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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TOPAZ MUSEUM BOARD AND WAKASA MEMORIAL COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS WAKASA MONUMENT AND MEMORIAL SITE IN JOINT MEETINGS HOSTED BY UTAH STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

The Topaz Museum Board and Wakasa Memorial Committee will join discussions led by Utah State Historic Preservation Officer and archaeologist Chris Merritt to work jointly on future plans for the conservation of the Wakasa Monument and Memorial Site. As part of this collaborative effort, Dr. Merritt will also facilitate conversations with these stakeholders to discuss an archaeological examination of the excavation site, as put forth in a National Park Services/National Historical Landmark report issued in 2022. The representatives from the Topaz Museum Board are Scott Bassett, Sherrie Hayashi, and Hisashi Sugaya and the representatives from the Wakasa Memorial Committee are Karen Kiyoko Lowhurst, Masako Takahashi and Nancy Ukai, with State Senator Jani Iwamoto and representatives from the National Park Service. The first meeting of the new project team will be virtual, on Sept. 28, hosted by the Utah State Historic Preservation Office.

Says Senator Jani Iwamoto, "I look forward to working with all the stakeholders, and having worked with Dr. Merritt for many years, I have great confidence that his passion for stewarding Utah's cultural resources will move us collectively forward in respectfully protecting this significant monument and site."

These meetings begin an inclusive effort to guide preservation of the Wakasa Monument and Memorial Site. Given the urgency to conserve and protect the memorial stone before the onset of winter, initial discussion will focus on the resolution of these immediate matters. We are optimistic that our shared desire to protect this sacred cultural resource will lead to cooperation and promote the process of healing.

Statement from the Topaz Museum Board

The Topaz Museum Board is appreciative of Dr. Merritt's generous invitation to facilitate this critical conversation and look forward to working with him and those appointed by the Wakasa Memorial Committee. We are pleased with the emphasis Dr. Merritt has placed on "focusing on the future of the monument and partnership." The Topaz Museum is a 501c3, nonprofit organization that founded and operates the museum facility in Delta, Utah and stewards the Topaz site.

Statement from Wakasa Memorial Committee

The Wakasa Memorial Committee welcomes this opportunity to sit at the table as full partners in a historic discussion about the protection and preservation of Topaz' most important spiritual place and civil rights artifact: the Wakasa Monument and Memorial Site. From across the nation, the WMC is a committee of Topaz survivors, descendants, allies and members of the Japanese American community dedicated to the proper preservation and interpretation of the Wakasa Monument, Memorial Site and the Topaz National Historic Landmark.