

My name is Ann Tamaki Dion

Nineteen of my relatives were incarcerated in Topaz. My parents met and were married there. The fact that I am a Topaz descendant is the first reason why I volunteered to help form the Friends of Topaz, a Bay Area organization whose purpose is to support the Topaz Museum.

The second reason I volunteered to help is because I was inspired by the 30 plus years of work Jane Beckwith had already devoted to the museum project when I met her in 2012. At that time, the museum was not yet built; the narrative and exhibits not yet decided and the entire campsite not yet purchased.

The Friends of Topaz worked closely with the TMB and other stakeholders to ensure that the museum, yet to be built, would accurately represent the many varied voices of Topaz incarcerated and their descendants. We worked with representatives of the National Park Service and experts such as Manzanar chief interpreter Alisa Lynch and Dr. Franklin Odo, former director of the Asian Pacific American Center at the Smithsonian, to realize the excellent museum that opened in 2017.

Now we are embroiled in a troubling controversy concerning the Wakasa Memorial stone.

I believe that this very significant artifact must be honored as an important part of the Topaz story. It embodies the injustice that was perpetrated against all of those who were forced into Topaz camp.

I also believe that the TMB shares my understanding of, and respect for, the Wakasa Memorial stone. The TMB's past record of including all stakeholders and working consistently with Topaz descendants, in particular, does not erase the circumstances surrounding the removal of the Wakasa stone, but it does call for a fair and reasonable examination of the facts.

The TMB has apologized for removing the stone without the presence of community members, but it was a prudent action, given that the stone's location was publicly revealed, thus jeopardizing the stone's safety.

The TMB's fiduciary responsibility was to protect the stone and they acted accordingly.

I believe that the TMB's mission has always been to honor the Wakasa Memorial stone and to continue to sustain the museum. That is my goal going forward and I believe it is goal of other stakeholders and community members.

I hope we can work together cooperatively on the next steps to plan the Wakasa Memorial event in 2023.

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