

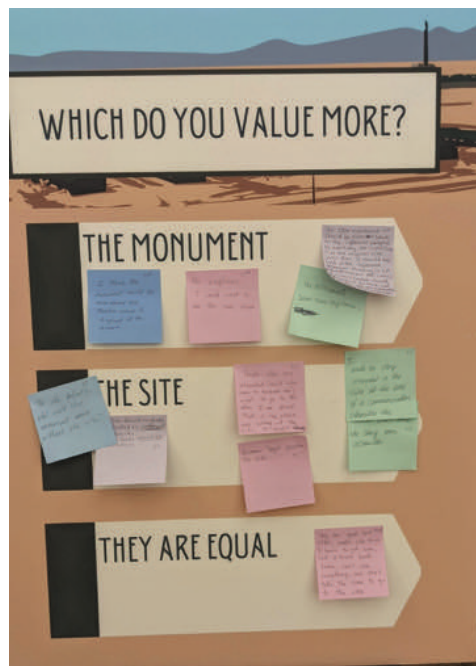


# TOPAZ TIMES

## THE CITY

November 2022

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The Topaz Museum Board invited all of its stakeholders to participate in a community discussion. Thank you to those who helped make the project a success.

## Topaz Community Outreach Project

The Topaz Museum Board launched a national outreach effort to gather crucial community input and perspectives on the future of the James Hatsuaki Wakasa monument. We thank everyone who participated in the survey and community meetings or sent us a message. The project ran from June to August.

Over 350 people responded to the survey and approximately 150 people attended the public meetings, sharing their ideas and feelings about the future of the Wakasa Monument and giving input on how to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Mr. Wakasa's killing.

The outreach project revealed that this topic carries with it strong emotions for many in the Topaz commu-

nity with opinions that vary greatly. Some in the community carry feelings of trauma, hurt, and anger, much of it directed at the Topaz Museum Board. Others expressed great support, gratitude, and praise for the Museum and its stewardship of the Topaz site and story. For most, the monument is an important symbol that provides an opportunity to tell an even more nuanced and powerful story about Topaz.

Yet the details of what it represents and how that story is told seems to divide the community, a contrast that can be seen in the survey results and was clearly evident during the community meetings.

With these important perspectives and attitudes collected and

heard during the Topaz Community Outreach Project, the Topaz Museum Board can move forward, addressing the challenge of unifying a community, honoring the legacy of Mr. Wakasa, and continuing to preserve and protect Topaz in a way that respects all of its stakeholders.

The final Topaz Community Outreach Project report, including results of the survey and comments submitted was completed and shared publicly on the Topaz Community Outreach Project website in November, and has provided vital feedback for the planning of an 80th anniversary event, commemorating Mr. Wakasa's death and future preservation and conservation of the monument and site.



# Utah Day of Remembrance

In February Utah Governor Spencer Cox signed S.B. 58, Day of Remembrance Observing the Incarceration of Japanese Americans During World War II. This bill was sponsored by Senator Jani Iwamoto and received unanimous support from the House and Senate. S.B. 58 designates February 19th as an annual day of remembrance observing the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.

“Day of Remembrance allows us to vow to remember and recommit to safeguarding the civil rights of ALL Americans. What happened to Japa-

nese Americans is relevant today—especially today—and must never, ever, be forgotten,” said Senator Jani Iwamoto.

Three months later, Governor Cox visited the Topaz Museum on May 23, 2022 and tweeted this message: “The Topaz Museum memorializes one of the uglier episodes in American history. More than 11,000 people of Japanese descent spent time in this internment camp between 1942 and 1945. We must never allow hate and prejudice to lead to this kind of violation of human rights again.”



Governor Spencer Cox came to the museum after he signed the Day of Remembrance legislation. Max Matsuhara just happened to be at the museum that day.

# Ireichō Installation Ceremony

From an article by Dr. Baldwin Tom

The Ireichō event in Little Tokyo in September was the launch of the National Names Monument, honoring 125,248 persons of Japanese ancestry who were incarcerated.

Madeline Nobori Tom, Senior Chaplain, represented and carried soil from Tanforan Assembly Center as a descendant and survivor of Topaz.

Over 200 attendees with representatives from all 75 sites were present with soil from each location.

This comprehensive list of 125,248 persons of Japanese ancestry who were unjustly imprisoned in U.S. Army, Department of Justice, and War Relocation Authority (WRA) camps has been compiled - and thus the first time it has been possible to properly memorialize each incarcerated as distinct individuals instead of a



Chaplain Madeline Nobori Tom touches a ceramic piece infused with the soil from 75 WWII Japanese American sites of incarceration that is embedded in the book of names. Photo by Kristen Murakoshi.

generalized community.

The names are the heart of the Irei National Monument Project which links three distinct elements: a sacred book of names as monument (Ireichō), a website monument (Ireizō), and light sculpture monuments (Ireihī).

Irei provides comfort for the spirits of the departed and focuses on a community’s need for consolation and healing.

# Topaz Stories

On April 22, 2022, a public reception for the Topaz Stories exhibition was held at the State Capitol in Salt Lake, attended by former camp incarcerated and descendants, as well as state and community leaders.

The exhibit, curated by Ruth Sasaki and supported by Friends of Topaz Museum, the Topaz Museum Board, plus numerous state entities, will remain on display in the Capitol’s third floor mezzanine until December 31, 2022, so hurry to see it before the exhibit closes!



A large crowd attended the opening ceremony for the Topaz Stories exhibit, including Yae Wada, who was a young married woman in Topaz. Photo by Todd Anderson.



In a generous act of gratitude to thank Deltans for supporting the Topaz Museum, Shirley Muramoto and Mark Inouye performed a free concert for townspeople in May. Shirley is a renowned koto soloist and Mark is the principal trumpet player for the San Francisco Symphony.

# Shirley Muramoto and Mark Inouye concert

by Shirley Muramoto

I had the great opportunity in May to play my koto with amazing premier trumpet musician, Mark Inouye, of the SF Symphony. Just six days before our performance at the Delta High School Auditorium in Delta, Utah, we met to rehearse.

We knew that both our families had been incarcerated at Topaz, and we exchanged our histories. Mark did not

find this out about Topaz until after his father had passed away.

Because the town of Delta and the Topaz Museum are supporting and remembering the history of Topaz, we both wanted to thank the town by presenting a free concert for them. We were warmly welcomed with a full house audience (on a Monday night) and a standing ovation afterwards.

*Editor’s note: In the meantime, Shirley decided to store her koto in Delta for future concerts and asked Jane Beckwith if anyone would be interested in learning to play koto via free zoom lessons. Jane identified musician/artists and sisters Stephanie and Bessie Skeem, whose grandmother worked at Topaz as a switchboard operator while her husband was in a POW camp in Europe during WWII. Stephanie has been studying with Shirley for the past four months.*



## Sam Kanai's daughter returns to Topaz



Debra Kanai DeMeis came to the museum hoping to learn more about her father, Sam Kanai, one of the best baseball players in Topaz. He hit .625 while playing for the Hospital team. Debra saw a uniform at the museum and the baseball fields at the site where her father must have played before he left Topaz on May 30, 1943.



## Boys see Topaz with their grandfather



Keith Ono brought his grandsons on a long trip to Topaz from Washington state.

## Kaneko family loves the 'Topaz Third Grade Diary'



Everyone loves the diary and the whimsical stories about students like Richard Kaneko, who brought his family to visit this summer. The diary is available online at: [collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=507604](https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=507604)

## Collection from famous dancer donated to the museum



Sahomi Tachibana taught traditional dance in Tule Lake and then in Topaz. The prop in this photo was recently donated to the Topaz Museum by Tachibana's daughter Elaine Warner.



## Traditional Japanese mask



This mask was made from a dried sugar beet for Sahomi Tachibana performances.

## Hirai family gathers for their reunion



Stan Hirai's family was in Topaz. His mother, Alice, believed in educating everyone about the history of Topaz. The family ended up in Ogden, Utah after the war.

## San Jose travelers arrive on special day



Warren Shimonishi came with a bus full of friends from around San Jose on the anniversary of the opening of Topaz, September 11.

## Visit from Dave Tatsuno's family



Arlene Tatsuno Damron and her husband, Gene, have been supporting the museum since the years when her father, Dave Tatsuno, (in the background) was on the Topaz Museum Board. Arlene was born in Topaz. They watched the introductory video at the museum and heard Dave's voice as the narrator.

## Ryuchi Adachi's son comes to the museum



Wayne Adachi and his wife arrived at the museum just as the first snowstorm of the year began in Delta. His father, Ryuji, must have experienced the extreme temperatures before he was released and went to Stanford to teach Japanese.

## Scouts remember Topaz opening day



Early on the morning of September 11, Boy Scout Troop 111 from Eagle Mountain, Utah, held a flag ceremony at the Topaz site.

## 150 students walk to the museum



All of the third-grade students from Delta North Elementary filed across Delta's Main Street for their first visit to the Topaz Museum. We are sure they will return.



# Topaz Museum Board and Wakasa Memorial Committee discuss monument and memorial site in joint meetings hosted by Utah State Historic Preservation Office

In September 2022, the Topaz Museum Board and the Wakasa Memorial Committee began meeting regularly with Utah State Historic Preservation Officer and archaeologist Chris Merritt on the conservation of the Wakasa Monument and Memorial Site, which includes an archaeological examination

of the memorial stone and excavation site. The representatives from the Topaz Museum Board are Sherrie Hayashi, Hisashi Sugaya and Ann Dion, and the representatives from the Wakasa Memorial Committee are Karen Kiyo Lowhurst, Masako Takahashi, and

Nancy Ukai, with State Senator Jani Iwamoto, and National Park Service representative, Justin Henderson. The Topaz Museum Board has hired John Lambert, a stone conservator recommended by Dr. Merritt, to begin investigating the stone and the excavation site.

## Tanforan Memorial Ceremony

by Hisashi Bill Sugaya

It was a truly uplifting event. A positive experience that showed how many people and organizations came together to memorialize those of us who experienced the outcomes of EO 9066.

What surprised me was the diverse range of presenters. There were the notables: Congresswoman Jackie Speier, a California Senator, the Speaker Pro Tempore of the California Assembly and Acting Consul General of Japan. But others showed the diversity of communities who supported the memorial:

Gregg Castro of the Ohlone Tribe reminded people that the memorial site is on land that was once Ohlone. Zahra Billoo, Council on American Islamic Relations talked about the support Japanese Americans gave to the Muslim community after 9/11 and continues.

The City of San Bruno Community Foundation, whose chair is from Tonga, provided multiple grants for the project.

The theme was “Learning from history, never let it happen again” and focused on the resilience of the incarcerated.

## New Patagonia film: ‘The Scale of Hope’ features climate and strategic development advisor and ice climber Molly Kawahata

In September 2022, Patagonia released The Scale of Hope, a new film which shares the story of Molly Kawahata, whose family was incarcerated at Topaz.

The film documents Kawahata’s years working for the Obama administration as a climate advisory, her ice climb in the Central Alaska Range, and her family’s story at Topaz

during WWII.

The film also shares her challenges with Bipolar 2 Disorder – a mental illness and experience in polarities that Molly feels “has given me tremendous challenges just as much I feel as it has fueled my successes. I hope it provides a new perspective – that we can be proud of the things we struggle with in life.”

# Topaz Mess Hall and Community Orchard

Chad Warnick, the Delta High School Ag teacher who has included Topaz history in several of his projects, is Utah’s Teacher of the Year.

After the war, a Topaz mess hall was moved to the Shepherd farm, and later, that land was purchased by the Millard School District. Chad has repurposed the mess hall to be part of his outdoor classroom.

He hopes to put a

marker in the mess hall to commemorate its former life and plans to develop a community orchard nearby that will feature Japanese cherry trees, in memory of those people who were in Topaz. Chad’s award came with a check for \$10,000. We celebrate his recognition by the State and the connections he is teaching his students about Topaz and commend his award winning programs.



The mess hall sat empty for many years after it was moved from Topaz. Now Chad Warnick’s Ag classes use it for part of their curriculum.

# Sahomi Tachibana: American Legacy of a Japanese Dancer online program

In March, the Friends of Topaz Museum and NextGen: Geijutsuka hosted their first online program, featuring 97-year-old, traditional Japanese dancer Sahomi Tachibana (The stage name of Doris Haruno Abey, who was incarcerated with her family at Tule Lake and Topaz during World War II.)

Tachibana performed on Broadway and in 45 states, while teaching generations of students, until she retired at age 95.

In 2021, she received the Emperor’s Order of the Rising Sun, Silver Rays —Japan’s highest civilian honor. The program was hosted by documentary filmmaker Lauren Kawana.

The program featured archival footage of Tachibana dancing at Jacob’s



Sahomi Tachibana was about 18 when she was producing dancing performances in Topaz.

Pillow, an interview with her daughter, Elaine Werner, and students Wynn Kiyama, Tomie Hahn, and Theodora Yoshikami.

Japanese American kabuki performer Bando Hiroshichiro was also part of

the program. Several props and artifacts related to traditional dance from Ms. Tachibana’s personal collection, which were displayed and discussed, were donated to the Topaz Museum.



A couple from Nara edged out the family from the Netherlands on being the visitors who traveled the farthest to come to the museum.





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# THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL DONORS!

Prior to 1990, the Topaz Museum began raising money to preserve the history of Topaz. Even though we were not a formal non-profit, 118 people donated to the dream of building a museum. As of October 2022, a total of 5,935 donations have been made.

Because of your continued financial support, the Topaz Museum Board has purchased all of the site --639 acres, with one acre owned by JACL Chapters in Salt Lake City.

We have restored the recreation hall from Block 42 and have given over 200 programs to Utah schools, teaching over 11,000 students.

After purchasing land in Delta, we built the Topaz Museum in memory of all people of Japanese ancestry who were forced to live there and to teach our visitors the history of a terribly

important part of American history.

Since the Topaz Museum opened in 2015, we have had 58,888 visitors.

Join us in our continued work of preserving and sharing the stories of Topaz by making a donation in any amount.

Please use the enclosed envelope to remit your tax-deductible donation or go to our website: [topazmuseum.org](http://topazmuseum.org) to donate with PayPal.

Our sincere gratitude to those who have donated in the past, and we thank each and every one of you who join us this year in supporting the Museum.

We have very exciting news about a major gift to the Topaz Museum that we can't wait to share! Keep watching the mail for a special announcement with a tribute to the family member who is bestowing the Museum with the

gift, validating all of your support and work on this important history. Thank you to them and to you!

## Keep in touch

The Topaz Museum newsletter continues as a print version but also is shifting to an email format, which allows us to send you the news immediately and cut down our postage and printing expenses. Regardless of which version you prefer we would love to update your contact information and ask if you would kindly email your name, email address and phone number to:  
[topazalumscommitte@gmail.com](mailto:topazalumscommitte@gmail.com).