

# HPI Leads First-Ever Field Trip

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HPI and Japanese program students at the Topaz Internment Camp site near Delta, Utah

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On October 28<sup>th</sup>, the HPI and Japanese Program partnered to take a group of students to the Topaz Internment Camp museum in Delta, Utah. This was the HPI's first ever field trip, and it did not disappoint.

### Topaz Internment Camp

During WWII, over 100,000 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry, most of whom were American citizens, were removed from their homes on the West Coast and forced to relocate to one of several remote detention camps and facilities. None of these people were ever convicted of any crimes, yet they were confined for years as a result of what the 1982 federal Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians determined as "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership." The mass exile and incarceration of Japanese Americans was undoubtedly one of the worst violations of civil rights against citizens in U.S. history(<https://topazmuseum.org>).

### A Transformative Trip

Despite the injustices they faced, many Japanese Americans chose to build a sense of community and hope during their time in the camps. They formed a variety of sports teams, made jewelry, and created art. HPI Interim Director Colin Flint noted, "I thought this was going to be a trip about inhumanity, but it turned out to be a trip about humanity."

Attendees of the field trip found their visit to be most enlightening. One student shared, "I was struck by the creativity of the interned to use what resources they did have to build furniture that made their lives more functional and comfortable. Attending the museum also gave me an opportunity to reflect on my personal family history and our relationship to Japanese Americans during the war."

Another expressed, "This experience was honestly just amazing. My great aunt had cousins in the camp—she is from Japan—and my great grandfather served in the Pacific theater. This whole experience made the stories I grew up on so much more real, and showed how much love really was in my family."



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