



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**
Save the past. Enrich the future.

September 15, 2021

VIA EMAIL

Ms. Jane Beckwith and Members of the Board
Topaz Museum
P.O. Box 241
Delta, UT 84624

Re: Topaz Relocation Center, a National Historic Landmark

Dear Ms. Beckwith and Members of the Topaz Museum Board:

Thank you for sending a copy of the Topaz Museum's August 27, 2021, letter and other correspondence to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Congress chartered the National Trust in 1949 as a private, nonprofit membership organization to facilitate public participation in historic preservation, and to further the purposes of federal historic preservation laws. With the strong support of over one million members and supporters nationwide, the National Trust works to protect significant places representing our diverse cultural experience by taking direct action and inspiring broad public support.

First, it is the National Trust's understanding that on July 27 the Wakasa Monument was unearthed and its Memorial Site was disturbed by the Topaz Museum, although archaeologists had advised the Museum that the Wakasa Monument should best be left buried in the ground. Since July 27, the Topaz Museum has apologized for not consulting with Survivors, Descendants, the Japanese American community, or with the group of volunteer experts who convened in October 2020 after re-discovery of the Wakasa Monument. In the National Trust's experience, consulting with stakeholders and planning with experts would have reduced or avoided harm to the Wakasa Monument and its Memorial Site.

Second, in response to the Topaz Museum's August 27 letter, the National Trust for Historic Preservation asks whether the Museum, as the steward of Topaz, intends to consult with the communities of stakeholders and to plan with outside subject-matter experts as the Museum develops the future plans for protection, preservation, and interpretation of the Wakasa Monument, its Memorial Site, and the Topaz National Historic Landmark. The National Trust anticipates that experienced experts and interested stakeholders would be willing to help if the Museum were to ask. The National Trust for Historic Preservation offers to review drafts of plans for protection, preservation, and interpretation.

Third, the National Trust for Historic Preservation supports the newly formed Wakasa Memorial Committee's constructive six-step proposal for a collaborative solution with the

Topaz Museum. To that end, the National Trust highly recommends these initial steps by the Topaz Museum:

- Initiate a mediation process among the Topaz Museum and the Wakasa Memorial Committee, utilizing an independent, professional, and mutually acceptable mediator;
- Through mediation, establish a binding Memorandum of Agreement between the Topaz Museum and the Wakasa Memorial Committee, particularly to formalize communication, consultation, and shared decision making; and,
- That the Topaz Museum publicly commit to collaborate with the Wakasa Memorial Committee to jointly plan the best ways to protect, preserve, and interpret the Wakasa Monument, its Memorial Site, and the Topaz National Historic Landmark.

In the wake of July 27, it seems that purposeful change is necessary to rebuild trust with Survivors, Descendants, and the Japanese American community, and to jointly plan with the Wakasa Memorial Committee to protect, preserve, and interpret the unique and irreplaceable historic and cultural attributes of the Topaz National Historic Landmark.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation urges the Topaz Museum to commit itself to the Wakasa Memorial Committee's six-step proposal of a collaborative and transparent pathway forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Nieweg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rob Nieweg
Vice President, Preservation Services & Outreach
National Trust for Historic Preservation

cc: Wakasa Memorial Committee
Japanese American Citizens League
Utah State Historic Preservation Office
National Park Service