



December 23, 2022

Via email

Dear Topaz Museum Board:

We read your article, "Topaz Community Outreach Project," in the November, 2022 issue of the *Topaz Times*. The article said that TMB has published the final report on the results of its survey and six public meetings that were held this summer. These purportedly solicited Japanese American community feedback on TMB's plans to preserve and interpret the monument and site and to hold a ceremony on the 80th anniversary of James Wakasa's murder.

WMC looked for the report on the Topaz Community Outreach Project (TCOP) website, which is where the article said the report was released, but we were unable to find it.

We kindly request that you send us a copy of the report which was federally funded by a Great Basin Heritage Area Partnership (GBHAP) grant.

We are disappointed that the TMB published this report because we had requested in our letter of Oct. 3 (below) that the Board refrain from doing so. However, we never received any reply to our letter. WMC's request was made due to our concern that the design of TMB's survey and meetings did not include meaningful opportunities for input from Japanese American stakeholders outside of members of the Topaz Museum Board and the hired manager paid for by GBHAP funds.

The meetings were disrespectful with participants muted, no TMB officer or member participation in six meetings, and no opportunity for open discussion. The survey contained structurally-biased and traumatizing questions, such as the example printed in the *Topaz Times* which asked attendees to assign a hierarchical value to the monument and the sacred site. The meetings did in fact evoke "trauma, hurt and anger," in the words of the *Topaz Times*.

We are encouraged, fortunately, by progress made in the inclusive and collaborative Utah State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) meetings which have been held over the last two months.

WMC raises below three important issues on which future cooperation will continue to be necessary.

**1. Physical protection and preservation of the Wakasa Monument and Memorial Site.**

As you know, since early October, six collaborative meetings have been convened by the Utah SHPO, led by State Archaeologist Chris Merritt and with participation by three TMB members, three WMC members, a NPS representative, state senator Jani Iwamoto and a masonry restoration expert who has been hired by the TMB, all of whom are cc'd here. The meetings have been productive, resulting in preliminary agreement on technical issues that will improve the protective capacity of the shed that covers the unearthed stone. Discussions have begun on archaeological options to preserve and protect the Memorial Site.

**2. Interpretation of the Wakasa Monument and Memorial Site and decision on the final disposition of the Monument.**

Our letter of Oct. 3 proposed a collaboration between WMC and TMB to discuss and determine the critical issues of interpretation and how the final disposition of the Monument will be decided. These are at the heart of the need for community parity with the TMB and our community's agency when it comes to narrating the facts of Mr. Wakasa's killing, the heroic creation of the Monument, its burial, unearthing and future memorialization. How the Site and Monument are interpreted and where the Monument should be displayed must be a community-based discussion led by survivors, descendants and members of the wider community. WMC reissues our invitation to TMB to work together on designing and carrying out such a plan.

### **3. Commemoration of the 80th anniversary of James Wakasa's death in April, 2023.**

We thank the TMB for its letter of Sept. 8 (below) inviting the WMC to "take the lead on planning this (ceremony)," and the proposed division of responsibilities; that WMC will develop the event program details, and the TMB will address the logistical aspects of the event. Now that the SHPO-led meetings have approved interim plans to protect the stone and the SHPO working group is entering discussions on potential archaeological projects for the site, WMC believes it is time to turn to the collaborative planning of the ceremony. We note that the *Topaz Times* states that the TCOP report "has provided vital feedback for the planning of an 80th anniversary event." We look forward to receiving the report as WMC and TMB prepare for the anniversary event next year with the division of labor you propose.

The SHPO, NPS and GBHAP have all stated that the best way to preserve and protect Japanese American cultural heritage is through collaboration and working with descendants and survivors. For example, the NPS wrote that NPS seeks to "foster dialogue between key stakeholders and encourage collaboration in making resource management decisions in the future." The GBHAP grant guidelines for 2022 "encourage collaboration and (the leveraging of) resources of multiple parties to achieve Great Basin National Heritage Area goals."

In conclusion, WMC respectfully asks that:

- TMB respond to this letter in order to confirm that TMB intends to collaborate with WMC and others in the survivor, descendant, and Japanese American community to plan, decide, and implement the protection, preservation, and interpretation of the Wakasa Monument and Memorial Site as well as the 2023 anniversary event.
- Finally, we reiterate our request for a copy of TMB's TCOP report.

Sincerely,

### **Wakasa Memorial Committee**

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

Kiyoshi Ina, Topaz Survivor

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

Wakasa Committee

Lauren Araki, Topaz Descendant

Sarah Julia Escobido Brandenstein, Topaz Descendant

Cheryl Ann Escobideo, Topaz Descendant

Midori Hogg, Topaz Descendant

Claudia Katayanagi, 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  
Paula Fujiwara, Tule Lake Descendant  
Karen Kiyo Lowhurst, Heart Mountain Descendant  
Chizu Omori, Poston Survivor  
Emiko Omori, Poston Survivor  
John Ota, Descendant of so-called “voluntary evacuees”  
Erin Shigaki, Minidoka Descendant  
Barbara Takei, Tule Lake Descendant  
Paul Tomita, Minidoka Survivor

### **Advisory Council**

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  
Bruce Embrey, Manzanar Descendant, Co-chair Manzanar Committee  
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  
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

att.

Sept. 8, 2022 TMB letter to WMC re 2023 ceremony

Oct. 3, 2022 WMC letter to TMB re final report

*Topaz Times*, November 2022

CC

Brandi Roberts, Executive Director, Great Basin Heritage Area Partnership

Abe Johnson, President of the Board, Great Basin Heritage Area Partnership  
Sarah Capen, Chair, Alliance of National Heritage Areas  
Jennifer Ortiz, Director, Utah Division of State History  
Chris Merritt, Utah State Historic Preservation Office  
Mike Reynolds, Regional Director, Interior Regions 6,7,8 National Park Service  
Lisa P. Davidson, Acting Program Manager, National Historic Landmarks Program, NPS  
Justin Henderson, Heritage Partnerships Program, Intermountain Region, NPS  
Rob Nieweg, National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Jani Iwamoto, Utah State Senator, 4th district  
David Inoue, Executive Director, Japanese American Citizens League  
Carol Kawase, Governor, JAACL NCWNP district  
John Lambert, Abstract Masonry Restoration