, a member of the Great Wolf Clan and the Grand River Band and the Grand Traverse Band with connections to Benzie County, praises the book. (Remember that I wrote an article for *The Betsie Current* back in 2015 about Phillip Bailey; read that article at [bit.ly/1JPMfN3](http://bit.ly/1JPMfN3))

“Mr. Downes has created a world that might have been—a possible view of Native People in North America, before European colonists, full of the hardships and struggles that they faced,” Bailey says. “Mr. Downes’s

description of native language, culture, and outlook is both respectful and accurate. His esteem for native culture is commendable. A great story and read.”

### Story Summary

The book’s heroes and heroines, known as the Anishinaabek or ‘True People’ as they called themselves, were communal, even symbiotic, in that subsisting on one’s own was, effectively, impossible.

“Spirituality wasn’t just a belief for the Anishinaabek; it colored everything they did each day of their lives,” Downes says “They believed in the inter-connectedness of all things and that manitous, or spirits, lived in everything from trees and rocks to their weapons and hunting tools.”

The individual characters that populate Downes’s saga are unforgettable, with vivid depictions of their personalities and physicality. Hunters and fishermen, history buffs, those who love romances—all will appreciate and enjoy this book. There is a lot going on in these 304 pages, but the action flies.

The novel is set in a world of magic and mystery “in which animals gave their lives so that the People might live.” Readers will travel with the clan to the bleak time of the Starving Moon, when the winter stores are exhausted and only the first signs of spring appear (nothing yet edible), through the Maple Sugar Moon in early spring, to the invasion of flies in the summer. (A lot of smoke was the only way to keep the biters at bay, we are informed, plus the smearing of mud, bear grease, or the juice of wild onions on the body.)

The lovers, Ashagi (Blue Heron) and Misko (Red Moon) fuel the plot, with their adventures and deep enduring passion. There is also Nahme, who saved the clan one spring, since a single sturgeon could feed the band for three days.

The eponymous ‘windigo’ is a cannibal that visits “desperate souls at the black ebb of hunger.” To ‘go windigo,’ that is, ‘to eat one’s own kind,’ was taboo, despite starvation and famine, and the penalty was death or banishment—a slower form of death, since no member of the clan could survive for long without the group. Downes’s windigo, revealed later in the novel, is an integral part of the story.

As a tribute to Benzie County, where Downes and his wife have enjoyed life in their cottage on Little Platte Lake for the last 22 years, the story concludes in a setting that is familiar to local readers:

“...on the third morning after a night of trembling with cold, Ogaa and his companions beheld two islands and a great mountain of golden sand on a far shore... Mountains of sand rose up as they paddled on... and then a great golden bear took shape in a towering dune, overlooking the lake like a sentinel.” The Old Man then narrates the renowned legend, and “that summer the Amik clan began the work to establish a new village on the creek south of the Sleeping Bear, a creek that was ‘bedeviled’ by otters.”

Downes is currently working on a prequel, *He Who Outruns the Wolves*, about the clash between Native Americans and Spanish conquistadors.

*At his promotional book talks around the country, Downes offers—in addition to a lecture—a slideshow of 109 pictographs by artist, author, and traveler George Caitlin (1796-1872), who specialized in portraits of Native Americans in the Old West. To learn more about this witty gregarious writer, photographer, and traveler, visit his websites and/or his Windigo Moon blog: PlanetBackpacker.net or RobertDownes.com. His books are available on Amazon or in any of our area bookstores, and look for his latest work coming soon, this time a thriller, Bicycle Hobo, which Downes calls a reinvention of Moby Dick.*



Elkins says that he has been wanting to do a bar-bque place in downtown Manistee for quite some time now.

“Funny story, but I actually almost bought this same building before they did,” he laughs.

Ultimately, Elkins credits his friends for persuading him to apply for the position at North Channel.

“I’m the beer junkie; I’m the barbecue guy,” he says. “So my friends pushed me to apply for this job—and man, they were right.”

**Live Entertainment**

The brewery can hold about 150 people at capacity—about 75 in the front room with the bar and a dozen tables, and another 75 or so in the back room that is filled mainly with booths.

Jacob Walsh, the bar manager, has been working for North Channel for the past few months, preparing for the big opening. Raised in New York and having lived for a decade in southern Florida where he managed restaurants, Walsh moved to Manistee two years ago and has been working in the restaurant industry just across the river.

“I love food and beverage management,” he says. “I love good food. I love good beer. I take lots of pride in the local community.”

What is his favorite North Channel beer? The Bock.

Walsh is excited about the upcoming entertainment schedule. Throughout the winter, he says, they plan to have live shows, such as music and stand-up comedy. They are also planning a New Year’s Eve party, with details still in the works. (Check their Facebook page for updates.)

**Old Building Gets New Life**

North Channel Brewing Company is located in a 21,000-square-foot, three-story, 100-year-old building that sits on just over half an acre. The building was once Manistee Manufacturing, a furniture company that began in the 1890s. At one time, the building encompassed the whole block, according to the brewery’s website, but it had several large fires that eventually led to the company’s shuttering. The building has had several uses since—all manufacturing through the early 2000s, though it was most recently used as a resale store until 2010. Then the dilapidated building sat vacant for many years.

The structure was in worse shape than the business partners originally thought,

so it took eight months of construction



The new North Channel Brewing Company is 8,000 square feet of space on the first floor of a 100-year-old renovated building in Manistee. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

to get the brewery ready. But there are further plans for the building: the brewery and restaurant are located in 8,000 square feet on the first floor, and there are 13,000 square feet comprising 14 apartments upstairs, though those will not be ready until 2018.

The brewery’s soft opening was Friday, November 10, and this event—complete with a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony—was geared toward the many contractors, vendors, and city officials who had helped along the way. Saturday, November 11, marked the official grand opening to the general public.

More good news came at the end of November, when *MLive* reported that North Channel will receive \$970,000 from the state to complete the \$5.4 million building restoration, turning it into both a commercial and retail development. The Michigan Community Revitalization Program award is dependent upon the project creating at least 20 jobs that pay an average of \$18 per hour, which it already is doing at the brewery. Additional funds for the project are coming from a loan from Shelby State Bank, historic tax credits, and 13 percent of the project’s costs are coming from the City of Manistee.

*North Channel Brewing Company is located at 86 Washington Street, across the street from the Farmers’ Market and next to the Manistee River at the drawbridge. You might even look out the window to see a pile of cars lined up at the lifted bridge as the occasional freighter goes by. Learn more at NorthChannelBrewing.com.*

Whatever life brings, we’re **here.**



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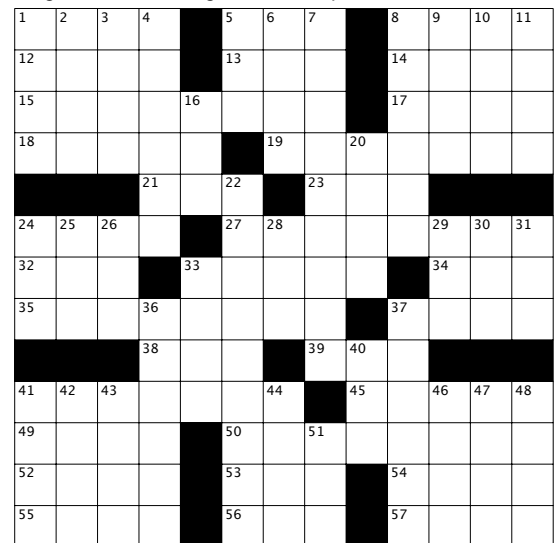
**Betsie Current Crossword** by Eliza Prager and Dan Flanagan exclusively for The Betsie Current

**ACROSS**

1. Talon
5. Verizon competitor
8. They bow after a play
12. Exceptional or unexceptional, depending on context
13. "Obviously!"
14. Opera highlight
15. Badger, e.g.
17. Manager Weaver of the Baseball Hall of Fame
18. Slash in a bowling alley
19. Nature artist Gwen
21. 80’s band \_\_\_ Leppard
23. Letters before an alias
24. Traveling worker
27. Position at "The Betsie Current"
32. "I \_\_\_ you an apology."
33. It might result in 20/20 vision
34. 401(k) alternative
35. Wind and rain
37. Noggin
38. Acorn dropper
39. Oft stubbed appendage
41. Animal in tall tales?
45. Cuban music genre
49. See 48-Down
50. Blow a fuse, say
52. "Don't give me that \_\_\_, young man!"
53. "Losing My Religion" band
54. Actress Shawkat of "Arrested Development"
55. Snow day gear
56. Prefix with athlete
57. Skipper’s place

**DOWN**

1. Some corporate bigwigs
2. Lifeless
3. Former tennis star Kournikova
4. Goofball



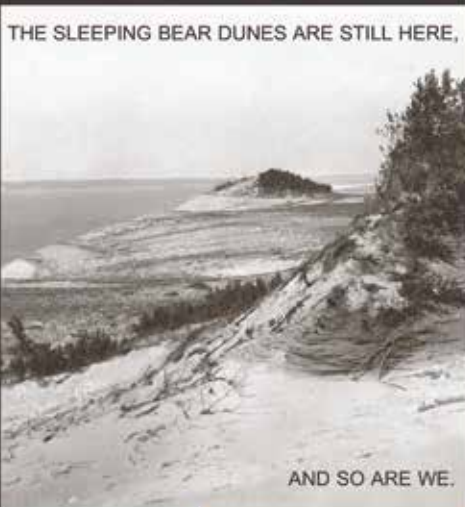
December 2017 | Solution at [dandecrosswords.com/gwen](http://dandecrosswords.com/gwen)

5. "Much \_\_\_ About Nothing"
6. Territory
7. TV’s Frasier Crane, for one
8. Ubiquitous salad
9. "I think I smell \_\_\_"
10. She gives a funny response when asked "What is zero divided by zero?"
11. Mineral in baby powder
16. Flock formation
20. "I get it, I get it."
22. City on M-22
24. Gardening tool
25. The most literate of Pooh’s friends
26. Jerry Seinfeld’s "\_\_\_ Movie"
28. Superlative suffix
29. Reason for a shootout
30. Schoolboy Rowe stat
31. Raced
33. It might be red in October
36. Belly-ached
37. Crystal Lake village
40. Hockey great Bobby
41. Tennis highlights
42. Longtime FOX series, for short
43. Philosopher Descartes
44. Happily \_\_\_ after
46. Inside man
47. Skedaddle
48. Resident of 49-Across
51. Record label that famously fired the Sex Pistols



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THE SLEEPING BEAR DUNES ARE STILL HERE,  
AND SO ARE WE.



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## CONSTANTLY FLOWING

### Mondays

Circle Time for infants and toddlers at the Benzie Shores District Library at 630 Main Street in Frankfort. Infants and toddlers (+ their parents/caregivers) will have fun rhyming and moving with Miss Char, as well as a focus on repetition. Each week, children build their repertoire of rhymes, both old and new. There is an informal playgroup following Circle Time. 10-11am.

Yoga class for seniors led at no charge by Michelle Leines at The Gathering Place Senior Center. 10579 Main Street in the Honor Plaza. 231-525-0600. 10-11am.

Pilates with Anna at the Oliver Art Center. annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 10:15am.

A volunteer will be at the Benzie Shores District Library to repair clothing while you wait. No formal wear or upholstery; no drop-offs. 10:30am-12pm.

Cards at The Gathering Place. We have a dedicated group of card sharks who play Pinochle weekly during lunch, but we aren't limited to Pinochle: grab your friends and join us for euchre, cribbage, and rummy, too! 12-1pm.

### Tuesdays

Sunrise Rotary Club's weekly meetings are over breakfast at the Cold Creek Inn of Beulah. Come join us! 7:30-9am.

Stretch and tone with Jean at the Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com. 9-10am.

Gentle yoga in the barn at the First Congregational Church of Benzonia. All levels welcome. Donation. 10am.

Technology Tuesday: Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort offers assistance with technology. Learn how to download ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines to your personal devices. 10am-12pm.

Music by the Melody Makers at The Gathering Place. 10:30am-1:30pm.

Knitting Group at Benzonia Public Library. A "knit-along" project for those who want to work on the same project, or bring your own project if you prefer; we'd love your company! Need help? If you are having troubles with a current project, bring it along and we'll help you get it straightened out. Call Michele at 231-383-5716 with any questions. 1-3pm.

Chair Yoga class for \$5 at The Gathering Place. 3:30-4:30pm.

Yoga with Kari at Pleasant Valley Community Center in Arcadia. Open to all levels; \$13 per session. 231-383-1883. 5:30-7pm.

Yoga flow with Lauren at the Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com. 6pm.

### Wednesdays

Stay Fit with Doris at The Gathering Place. 10-11am.

Open art studio at the Oliver Art Center. Participants are strongly encouraged to become members and to contribute a donation of \$2 per visit. 10am-4pm.

Gentle yoga with Lauren at the Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com. 10:15am.

Bingo at The Gathering Place. Cost is \$1 per card or bring a prize. 12:30-1:30pm.

Yoga with Kari at the Oliver Art Center. Open to all levels; \$13 per session. 231-383-1883. 5:30-7pm.

Stormcloud Brewing Company's Trivia Night is here again: the Fall Trivia Tournament began Wednesday, October 25, and continues through Wednesday, December 20, excluding Wednesday, November 22, the night before Thanksgiving. Teams of up to four people compete in an eight-week series for weekly prizes and overall grand prizes. Teams may join at any time and can attend as many games

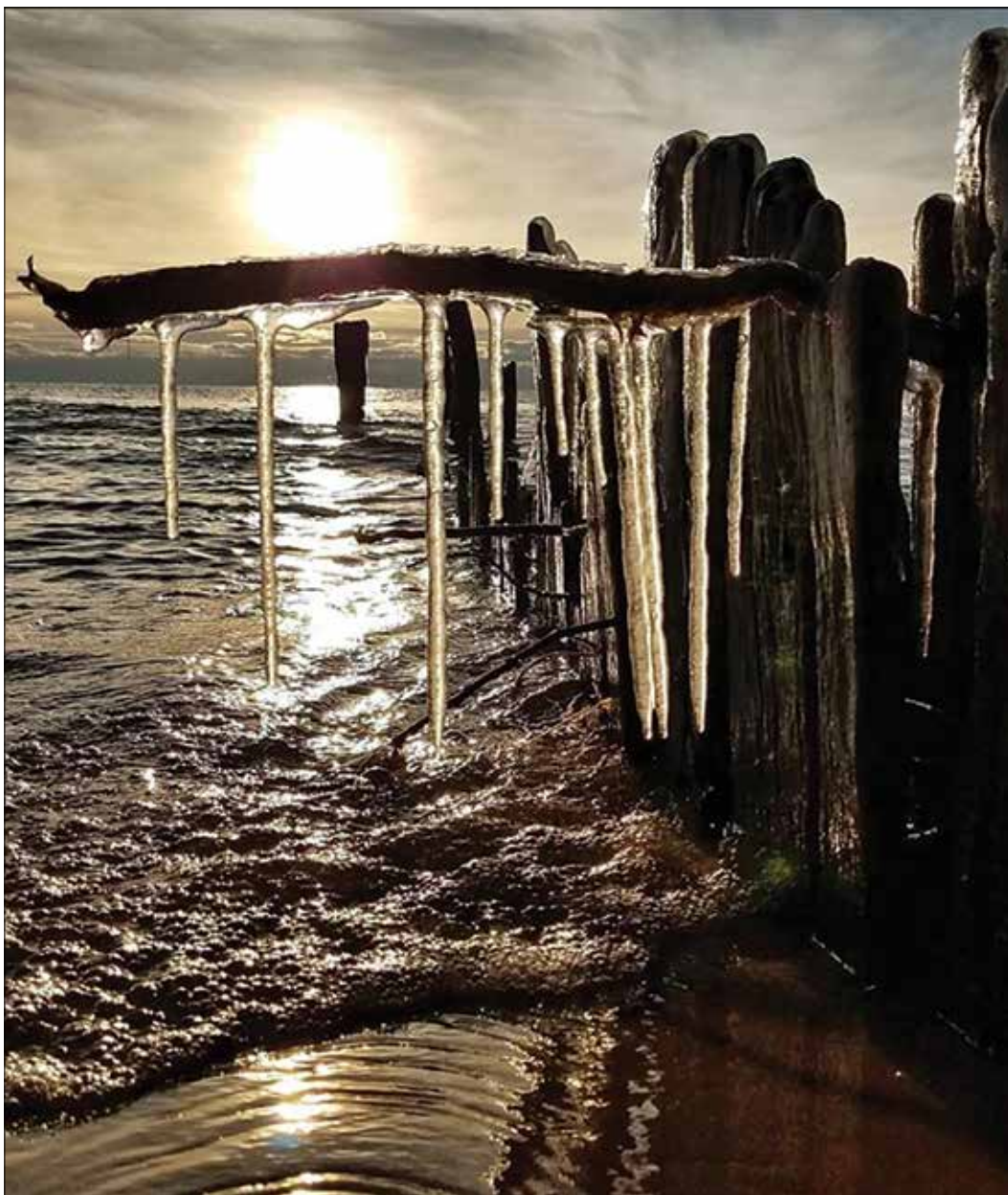
clay, glaze, and firings. 3:30-6:30pm.

Yoga with Kari at the Ware Farm of Bear Lake. Open to all levels; \$13 per session. 231-383-1883. 4-5:30pm.

Open Mic Night at St. Ambrose Cellars, hosted by Jim & Wanda Curtis, beginning at 6pm. (Also enjoy 35% off howler and growler discounts all day!)

Open Mic Night at The Cabbage Shed in Elberta. 8pm.

### Fridays



"Winter's Bone" by Noah Sorenson.

as they choose—you did not need to start on the first date. Begins at 7:30 pm.

### Thursdays

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. annamallien@gmail.com 9-10am.

Adult coloring at Benzie Shores District Library. All materials provided. 10-11am.

Bible Study at The Gathering Place. 10-11am.

Bunco at The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

Computers with Carol at the Darcy Library at 7238 Commercial Street in Beulah. Ask Carol computer-related questions. Read to Denny, the new puppy! 1-5pm.

Everyone is welcome to attend Open Clay Studio at the Oliver Art Center, including families! Per 4-visit block (12 hours total, used how you like), \$60 fees cover one adult or one adult and child pair. It can be as fun or focused as a student prefers, and all skill levels should consider taking part. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times in the studio. Price includes: 25 pounds of

Yoga flow with Lauren at the Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com. 10:15am.

Bunco at The Gathering Place. 9:30-10:30am.

Wii Bowling at The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

### Saturdays

Body Sculpting on the ball with Deanne at Oliver Art Center. annamallien@gmail.com 10:15.

\*Yoga classes at Discover YOU Yoga and Fitness in Frankfort every day of the week, except Saturday. For a complete schedule and more information on classes and rates, visit discoveryyogami.com.

## ON DECK

### Friday, December 8

Heikki Lunta Party at Iron Fish Distillery. It looks like Old Man Winter (Heikki Lunta) is finally ready to get the snow falling, so let's celebrate with happy-hour prices, special cocktails, food truck, live music, and dancing

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and singing around the giant bonfire. (Heikki Lunta loves this!) 4-10pm.

**Friday, December 8**

Mistletoe Magic holiday shopping and dining in downtown Frankfort. Participating merchants include: Anet & Ollie's, Betsie Bay Furniture, The Bookstore, Corner Toy Store, Dinghy's, Crystal Lake Adventure Sports, Ellie Harold Studio & Gallery, Frankfort True Value Hardware, The Garden Theater (half off movie tickets for the 7:30pm showing with any receipt from downtown business), Hull's of Frankfort, Kilwins, Lynn & Perin, Petals & Perks, Stormcloud Brewing Company. There will be discounts, prizes, samples, live music, and Santa and Mrs. Claus. Come enjoy a night of holiday shopping and fun in beautiful downtown Frankfort! 5-8pm.

**Friday, December 8**

Shenanigans, featuring Cheryl Wolfram and Jeri Dziabuda, performs live in the St. Ambrose Cellars tasting room. 6-9pm.

**Friday, December 8**

Dale Wicks is a Grand Rapids-based singer/songwriter with a sound that borders on country and rock. He has an excellent catalog of original songs but also knows some great covers. He not only sings and plays guitar, he can also throw the harmonica into the mix like nobody's business! Stormcloud Brewing Company in downtown Frankfort. 8-10pm.

**Friday-Sunday, December 8-10**

The Benzie County Community Chorus will hold its annual Christmas Concerts. On Friday and Saturday, the concert will take place at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church at 8190 Lincoln Road, Beulah. On Friday, the concert will begin at 7:30pm, and on Saturday, the concert will begin at 3pm. On Sunday, the concert will begin at 7:30pm at the Frankfort United Methodist Church at 537 Crystal Avenue/M-22. A free-will offering will be taken to assist with chorus expenses. Join us as we immerse ourselves in the beauty of the season!

**Saturday, December 9**

Christmas Magic in Downtown Beulah is always the second Saturday in December. Breakfast with Santa and Frosty at the Hungry Tummy goes from 9-10:30am. The Darcy Library's cookie sale at the Beulah Trailhead goes from 10am-2pm. The Benzonia Public Library Holiday Party in the Upper Level of the Mills Community house is from 11am-1pm and will have family-fun activities, Christmas carols, crafts, stories, refreshments, and a puppy show. From 3-5pm, there will be free family activities in downtown Beulah at the Beulah Trailhead: art project, face-painting, cookie-decorating, and Santa. Also during this time, there will be free horse-drawn wagon rides! At 4pm, the Benzie Central High School Choir will stroll through downtown Beulah, and they will be singing carols. At 5:15pm, the Christmas Magic Lighted Parade will begin. Stores will stay open late that day for holiday shopping. Learn more at CLCBA.org.

**Saturday, December 9**

Holiday Party & Craft Workshop at Benzonia Public Library. Refreshments throughout the event. Stories and carols from 11-11:30am, a hilarious puppet show from 11:30am-12pm, a festive photo booth from 12-1pm, as well as ornament/craft workshop and gift-making and -wrapping during that time. Call 231-882-4111 for more information.

**Saturday, December 9**

Coldwell Banker Schmidt in Benzonia is hosting an event called "Celebrating Our Home for the Holidays." Please join us for food, music, and photos with Santa. There will also be Christmas trees and wreaths for sale. All profits from wreath sales will go to BACN. No admission fee. 12-4pm.

**Saturday, December 9**

The annual holiday party for the Benzie County Democrats will take place again at Grow Benzie, on M-115 between Benzonia and Frankfort. Good food, socializing, and music are the order of the evening. The event is a potluck, with some meat and

non-alcoholic beverages being provided by Benzie Dems. Please bring a dish to pass; your own plate, cup, and silverware; and your own alcoholic beverage, if desired. We will continue our tradition of collecting items or check donations for St. Philip's Episcopal Church, which serves families with children. Participation is optional. This year, they have asked for gifts for ages 7-17: gift cards to Target, Walmart, Amazon, and Meijer are particularly good. Gifts to the pantry are tax-deductible. If you don't want to shop but want to contribute, a check can be made out to St. Philip's Episcopal Church-Beulah. We look forward to seeing you! 5:30-9pm.

**Saturday, December 9**

Rob Coonrod is a guitarist and singer/songwriter hailing from Interlochen. He studied guitar at Interlochen Arts Academy and then at the California Institute of the Arts, and he has taken influences from his many travels abroad to Europe and South America. Rob spent his 20s in Los Angeles playing music, and he has toured all over the United States and Europe as a solar act. He has played with bands including Blues Traveler and 100 Monkeys. He currently lives in Traverse City and plays weekly solo shows, as well as with his funk-rock band Capybara. He will take the stag at St. Ambrose Cellars tasting room. 6-9pm

**Sunday, December 10**

Storm The Mic/Open-Mic Night, hosted by local singer/songwriter Blake Elliott. Stormcloud Brewing Company. 6-9pm.

**Monday, December 11**

The Benzie County Players will hold auditions for Neil Simon's *California Suite* beginning at 5:30pm.

**Tuesday, December 12**

Hanukka/Chanuka begins in the evening.

**Friday, December 15**

Alfredo Improv returns to the St. Ambrose Cellars stage. 6-9pm.

**Saturday, December 16**

4th annual story-writing contest to celebrate the release of "Gerald's Talking Dog," a Belgian Rye Dubbel fermented with a blend of Michigan sweet and tart cherries. All contest entries will be read by a panel of judges. The top three stories will then be presented at a public reading in the pub on Saturday, December 16, at 7:30pm. Contest Details: Each essay submission should be a creative undertaking, meant to captivate and entertain, beginning with the following title and first line. "Gerald's Talking Dog loves cherries. That's all he ever talks about..." The rest of the story is up to the writer to spin the tail in 500 words or less. (All story submissions are due by Monday, December 4.) 1st Place Prizes: 2018 Cloudspotter Membership, \$100 Stormcloud Gift Card, Stormcloud Growler, and 5 pounds of dried cherries from Graceland Fruit. 2nd Place Prizes: \$50 Stormcloud Gift Card, Stormcloud Growler. 3rd Place Prize: \$25 Stormcloud Gift Card, Stormcloud Crowler. The top three stories will also receive publication in *The Betsie Current*. Read past winning entries: [betsiecurrent.com/index.php/tag/geralds-talking-dog/](http://betsiecurrent.com/index.php/tag/geralds-talking-dog/)

**Saturday, December 16**

Barefoot Music: Jennie Rae and the guys (Nathon Lane on guitar; Phil Coryell on harmonicas, BeeJay Reffit on bass) always show up with the good vibes that are sure to put a smile on your face! Soulful, acoustic twists on popular songs spanning decades of the top-40 countdown. From Frank Sinatra to the Red Hot Chili Peppers, but all 100% Barefoot music style! St. Ambrose Cellars. 6-9pm.

**Wednesday, December 20**

Hanukka/Chanuka ends in the evening.

**Thursday, December 21**

Winter Solstice: shortest day of the year, longest night of the year.

**Sunday, December 24**

Christmas Eve.

**Monday, December 25**

Christmas Day.

**Tuesday December 26**

Kwanzaa begins.

**Sunday, December 31**

New Year's Eve.

**Monday, January 1**

New Year's Day.

**Monday, January 1**

Kwanzaa ends.



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# Snowshow the Dunes

Holiday and Saturday snowshoe hikes this winter

By Staff Reports

With snow in the forecast, park rangers are beginning to get snowshoes out so that visitors can explore Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore by foot this winter.

Not only is snowshoeing easy, fun, and good exercise, it is also an activity that can be enjoyed by all ages. The ranger-led hikes are mildly strenuous, yet they proceed at a leisurely pace for only one and a half miles, at the most.

All hikes will begin with rangers giving an introduction and basic snowshoeing instructions at the Philip A. Hart Visitor Center in Empire, and then everyone will travel by car to the trailhead or to the area of the National Lakeshore that has been pre-selected for that day. Once there, the rangers will help participants to learn about the Park's unique features and winter's effect on them by exploring and discovering clues on-site. Be prepared and plan to be outside for about two hours. Dress in layers and wear waterproof boots, to be most comfortable.

Snowshoes will be loaned at no charge to participants who do not have their own. These hikes are free, but participants do need a park-entrance pass or an annual park pass to join in the fun.

Reservations are required, whether participants borrow snowshoes from the National Lakeshore or have their own. To cancel a reservation, please call the National Lakeshore, so that visitors on the waiting list can be contacted to participate in the hike.

*Ranger-led snowshoe hikes will be offered on Wednesday, December 27, at 1 p.m.; Friday, December 29 at 10 a.m.; Saturday, December 30 at 1 p.m.; and then on Saturdays at 1 p.m. from January 6 through March 17. Meet at the National Lakeshore's Philip A. Hart Visitor Center in Empire. Please call 231-326-4700, extension 5010, for details and to make reservations. For more in-depth information about Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, please visit [www.nps.gov/sb](http://www.nps.gov/sb).*

## Fixing the Platte

Sleeping Bear Dunes announces Platte River Mouth restoration and access plan

By Staff Reports

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore superintendent Scott Tucker recently announced the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Platte River Mouth Restoration and Access Plan/Environmental Assessment (EA). The National Park Service (NPS) has selected the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2) presented in the EA.

The Platte River is located in the southern portion of the National Lakeshore and discharges into Lake Michigan. Benzie County owns and manages a recreational boat launch at Platte River Point, approximately 900 feet upstream from the river mouth, at the end of Lake Michigan Road.

Dredging between the boat launch and river mouth has been performed regularly since 1968 by the NPS or the State of Michigan. Dredging has typically occurred after Labor Day, primarily at the sand bars at the river mouth. A large quantity of stockpiled dredge spoils (sand and gravel, removed from the river) is located near the mouth of the river on the eastern side. Dredging of the river and continued deposition of spoils on the shore has caused negative environmental impacts.

Under the Selected Alternative, the NPS will no longer conduct dredging of the river. Existing dredge-spoil piles along

the river bank will be removed, and the river banks will be restored to a more natural condition. Funding received through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will be used to begin developing the river/

beach restoration plan.

Recreational access to Platte Bay will remain available via the existing boat ramp and Lake Michigan Road, owned and maintained by Benzie County. Without dredging, ease of use for boaters will be more dependent upon current lake levels, the location of the river mouth, and the boating equipment involved. Boating on Lake Michigan has inherent risks, and all boaters must take proper precautions, including gauging their ability to successfully negotiate launch sites and shallow near-shore waters.

*The EA, FONSI, and a summary of public comments received are available at: [Parkeplanning.nps.gov/platte](http://Parkeplanning.nps.gov/platte).*



Surveying at the Platte River. Photo courtesy of the Glen Arbor Sun.



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