

A HOMECOMING

Unveiling footprint of Khoi & San at Heritage Centre

DEBBIE HENDRIKS

At last the day dawned when the Heritage Centre at Riverlands, Cape Town, officially opened its doors to honour the long struggles of the past, while envisioning a shared future.

For the first time in the history of South Africa, a permanent space was dedicated to preserving, celebrating and restoring the cultural memory of the country's First Nations.

The opening, on a crisp and sunny winter's day also featured an inaugural exhibition.

Elders like Queen Katrina Esau, N/uu speaker from Upington, and Petrus Vaalbooi, leader of the Kalahari Boesmans, as well as other leaders, and community members from across the nation, and some across the world, gathered to witness this historic event that symbolised resilience, unity, and a long-awaited recognition.

The area reverberated with the sound of drums and beautiful singing in the ancient Khoekhoe-gowab language, and dancing and spoken word performances from the youth of South Roots International, a partner of the Western Cape First Nations Collective (WCFNC).

As with previous historical and milestone events at Riverlands, the team of South Roots set the tone for the day with their energetic performance.

Chief Zenzile Khoisan, chairman of the Western Cape First Nations Collective, whose brainchild the centre was, gave voice to the deepest meaning of the day.

He began with gratitude to the Creator, the elders and to countless supporters.

"What we celebrate here today is nothing less than a monumental victory for the First Peoples of South Africa in their long quest to be recognised, restituted and restored."

He explained that the Centre's walls held the language, culture, battles and heroes of the Khoi and San as proof of their enduring footprint over the last 20 000 years.

"We have a history. We have a culture. Today we unveil our footprint. Whoever questions it, let them put their footprint on this land as we have."

Chief Zenzile emphasised that the Centre is not about ownership but stewardship: "It is our duty to care for this place, not just for ourselves but for seven generations."

Jody Aufrichtig, the developer of Riverlands, formally handed over custodianship of the Heritage Centre to the Western Cape First Nations Collective Trust on behalf of the Liesbeek Leisure



MONUMENTAL VICTORY: The doors of the Heritage centre was officially opened with an inaugural exhibition. This included the journey to anchorage and custody at Riverlands, the Battle of Gorinhaiqua, a wall heroes and other exhibits of culture and heritage.

PICS: IFN MEDIA; PHIL'S PHOTO'S

Properties Trust. A milestone he described as "an honour and a reconciliation".

More importantly, Aufrichtig said, he saw the project as a break in the "cycle of invisibility" that had hidden First Nations heritage. He hoped the Centre would teach children South Africa's true history, not merely the colonial version centred on Jan van Riebeeck.

Princess Chantall Revell, a trustee of the WCFNC, welcomed the elders, Queen Katrina Esau and Petrus Vaalbooi.

Revell reminded all present that the path to Riverlands had been paved by the struggles and sacrifices of the elders.

"Queen Katrina and Oupa Petrus, you walked a long road so that we, the younger ones, can stand here today and say thank you. Your work will never be forgotten."

In her reaction to the opening of the Centre, Queen Katrina urged for unity, "so that the children who come after us may see that unity among the elders".

She spoke with the candour and wisdom that has made her a revered figure in cultural preservation. She recalled how, when asked what animal should symbolise the Centre, she suggested an eland, a powerful symbol of dignity and endurance. Her message, however, was directed less to symbols than to people.

She reflected on the fading practices of culture that are too seldom brought forward, stressing the need for gatherings like this to revive and transmit those traditions.

Queen Katrina's thanks to Chief Zenzile for consulting the elders captured a shared sentiment, that the Heritage Centre was not built in isolation, but through dialogue and respect.

Oupa Petrus felt the gathering was a sign of divine purpose.



GIVING HIS BLESSING: Oupa Petrus Vaalbooi, leader of the Kalahari Boesmans, gives his blessings to the Heritage Centre, and said it is the fruit of a long and hard labour.

PIC: IFN MEDIA

Nurture & conserve



From the Editor's pen

After a struggle that now seems an eternity, the First Nations Heritage Centre at Riverlands has been handed over to the Western Cape First Nations Collective Trust by the Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust, which is the title holder and developer of the land.

This watershed moment is a noteworthy break with what has been a terribly searing and difficult past, where agreements between the First Nations and other entities have been dishonoured and violated, leaving the First peoples in a space where trust has been broken.

With this handover of custody of the First Nations Heritage Centre it is accepted by both parties that what has been sealed in the Social Compact, signed between the two parties several years ago, is an acceptance that the partners in this venture collectively:

"Recognise the injustices of our past; honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land; respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity."

The handover ceremony also affirms that: "the process followed prior to reaching a Social Compact between the First Nation Collective and the current Owner of the Land was one of the most intensive public participation programmes carried out in the Western Cape.

This is in respect of the Land and the Riverine Corridor that culminated in the River Club First Nations Report and forms the foundation of this declaration and

contract between the Owner and Trust."

With the official handover the parties further affirmed the other critical clauses contained in the social compact, notably that:

"This Social Compact represents the collective wisdom of the First Nations Collective and is the product of co-operation, respect and general agreement between the Parties.

"A primary objective of this Compact is to formalise an integrated and interactive system for the management and protection of the Heritage Features.

"This will ensure that these heritage resources bestowed to the future generations of the First Nations under the custodianship of the Trust will be nurtured and conserved.

"The First Nations heritage is unique and precious, and defines their cultural identity and is integral to the spiritual well-being of the First Nations and to the building of our nation and shaping our national character.

"This Social Compact celebrates the First Nations heritage and the implementation of this Social Compact will educate the public and future generations in respect of the First Nations history, oral traditions and customs with a view to facilitate healing and material and symbolic restitution."

Our belief is that this Social Compact should be widely read, understood and emulated everywhere our First Nations indigenous peoples are fighting for their much deserved recognition, restitution and restoration.

Zenzile Khoisan

Handover ceremony at Heritage Centre

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"Look how our people are standing together. The Heavenly Father has called and bound us for one purpose: unity," Oupa Petrus said.

With characteristic humour and seriousness, he blessed the nation and urged them never to let go of one another's hands.

"For me this Heritage Centre is not just a building, but the fruit of unity and proof that the Khoi and San nation still have strength and purpose," he said.

Pastor Johannes Maarman, chairman of the KhoiKhoi Peoples Rooibos Biodiversity Trust, praised Chief Zenzile for being a leader who acts rather than only speaks. "I applaud you for bringing all this here for the whole nation of southern Africa."

He reminded the community to always respect elders and announced a donation of R50 000 toward the Centre, offered on behalf of the Koranna, Griqua, Nama, Cape Khoi, and Cederberg communities.

Jody Aufrichtig, who worked alongside the First Nations Collective for more than seven years, reflected on the long journey to this day.

He recalled sleepless nights, countless meetings, and nearly 300 versions of the development plan.

"Yet, it had all been worth it. All the energy, all the time we put in was worth every little bit. What a momentous occasion. All I can really say is: Welcome home, my friends."

He acknowledged disagreements with Chief Zenzile but stressed that mutual respect had always brought them back to common ground.

In a moving moment, Aufrichtig spoke of forgiveness for those who had tried to derail the project.

"I forgive you. Let's all come together. Let's build our country. This is my home, and I love it."

Chief Zenzile addressed the youth directly, telling them the Centre was

their protected zone, where their talents and genius would flourish. He also acknowledged the struggles and opposition faced during the project, but declared, "if God is for you, who can stand against you?"

The Centre, he said, must be a place of unity, "Here we leave our differences at the door and work together inside."

He also honoured contributions from indigenous groups worldwide, families, artists and Allen Faubion from America, whose contributions made the inaugural exhibition possible.

Faubion, from Texas in America, said that walls always represent identity.

"That is who the Creator has made us to be, and the gates, or the doors are always a picture of opportunity and access to opportunity."

One of the wall in the Centre is specifically dedicated to the memory of heroes. Chief Zenzile said, "today, we stand on the shoulders of giants. On the wall of heroes is a representation of some of the most outstanding and heroic figures in the long history of our people."

He drew the attention to a withered tree planted in red Kalahari sand that stood as a living symbol of renewal.

"That red sand came from the red dunes of the Kalahari, but what the amazing thing about that tree is, is that with it comes the seed and from that seed will come new and bigger and stronger and more magnificently trees, because this is the place where those seed will be planted."

The opening and exhibition of the Heritage Centre at Riverlands was more than a ceremonial event. It was an act of restoration, an affirmation that the Khoi and San peoples are not relics of the past but living nations shaping the future. It is homecoming and a place of anchorage.

Here, the First Nations will reclaim their stories, honour their heroes, and plant seeds for generations yet to come.

Erfenis-sentrum simbool van oorlewing en veerkragtigheid

DEBBIE HENDRIKS

Die opening en eerste uitstalling by die Eerste Nasie Erfenis-sentrum by Riverlands in Kaapstad, was meer as net 'n seremonie en feesviering – dit was 'n oomblik van vernuwing, bevestiging en waar hulde en eer gebring is aan die Khoi en San van Suid-Afrika.

Die samekoms was 'n herinnering dat erfenis lewendig bly wanneer dit geleef, geëer en voortgedra word deur eenheid.

Die woorde van die oudstes en ander leiers het deur die saal weerklink en die gehoor daaraan herinner dat die voetspore van die inheemse volk diep lê. Hulle het ook die dringendheid van eenheid beklemtoon en die hoop op herstel verwoord.

Prinses Chantal Revell het die toon aangegee deur die opofferings van die oudstes te erken.

Koningin Katrina Esau van Upington, het op haar beurt 'n opoep tot eenheid gemaak, terwyl Oupa Petrus Vaalbooi, leier van die Kalahari Boesmans, sy seën aan die byeenkoms gegee het.

Pastoor Johannes Maarman het sy toespraak gegrond op leierskap en tasbare ondersteuning.

Saam het hul woorde bevestig dat die krag van die Khoi en San-nasie nie in groot monumente lê nie, maar in die bande van sterk verhoudings, respek en 'n gedeelde visie.

Hulde aan diegene wat voor geloop het

Prinses Chantal Revell het almal daaraan herinner dat die pad na Riverlands gebaan is deur die stryd, opofferings en onwrikbare geloof van die oudstes.

Sy het met dankbaarheid na Koningin Katrina Esau van Upington en Oupa Petrus Vaalbooi van die Kalahari verwys toe sy hulle direk aangespreek het.

“Julle het 'n lang pad geloop sodat ons, die jongeres, vandag hier kan staan. Ons wil aan julle baie dankie sê. Ons sal wat julle gedoen het, nooit vergeet nie.”

Haar woorde het weer bevestig dat die sentrum nie bloot 'n gebou van klip en sement is nie, maar 'n lewende gedenkteken vir mense wat hul lewens gewy het met toewyding en deursettingsvermoë sodat die kultuur kan voortleef.

Revell het die ongebroke ketting tussen generasies beklemtoon en bevestig dat die jonger geslag op die skouers van die oudstes staan.

Sy het ook Ouma Katrina se klein-kind, Claudia verwelkom en gehoop dat sy ook die pad sal volg wat haar ouma geloop het.

Oproep tot Eenheid

Koningin Katrina Esau, 'n simbool van wysheid en dapperheid



HULDE AAN DIE OUDSTES: Prinses Chantal Revell, spreek haar dankbaarheid uit teenoor Koningin Katrina en Oupa Petrus Vaalbooi, wat van die Noord-Kaap gereis het om die opening van die sentrum by te woon.



VRUGTE VAN EENHEID: Oupa Petrus voel die sentrum wys wat eenheid kan doen.



STERK LEIERSKAP: Pastoor Johannes Maarman maan leiers om nie net te praat nie, maar ook te doen.



STREEF NA EENHEID: Nageslag moet kan sien dat daar eenheid onder die oudstes was.

FOTO'S: IFN MEDIA, YASSER BOOLEY

in die bewaring van taal en kultuur, het in haar toespraak vertel hoe sy, toe sy gevra is watter dier die sentrum die beste sou verteenwoordig, die eland gekies het – 'n dier wat waardigheid, grasia en volharding simboliseer.

“Dit is hoe die Khoi en San volke is. Daarom moet ons streef na eenheid.

Ons moet eenheid bou sodat die kinders wat ná ons kom kan sien dat daar eenheid onder die oudstes was.”

Sy het met kommer genoem dat baie kulturele gebruike en tradisies stilweg aan die verdwyn is.

“Te dikwels bly kulturele kennis onuitgespreek en erfenis ongesiens. Byeenkomste soos vandag moet dien om ons te herinner om tradisies te herleef en dit weer sigbaar en lewend te maak.”

Ouma Katrina het ook dank uitgespreek aan chieff Zenzile Khoisan, wat die oudstes kom raadpleeg het tydens die totstandkoming van die sentrum.

“Hierdie gees van respek en raadpleging bevestig dat die Erfenis-sentrum nie in isolasie gebou is nie, maar deur samewerking en eerbied.”

Seën van Eenheid

Oupa Petrus Vaalbooi, leier en oudste van die Kalahari, het ten spyte van

sy hoë ouderdom die reis na Riverlands onderneem, en sy teenwoordigheid het diep respek en toegeneetheid afgedwing.

Sy woorde, vol beeldspraak en oortuiging, het gefokus op die plig van eenheid.

“Kyk hoe staan ons mense saam,” het hy uitgeroep. “Die Hemelse Vader het ons geroep en vir een doel gebind en hier saamgebring – vir eenheid.”

“Kyk die pragtige, wonderlike gebou wat vandag hier staan, waar ek dit kan sien, terwyl my oë nog kan.

“Dit was die vrugte van eenheid, 'n tasbare teken dat die Khoi- en San-nasie steeds krag en 'n doel het.”

Sy seën aan die gemeenskap was eenvoudig maar diep, dat hulle mekaar se hande nooit moet laat los nie, maar dit moet vashou.

Dit is ware leierskap

Pastoor Johannes Maarman, voorsitter van die Khoikhoi Peoples Rooibos Biodiversity Trust, het met passie gepraat oor die betekenis van leierskap.

Hy het chieff Zenzile geprys as 'n leier wat nie net praat nie, maar doen.

“Ek ken baie mense wat baie kan praat – meestal skinder hulle, of is jaloers – maar hulle kan niks doen nie.

“Maar julle is geseën met 'n leier wat opgestaan het en iets soos hierdie Erfenis-sentrum tot stand gebring het, met die hulp van sy Vader in die hemel en ander sterk leiers om hom.

“Ek is nie bewus van enige ander KhoiSan-persoon wat al so iets kon doen nie.”

Maarman het die gehoor daaraan herinner dat kulturele projekte slegs floreer wanneer die oudstes gespekteer en geraadpleeg word.

Sonder daardie respek, het hy gewaarsku, misluk sulke pogings. Sy raad was prakties én geestelik: besoek die ouer garde, sit by hul voete, luister en leer.

In 'n betekenisvolle gebaar het Maarman aangekondig dat die Rooibos Trust R50 000 aan die Erfenis-sentrum sou sken.

Hy het beklemtoon dat die bydrae namens al die begunstigde gemeenskappe gemaak word, wat bestaan uit die Koranna, Griekwa, Nama, Kaapse Khoi en die gemeenskappe van die Cederberg-gebied.

Dit was 'n belangrike herinnering dat die projek nie vir een groep alleen is nie, maar dat dit 'n KhoiKhoi-inisiatief is, wat deur en vir die Eerste Nasies gebou is.



SHARING THE JOY: Jody Aufrichtig, the developer, and chief Zenzile Khoisan share the special day at the opening and inaugural exhibition at the First Nations Heritage Centre.

PICS: IFN MEDIA

Breaking the cycle of invisibility

IFN MEDIA

“What an amazing, unbelievable day. This day is probably one of the best days of the last few years.”

These were the words of Jody Aufrichtig, chairman of Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust, the developer of Riverlands, who spoke at the opening and inaugural exhibition at the Heritage Centre.

“It is a most beautiful spiritual energy that we are seeing here today, and what a journey it has been to get where we are today.”

Aufrichtig said a special thanks to Ouma Katrina, and Petrus Vaalbooi for making the effort to come all the way to be part of the opening.

“We’ve travelled the journey, and met quite a few times over the years and I’m very grateful that you made the effort to be here today”.

Aufrichtig recalled how he sat two hours before the opening at the water’s edge, having a coffee.

“The sun was shining on my back, and there were beautiful bird life all around me. I looked at the amazing landscaping and I thought to myself, was this worth it?”

“And without a doubt, it has been a wonderful, beautiful, amazing, hard, spiritual, full-of-tears-happiness, incredible journey to really get to where we are today.

“What a momentous occasion. it’s an honour to be part of this. All I can really say, and I’ve said it before, is: Welcome home. Welcome home, my friends. Good to have you back.

“All the energy, all the time we put in was worth every little bit. And I have no regrets whatsoever to see what’s been created today.”

Aufrichtig further described sleepless nights, hundreds of meetings,

and nearly 300 versions of the development plan.

“Specialists from fields as diverse as archaeology, hydrology, and ecology contributed, and countless public participation processes were undertaken. But all the energy, all the time we put in was worth every little bit. I have no regrets.”

For him, the Heritage Centre was not a developer’s achievement, but a homecoming for South Africa’s First Peoples.

“It is an honour and I’m really humbled to be here today to represent the development trust as a partner with the First Nations.

“This is certainly a world first and groundbreaking radical reconciliation.

Aufrichtig acknowledged that he and Chief Zenzile had not always agreed, but “after some heavy debates we had always found common ground through integrity and mutual respect, and I appreciate that, chief.

“You and your colleagues have been instrumental in establishing this connection and partnership I’m very proud of them, and I’ll be eternally grateful for the bond and friendship that we’ve developed.

Aufrichtig reflected on the deeper meaning of the project, that it was not only about building a centre, but about breaking the “cycle of invisibility” that had obscured First Nations heritage for centuries.

“We have always committed to working together with the First Nations and building a world-class, cultural, media and Heritage Centre and creating this long-term partnership and I’m very proud in very trying circumstances to honour the integrity of our partnership.”

Aufrichtig spoke of his hope that children would come here to learn South Africa’s true history, not

merely the colonial version centred on Jan van Riebeeck.

“Now we have a place of anchorage for the First Nations and where we can also educate and teach my children and everyone’s children about the true history of South Africa. I don’t want to hear my kids talking about Jan van Riebeeck again in the history of South Africa.

His words also carried a personal tone of forgiveness. He acknowledged the attempts at extortion and false leadership claims that had marred the project but, inspired by his daughter, chose to forgive.

“I was not sure if I was going to mention this but I guess let me mention it. We had 29 people on this project who tried to extort money from us. We had parties who fabricated fake news.

“We had parties who claimed to be First Nations leaders who were not First Nations.

“I thought this was a chance I could talk to all these people and say something to them because I’ve carried a lot of anger over the years over this matter.

“So I asked my daughter for some inspiration this morning and she called me about two hours ago and said Daddy, I left something in your briefcase that would inspire you.

“And I want to tell those people: I forgive you. Let’s build our beautiful country. This is my home, and I love it. Let’s build it together.”

Speaking on behalf of the LLPT, he announced the formal handover of custodianship of the Heritage Centre to the Western Cape First Nations Collective Trust.

This, he said, was not just symbolic but a practical act of entrusting the future to the rightful stewards, the South Africa’s First Peoples. **(Article on right)**

Handing over of custody

The Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust is delighted to be handing over custodianship of the Heritage Centre to the Western Cape First Nations Collective Trust today.

This represents a profoundly significant milestone for both organisations and marks the culmination of extensive collaboration, dialogue, and shared commitment to honouring South Africa’s foundational heritage.

The Western Cape First Nations Heritage Centre, in the care of South Africa’s foundational peoples, creates a vital space where their rich history, enduring legacy, vibrant traditions, and evolving modern identities can be celebrated and shared with the world.

We firmly believe that all people possess an intrinsic longing for deeper connections—to one another, to the natural world that sustains us, and to the ancient knowledge systems that have guided humanity through countless generations.

The Heritage Centre stands as a beacon of these fundamental connections, offering visitors an opportunity to engage with wisdom traditions that predate colonial history and continue to offer profound insights for contemporary challenges.

As custodianship passes to the Western Cape First Nations Collective Trust, we anticipate with great excitement how this sacred space will serve as a bridge between past and future.

We envision the Heritage Centre playing a crucial role in fostering greater understanding between diverse communities, healing historical wounds, and helping to forge a more inclusive future where all South Africans can appreciate their interconnectedness and shared responsibility as custodians of this remarkable land.

The Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust looks forward to witnessing the Heritage Centre flourish under its rightful stewards, creating lasting positive impact for generations to come.

Standing on the shoulders of giants

DEBBIE HENDRIKS

“Today, we unveil to you, our footprint over the last 20 000 years. Whoever wants to question us and say we do not have a footprint, you will see on the walls here that starts in the north, goes east, goes west and right to the tip in the South.

“We certainly have a history, a culture, a footprint.”

These were the impassioned words from Chief Zenzile Khoisan, chairman of the Western Cape First Nations Collective, at the opening and inaugural exhibition at the Heritage Centre in Riverlands.

“In all humility, we present to you what we believe are the histories that were lost, stolen and strayed in South Africa. The language that was cut out of our mouth is on these walls.

Chief Zenzile reminded the audience that what they saw within the Centre was not merely an exhibition but a reclamation of history and identity.

“These walls bear the names and stories of heroes long denied, the languages once silenced, the battles fought, and the symbols of culture that colonial narratives had tried to erase.

“We are standing on the shoulders of giants. Right here is a wall of heroes that is the most composite representation (and we couldn’t get to everybody) of the most outstanding and heroic figures in the long history of our people – all the way from the time from before the colony became a fundamental millstone around our necks.”

Chief Zenzile then talked about the wall where the Battle of Gorinhaiqua were depicted.

“Here the warriors of the Gorinhaiqua defeated the feared militarist Francisco D’Almeida.

“You will also see a timeline of our people’s history, yet there are some who say we do not have a footprint or a culture.

“We have a history, a footprint, a culture. There are our symbols like the bow and arrow, the kaagen, the moon, the gathering space and so much more,” chief Zenzile said.

He then explained what could be seen on the other walls, like the horrid

doctrine of discovery in which the Vatican gave permission for Indigenous peoples worldwide to be eviscerated.

He highlighted stories entrusted to the Centre – like the life of tennis pioneer David Samaai, a photo from a photographic legend, and gifts from indigenous peoples worldwide.

“David Samaai, is an unsung hero, who played at Wimbledon. His family has given his entire collection of medals, the story of his life and all the most treasured memories of the hero in their family. They have entrusted this to us.

“Then you will see a wonderful representation of the red dunes of the Kalahari by one of the greatest photographers in the country, Benny Gool.

“There a gifts from all over the world from other indigenous groups, from so far as the Arctic Circle, Malaysia, Russia, to name a few, and we also have precious gifts from our local groups that you can see and

“The Centre is not about ownership, but custodianship. This means responsibility – not only to preserve the past, but to pass it on stronger to the next seven generations.

experience.”

“Here is an exhibition about Dulcie September, another one of our heroes, who were killed in the liberation struggle.

“Those who know me will be aware that I was also an investigator for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and Dulcie’s death was one of the cases I investigated.

“There is also an exhibition of the slaves, who were given the surnames of the month they were purchased.”

Chief Zenzile then drew the attention to a withered plant planted in red

OUR HEROES: Chief Zenzile Khoisan reads out the names on the Wall of Heroes.



Kalahari sand that stood as a living symbol that we are all connected. It is also a symbol of renewal because from its seed, stronger trees would grow. This was a gift from Oupa Jan Pietersen, of the Kalahari.

“To the Rooibos Trust, that R50 000 that you gave us, thank you very much. We will have to turn over each penny because we have no time to waste and there is no time to waste money.

“If people want to have a party, this is not the place. If you want to build a nation, this is the place.”

The Centre, Chief Zenzile explained, was not about ownership but stewardship and custody.

“Custodianship meant responsibility, not only to preserve the past but to pass it on stronger to the next seven generations.

“When we say custody, we are not called to ownership, we are called to stewardship and custody. And anybody who works with us, and wants to be a bad steward, will have to be a bad steward outside of the First Nations Heritage precinct, because what we have created here with people like Joe Noero, Jody Aufrichtig, and too many to mention, is something that is amazing.

“You will see the Journey to Riverlands on the wall. What is amazing about this centre, is that our young people led the ceremony, and that our young people were the first to enter through the doors.

“It is incumbent upon us to ensure that for seven generations in perpetui-

ty, we not only look after this place, but we hand it to the next generation in a better state than we found it.”

He then spoke passionately of the youth, of the young people of South Roots, who had led the ceremonies and who sang and performed so beautifully.

“This is your protected zone,” he told them.

“Here you will grow in all of the many projects we will do. We will not only take the skills that we have and impart it to you, but we will bring out all the beautiful skills that you have inside of yourself because inside every one of the First Nation young people, there is genius. You have the ability to soar to great heights.”

He also addressed the challenges that had come with building the Centre: opposition, ridicule, even attempts to drive them out.

“We have been denied. Many of the people on this Wall of Heroes were denied, and they died as paupers. But here we will flourish.

“We were terrorised, we were tarred and feathered and they wanted to run us out of town. But I am telling you if God is for you who can stand against you?”

“We have also created this as a place of unity, one of the important features of this event today – because many of the people who are in this hall, are people who do not work together naturally – but the Centre will stand as a place of unity where differences are left outside and collaboration take root inside.”

Comments on handover ceremony

Amazing affirmation

“The handover ceremony was an amazing affirmation of Our Father's faithfulness, the realisation of His promise that the Foundation Nation will be restored.

At this beautiful place of anchorage we can be healed in this space where repentance and reconciliation will take place.



HILARY-JANE SOLOMON
Secretary, Western Cape
First Nations Collective

Overcome with emotion

“It was an overwhelming experience to walk into the heritage centre and realise that we have a place which we can truly call home.

I was overcome with emotion to see our wall of heroes where our people who made such tremendous sacrifices are celebrated with dignity for their contribution to the building of our nation.



TANIA KLEYNHANS-CEDRAS
Trustee, Western Cape First
Nations Collective

Sentrum vrugte van eenheid

“Die Erfenis-sentrum gaan nie oormure en kamers nie, maar oor die gees wat dit dra. Dit is die vrugte van eenheid, 'n tasbare teken dat die Khoi en San steeds krag en 'n doel het.

Kyk die pragtige, wonderlike gebou wat vandag hier staan, waar ek dit kan sien, terwyl my oë nog kan.

Die Hemelse Vader het ons geroep en vir een doel gebind en hier saamgebring – vir eenheid. Mag ons nooit mekaar se hande los nie.



PETRUS VAALBOO
Leier van die Kalahari
Boesmans

Exciting place for youth

“I am just amazed that the heritage centre is ready to show to the world.

This is an exciting place for young people because we now have a place which we can be a part of, a place where we can learn and where we will be involved in all the activities.



ALEXIS MARTIN
High School Student

Observe heritage treasures

“Today is one of the most important days for the people of this country.

With the official handover of the heritage centre to its true custodians our people can finally come to a space where their tangible and intangible history is proudly presented in a dignified manner. This is a space where everyone can come and learn and be exposed to our rich cultural and heritage treasures.



RON MARTIN
Heritage specialist

Place to teach real history

“We have always committed to working together with the First Nations and building a world-class, cultural, media and Heritage Centre and creating this long-term partnership.

I'm very proud in trying circumstances to honour the integrity of our partnership.

Now we have a place of anchorage for the First Nations and where we can also educate and teach my children and everyone's children about the true history of South Africa.

I don't want to hear my kids talk again about Jan van Riebeeck in the history of South Africa.



JODY AUFRICHTIG
Developer of Riverlands

Incredible achievement

“What an incredible achievement it is to finally be a part of such an important event in the life of our people.

It filled me with great pride and humility to know that we have achieved something of great value for our people.

I know that the First Nations heritage centre and all that it represents is a break with past injustice and the beginning of our people's victory over the evils of colonialism and apartheid.



CHIEF JOHN JANSEN
Trustee, Western Cape
First Nations Collective

Bou eenheid vir kinders

“Ek wil vandag vra dat ons eenheid moet bou, sodat die kinders wat opkom die eenheid sien onder ons grootmense.

Ons het kultuur, wat ons nie meer so mooi uitbring nie, want ons kom nie bymekaar uit nie. Dankie chieff Zenzile, dat jy ons kom raadpleeg het. Jy het gesê julle wil iets maak, en hier staan dit nou. Ek is dankbaar.



KATRINA ESAU
San-leier van Upington

We feel at home here

“We as South Roots are very proud of the work we have done with our leaders throughout the journey.

We feel at home here and we look forward to being part of everything that will happen at this Heritage Centre.



OLIVIA VAN WYK
South Roots International

Applaud for hard work

“Chief Zenzile is one of the first in a lifetime of KhoiSan leaders that don't just talk, but also do.

Some leaders talk, but there is no action. You are blessed with a leader who stood up and brought something like this Heritage Centre this into existence, with the help of his Father in heaven.

We applaud the Collective for bringing this for the whole nation.



JOHANNES MAARMAN
Chairman, Khoikhoi
Peoples Biodiversity Trust

Excited for all involved

“It is a wonderful experience to finally see the heritage centre at Riverlands being handed over.

I am so excited for everyone who worked tirelessly and who made this happen. You were dedicated and endured every attack from those who did not want this dream come true. This is a place where we can come to learn our true history.



LUKE JACKSON
High School Student

Comments on handover ceremony

Success at last visible

“Our journey to this moment has been remarkable. We had to endure incredible hardship and we had to face situations where at times our lives had been placed in danger.

But with the help of Almighty God we were able to stand our ground and achieve the success that is now visible. Now we have a true legacy that we can protect and hand over to future generations.



CHANTAL REVELL
Trustee, Western Cape
First Nations Collective

Sacrifice was not in vain

“What has been achieved with the handover ceremony and the unveiling of our inaugural exhibition is truly a dream come true.

Very few people know the depth of sacrifice that went into the construction of the First Nations Heritage Centre and its surrounding precinct, but being there to witness such a historic event is the evidence that all our sacrifices were not in vain.



JEREMY JACKSON
Trustee, Western Cape
First Nations Collective

Unforgettable experience

“It was such a powerful and unforgettable experience to be part of something so beautiful as the handover ceremony that was followed by the opening of the doors of the First Nations Heritage Centre.

What a truly incredible feeling it was to finally know this important space is now under the full custody of the First Nations.



SHIREEN MARTIN
Trustee, Western Cape
First Nations Collective

History in the making

“To the First Nations team I would like to congratulate you on this incredible achievement.

Your persistence in getting the due recognition you deserve has been commendable.

It has truly been an honour working with you all and the mutual respect we have both shown for one another in achieving our goals has helped lead to this very moment.

Please enjoy the moment you are in as it is one of history in the making as you open an iconic space of recognition for all our future generations to see and remember. You are truly all warriors.



DALE BLANCHARD
Director, WBHO Construction

Custodians, not owners

“The Centre is not about ownership, but custodianship.

This means responsibility – not only to preserve the past, but to pass it on stronger to the next seven generations.

The Centre will stand as a place of unity where differences are left outside and collaboration take root inside.

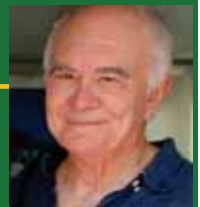


ZENZILE KHOISAN
Chairman, Western Cape
First Nations Collective

Exceptional space

“We have done it! We have accomplished what we set out to do, which is to create an exceptional space where the First Nations can be truly celebrated.

It is finally the realisation of a dream that is the product of hard work and dedication and we are proud to have played our part to see it through till the end.



JOE NOERO
Architect of the
Heritage Centre

Place holds so much info

“It was truly an incredible milestone to bear witness to the handover ceremony and to be in a place that holds such an incredibly informative body of information.

I know it was not easy for those who gave everything and made tremendous sacrifices so that this dream could come to fruition.



DEREK ERASMUS
Businessman

Centre for healing & hope

“The handover now opens the way for us to make a real difference in the lives of our people who are suffering because of all the pain they had to endure.

Our communities are broken and our youth are in great danger, so the work of the heritage centre will help to heal our communities and to give them hope.



JOHANNA FLORKOWZI
Cultural activist

Access to opportunity

“Walls always represent identity. That is who the Creator has made us to be, and the gates, or the doors are always a picture of opportunity and access to opportunity.

It is here, at this Heritage Centre, at the tip of Africa that the Father will reveal His purpose for us.



ALLEN FAUBION
Texas, USA

End to broken promises

“This is an affirmation and is the seal of the covenant that was made between the developer and the First Nations. This is an agreement that must bring to an end the long and bitter history of broken promises between the First Nations of South Africa and everyone else.

With this handover we declare that we have begun the journey of correcting the injustice of our past.



AARON MESSELAAR, Trustee, WCFNC

Centre can unlock people's potential

“What we have seen with this handover ceremony is that those who truly are dedicated to a cause can make a difference in the lives of our people.

With the handover of this centre it is now possible to go forward and build our people, unlock their potential and create the conditions through which we can bring about real and lasting change.



CHARLES QUINT, First Nations Enterprise development

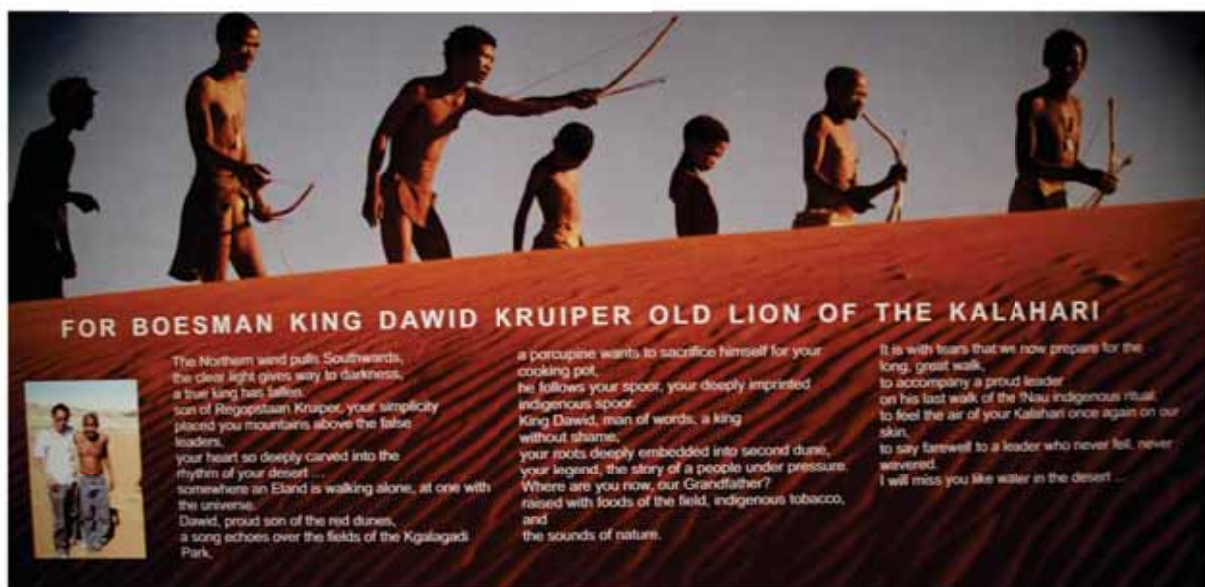
Celebration at handover ceremony



PICTURES: IFN MEDIA, YASSER BOOLEY, PHIL'S PHOTOGRAPHY

Celebration at handover ceremony





RED DUNES OF THE KALAHARI

A beautiful photo of the San on the red dunes in the Kalahari, taken by Benny Gool, one of the greatest photographers in the country.

Written on the picture is a poem of Chief Zenzile Khoisan, paying tribute to Dawid Kruiper, on the news of his death in 2012.

PIC: BENNY GOOL



UNSUNG HERO DAVID SAMAAI

An exhibition of the life of tennis pioneer David Samaai from Paarl, who played at Wimbledon.

His family entrusted his entire collection of medals, the story of his life and all the most treasured memories of the hero in their family.



PRECIOUS GIFTS from local and international indigenous people from around the world is on display at the Heritage centre. Local gifts includes the traditional garments of Khoebaha Japhta Taaibos-Davids, and the traditional cloak of Chief Harleen Sassman.

JUSTIFICATION OF COLONISATION: Ron Martin, heritage specialist, shows the display of the Doctrine of discovery in which the Vatican gave permission for Indigenous peoples worldwide to be eviscerated.



Dulcie September – The Archives Speak:

The life and work of the anti-apartheid activist from Athlone, Dulcie September, as told through a collection of document and photos from family, friends and archives.

Honouring Their Legacy

Some of the images of our heroes and heroines are not on display on this Wall of Heroes, but their names tell the stories of courage, dedication, and sacrifice.

While some of their faces may not be here, their impact remains unforgettable.

We honour them through the legacy they leave behind – one that continues to inspire us all.

From ancient times until today, they all represent lives lived in service and a commitment

to something greater than themselves.

These Heroes, whose images have not been captured, include among others, **Gogosoa; Gonema; Gokou; Jan Perel; Oedesoa; Sosoa.**

We honour you greatly as dedicated stewards, custodians and servants of the people.

Their contributions to the defense of our foundational peoples, to their recognition, and restitution serves as an inspiration to strive for excellence, until we are fully healed and restored in the lands of our ancestors.

Ancient Cultural Heroes



Chief Xhore



Doman / Nomsoa



Autshumato



Krotoa



Dawid Stuurman



Klaas Stuurman



Adam Kok I



Sarah Baartman



Adam Kok II



Ouma Magdalena



Hendrik Witbooi



Nicolaas Waterboer



Barend Barends



Adam Kok III



AAS Le Fleur I



Abraham Esau



Maria Marais



Ouma Lena Jantjies



AAS Le Fleur II



Koos Sas

Resurgence Heroes



Biskop Kanyiles



Josiah Katz



Jaftha Taaibos-Davids



Jatti Bredekamp



Regopstaan Kruiper



Dawid Kruiper



Ouma !Una Rooi



Khoisan X



Charles Hesselman



Richard Kutela



Mario Mahongo



Okkie Lewies



Anthony Le Fleur



Joyce Katz



Johannes Kraalshoek



William Langeveldt



Minnie Barendse



Matty Cairncross



Benedickt Kabab



Ernest Solomon



Jacobus Jooste



Harleen Sassman



Basil Kivedo



Corneels Links

Anti-Apartheid Struggle Heroes



Anton Fransch



Coline Williams



Robbie Waterwich



Ashley Kriel



Basil February



Dulcie September



Imam Abdullah Haron



Amien (Archie) Sydow



Blanche Laguma



Johnny Issel



Zuraya Abass



Cecil Esau



Dr Abdullah Abdurahman



Patrick Blah Rickets



Cissie Gool



Alex Laguma

Writers, Poets, Artists and Academic Heroes



Adam Small



Sydney Vernon Petersen



James Matthews



Danny Titus



Bessy Head



Neville Alexander



Melvin Whitebooi



Jakes Gerwel



Zelda Jongbloed



Don Matela



Rashid Lombard



Shaleen Surtie Richards

Music Heroes



Cliffie Moses



Alvin Dyers



Tony Cedras



Errol Dyers



Ouma Grietjie van Garies



Taliep Petersen



Hotep Galeta



Sathima Benjamin



Robbie Jansen



Stephan Erasmus



Tony Schilder



Mac McKenzie

Indigenous heroes

Ancient Cultural Heroes

Chief Xhore: Khoi translator & negotiator

Doman: Khoi translator & resistance leader

Autshumato: Mediator; Robben Island prisoner

Krotoa: Mother of Khoi nation; interlocutor

Dawid Stuurman: Resistance leader, escaped twice from Robben Island

Klaas Stuurman: Chief; resistance leader

Adam Kok I: Founding patriarch of Griqua

Sarah Baartman: Victim of colonial exploitation

Adam Kok II: Successor to Adam Kok I

Ouma Magdalena: Cultural custodian

Hendrik Witbooi: Nama resistance leader

Nicolaas Waterboer: Chief; resistance leader

Barend Barends: Chief; resistance leader

Adam Kok III: Established Griqualand East

AAS Le Fleur I: Griqua leader; prophet

Abraham Esau: Anti-colonial resistor; Nama rebel

Maria Marais: Cultural custodian

Ouma Lena Jantjies: Woman elder; healer

AAS Le Fleur II: Griqua leader; spiritual visionary

Koos Sas: Rebel leader; resistance figure

Resurgence Heroes

Biskop Kanyiles: Cultural activist; spiritual leader

Josiah Katz: Katz-Korana king; historian

Jaftha Taaibos-Davids: Koebaha, Kei Korana

Jatti Bredekamp: Academic, resurgence thinker

Regopstaan Kruiper: Healer; heritage guardian

Dawid Kruiper: Led land San restitution claims

Ouma !Una Rooi: San elder; oral historian

Khoisan X: Activist; identity advocate

Charles Hesselman: Land, cultural rights activist

Richard Kutela: Linguistic specialist; healer

Mario Mahongo: Land rights activist; leader

Okkie Lewies: Khoi leader; cultural advocate

Anthony le Fleur: Griqua rights campaigner

Joyce Katz: Educator; community builder

Johannes Kraalshoek: Free State Griqua leader

Dok Langeveldt: Cultural and heritage stalwart

Minnie Barendse: Khoi women's rights activist

Matty Cairncross: Cultural custodian; poet

Benedict Kabab: Griqua leader; activist

Ernest Solomon: Community organiser

Jacobus Jooste: Cultural preservationist

Harleen Sassman: Educator; heritage advocate

Basil Kivedo: Politician; educator; historian

Corneels Links: Nama king; cultural activist

Anti-Apartheid Struggle Heroes

Anton Fransch: Revolutionary fighter, MK cadre

Coline Williams: Revolutionary fighter, martyr

Robbie Waterwich: Revolutionary youth activist

Ashley Kriel: MK commander; youth activist

Basil February: MK fighter; killed in battle

Dulcie September: Anti-apartheid activist

Imam Abdullah Haron: Anti-apartheid cleric

Amien Sydow: Revolutionary commander

Blanche Laguma: Activist, thinker, organiser

Johnny Issel: Revolutionary leader, strategist

Zuraya Abass: Community leader, revolutionary

Cecil Esau: MK fighter; Robben Island prisoner

Dr A. Abdurahman: Political leader; physician

Patrick Rickets: Soldier, revolutionary fighter

Cissie Gool: Political leader, social trailblazer

Alex Laguma: Writer; political leader

Writers, Poets, Artists & Academic Heroes

Adam Small: Poet; philosopher; playwright

SV Petersen: Poet; educator

James Matthews: Poet; publisher; activist

Danny Titus: Legal scholar; language advocate

Bessy Head: Novelist; short story writer

Neville Alexander: Language activist, educator

Melvin Whitebooi: Journalist; playwright

Jakes Gerwel: Academic; political advisor

Zelda Jongbloed: Veteran journalist; MP

Don Matela: Poet; cultural rights activist

Rashid Lombard: Photographer, jazz promoter

Shaleen Surtie-Richards: – beloved actress

Music Heroes

Cliffie Moses: Musician; bandleader

Alvin Dyers: Jazz guitarist

Tony Cedras: Composer; multi-instrumentalist

Errol Dyers: Guitarist; musical innovator

Ouma Grietjie: Nama Riel performer; folk artist

Taliep Petersen: Musical theatre pioneer

Hotep Galeta: Jazz pianist; educator

Sathima Benjamin: Jazz vocalist; composer

Robbie Jansen: Saxophone player; singer

Stephan Erasmus: Musician; composer

Tony Schilder: Jazz pianist; bandleader

Mac McKenzie: Composer; ghoema innovator



PROUD MOMENT: Prof. Magda Minguizzi, Associate Professor at the Mandela University's School of Architecture, shares her insights on the journey to the publication of her book, *Origins*.
Photo: Leonette Bower

Origins rooted in Indigenous Knowledge Systems contributing to future environment

Associate Professor Magda Minguizzi of Mandela University's School of Architecture recently launched her second book, *Origins – Khoisan heritage sites and sense of belonging in the Eastern Cape, South Africa*, illustrating three years of research in partnership with ten KhoiSan leaders, based in the Eastern Cape.

The book speaks about the meaning of indigenous heritage and the sense of belonging, as experienced today by the KhoiSan endemic peoples of South Africa.

Prof Minguizzi is also the Director of the recently established Indigenous Knowledge System of the Built Environment Unit (IKSBEU) in the University's School of Architecture.

This Unit is composed of academics from all over the University, students, and both local and national Indigenous leaders and community members. "A true exciting space for exchange", she says. Read more.

Linking IKS with architecture

In the face of global economic, social, and environmental crises, we must re-learn how indigenous communities lived sustainably and in harmony with the land, Prof Minguizzi says.

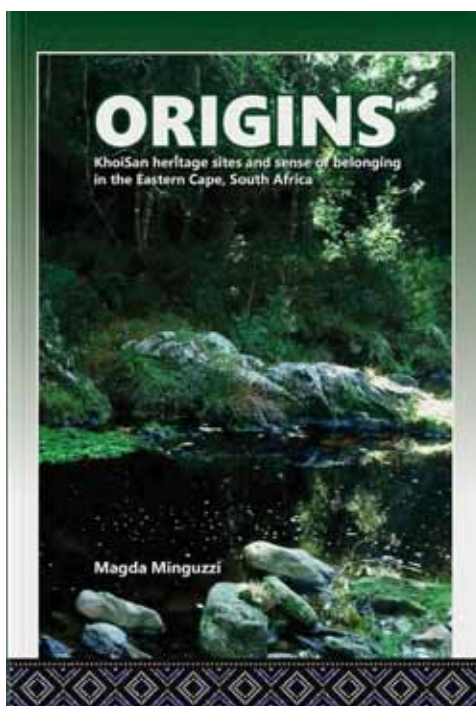
Applying these practices today, through the involvement of local communities, we can strengthen their local economies, promote indigenous building techniques, and encourage environmental stewardship.

This approach also helps protect cultural landscapes, preserve traditional skills, and sustain local identities, ultimately fostering social cohesion.

About origins

Origins contains a collection of the author's interviews with the KhoiSan leaders in 2021, representing unique material and the Indigenous Peoples of South Africa's experiences.

These are acts of restoration, for them to tell



and re-write their story, Prof Minguizzi says. Several important heritage sites that the research group visited, as well as Indigenous methodologies, are also covered.

"I have written this book for and with the First Indigenous Peoples of South Africa, the KhoiSan community members and their youth and for the Indigenous Peoples, and I believe it is going to make a difference in their lives," Prof Minguizzi said.

Scholars, architects, anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, students and the public will find *Origins* of interest as well, she says.

"My interest in the First Nations and their

heritage started when I arrived in South Africa and at Mandela University in 2013. I realised that there was very little knowledge and understanding of their deep culture and their heritage sites," Prof Minguizzi says.

With her background as architect, formed at the University of Architecture IUAV in Venice, it was of crucial importance for her to have a clear understanding of where the first building sites of human beings are located.

"Those are our 'origins', where the contemporary built environment and landscape originated and the base on which we can build a solid future. And I started the collaboration with the leaders of the San and Khoikhoi exactly for this reason. I am deeply grateful to them for this opportunity."

Since last year Prof Minguizzi has also been working with Chiefs and community members, based in the Western and Northern Cape, extending the range nationally.

The Spirit of Water

Prof Minguizzi's first book was entitled *The Spirit of Water*. Practices of cultural reappropriation. Indigenous heritage sites along the coast of the Eastern Cape-South Africa.

Published under the Florence University Press -FUP in 2021, this book covered methods and procedures that could help re-establish the link between the Indigenous communities and their 'forgotten' heritage sites, due to colonial segregations.

Prof Minguizzi started this research project in 2015, co-authored with the chiefs of the KhoiSan Peoples living in Nelson Mandela Bay, and assisted by University staff, as Architect Lucy Vosloo, and students. The team explored the Eastern Cape heritage, focusing on the remains of precolonial fish traps located along the shoreline.

Source: www.mandela.ac.za

Authentic exquisite, urgent narrative

IGARU ZENZILE KHOISAN

comments on Professor Magda Minguzzi's book, *Origins: KhoiSan heritage sites and a sense of belonging in the Eastern Cape, South Africa*

Indigenous and foundational peoples are often the subject of academic distortion, objectification and mercenarism. This is especially the case when academics set out to shed light on their contemporary conditions, their worldview, their perceptions of who they are or have to be and their inherent and urgent agenda to right deep injustice, reclaim stolen identity and demand restoration and restitution.

In the unsettled ground that is contemporary South Africa, one of the most pertinent questions that needs to be answered goes directly to the foundations of this contemporary society, the National Question, and, more specifically the matters of answering the clamour from the descendants of this country's foundational peoples, that they be recognised and restored.

Unlike many paternalistic academic texts which have followed the long-held course of "Anthropology as the Handmaiden of Imperialism," Professor Magda Minguzzi, in *Origins*, presents a most refreshing and thoroughly commendable account of a decade of work conducted with sensitivity, respect and integrity.

Prof Minguzzi sets the bar extremely high by placing the people directly connected to her re-



Chief Zenzile Khoisan introducing the book *ORIGINS*. Photo Leonette Bower

search and that of the unit, and the indigenous leaders who co-laboured within the project, at the very centre of the book, which is now being celebrated and the documentary which is a critical product of the project.

The first and most critical aspect that sets this work apart is that it is anchored in respect for indigenous protocol.

This means that the process of accessing information was not an intrusive process through which the ten leaders interviewed were trivialised or undermined.

The second noteworthy aspect is the sheer vastness of space and terrain that was covered to attend and gain perspective on the many sentinel cultural and spiritual spaces defining the Indigenous Khoikhoi or San leaders who had, at times, to reach deep into ancestral memory to reveal what to them is their essence.

The third element that is noteworthy is the depth of information that the participants shared in the course of this project, revealing a refreshing level of trust and sense of ease within the exercise of sharing.

What *Origins* therefore presents is an authentic and cohesive narrative reflecting the worldviews, perceptions, perspectives and aspirations of the Khoi and San indigenous leaders as they pursue their noble quest for the restoration, restitution and recognition of their people who are the foundational first peoples of South Africa.

Origins: A necessary intervention

The Khoi and San, as foundational African peoples of Southern Africa, are survivors of a most brutal process of dispossession, colonisation, cultural suppression and genocide, through which they were nearly eviscerated.

The First Indigenous people have an astonishing story to tell, because it involves a people favoured by the Almighty God to be custodians of what was once paradise, living in relatively perfect balance with their fellow beings and the universe, revering the Creator, Almighty God.

Origins, therefore is a timely intervention that sets the record straight with an exquisite, authentic and urgent narrative that needs to be heard.

About Prof Magda Minguzzi

Prof Magda Minguzzi was born in Alfonsine, a small town in the Ravenna Province in Italy. She studied art and architecture at school and then moved to Venice to study Architecture, from undergraduate to her doctorate.

Origins was supported by the National Research Foundation of South Africa and published by Mandela University Press. The book can be purchased on Takealot or African Sun Media.



**LEFT:
CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE:** Nelson Mandela University Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Sibongile Muthwa, speaking at the launch of *Origins*, which she celebrated as a critical contribution to the new vision of the University.

**RIGHT:
INDIGENOUS ANTHEM:** The Oeswana Youth group render the National Anthem in their indigenous Mother tongue.



The KhoiSan Leaders who contributed to *ORIGINS* and whose interviews are included is: Gaob Thomas Augustus; Xam # Gaob Maleiba; Gaob Brato Malgas; Gaos Jean Burgess; Gaos Anna Williams; Paramount Chief William Human; Gaos Margaret Coetzee; Chief Wallace Williams; Paramount Chief Gert Cornelius Steenkamp, Gaob Daantjie Japhta, Goab Michael Williams. Prof Magda Minguzzi is in the middle.

Photo's: Leonette Bower

Gesellig by oorhandingseremonie

