



June 6, 2022

Via email

Dear Topaz Museum Board,

This letter follows up to our request on April 28, 2022, that the Topaz Museum consider implementing a community archeology project at the Topaz NHL to study and gather data from the Wakasa Memorial excavation site. We believe all parties would agree that such a project offers benefits to the Delta community and also provides a positive opportunity for healing. We further support the offer from Utah's SHPO to convene stakeholder discussions to help us move forward.

#### 1. Community archaeology

As you know, community archeology is a relatively new field that offers the opportunity for local community members, students and other interested volunteers to work alongside professional archeologists to learn the techniques of unearthing cultural resources while sharing personal stories related to the history of the site.

It was pioneered at the Manzanar National Historic Site and has been extended to the NPS' Minidoka, Idaho, and Honouliuli, Hawai'i, National Historic Sites. Manzanar's Community Archeology Program began in 2003, engaging hundreds of volunteers from 9 years old to over 90s, and has won statewide, national and international acclaim, including a prestigious Excellence in Public Archaeology Programming award last year by the Society for American Archaeology.

Both the NPS and the Utah State Historic Preservation Officer have expressed strong support for bringing such a project to the Topaz NHL if the Topaz Museum Board agrees. The NPS has offered to develop a scope of work. Utah's State Historic Preservation Officer, Chris Merritt, has said that "the archaeology work that TMB and the NPS completed in the past year is a great start," and that he would be "happy to find a way for archaeology to be a conduit for healing, history preservation, and telling the whole story at Topaz."

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has offered the support of grant funding to help efforts to preserve the Topaz NHL, especially for a community archeology project at the Memorial Site. The NTHP has said it would welcome a grant application from the Topaz Museum Board.

With this powerful coalition of supporters, the Topaz Museum has an opportunity to organize and develop an exemplary community archeology program.

In addition, a Community Archeology project is a way to make progress on the recommendations in the NPS' assessment report that urge collaboration with stakeholders and to develop a site condition monitoring plan and preparation of an archeological research design.

We urge you to consider this opportunity to invite such a possibility.

#### 2. Wakasa Monument

We learned through a recent social media post that the Wakasa Monument remains on the wood pallet in the Museum courtyard, left as it was 10 months ago. It is a concern that the National Park Service's February 4 recommendations that the Museum Board consult with stakeholders regarding preservation of the Wakasa Monument have not yet been implemented.

The Utah SHPO has offered to facilitate a meeting with the Topaz NHL stakeholders. We suggest that the first order of business for the Museum Board, stakeholders, the Utah SHPO and the NPS, would be to initiate planning for the wooden frame to protect the Monument, as recommended by the NPS. Perhaps this effort could be included as part of a community archeology program.

Is the Museum able to arrange a date to convene such a meeting?

We respectfully request a response from the Board about the proposed community archeology project, and on implementing the NPS' recommendations on the memorial stone.

Sincerely,

**Wakasa Memorial Committee**

wakasamemorial.org

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Akemi Yamane Ina, Topaz Survivor, born at Topaz the day after Wakasa was killed

Kiyoshi Ina, Topaz Survivor

Toru Saito, Topaz Survivor

Hiroshi Shimizu, Topaz, Tule Lake, Crystal City Survivor; father, Iwao Shimizu, member of 1943 Wakasa Committee

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Barbara Takei, Tule Lake Descendant

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Wakasa Memorial Committee Advisory Council

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