

Dear Wakasa Memorial Committee:

Please cease the negative portrayals and public attacks on the Topaz Museum Board and the decisions about the removal of the Wakasa Monument. I take full responsibility for the decision and apologize. While there were previous discussions about the removal of the monument, when its location was revealed publicly, I overreacted, worried that it was at risk for vandalism or worse. It pains me to witness the swirl of controversy over my actions and to know that the future of the Topaz Museum and incarceration site has been impacted.

Over the years, what I've learned about the concentration camp experience has come from people in the Japanese American community who were in Topaz. I began having conversations with them in 1983 at a conference at the University of Utah. As the founder and President of the Topaz Museum, I've done my best to be a good steward of your history.

I was born and raised in Delta, Utah and heard references to Topaz all my life. At times it's been difficult since most of the townspeople of Delta in 1983, had the mindset that Japanese Americans were not harmed, quite the opposite of my understanding. The closest Japanese American community is Salt Lake, a two-and-a-half hour drive away. In spite of our isolation, we've built a very significant museum on Main Street in Delta, which has hosted thousands of students over the years. We have also purchased 639 acres for the Topaz incarceration site, 16 miles away. We continue to thrive because of the support from Topaz descendants, the support we now receive from the Delta community, the broader Japanese American community, and all people who care about exposing this unjust part of American history.

As much as I care about educating the public about the incarceration, I can never feel the emotional pain of that experience in the same way that so many Japanese Americans do. In my haste to protect the Wakasa Monument from potential vandalism and danger, I did not fully understand all that the monument symbolized: Issei rebellion, tangible evidence of the tragic shooting, emotional scarring, enduring trauma from government mandates, and so much more. I am so sorry that my judgement was clouded by my sense for the need to move swiftly. I cannot undo the serious mistake that has been made, but I hope you will accept my apology and that we can move forward.

The Topaz Museum Board and I are committed to doing better. This incident has caused us to reflect and realize that we need to strengthen our current infrastructure as we plan for the future. To begin with, we will be enlisting the broader Japanese American community, Topaz stakeholders, including members from the Wakasa Memorial Committee, to work together to decide the future of the Wakasa Monument and to plan a memorial in 2023 that will shine a light on Mr. Wakasa's killing on what will be the 80th anniversary of his death. We look forward to planning with you and our Topaz community and hope that together we can create a legacy that will truly honor the significance of Mr. Wakasa's death.

Sincerely,
Jane Beckwith
President, Topaz Museum Board of Directors

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
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