



VIA EMAIL

March 2, 2022

Dear Topaz Museum Board:

1. We look forward to holding our next meeting. Would Weds. March 9 or Thursday March 10 be convenient? Or Weds. March 16 or Thurs. March 17? Please let us know and we will set up the Zoom.
2. We attach our response to the NPS report. When a date is confirmed, we would like to invite Justin Henderson of the NPS to attend our second meeting.
3. Did you receive the Wakasa Memorial Committee letter and draft press release emailed to you on Feb. 17?. We think it would be good to keep the community informed and wonder what you think about issuing a joint press release before the next meeting?

Thank you.

Wakasa Memorial Committee

WakasaMemorial@gmail.com

<https://wakasamemorial.org>

Kiyoshi Ina, Topaz Survivor

Toru Saito, Topaz Survivor

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

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

Lauren Araki, Topaz Descendant

Midori Hogg, Topaz Descendant

Patti Iiyama, Topaz Descendant

Claudia Katayanagi, Topaz Descendant

Kimiko Marr, Topaz Descendant

Mari Matsumoto, Topaz and Poston Descendant

Martha Nakagawa, Topaz, Tule Lake and Leupp Descendant

Gail Nanbu, Topaz Descendant

Barbara Suyehiro, Topaz Descendant

Diana Emiko Tsuchida, Topaz Descendant

Nancy Ukai, Topaz Descendant

Ruth Wakabayashi Kondo, Topaz Descendant
Bif Brigman, historian, Minidoka Pilgrimage former co-chair
Karen Kiyo Lowhurst, Heart Mountain Descendant
Chizu Omori, Poston Survivor
Emiko Omori, Poston Survivor
John Ota, Descendant of so-called “voluntary evacuees”
Barbara Takei, Tule Lake Descendant
Paul Tomita, Minidoka Survivor

Advisory Council (partial)

Tetsuden Kashima, Topaz Survivor, Professor Emeritus, American Ethnic Studies Department and Sociology, University of Washington
Masako Takahashi, Topaz Survivor, Takahashi Family Foundation
Satsuki Ina, Topaz Descendant; Tule Lake, Crystal City Survivor
Dr. Karen Korematsu, Topaz Descendant, Founder & Executive Director Fred T. Korematsu Institute
Stacey Camp, Archaeologist, Director of the Campus Archaeology Program, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Michigan State University
Roger Daniels, Charles Phelps Taft Professor Emeritus of History, University of Cincinnati
Art Hansen, Professor Emeritus History, Asian American Studies, California State University, Fullerton
Donald Teruo Hata, Gila River Survivor, Professor Emeritus of History, CSU Dominguez Hills
Tom Ikeda, Minidoka Descendant, Densho Founding Executive Director
Japanese American Citizens League, Northern California-Western Nevada-Pacific District
Michelle G. Magalong, University of Maryland Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow in Historic Preservation, President of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation
Roger Shimomura, Minidoka Survivor, Distinguished Professor Emeritus
Renee Tajima-Peña, Heart Mountain, Tule Lake, Gila River Descendant, UCLA Professor of Asian American Studies, filmmaker
Karen Umemoto, Manzanar Descendant, UCLA Professor of Asian American Studies and Urban Planning
Mary Urashima, Historian, author, *Historic Wintersburg*
Duncan Ryūken Williams, Buddhist priest and Professor of Religion/American Studies & Ethnicity, University of Southern California
Jay Xu, Director and CEO, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco

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
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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



To: Topaz Museum Board

From: Wakasa Memorial Committee

Date: March 2, 2022

Re: National Park Service report: "Central Utah Relocation Center (Topaz) National Historic Landmark Condition Assessment Report, January 2022"

Dear Topaz Museum Board,

We thank the Board for inviting the National Park Service to formally assess the Wakasa Monument and Memorial site on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, 2021. The Feb. 4, 2022 NPS condition report demonstrates that the Wakasa Monument and Memorial Site merit the highest level of care.

We state below (1) our understanding of the salient points of the NPS report; (2) our concerns about the Monument and Memorial site; and (3) our recommendations, informed by archaeologists and heritage preservationists.

I. NPS report salient points

1. Call for collaboration, consultation and consensus among stakeholders regarding decisions on the Monument and Memorial site

- Collaborative process and decisions. The NPS calls for a "*collaborative decision-making process*" and for "*future collaborative management decisionsthat take the philosophies and concerns of key stakeholders into account and builds support for the final outcome*" (p. 33).
- Consensus. The NPS calls for consensus, which goes beyond consultation, among stakeholders: "*Given the significance this site holds, it was important that there be consensus among stakeholders regarding how this location and artifacts found there should be treated and if further archeological investigation would be appropriate*" (p.10).
- Robust stakeholder consultation to understand "unique insights" of survivors, descendants, stakeholders. "Fundamental questions" regarding preservation

factors and to define historic and cultural values and significance must be undertaken with survivors, descendants and stakeholders, *“who possess unique insights and perspectives that enrich our historical understandings of Topaz and its legacy”* (p.11).

2. Monument: What are the archeological concerns?

- Vulnerability. The Monument stone is stored outdoors in the Topaz Museum courtyard. It remains *“vulnerable to damage and loss”* (p. 24). Fractures and networks of cracks are observed along the top ridge of the stone.
- Improvements to shed. The NPS assessment makes detailed recommendations for improvements to the protective shed that now covers the stone in order to alleviate thermal stress and other risks (p. 32).
- Need for new wood frame for stone. The NPS recommends that the stone be *“removed from the pallet and carpet fragment on which it currently sits and placed in a low-wooden frame”* (p. 32) to cradle and stabilize the stone on a fixed base.
- Two stone fragments. These fragments became detached *“at some point when the stone was placed on site at Topaz and when it was removed for placement at the Topaz Museum”* (p. 27).
- "Pile" of stone fragments and concrete pieces separated from the Monument at the time of removal. There are 40-50 pieces of basalt and concrete which were left behind at the site on July 27, 2021, which may be associated with the original Monument (p. 30).

3. How should the Monument be interpreted and preserved?

- Role of key stakeholders. Regarding the future treatment of the stone, *“There should be consultation among key stakeholders to better understand how the value and significance of the stone is defined”* (p. 33). *“The significance may be with the stone itself as an artifact that belongs in a museum, or it may be more closely connected to its role as a monument on the physical site and location from which it was removed...Future preservation strategies for the stone will depend upon clearly defining these values and significance so that future management decisions support and enhance them”* (p. 33).

4. Wakasa Memorial Site: what are the archeological concerns?

- Need for immediate stabilization. *“Erosion is a primary concern....Priority should be given to the immediate stabilization of the site to prevent further damage” such as that likely caused by intense flooding in August, 2021 (p. 33). “A shallow depression measuring approximately 7’ x 7-6” at its widest, marking the location where the stone was removed” is at risk of “further erosion around the depression ... as the backfill settles” (p. 29).*
- Need for monitoring plan. *“The NPS research team strongly recommends that the site associated with the monument is stabilized and that a site condition monitoring plan is developed to preserve and protect it” (p. 33). If there is increased visitation to the site, “it is recommended that a qualified archeologist with experience working at Japanese American confinement sites be consulted early in the planning process” (p. 34).*
- Artifacts exposed. As noted above, a “pile” of 40-50 fragments that “*may be associated” with the stone’s July 2020 removal*” are exposed (p. 30). A wide-mouth glass jar base was shown, presumably still at the site. (It was not clear if it was on the ground previously or was a result of the excavation).

5. What process is needed to determine Stewardship of the Monument and Memorial Site?”

- There is need for a process to determine future policies and actions. *If future interpretation, visitor access or additional archeological research is warranted, “an appropriate research strategy and collection policy would need to be clearly defined” with the engagement “of key stakeholder groups in these types of discussions” (p. 35).*

6. Moving forward: After the stone is protected and the site is stabilized, NPS recommends a process to determine future policies and actions and makes three specific recommendations for a monitoring plan, interpretive plan, and archaeological research design.

- **Monitoring Plan:** “The NPS research team strongly recommends that the site associated with the monument is stabilized and that a site condition monitoring plan is developed to preserve and protect it.”

- **Interpretive Plan:** “Should a decision be made to interpret the site which may result in increased visitation to this location and an increased potential to cause visitation-related damage, then it is recommended that a qualified archaeologist with experience working at Japanese American confinement sites be consulted early in the planning process.”
- **Archaeological Research Design:** “If, through consultation with stakeholder groups, the TMB identifies the need for more archaeological work at the site, even without added interpretation, a research design prepared by a qualified archaeologist would still be needed.

II. WMC Concerns

- Lack of consultation. The Topaz Museum Board issued a press release on Feb. 8, in which it summarized the NPS report. Yet in a meeting between three TMB members and three WMC members on Feb. 15, Wakasa committee members were surprised to learn that the Board had started to take remediation steps without consultation with WMC and stakeholders, a necessary step that was recommended by the NPS in its report. This communication lapse is concerning.
- Archaeological research and master plan. Such a plan is recommended by the NPS. WMC supports such an overall plan in order to avoid an ad hoc process of decision making and incremental actions.
- Stakeholder engagement. A future topic of discussion is how to engage stakeholders so that future decisions are made with full participation of stakeholders. This was discussed at the first TMB-WMC meeting as a potential topic of the second meeting.

III. What are the recommendations of the Wakasa Memorial Committee and Advisory Council regarding the NPS report?

- **WMC supports continued NPS research and involvement on the points described above.**
- **WMC calls for the following professional archeological research:**
 1. **Re-excavation of memorial site.** WMC strongly recommends that a full scientific re-excavation of the Wakasa Memorial Site be undertaken by the National Park Service as a follow-up study to the report. As the NPS report states: "Even with the stone's removal, opportunities remain to learn more about

the site of the Wakasa Monument." (p. 34). The absence of professional archeologists during the July 27, 2021, excavation meant that fine screening of the soil for artifacts, cremains or other mementoes did not take place. A professional re-excavation may uncover important historical and cultural artifacts that were left behind. For example, the report does not make clear whether the glass fragment (p.31) was on the ground before the stone's removal or was dug up and left behind on July 27, 2021. Other artifacts may be uncovered in a professional excavation. A re-excavation would need to be coordinated with the NPS recommendation to stabilize the site and halt erosion (p. 29).

Aside from information that would be gained, a formal scientific excavation also would be a meaningful gesture of healing and respect for survivors, descendants and stakeholders and acknowledge the importance of the historic stone and the National Historic Landmark site.

2. **Protection of site fragments and analysis.** The report does not discuss evidence of writing, or the absence of it, on the basalt and cement fragments left behind at the site. We request collection, protection and analysis of the fragments that are still left vulnerable on the ground at the site. Additionally, a glass fragment stamped with the mark of the Hazel-Atlas Glass Co. was recovered at the site (p. 31). It is not clear whether the glass artifact was dug up at the time of the July 27, 2021, removal. It is similar to those found at Manzanar, suggesting that floral offerings may have been made near the Monument and/or the death site.
3. **3D model of the Monument.** WMC recommends creating a 3D model of the stone in an effort to preserve it and capture details, including the possibility of writing, inscriptions or cultural markings.
4. **Analysis of all four facades of Monument.** WMC recommends examination of all surfaces and especially the side of the rock that is currently facing downward on the pallet to to better understand the artifact and to look for markings and other cultural inscriptions. This would require lifting the stone from its current position and perhaps should be undertaken when the cradle is fabricated and the stone moved.
5. **Research on potential origins of Monument stone.** WMC requests research to pinpoint the origin of the monument stone with more geological data, such as by doing comparison microphotography at possible quarries or with portable x-ray fluorescence analyzers. A non-destructive analysis of the stone's material, such as using an XRF gun (p. 20 states NPS was not able to conduct a positive

identification of the stone). Consultation with a geologist who works in that region is recommended. A Topaz Board member spoke of a quarry near the camp whose boulders were carried by the Board to the camp's entry area where the flagpole is located. Brush paintings by Chiura Obata shown on Nov. 30 at the Topaz Museum by the board president show Nikkei laborers driving trucks with boulders, which may provide additional historical clues.

WMC looks forward to collaborating with the Topaz Museum Board on these important archeological and cultural issues assessed by the National Park Service. Topaz survivors, descendants and other stakeholders from across the country are deeply interested in learning more about the future preservation, curation and treatment of the historic memorial site and Monument and participating in discussions about these topics. The monument's rediscovery has changed the narrative of the Topaz National Historic Landmark. It represents the most significant archaeological and civil rights artifact from all the U.S. concentration camps for Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans and deserves wide community engagement..

Sincerely,

Wakasa Memorial Committee
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Mary Urashima, Historian, author, Historic Wintersburg
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Studies & Ethnicity, University of Southern California
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