

November 3, 2021

Dear Wakasa Memorial Committee:

Thank you for your October 25th letter delivered to us via email. Please consider this an official response. Moving the Wakasa Monument has caused us to take a hard look at ourselves and our actions and the impact on our community, which includes you. This has been a wrenching learning process and one that could not be hurried. In retrospect there are so many things we wish could have been handled differently. With your support, we would like to continue a healing process and to repair and build trust so that we can work together with Topaz descendants and the broader community to soften the grief and pain that we have inadvertently caused and move forward together.

The Topaz Museum Board is pleased the WMC is agreeable that three representatives from the Board and three representatives from the WMC form the foundation of a planning committee to discuss a community memorial ceremony in April 2023 to mark the 80th anniversary of Mr. Wakasa's death. This joint committee could also add members by mutual agreement to include the broader Japanese American and Topaz stakeholder community. In addition, the Topaz Museum Board proposes that this group's responsibilities also extend to future plans for the Wakasa monument and the excavation site.

We appreciate your suggestion to begin working with the National Park Service and have already reached out to Justin Henderson for his team's expertise in assessing the monument. Although our immediate priority is to protect it during the winter, this aligns with our plan to conduct an evaluation of the monument for long-term conservation. Justin has indicated that he and his team would like to conduct their evaluation this month. We would like to invite two members of the WMC to join us in Delta, Utah at that time. We will be happy to share unedited video and photos of the evaluation, as well as any final reports generated by the NPS. In the interest of moving forward, we will not be providing visual documentation of the July 27, 2021 relocation of the monument as there are concerns that the video may be edited in ways that portray the process in an unfavorable manner. We believe that the NPS evaluation of the monument with WMC representatives onsite should suffice. We will keep you apprised of Justin's plans to visit Delta.

Since the Topaz Museum Board is hopeful that our discussions with the WMC can result in productive outcomes, we believe that any discussion of mediation and of the identification of a specific mutually acceptable mediator is premature. In the unlikely event our hopes are misplaced, we would be open at a later time to consider, together with WMC, a facilitated process to expedite a way forward.

With respect to WMC's desire for the Topaz Museum Board to formally recognize WMC as one of the voices of the community and of stakeholders, please be assured that we do, and we have taken WMC's criticisms and suggestions to heart. We also pledge to engage in regular and direct communications with WMC and to seriously consider its recommendations. However, with respect to WMC's request that the Topaz Museum Board enter into a "Memorandum of Agreement," we cannot enter into any contractual commitment which relinquishes the Board's legally mandated discretionary and decision-making authority. As a non-profit corporation bound by the laws of the State of Utah, Board members have non-delegable corporate and fiduciary duties, and are ultimately legally accountable to discharge those duties. Furthermore, no matter how well-intentioned, an MOA with WMC would set a precedent for other groups to request their own MOAs which likewise would displace the board's decision-making

responsibility. In spite of our inability to agree to an MOA with WMC, we want to assure you that we are committed to working in good faith with the joint committee, mindful that the Museum and its Board members would face serious repercussions from the community and all Topaz stakeholders if we do not do so. The TMB will consider recommendations made by the joint committee very seriously, but ultimately will comply with Utah law and make the decision as to how to proceed.

In closing, we would like to address a number of concerns. Although we would like to work together in a conciliatory fashion, the negative portrayals of the Topaz Museum in print, visual, and social media, have impacted the museum's future in that, professionals in the archaeology and conservation fields have indicated they prefer not to help us with the Wakasa Monument because of concerns that their own credibility and reputations may be targeted and impugned. As Board members, we are concerned that our invitation to witness the NPS evaluation and our desire to be transparent about the reports and visual documentation could result in future negative commentary. We are not seeking forgiveness for our previous actions, but hope there is an acknowledgement that we are working hard to improve and to atone for what has happened. As a sign of good faith on your part, we request that WMC's condemnatory statements and portrayals of the Topaz Museum and its Board members in a negative light cease so that we can progress and work together in a civil fashion and properly honor James Wakasa and all that this monument represents.

If you are amenable, we can begin next steps by naming the three representatives from the Topaz Museum Board and Wakasa Memorial Committee respectively and proceed to ask those members to join us as we move forward.

You may continue to send all future communications to our Board members; however, Topaz Museum Board member Scott Bassett will be our point person in coordinating communications with the Wakasa Memorial Committee. His email is spbassett53@gmail.com.

We respectfully request that WMC respond to this letter by November 20, 2021.

Sincerely,

Topaz Museum Board of Directors
Jane Beckwith, President
Lance Atkinson
Scott Bassett
Lorelei Draper
Mark Nelson
Rick Okabe
Hisashi Bill Sugaya
Teresa Thompson

cc:

Mike Reynolds, Regional Director, Interior Regions 6,7,8, National Park Service
Lisa P. Davidson, Acting Program Manager, National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service
Justin Henderson, Heritage Partnerships Program, Intermountain Region, NPS
Robert Nieweg, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Michelle Magalong, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation
Jennifer Ortiz, Director, Utah Division of State History

Chris Merritt, Utah State Historic Preservation Office
Carol Kawase, District Governor NCWNP, JACL
David Inoue, Executive Director, JACL
Jani Iwamoto, Utah State Senator, 4th District