

First Nation News

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HERITAGE CENTRE TO OPEN, PROJECTS TO START IN 2026

IFN MEDIA REPORTERS

After years of perseverance, resistance, and unwavering commitment, the custodians of the First Nations precinct at Riverlands, near Observatory in Cape Town, are preparing to officially open the First Nations Heritage Centre in January 2026.

The opening marks a historic milestone for the descendants of the Khoi and San peoples, whose struggle for recognition, restoration, and a place of anchorage has spanned generations. The Heritage Centre stands as a tangible expression of indigenous resilience, self-determination, and the long journey toward justice.

Hilary-Jane Solomon, Secretary of the Western Cape First Nations Collective Trust (WCFNCT), confirmed that the centre is now ready to welcome the public.

“After years of intense struggle to secure a place we can proudly call our own, we are finally ready to open our doors and share the realisation of a vision we fought so hard for – the restoration of our people and our history,” Solomon said.

The Heritage Centre forms part of a broader, all-encompassing initiative led by the WCFNCT to formalise the right of return of Khoi and San descendants to a liberated indigenous zone within the Riverlands development. This precinct is situated on ancient land from which First Nations people were violently dispossessed at the dawn of colonialism.

Over the past months, a series of milestone ceremonies have taken place to prepare the precinct for its higher purpose. These included a blessing ceremony with local and international elders, a thanksgiving ceremony,

and finally, the official handover of custodianship from the developer to the First Nations.

“These processes were essential,” Solomon explained. “They ensure that the work carried out here aligns with the spiritual, cultural, and historical purpose for which this place was intended, and that the custodianship of the precinct is secured for generations to come.”

From early 2026, guided cultural heritage tours led by WCFNCT leaders will begin. These tours will explore the significance of the site, including the sunrise and sunset sentinels, the

eco-corridor and its indigenous vegetation, the foregrounding wall, and the exhibitions housed within the Heritage Centre.

Training programmes for First Nations youth will also be rolled out, creating pathways for skills development, employment, and long-term participation in the centre’s work.

WCFNCT chair Chief !Garu Zenzile Khoisan, also further explained how things would unfold at the heritage centre in the new year.

“We have done several years of planning on how we will roll out our work. This means that each of the components will be brought on stream as the necessary resources become available. This will begin with a series of workshops with all our partners in the five components of the FN heritage project.

“This involves activating our developed work plans for these components, including the First Nations media and communication centre; the centre for the healing of generational trauma; the institute for indigenous knowledge and tangible heritage; the First Nations leadership academy, and the centre for First Nations entrepreneur development,” the chair explained.



Voices of the journey

Ron Martin (Heritage expert)

“With the official handover of the Heritage Centre to its true custodians, our people finally have a space where both our tangible and intangible history is presented with dignity. This is a place of learning, pride, and belonging.”

Hilary-Jane Solomon (WCFNCT)

“The handover ceremony was a powerful affirmation of our Father’s faithfulness – the fulfilment of His promise that the Foundation Nation will be restored. This place of anchorage is a space of healing, repentance, and reconciliation.”

Tania Kleinhans-Cedras (WCFNCT)

“It was overwhelming to walk into the Heritage Centre and realise that we finally have a place we can truly call home. Seeing our Wall of Heroes honoured with dignity moved me deeply.”

Olivia van Wyk (South Roots)

“We are incredibly proud of the journey we have walked with our leaders. This space feels like home, and we look forward to being part of everything that will unfold here.”

Chantal Revell (WCFNCT)

“Our journey to this moment demanded endurance through hardship and danger. By the grace of God, we stood our ground. What stands here now is a legacy we can protect and pass on to future generations.”

Petrus Vaalbooi (Kalahari San)

“Die Erfenis-sentrum gaan nie oor mure en kamers nie, maar oor die gees wat dit dra. Dit is die vrug van eenheid – ’n tasbare bewys dat die Khoi en San steeds krag en doel het. Mag ons nooit mekaar se hande los nie.”

Aaron Messelaar (WCFNCT)

“This handover seals a covenant between the developer and the First Nations. It marks the end of broken promises and the beginning of correcting the injustices of our past.”

Luke Jackson (Learner)

“This is a place where we can finally learn our true history. It exists because of dedication and courage in the face of constant opposition.”

Alexandra Martin (Learner)

“This is an exciting space for young people. We now have a place where we can learn, participate, and help shape the future.”

John Jansen (WCFNCT)

“This achievement represents a break from past injustice and the beginning of victory over colonialism and apartheid.”

Jody Aufrichtig (Developer)

“We are proud to honour our partnership and to help create a world-class cultural, media, and heritage centre. This is a place where our children can finally learn the true history of South Africa.”

Jo Noero (Architect)

“We have accomplished what we set out to do, to create an exceptional space where the First Nations are truly celebrated.”

Allen Faubion (Texas, USA)

“Walls speak of identity, and doors speak of opportunity. Here, at the tip of Africa, the Creator’s purpose for His people will be revealed.”

Jeremy Jackson (WCFNCT)

“Witnessing the handover and inaugural exhibition confirms that none of the sacrifices made along this journey were in vain.”

2025 – a year of great achievements

From the *desk*
of the *Editor*



As we close what has certainly been a momentous year for the First Nations Heritage Centre at Riverlands, there is no doubt that the long years of defending our right of return and our right to permanent anchorage is now behind us.

All that now remains is to gather ourselves and implement the many plans that were developed through extensive consultation with our people.

As we now prepare for a well-deserved season of rest and close out our work year of 2025, we must first give thanks to our Creator for the greatest affirmation of the cause with which we have been seized for almost a decade – the establishment of a permanent space where Khoi and San history, heritage, culture and indigenous knowledge can be showcased and celebrated in the first territories of dispossession.

It is this faith in our Creator's promise, that justice will prevail and restoration will replace the brokenness that resulted from those acts of cruelty against our people four centuries ago that has underwritten all our efforts to create a safe haven for the descendants of South Africa's first custodians.

These people suffered every indignity so that others could flourish and prosper, while we were stripped of identity, land, dignity, humanity and agency.

How incredibly inspiring then it is to see that all our sacrifices were not in vain, even as our reputations were besmirched and tarnished, our leaders threatened and our families thrown into turmoil because we chose the difficult path of exercising our indigenous cultural agency and crafting a unique covenant or social accord with the developers of Riverlands so that our generation and the many generations that still may come can have an anchorage from which we can rebuild.

Now, as we celebrate the awe-inspiring message of Christmas, Emmanuel, the affirmation that Almighty God our Creator is with us, we know that we are not

alone, even as we face all life's trials and challenges.

As we look back on the year that was, the overwhelming message that comes through is that we have been truly blessed to witness the manifestation what those who went before us could only dream about.

We, in this generation – by staying the course, being resilient and refusing to throw in the towel, even though we had to endure every onslaught – have demonstrated that hard work, endurance and, most of all faith, conquers all.



This has seen us through a process in which the First Nations heritage centre was constructed in one annual lunar cycle, from the breaking of the ground on the New Moon in March 2024 to the completion of the building on the Full Moon of March 2025.

This watershed event was celebrated with an incredibly wonderful blessing ceremony, where our indigenous elders from around South Africa and around the world came to witness and participate in the blessing of the building and the entire First Nations Heritage Precinct within which it is located.

Soon after that we had the experience of a ceremony of thanksgiving in which specific indigenous cultural rites, in line with the prescripts Khoi and San indigenous protocols were performed and where we collectively expressed our gratitude to the Creator for our answering our prayers for a place of anchorage.

The final part of the process of ensuring

that our custody over our place of anchorage was secure and that our plans for the future are properly set in place occurred on 29 July, when our keys of custody were officially handed over to the Western Cape First Nations Collective Trust by the Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust, the developer of Riverlands.

Having traversed that full pathway, with all protocol observed, it is therefore clear that the descendants of the First custodians and defenders now are firmly ready to take control of our own destiny.

This is a journey of hope conquering



despair, of emerging victorious from what can only be described as a war of attrition and of, in humility, accepting that the First Nations heritage precinct in the oasis from which the first people can heal from brokenness, celebrate our long suppressed culture and indigenous knowledge systems and proudly showcase the best of what our people have to offer to the world.

May 2026 be the year of the glorious rising of the descendants of South Africa's first indigenous peoples, where our faith is restored and where hope, like a fountain, springs eternal.

Wishing all our people a Blessed Christmas and a joyous, prosperous, safe and successful New Year.



Zenzile Khoisan & the IFN Media Team

Al lyk dit of alles rondom ons vergaan, God hou sy mense vas

MY
INHEEMSE

DS REGGIE
BOESAK



Skriflesing:

Handelinge 27:13–26

Wanneer ek die verhaal van Paulus se reis na Rome lees, sien ek myself saam met hom op daardie stormsee.

Ek voel die koue soutspatsels teen my gesig, hoor die gekraak van die houtskip en die geroep van matrose wat teen die wind skree.

Ek kan my voorstel hoe hulle hoopvol uit Sesarea vertrek het – Paulus, 'n gevangene van die Romeinse Ryk, saam met ander gevangenes onder toesig van 'n streng kaptein en sy regiment.

By Mira word hulle oorgeplaas na 'n skip oppad na Italië, en later vaar hulle na Kreta, waar hulle by die Mooi Hawens aan wal gaan.

Alles het aanvanklik belowend gelyk. Die son het geskyn, die wind was sag, en die volgende hawe sou Feniks wees.

Maar dan, soos dit dikwels in die lewe gebeur, verander die wind. Wat mooi begin het, word 'n nagmerrie. 'n Suidwes-storm, die gevreesde Eurakilon, slaan toe met ongenaakbare krag.

Twee weke lank dryf hulle doelloos op die stormsee, tot hulle uiteindelik op Malta uitspoel – stukkend, uitgeput, maar lewend.

Ek dink aan die kaptein, trots en vol selfvertroue. Paulus het hom gewaarsku om nie verder te vaar nie, dié boodskap het gekom van die Engel wat God na hom gestuur het.

Maar die kaptein het nie na hom geluister nie. Hy wou sy gesag laat geld. Hy het besluit om sy eie koers

te hou – soos soveel leiers deur die eeue wat nie na wysheid wil luister nie.

En toe kom die storm. Ek sien in my geestesoog hoe hulle paniekerig begin planne beraam.

Ek sien vyf planne ontvou – vyf pogings van mense om self beheer te neem wanneer die natuur, en uiteindelik God, duidelik wys dat Hý in beheer is.



Mag hierdie Kersgety vir julle 'n tyd wees van vrede, geloof en herstel.

Plan A: Hulle besluit om naby die kus te bly, want die wind is aanvanklik lig. Maar 'n storm tref hulle onverwags. Chaos breek uit. Soldate skree, matrose hardloop, toue breek, vate rol oor die dek. Die skip slinger heen en weer – dis paniek in sy rou vorm.

Plan B: Hulle probeer teen die wind vaar, maar word meegesleur. Moed sak, en hulle dryf net waarheen die storm hulle neem. 'n Klein oomblik van rus kom toe hulle 'n eiland sien en skuiling soek, maar dit hou nie lank nie.

Plan C: Hulle bind toue om die skip se onderkant en laat die anker sak – desperate pogings om iets, enig iets, te red.

Plan D: Die bevel kom: "Gooi die vrag oorboord!" Dis 'n simboliese oomblik. Soms moet 'n mens ook in die lewe van dinge ontslae raak – van laste, trots, en bagasie wat jou terughou. Maar selfs dit help nie; die wind woed voort.

Plan E: "Gooi die toerusting oorboord!" sê hulle. Hulle



Foto ter illustrasie

gehoorsaam, maar niks verander nie.

Uiteindelik besef hulle: al hul planne, al hul menslike kennis en vaardigheid beteken niks sonder God se leiding nie.

Dae lank het die storm gewoed. Die nagte was pikdonker. Die sterre, die enigste rigtingwysers, was deur wolke bedek. Niemand het meer hoop gehad nie.

In my eie lewe, en in die geskiedenis van ons volk – die Khoi en San – herken ek hierdie patroon.

Ons het ook deur storms gegaan. Storms van onreg, van ontkenning, van verlore grond en kultuur.

Baie keer het ons self planne beraam, maniere gesoek om staande te bly in 'n wêreld wat ons wou wegwaai.

En tog, telkens wanneer ons moed opgegee het, het daar 'n stem uit die donker gekom wat gesê het: "Staan op!"

Soos Paulus op die stormsee het ek ook al gevoel dat alles verlore is. Ek het gesien hoe mense hul geloof verloor, hoe hoop weggespoel word deur die winde van teleurstelling.

Maar dan, op die oomblik wanneer alles donker lyk, kom die lig van God se genade deur die wolke.

Paulus, die gevangene van Rome, maar die dienaar van Christus, hoor 'n engel se stem: "Moenie bang wees nie." En hy staan op.

Hy word die stem van hoop te midde van chaos. Hy sê vir sy medegevangenes: "Nie een van julle sal sterf nie; net die skip sal vergaan."

Daardie woorde dra ek in my hart. Want ek glo: selfs al lyk dit of alles rondom ons vergaan – ons kultuur, ons geskiedenis, ons identiteit – God hou sy mense

vas. Die skip mag breek, maar die mense oorleef.

My geliefde KhoiSan-volk, hierdie verhaal is ook ons verhaal. Die Eurakilon van onreg het al dikwels oor ons gewaai.

Ons het storms van uitsluiting, vernedering en vergeet ervaar. Maar God was nog altyd by ons.

Ons spore lê diep in hierdie land – in die sand, in die berge, in die plante wat ons voorouers geken het, in die rooibos waaruit ons kennis gegroei het.

Ons is nie toevallig hier nie. God het ons hier geplaas. En Hy roep ons steeds, soos Hy Paulus geroep het: "Staan op, hou moed, moenie bang wees nie."

Ek glo dat die storms wat ons as volk deurstaan, nie ons einde is nie, maar ons voorbereiding vir 'n nuwe begin.

Net soos Paulus uiteindelik Rome bereik het, sal ons ook ons bestemming bereik – nie deur eie krag nie, maar deur God se genade.

Daarom sê ek vir julle: Hou moed. Soos Handelinge 27 leer:

- "Hou moed!" (vers 22)
- "Moenie bang wees nie." (vers 24)
- "Vertrou op God." (vers 25)

Mag hierdie Kersgety vir julle 'n tyd wees van vrede, geloof en herstel.

Mag ons as volk saam staan – met nederige harte, maar met vaste geloof dat God nog steeds aan die stuur van ons lewensboot is.

In die Naam van Jesus Christus bly ek julle dienaar.

Ds. Reggie Boesak is die kapelaan van die Kaapse Khoi Kulturele Erfenis Ontwikkelingsraad van SA

* Die artikel het voorheen in Inheemse Spoor verskyn

RIVERLANDS

The path of Stewardship

How the Heritage Precinct became the Homecoming of South Africa's First Nations

IFN MEDIA REPORTERS

When the early morning clouds settled softly over Hoerikwaggo (Table Mountain) in December of 2024 – a quiet symbolism filled the air. For those gathered at Riverlands the cloud felt like a sign: the long, painful journey toward recognition and restoration had finally come home.

Riverlands, once an unremarkable patch in a contested landscape, has transformed over the past several years into a historic precinct dedicated to the heritage, memory and future of the Khoi and San peoples.

What is now standing there, the

First Nations Heritage Centre, is the product of years of struggle, negotiation, and a rare social compact between the Western Cape First Nations Collective Trust (WCFNCT) and the Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust (LLPT).

The Heritage Centre is more than a building, it is a milestone in South Africa's evolving story, a tangible footprint of stewardship that leaders say will shape the next seven generations.

A Dream Rising From the Soil

"This is our authentic footprint of stewardship," said Hilary-Jane Solomon, secretary of the WCFNCT, during one of the site inspections. "It will be our permanent contribution to our people who have waited a long time to be restored to their rightful place."

For Solomon and other leaders, Riverlands is not merely an architectural achievement. It represents a spiritual homecoming, built on land that lies between the Liesbeek and Black Rivers – the very rivers that mark some of the earliest interactions between indigenous communities and European colonisers.

The journey to this space began long before the foundations were poured. Over more than seven years, the WCFNCT fought a "gruelling battle," as many described it, to secure a place where the First Nations' narrative could be honoured.

When construction of the Centre began, it did so deliberately on 20 March 2024, under a New Moon. A full lunar cycle later, on an evening in mid-March 2025 when a bright yel-

low Full Moon rose, leaders, elders and international guests returned for a ceremony of thanksgiving.

The lunar bookending was intentional: a symbolic arc, marking not just a construction timeline but a spiritual cycle of restoration.

Designing a Place Rooted in Memory

Architect Jo Noero of Noero Architects approached the Heritage Centre project not merely as a design commission, but as a cultural responsibility.

"This is a building that is the only one of its kind in the world," he said during one of the walkthroughs.

Noero's design blends contemporary aesthetic clarity with deep indigenous symbolism.

The precinct features:

- Two towering sentinels, one aligned to sunrise and the other to sunset, each bearing nine symbols honouring KhoiSan spiritual and cultural principles.
- A vast mural wall, 43 metres long and nine metres high, depicting the journey of the First Nation, from ancient custodianship, through dispossession and struggle, to resurgence and restoration.
- A gathering space that functions as a cultural heart, where performances, ceremonies and community rituals unfold.

Landscaped indigenous gardens that echo the ecological heritage of the Liesbeek corridor.

From the outset, the site was approached as sacred ground.

Continued on the next page



BREAKING GROUND: Western Cape Premier Alan Winde and Cape Town Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis with First Nations leaders turning the sod for the First Nations Heritage Centre at Riverlands in March 2024.



BLESSING CEREMONY: First Nations elders from across South Africa participated in the ceremony to bless the First Nations Heritage Centre in March 2025.



Community's Long Journey

Among those who visited the construction site were senior leaders who understood the magnitude of the moment.

"This is something tangible that belongs to the people," said Kaptein Aaron William Messelaar, trustee of the WCFNCT and senior leader in the Griqua Royal House. "We can now all go and tell our people that the First Nations Heritage and Cultural Centre belongs to the First Indigenous people, the Khoi and San."

These words reflect not only anticipation but relief, because for generations, promises made to First Nations communities were later broken. Agreements disintegrated. Consultations faded. But now, Riverlands, for many, marks a turning point.

Father Austen Jackson, a heritage activist, compared the potential impact of Riverlands to the V&A Waterfront, another iconic Cape Town site.

However, Jackson stressed, Riverlands goes further because "central to this entire development is the memorialisation of the Khoi and San." As the final touches neared completion, including the sentinels and mural wall, excitement rippled through communities. What had once been dismissed as an unachievable dream had become a landmark.

A Ceremony of Gratitude

The thanksgiving and blessing ceremony in March 2025 was a milestone in its own right.

"Today, we give thanks to the faithfulness of the Creator," Solomon told the gathering. "This place of sanctuary stands as testimony to the resilience of the First Nations peoples."

Leaders arrived from across South Africa, as well as from Russia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Australia and the United States

Chief Reggie Boesak, chaplain of the Khoi and San Resurgence, led the spiritual rituals.

Before long the air filled with the sound of shofars, horns blown to signal significant spiritual transitions, sending deep echoes across the river and toward the four winds, symbolising unity across the indigenous diaspora.

"This is not the sound of war," Solomon said. "It is the sound of the beginning of restoration."

Traditional cleansing rituals followed, led by Chief Ron Martin and Chief !Garu Zenzile Khoisan, using boegoe water and sacred herbs to purify the space.

South Roots International performed indigenous dances and delivered prayers in Khoekhoegowab, a profound reclamation of language and identity.

For many, the moment was overwhelming, a collective recognition that a new chapter had begun.

Opening Exhibition of the Heritage Centre

On a crisp July morning in 2025, the Heritage Centre opened its doors with the handing over of the Centre by the developers, and the unveiling of its inaugural exhibition: *Ancient Legacies and Modern Identities*.

Emotions ran high as elders who had spent decades fighting for recognition entered the building – some of them for the first time.

"We have a history. We have a culture," said Chief Zenzile Khoisan, chairperson of the WCFNCT.

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

At the opening:

- ▶▶ Drums echoed through the precinct.
- ▶▶ Dancers from South Roots International animated the space with performances honouring creation stories.
- ▶▶ Youth recited poetry, bridging old and new worlds.
- ▶▶ Elders blessed the centre and the grounds, calling for unity.

Princess Chantall Revell paid tribute to the elders, saying: "You walked a long road so that we, the younger ones, can stand here today and say thank you."

Queen Katrina Esau urged unity among the younger generations, reminding them that cultural practices fade without deliberate preservation.

Queen Esau, one of the last speakers of the N/uu language, offered prayers and blessings, reminding the gathering of Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you... plans to give you hope and a future."

Oupa Petrus Vaalbooi, leader of the Kalahari San, added: "This Heritage Centre is not just a building. It is the fruit of unity and proof that the Khoi and San nation still have strength."

A Partnership Defined by Respect

Perhaps most remarkable in the Riverlands journey is the relationship forged between the WCFNCT and the LLPT.

Developer Jody Aufrichtig spoke candidly at the

opening. "There were disagreements," he said. "But mutual respect always brought us back. All the time and energy we put in was worth it. All I can say is: welcome home, my friends."

He described the project as a break in the "cycle of invisibility" that had erased First Nations contributions from mainstream history.

The official handover of custodianship from the LLPT to the WCFNCT symbolised a turning point in South Africa's post-colonial landscape. Unlike many previous agreements with First Nations communities, this one was honoured – publicly, ceremonially and permanently.

A Living Archive

Inside the Heritage Centre, visitors encountered:

- ▶▶ A journey to anchorage exhibit tracing the fight for recognition
- ▶▶ A detailed account of the Battle of Gorinhaiqua
- ▶▶ A wall of heroes honouring indigenous leaders across centuries; as well as Anti-apartheid struggle heroes, artists, musicians and academics.
- ▶▶ Cultural artifacts, artworks and contemporary installations
- ▶▶ A withered tree planted in red Kalahari sand, which symbolised resilience, rebirth and the seeds of future generations.

"The tree is from the red dunes of the Kalahari," Boesman leader Jan Petersen, explained. "From this seed will come new and stronger trees, because this is a place where seeds will be planted."

International ally Allen Faubion, who contributed significantly to the exhibition, reminded attendees that "walls represent identity. Doors represent opportunity."

A Homecoming for Generations

During closing remarks, Chief Zenzile turned to the youth, reminding them that the Heritage Centre was more than a memorial, it was a protected zone where future leaders, artists and thinkers would shape a new narrative.

"Here, we leave our differences at the door," he said. "Inside, we work together."

For the First Nations communities, Riverlands is a beacon of what can happen when history is acknowledged, heritage respected, and agreements honoured.

It is a homecoming. A place of anchorage. A milestone not only for the Khoi and San but for South Africa.

And as the doors opened, one message rose above all others, spoken by elders, leaders, developers and visitors alike: "Look how our people are standing together."

Riverlands Timeline

Forming the vision

- Formal engagement begins between WCFNCT and LLPT
- Site for heritage precinct agreed
- Historic Right of Return celebration
- Social compact signed between WCFNCT and LLPT.

2018 – 2021

2022

Obstacles removed

- Full bench of Supreme Court of Appeal ruling removes legal obstacles
- Extensive consultations with all First Nations structures and leadership throughout the country on stewardship and the vision for heritage precinct.

Design begins

- Engagements with Noero Architects
- Indigenous symbols, cultural protocols are built in every element
- Two sentinels and a vast mural wall will become central features.

2023

March 2024

Sod turning (with New Moon)

- Leaders, dignitaries break the soil
- Prayers, songs and blessings mark the beginning of construction
- This begins the lunar cycle framing the spiritual unfolding of the precinct.

Apr to Dec 2024

Building takes shape

- Mural foundations laid
- Structural frame completed
- Gathering Space and gardens begin to take form.
- Excitement grows across the First Nations communities.

Dec 2024

Final Inspection

- WCFNCT leaders walk through the nearly completed building.
- Cloud rests over Hoerikwaggo – seen as a sign of peace and alignment.
- Leaders declare: “Our footprint of stewardship has risen.”

March 2025

Thanksgiving ceremony (Full moon)

- One full annual lunar cycle after the sod turning.
- Shofars sound to the four winds.
- !Nau ritual performed
- Sacred herbs burned for cleansing.
- International guests attend.

May 2025

Prayers, Protocols, Blessings

- Indigenous prayers, dances and rites performed.
- Wall of Heroes announced.
- Elders reaffirm unity and healing.
- Centre seen as a place of shared memory and future purpose.

July 2025

Handover of Heritage Centre

- Inaugural Exhibition: *Ancient Legacies & Modern Identities*.
- Drums, dancers and youth performances ushers in the joyous occasion
- Custodianship formally handed to the WCFNCT.
- Public declaration: “This is home. This is restoration.”

2026 & Beyond

2026 and beyond

- Legacy for the next 7 generations
- Centre will become multi-purpose gathering space
- Inter alia: cultural hub; museum, research space; heritage archive
- Schools, communities and international partners begin ongoing exchanges.
- Riverlands symbol of recognition, restitution and restoration.



SNAPSHOT OF RIVERLANDS

The Heritage Centre at Riverlands is a striking meeting point between landscape, memory, and living culture. Set against an indigenous garden, and an open area which is used as a gathering space, the centre is located near the confluence of the Liesbeek and Black Rivers.

This is a place where natural beauty and human history are deeply intertwined. Carefully designed pathways and gardens lead visitors through the site, inviting slow movement and reflection.

The architecture of the centre blends modern lines with symbolic elements that honour Indigenous heritage. Clean white façades and glass surfaces convey openness and accessibility, while the bold mural on the exterior wall anchors the building firmly in history.

This large-scale artwork depicts scenes of community life, ancestral knowledge, resistance, resurgence and a vision of restoration, visually narrating stories that have long been marginalised or silenced.

The images communicate Riverlands Heritage Centre as a place of learning, recognition, and restoration – a space where past and present meet, and where cultural knowledge is preserved, celebrated, and shared with future generations.



Reflecting on the year that was at Riverlands



A STRONG TEAM: (ABOVE AND LEFT): Leaders of the Western Cape First Nations Collective with architect Jo Noero (4th right) and some of the professional building team during a tour of the nearly completed First Nations Heritage Centre at Riverlands in 2024.



Wishes for a Merry Christmas ...



Time to restore spirit, soul and body

Times and Seasons are ancient. It encapsulates the redemptive gift of Messiah that the Most High, Creator has given to all humanity as a reflection of His love.

A gift to be celebrated all year round!

It has been set long before the Gregorian calendar, culminating in the month of December that the world

celebrate as festive season.

In this time, let us make time to reflect, be refreshed and be restored in spirit, soul and body.

Let us share His love with everyone we meet; restoring hope and ensuring the well-being of society all year round... Blessings & Shalom

*Hilary-Jane Solomon,
Secretary, WCFNC*



Give thanks to God for His many blessings the past year

This has been a year that, as in life, has been an intense year that required intense sacrifices, where all of us were pushed to the very edge of our reserves.

It was also a year in which we had to endure the pain of laying to rest many of our family members, our stalwarts and trailblazers and other fellow compatriots in our resurgence.

These were leaders who toiled selflessly in our quest to achieve restoration, restitution and recognition for our peoples.

However, as we reflect on

the momentous year that now draws to a close, let us give thanks to Almighty God for His faithfulness and the many blessings he had bestowed on us.

These include the official handover of the First Nations Heritage precinct from the developer into the hands of its permanent custodian, the Western Cape First Nations Collective Trust.

May all have a Blessed Christmas and may the coming year bring the full realisation of our dreams.

*Zenzile Khoisan
Chairman, WCFNC*



Moenie dat verskille ons fokus op ons doelwit verloor nie

Feesgety wense aan my mede Khoi en San broers en susters. Namens myself en my familie wens ek almal 'n Geseënde Feesgety toe.

Mag God u almal onder sy beskerming hou tydens hierdie tyd, asook in die toekoms.

My KhoiSan broers en susters, ons bevind ons tans in 'n baie opwindende en interessante era van ons stryd ten opsigte van ons Wetlike erkenning as Eerste Nasie van Suid-Afrika.

Een baie groot oorwinning wat ons behaal het, is dat die Rooibos Tee verklaar is

as die KhoiSan se intellektuele eiendom.

Hierdie oorwinning het ook teweeg gebring dat daar groter eenheid onder die Khoisan Volk ontwikkel het.

Die Rooibos inisiatief moet ons ook gebruik om ons volk verder te versterk.

Ons moenie toelaat dat enige vorm van verskille ons laat fokus verloor om ons doelwit as 'n Volk te bereik nie.

Ek dank u almal vir u toegewydheid in die stryd om ons Status as Eerste Nasie te bereik.

*John Jansen
Trustee, WCFNC*



Milestones we achieved only possible thanks to Our Father

What an incredible year we have lived through where much has been revealed to us in the course of our work to restore dignity and respect to our people.

There have been so many lessons we have learned during one of the most trying periods of our resurgence movement.

The most important of everything we have experienced is the faithfulness of Our Father who have carried us through all the trials we had to endure, even as we were blessed abundantly

with the realisation of the dream of our heritage precinct, for which we have all tirelessly laboured.

It is with thanksgiving that we now look back at our achievements, knowing that none of the milestones we reached could have been possible without Almighty God.

Indeed, to Almighty God be all the glory and honour, for He is indeed faithful and just and through His favour we have achieved great milestones.

*Chantal Revell,
Trustee, WCFNC*



Victory possible thanks to dedication of all our people

What an incredible time it is to have witnessed what many predicted would never occur in our lifetime.

This achievement is the permanent place of anchorage for South Africa's First Indigenous Khoi and San peoples with our First Nations Heritage Precinct at Riverlands.

This precinct is situated in the heritage laden Gorinhaiqua territories near Observatory, which historically was one of the first territories of which the Peninsular Khoi were dispossessed.

The site represents our in-

igenous salute to the brave warriors who were the first freedom fighters who rose to defend our country.

We also give all honour, praise and thanksgiving to our Creator, Almighty God, whose hand of protection and favour has always been upon us.

Our victory would also not have been possible without the dedicated service of all of our people, who made tremendous sacrifices for us to achieve this milestone.

*Jeremy Jackson,
Trustee, WCFNC*



2025, a year of self-reflection, strength, authenticity

Re-igniting our innate abilities cannot be compromised, every action is a lesson learnt.

Achieving our goals requires self-discipline.

Our appeal for 2026 is to mindfully acknowledge the ultimate sacrifices made by resilient Cultural Warriors.

Many have faced life's toughest challenges and were able to withstand.

Reinforcing our inner-strength and dedication is required to be of continuous service in our communities where our contributions render transformative experiences into personal growth.

Restorative Justice for the Aboriginal Khwe and San Nation in 2026!

*Tania Kleinhans-Cedras
Trustee, WCFNC*

... and a happy, prosperous New Year



Let's make an impact on poverty and despair in 2026

This year was filled with a mixture of successes and challenges.

We have had some success in the placement of our youth in meaningful employment opportunities, while our battles against unsympathetic employers continue.

There's always hope,

though, and my wish for 2026 is to double our workforce at Riverlands and make an even greater impact on the war against poverty and despair in our First Nations communities. Happy Holidays, my beautiful nation.

*Shireen Martin,
Trustee, WCFNC*



We need to take back our communities and instill pride

This year was a challenging one. Our First Nations communities are being ravaged by violence and murder, with no relief in sight.

Uncaring, unfeeling local and provincial governments are using the suffering of our people as tools for cheap political point-scoring.

Only we can free ourselves, take back our communities, re-instill pride in our youth and give our children hope through the re-embrace of our rich heritage.

Wishing all our brothers, sisters and children a blessed and SAFE festive season.

*Ron Martin,
Heritage Specialist*



Happy Christmas and joyous, prosperous New Year

Wishing all our leaders, structures and the Khoi and San communities a very happy Christmas and a truly joyous and prosperous New Year ahead.

We give thanks for the many breakthroughs we have made at Riverlands.

We trust that all our hard over the past year will stand us in good stead and serve as our strong foundation from which we will build greater

resilience to reach greater heights as we seek to develop great stability, sustainability and self-reliance within our indigenous peoples.

May all take the time to be nourished by the company of our friends and family over this festive season and may we come back refreshed to face the challenge of the New Year.

*Charles Quint
Projects Office, WCFNC*



Let's not lose sight of the perspective of gratitude

The end of the year gives us the perfect time to reflect on what remains unfinished.

We reflect on all those open loops, incomplete tasks and intentions.

It's easy to lose sight of the perspective of gratitude. Life is a gift from God.

2025 itself is something so worthy of our gratitude that we have a God who walks alongside us.

As we gather with family, remember this is our opportunity to end the year with gratitude.

Remembering the things God has done and how He remained faithful and present in our lives.

We are ending the year with Gratitude and Love in our Hearts.

*Iris Davids
Cape Khoi Labour Forum*



Thank you for walking the journey with us

As we reach the close of 2025, I extend my deepest gratitude to every leader, community member, partner, and institution who has walked this journey with us.

This year has demanded resilience, clarity of purpose, and unwavering commitment to our heritage as Khoi and San peoples.

I am humbled by the selfless dedication shown across our structures, and inspired by the spirit of unity that continues to grow among our communities.

Despite the challenges, we have achieved remarkable successes – not born from individual effort, but from collaboration and hard work.

Together, we have ensured that our voices remain strong, our identity

remains protected, and our people remain united in their pursuit of dignity, justice, and recognition.

In 2025, we faced the strategic attempts by certain political actors to impose a new Khoi and San "superstructure" designed to dilute and eventually replace the National Khoi and San leadership.

Through wisdom, foresight, and collective strategy, we successfully outmaneuvered these efforts.

We reaffirmed that legitimate authority cannot be manufactured, nor can it be imposed.

Our leadership arises from lineage, history, and the will of our people.

*Captain Aaron Messelaar
Leader of the Griqua Royal
House and Deputy Secretary General, CONTRALESA*



God se genade en seën lig in die duisternis

Vanaf die Klein Namakwa huis te Kamiesberg wil ek graag 'n Christelike boodskap deel ter viering van die jaar 2025.

Hierdie jaar was 'n jaar van uitdagings en hoogtepunte, maar deur alles heen het ons die onwankelbare leiding en liefde van ons Hemelse Vader ervaar.

In hierdie tyd van verandering en onsekerheid, het ons as tradisionele mense ons geloof en vertrouwe in God versterk.

Hy het ons deur moeilike tye gedra en ons krag gegee om vol te hou, te glo en te hoop.

God se genade en seën is 'n lig in die duisternis, 'n bron van hoop vir ons land en ons mense.

Al die dank, eer en lof aan ons Hemelse Vader, wie se genade onmeetlik is. Hy is die rots en krag van ons lewens, die bron

van ons tradisies en die beskermheer van ons gemeenskappe.

Mag ons altyd die woord van Christus in ons harte hou en sy liefde deur ons lewens uitstraal.

Mag die jaar 2026 vir ons 'n jaar wees van vrede, voorspoed en nuwe geleenthede om ons geloof te verdiep.

Mag ons as tradisionele mense 'n voorbeeld wees van geloof, hoop en liefde en altyd ons dankbaarheid uitspreek vir die seëninge wat God aan ons gee.

Ons glo dat met God se leiding, ons toekoms vol hoop en voorspoed sal wees.

Laat ons altyd terugkeer na Sy woord en Sy beloftes en met vertrouwe die pad vorentoe stap.

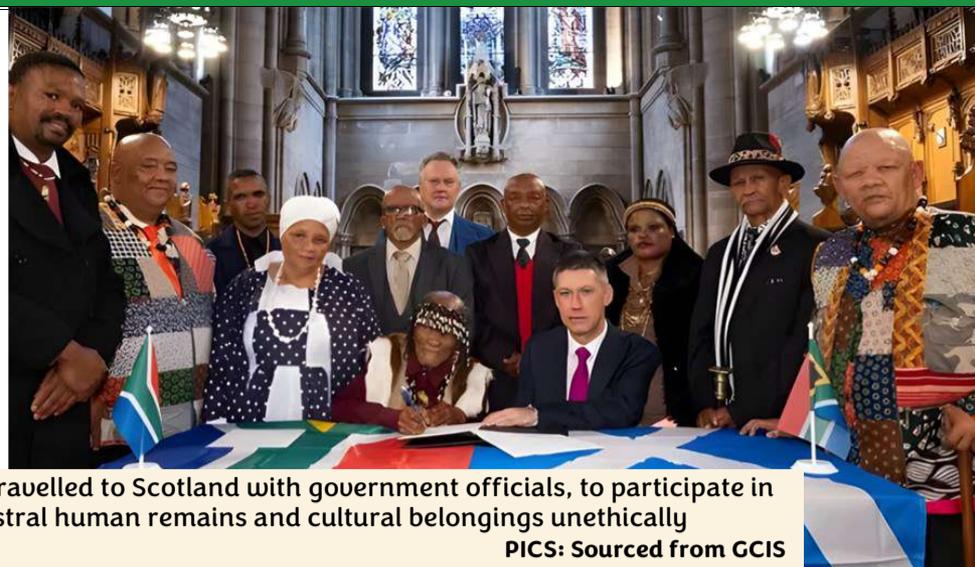
Seën en vrede vir julle almal.

In Christus liefde.

*Ouma Charlotte Links
Links Koninklike Huis
Kamieskroon*



RESTORING DIGNITY: Indigenous Khoi and San leaders travelled to Scotland with government officials, to participate in the historic handover by the Hunterian Museum of ancestral human remains and cultural belongings unethically removed from South Africa.



PICS: Sourced from GCIS



Preparing to lay ancestors to rest

ZENZILE KHOISAN

In October this year, the leadership of South Africa's Khoi and San peoples welcomed home the human remains of their ancestors who had been unethically and unlawfully exhumed from graves in the Northern Cape during the colonial period and taken to Glasgow, Scotland.

Here they were used as exhibits of research by academics from the University of Glasgow's Hunterian Institute.

The homecoming ceremony at Iziko was preceded by an indigenous welcoming ceremony at Cape Town International Airport where several indigenous elders, following the precepts of the Khoi and San rites of protocol, were on hand to receive the remains of the six ancestors, two casts and a smoking pipe indigenous cultural belonging.

Petrus Vaalbooi, the traditional leader of the Northern Cape Boesman and San peoples who has campaigned vigorously over many years for the return and reburial of ancestral remains, stated that this watershed event was "a long-overdue process".

He said, "this marks a critical step toward healing, respect, and the restoration of dignity to our ancestors."

The Hunterian Museum handed over the partial remains of six individuals, two plaster face-casts and a soapstone smoking-pipe excavated from a burial cairn.

These were unethically exhumed between 1868 and 1924 and deposited with the University of Glasgow by alumni and other donors.

The remains of five of these individuals, and the smoking-pipe, originate from the Northern Cape and are claimed by descendant members of

the San, Nama, Griqua and Korana populations. The additional remains originate from the Western Cape and are of KhoiSan origin.

They were unethically excavated from within a cave and are probably of considerably older than the other remains. The origin of the two face-casts is unknown, but they are thought to have been purchased in Edinburgh.

"The moment carries profound cultural and spiritual significance, as it allows for the return of our ancestors to the earth with honour – where traditional healing rituals and ceremonies may be observed in accordance with custom.

"This reburial is not merely the return of physical remains; it is a symbolic act of reclaiming heritage, confronting historical injustices, and restoring the dignity of a people.

"It represents the reconnection of communities with their cultural and spiritual lineage, and the beginning of a healing journey that spans generations," the elder and cultural custodian stated.

Vaalbooi was among several Khoi and San indigenous leaders that accompanied Minister of Arts, Culture and Sport to Scotland to attend a formal handover ceremony and solemn service at Glasgow University's memorial chapel, where Minister Gayton McKenzie stated that the repatriation was "an act of remembrance and respect".

The traditional elder from the Kalahari has, with other prominent Griqua, Nama and Korana elders, been part of a Northern Cape Reburial Task team (NCRRTT) through which the affected Khoi and San communities have communicated the firmly expressed demand from Khoi and San descendants that the remains of the

ancestors are properly repatriated and respectfully laid to rest.

The NCRRTT has been the primary interlocutor with the Department of Arts and Culture, Iziko Museums and the South African Heritage Resources Centre on the repatriation and reburial process which, they have advocated, must follow the established cultural practice, rituals and protocols that have been observed by Khoi and San peoples over centuries.

The heroic homecoming ceremony, at Iziko museums in Cape Town was the culmination of a long and intense journey that involved numerous critical role players including prominent Khoi and San leaders and communities, Iziko museums, the South African Heritage Resources Agency, the department of Arts and Culture and numerous other government departments and agencies.

McKenzie said: "We stand at a solemn crossroads of memory and justice, a moment to honour those whose stories were silenced by history, and to return them home with dignity."

"This reburial represents more than a physical return. It is an act of remembrance and respect, acknowledging the profound trauma caused and taking a step toward restoring the dignity of a people and providing respect for the dead that has been long-standing demand in the struggle for justice."

Lennox Tukwayo, CEO of Iziko Museums stated that this repatriation of ancestral human remains is a "significant and meaningful endeavour".

It is an act of remembrance, respect, restorative justice and cultural preservation. The six individuals will form part of the restitution and reburial of 58 individuals from the Iziko

South African Museum, later this year," Tukwayo added.

Hunterian director Steph Scholten said he was "glad that we can continue to honour our commitment to work with affected communities in an equitable way, returning human remains and culturally significant items to their rightful communities with dignity and care".

The Hunterian in its public statement on the process declared that the repatriation of the Khoi and San remains "will form part of the restoration of dignity to the communities affected and contribute to bringing closure to the trauma that resulted from numerous violations, such as unethical exhumations.

"Ancestral human remains, predominantly of Khoi, San and other indigenous origins, were unethically collected during the late 19th and early 20th centuries by institutions in southern Africa and around the world.

These remains were acquired without consent, often through illicit trade, unauthorised exhumation and grave robbing, to further race-based and pseudo-scientific research.

"The Hunterian has acknowledged its colonial legacy and welcomes repatriation claims, prioritising the return of non-British human remains and culturally significant heritage items."

The repatriation and respectful laying to rest of ancestors he resurgence movement of South Africa's Khoi and San resurgence movement has vigorously demanded redress for gross violations of their human rights.

These ancestral remains which have been cited by several prominent indigenous leaders as "the exhibits of criminal acts committed against the Khoi and San throughout over several centuries of colonialism."

Gathering in Napier empowers Khoe-San women



WOMEN'S HANDIWORK: Arts and crafts, homemade baked goods, sewing products, medicinal herbs and natural health items were on display at the KIWIA event in Napier.

Indigenous women leaders from across the Western Cape gathered in Napier earlier this month for a pivotal event hosted by Khoe-San Indigenous Women in Action (KIWIA).

Held at Blye Boodschap Church, the gathering centred on the theme: "Indigenous Women in Tourism, Agriculture, Economics and Business."

The event drew delegates from the Swartland, West Coast, Cape Agulhas, Overberg, Overstrand, Cape Town, Drakenstein and the local Napier community.

It highlighted not only the rich cultural heritage of Khoe-San women, but also their growing influence in economic development and community upliftment.

The programme commenced with an opening prayer by Maggie Anta, coordinator for the Swartland region. Chief Mary Jansen, founder and Chairperson of KIWIA, delivered the welcome address, setting the tone for a day of reflection, empowerment and strategic planning.

Honorary guests included: Chief Poem Mooney, National Leader of the Cape Khoi (CKHDC); Chief John Jansen, Western Cape Leader of the Cape Khoi (CKHDC); Chief Michael Dunsdon, Chainoqua Leader of the Overberg; Mr. Thandwa Ntshona, Principal Cultural Officer at the Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, and the sponsor of the event.

The Mayor of Cape Agulhas conveyed his apologies due to a conflicting engagement.

Delegates were welcomed with an exhibition of community-driven projects by KIWIA women, including arts and crafts, homemade baked goods, sewing products, medicinal herbs and natural health items.

These displays demonstrated the entrepreneurial spirit and creative talent within Khoe-San com-

munities.

In her keynote remarks, Chief Mary Jansen provided an overview of KIWIA's mission, outlining a bold vision for expanding its identity from Khoe-San Indigenous Women in Action to Khoe-San Indigenous Women in Africa.

She emphasised that Khoe-San women are part of the broader African family and should forge stronger connections with other traditional communities on the continent.

Jansen underscored the pivotal role of women in family stability and community development, warning that silence in the face of crime, violence and drug abuse contributes to social deterioration.

She called for renewed commitment to youth development and family reintegration.

Mr. Thandwa Ntshona presented Nama language booklets produced by the Department of Cultural Affairs, highlighting ongoing efforts to preserve Indigenous languages.

He also spoke about the responsibilities of cultural councils and the support structures available through provincial government departments.

Chief Poem Mooney motivated attendees by reflecting on the success of the Rooibos benefit-sharing agreement, encouraging women to harness this momentum to develop tourism-linked community projects.

Chief John Jansen congratulated KIWIA on its progress and urged the organisation to develop a sustainable business model that can be rolled out across the province.

Chief Michael Dunsdon offered full support to strengthen KIWIA, praising its leadership structure and its commitment to Indigenous women's empowerment.

Chief Mary Jansen formally introduced the organisation's leadership team, acknowledging

their dedication to the broader Khoisan movement. The leadership structure is as follows:

- Principal Chief Mary Jansen (Chairperson);
- Chief Ellen Dunsdon (Vice Chairperson);
- Deputy Chief Shirley Marinus (General Secretary);
- Chief Justina Adams (Humcumqua, Cape Agulhas)
- Chief Thelma Faro (Coordinator – Swartland);
- Deputy Chief Joan Campbell (Treasurer – Cape Metro);
- Deputy Chief Maggie Anta (Coordinator – (West Coast).

Both Chief Mooney and Chief John Jansen endorsed the leadership and supported the introduction of a cultural !Nau ceremony for KIWIA.

It was noted that cultural councils across the region should ideally have women representatives participating in KIWIA, although financial constraints have delayed the full implementation of this vision.

Delivering the vote of thanks, Chief Ellen Dunsdon expressed gratitude to KIWIA leadership, honoured guests, regional delegates and Mr. Ntshona. She also applauded the women who showcased their work.

In a firm closing statement, KIWIA criticised the Western Cape Department of Arts, Culture and Sport for allocating only R20,000 in funding, an amount the organisation deemed "a disgrace" and an indication that Indigenous women's organisations are not taken seriously.

The leadership warned that such underfunding contributes to broader social challenges, including the province's ongoing crisis of gender-based violence.

Transport costs posed significant difficulties for delegates, compelling organisers to pursue the lowest-cost arrangements.



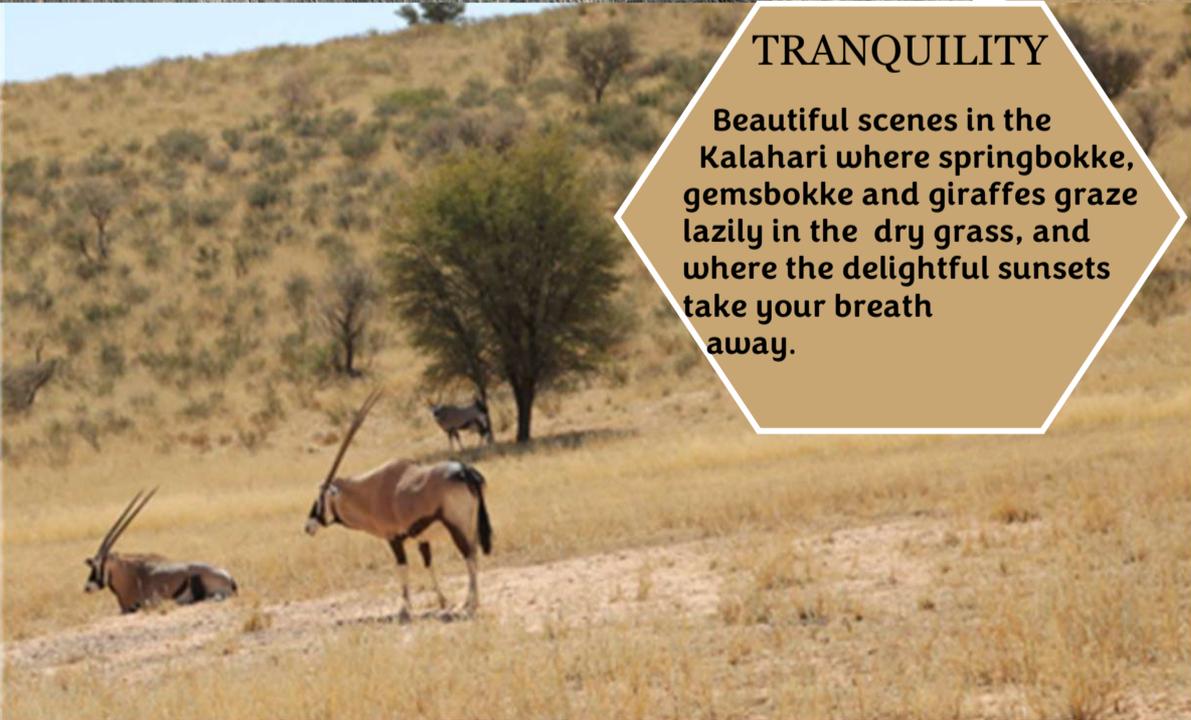
LEADERSHIP TEAM: From left: Chief John Jansen Western Cape leader Cape Khoi/ KCHDC; Chief Poem Mooney National Leader Cape Khoi /KCHDC; Dep Chief Joan Campbell, Treasurer KIWIA and Cape Town Representative; Dep Chief Maggie Anta, Swartland representative; Dep Chief Shirley Marinus, KIWIA Secretary; Chief Thelma Faro, West Coast Representative; Chief Justina Adams, Cape Agulhas Representative; Chief Ellen Dunsdon, Deputy Chairperson; Chief Mary Jansen Chairperson and founder of KIWIA; Chief Michael Dunsdon, Chainoqua leader Overberg, and Mr Thandwa Ntshona, Western Cape Department of Arts, Culture and Sport.

Ahh, but our land is beautiful!

A tiny snapshot of the beautiful landscapes we have encountered on our way to visit the Indigenous People in the remote places of our country - the Roads less traveled and not always seen or accessible to all of us. From the arid areas of Kamieskroon to the Kalahari with its beautiful sunsets in the Northern Cape; from the historic town of Wupperthal in the Western Cape to the picturesque mountainous village of Joubertinia and the luscious Keimoes, where the majestic Orange River flow - we have been in awe.



TRANQUILITY
Beautiful scenes in the Kalahari where springbokke, gemsbokke and giraffes graze lazily in the dry grass, and where the delightful sunsets take your breath away.





TOP LEFT: The iconic town of Wupperthal.

TOP RIGHT: Weaver bird's nests on the road to Kenhardt in the Northern Cape.

MIDDLE LEFT: The Kamiesberge and Spoegrivier at Kamieskroon in the Northern Cape.

MIDDLE RIGHT: An eagle in flight in the vast sky of the Northern Cape.



BOTOM: The luscious area in Keimoes in the Northern where the majestic Garieb (Orange) River, creates numerous islands with its tributaries.

Diverse cultures of the world through the portraits of Indigenous Peoples

This exhibition honors Indigenous Peoples' right to their cultures, identities and traditions, and their right to self-determination by determining their own policies and strategies with respect to their cultural heritage and traditional systems.

These rights are enshrined in many of the articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), for example in the Preamble, Articles 2, 3, 11, 12, 13, and 31 of the UNDRIP and throughout the ILO C169.

The exhibition showcases photographs that display the incredible diversity of Indigenous peoples' cultures through portraits of individuals from different parts of the world in their traditional clothing and environment.

As you look at these photos, we hope that you will see not only the individual, but the communities and the Indigenous Peoples they represent.

The exhibition was designed and shown during the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, celebrating Indigenous Peoples' cultural diversity, which was one of the pillars of the UN's International Year of Indigenous Languages.

The exhibition is even more important today with the upcoming United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032).

The term "Indigenous Peoples" is a common denominator for more than 476 million people, spread across more than 90 countries around the world who, through historical processes, have been denied their right to control their own development.

As distinct peoples, they claim the right to self-determination, including the right to control their own political, social, economic and cultural development.

This exhibition was developed to highlight Indigenous Peoples' right to their traditional knowledge and cultures on the occasion of the Eighteenth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and its special theme: "Traditional knowledge: Generation, transmission and protection". The introduction text was updated to reflect the COVID-19 pandemic.

The exhibition was organized by IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs) in collaboration with Alexander Khimushin and Christoph Lingg, and supported by the Indigenous Peoples Development Branch, Division for Inclusive Social Development of UN DESA. (Pics: Alexander Khimushin)



Afar woman, Danakil Depression, North-East Ethiopia

The Afar are Indigenous Peoples located in the Afar Triangle at the Horn of Africa. It is the lowest point of the continent, well below sea level. Affected by constant drought, it is also considered the hottest place on Earth.

A skeleton found here in 1994 has been dated to 4.2 million years old. Paleontologists believe the Afar region is the cradle of humanity. The Afar people may well be the descendants of the first humans living on this planet.



Sepik Papuan girl, Ambunti, East Sepik river, Papua New Guinea

This river serves as the only 'road' into many Sepik villages, with little to no infrastructure, including electricity, shops or other amenities.

This isolation has helped preserve their culture for generations. However, there are fears that this paradise will soon be destroyed by mining. This area is believed to be one of the largest undeveloped copper-gold deposits in the world, but the risk of ecological catastrophe as a result of its exploitation may outweigh the possible benefits to the local people.



Ulchi girl, Amur river, Far East of Siberia, Russian Federation

In a school of her native Bulava village Anastasia Kuchekta, (8) learns her people's language, dances and embroidery. She helps her mother engrave birch bark and process fish skin.

The Ulchi are one of eight groups of Indigenous Peoples living along the 12,800 km long Amur river in the Far East of Siberia. Fishing is their primary livelihood. They are a very small Indigenous group, living in just 2 villages, yet they have managed to preserve their traditions and national clothing.



Ixil girl, Santa Maria Nebaj, El Quiché, Guatemala

Joselin Pamela Valdez and her family live in the Cuchumatán mountains of the Guatemalan Highlands. Due to its remoteness, the Ixil Community has largely maintained its traditional culture.

Most women are weavers making the handmade traditional clothing that the Ixil women proudly wear in everyday life. Ixil are among the Indigenous Peoples who suffered horrific atrocities during the 36-year Guatemalan civil war which ended in 1996.



Khik woman, Wakhan Valley, Badakhshan, Afghanistan

This river serves as the only 'road' into many Sepik villages, with little to no infrastructure, including electricity, shops or other amenities.

This isolation has helped preserve their culture for generations. However, there are fears that this paradise will soon be destroyed by mining. This area is believed to be one of the largest undeveloped copper-gold deposits in the world, but the risk of ecological catastrophe as a result of its exploitation may outweigh the possible benefits to the local people.



Aboriginal woman, Lockhart River, Cape York, Queensland, Australia

During the period of 1905-1969 Australian government authorities and the police were given power to transfer Aboriginal children to foster care, forcibly removing them from their families.

The children who were taken were assimilated to Anglo-Australian culture.

It is estimated that about 100,000 children in total, or just about every third Aboriginal person at that time, was forcibly removed from their families.



Dukha woman, Darkhad Valley, Khovsgol, Northern Mongolia

The Dukha people live in one of the most remote and inaccessible Mongolian taiga forests bordering the Tyva Republic in Siberia. They are the only Indigenous reindeer herders of Mongolia.

Ulzii Sandag, 80, is one of only 282 Dukha people. If we count her 14 children, more than 60 grandchildren and a large number of great grandchildren, the total number of which she could not recall, it can be said that Ulzii is the progenitor of more than half of the Dukha people.



Oroqen man, Alihe, Inner Mongolia province, People's Republic of China

The Oroqen people live in a remote part of the Inner Mongolia Province in China, along the border with Siberia. The Oroqen language is not written until now; it is considered severely endangered.

Traditionally Oroqens are hunters, however most of them have transitioned to other occupations to adhere to the new wildlife protection laws passed in China. The government has provided support and modern dwellings for those who are integrating and have left behind their traditional way of life.

Full honours for courageous Freedom Fighter Colleen Lombard

21 August 1950 – 3 December 2025

Colleen Lombard, family anchor, diligent community activist, author, freedom fighter, political detainee, treason trialist and all-round beautiful and gentle spirited member of the human family has sadly departed from our ranks which she served in humility with exceptional distinction and courage under fire.

Her son SHADLEY LOMBARD, on behalf of the family, gives a glimpse in Colleen's life and contribution to our quest for justice and restoration of humanity.

Anti-apartheid activist, former political detainee and treason trialist, Colleen Lombard, 75, has died after a long illness.

Born Colleen Rayson in Wynberg on 21 August 1950 she attended St Matthew's Primary School and then St Matthews Anglican church in Claremont.

She later attended Oaklands High School in Lansdowne. She left school in Standard 9 and completed a secretarial course.

She married the then amateur photographer Rashid Lombard in 1970 and they had three children.

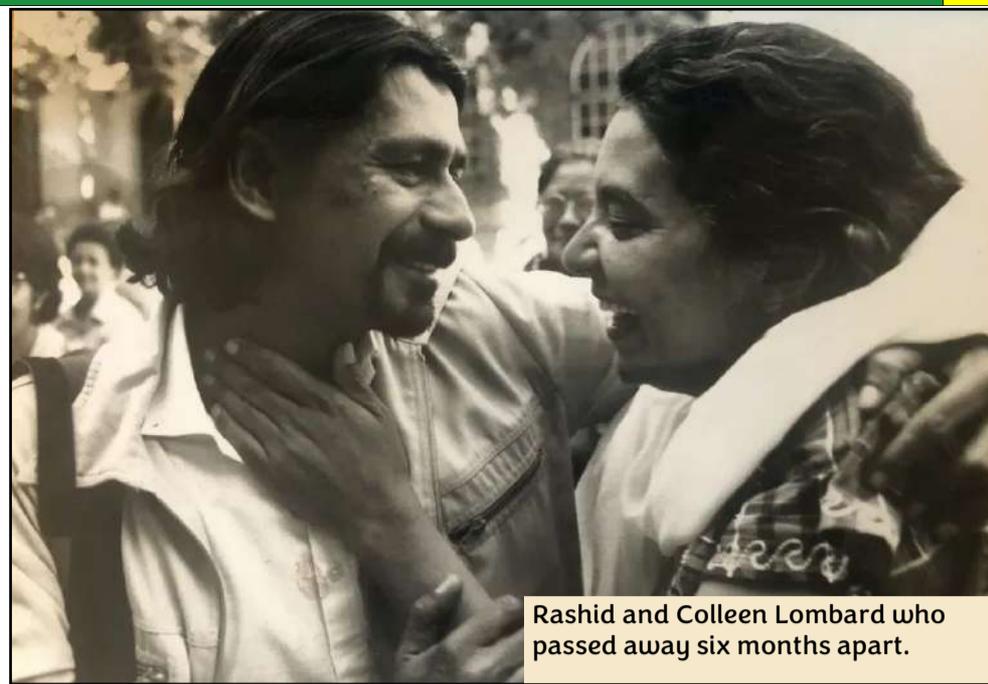
Colleen's passing is six months after that of her husband Rashid, who passed away on 4 June this year.

Colleen served as Treasurer of the Clothing Workers' Union (CLOWU) in 1984 and its administrative secretary in 1985. In 1986 she worked as a part-time administrator with the Churches Urban Planning Commission (CUPC), a service and developmental organisation.

In 1987 she was recruited by Bongani Jonas, an uMkhonto weSizwe commander to assist young ANC members to flee the country for military training.

On one of these missions, Colleen was arrested at the Lesotho border post with her comrade, the late Zurayyah Abass.

They were subsequently detained under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act which allowed the Security Police to hold them incommunicado in an unknown place with no right to legal representation.



Rashid and Colleen Lombard who passed away six months apart.

Colleen was released from detention on 29 January 1988 and subjected to stringent conditions, including having to report to the Gugulethu Police Station

Within months she and Zurayyah joined 11 other ANC members on trial for high treason for their efforts to end the racist system of apartheid. The group became known as 'the Yengeni Trialists' after the first accused, Tony Yengeni.

The state later changed the charge to "terrorism". At the trial in the Cape Town Supreme Court the accused refused to plead and instead Yengeni read a statement which ended, "The state therefore stands accused of treason and the people do not and will not withdraw that charge."

"As for the charge we now face, we again say that it is the state that stands accused."

Soon after the unbanning of the African National Congress and the re-

lease of Nelson Mandela in February 1990, the defence won significant legal judgements and the prosecution withdrew all charges against eight of the trialists, including Colleen Lombard. The prisoners were immediately released.

The trial against the remaining six trialists continued for a year, until finally ending in on 19 March 1991 when all charges were withdrawn.

Colleen remained an active member of the ANC.

Her 2021 book, *To the Moon and Back: A Detention Memoir*, was described by author John Allen, "as a valuable counterpoint to the memoir of men which dominate the literature of our liberation".

Colleen leaves her children Chevan, Shadley and Yana and her grandchildren, Liya, Ayden, Oliver, Amir and Stella. Her granddaughter Hannah passed away in 2002.

Colleen was buried by Muslim rights.

!Gai tse gure Colleen Lombard.

Deep sadness as world says goodbye to Bra Pops

10 December 1949 – 4 December 2025

South Africa, Africa and the international universe of music and creative art lost one of its formidable pillars when we had to bid a bittersweet farewell to one of our most multi-faceted artists, the incomparable Pops Mohamed, six days before his 76th birthday.

News of his passing was met with deep sadness, with many noting that we are bereft because we have lost a prolific genius and an icon who immensely contributed to the South African music landscape.

The international acclaimed artist, whose musical universe spanned more than five decades in numerous genres, was a true giant, whose mastery of the instruments that were his tools of trade, grasp of the human condition revealed that he truly was in his life and even after his passing, an exceptional human treasure.

His compassionate and empathetic engagement with the planet and its many peoples set him apart as a being



POPS MOHAMED, jazz musician, multi-instrumentalist, and producer.

who achieve higher consciousness despite being showered with many accolades and awards, endearing him to all who had the honour and privilege to encounter him.

Tributes that attest to this exceptional legacy have continued unabated even after he was gently laid to rest since his passing on 4 December 2025.

Pops Mohamed or, Bra Pops, as he was popularly known, was born in Bemoni, Gauteng, as Ismail Mohammed-

Jan, on 10 December 1949.

Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture, Gayton McKenzie, stated that the passing of Pops Mohamed, marked the loss of a significant figure in the country's musical landscape.

"Pops Mohamed was not merely a musician but a guardian of our cultural heritage, a teacher, a visionary. His music carried the voices of our ancestors and opened doors for new generations to embrace and celebrate our roots," McKenzie stated.

In 2023, he was honoured with the South African Music Awards (SAMA) Lifetime Achievement Award, celebrating decades of dedication to SA's music industry and his role as a pioneer in preserving and promoting traditional and contemporary African music.

Bra Pops, despite the health challenges he was experiencing, was, nevertheless, a true ambassador of the healing power of sound, of music and his indefatigable spirit is captured on a post at 6.13 pm on his Facebook page

on 25 November, bring news of an upcoming gig for which he was preparing. However, the Creator of the universe called him to join in at the great gig in the sky in the village just beyond the sunset, three days before this much awaited gig.

Nine days before his death Pops shared the following on Facebook

“ Back on the Block!
Hi folks...! I'm so excited to announce that Jason Katz and I will be doing our *AFROBETAN SOUND JOURNEY* on Sunday 7th December

This project is very special and has been very successful this far. Indigenous African Musical Instruments verses Tibetan Singing Bowls and huge Gongs! Come and have a *out of body experience* with us and unwind! This is a one-off experience. Do no miss out on this *Mystical Journey*!

”

Celebrating milestones at First Nations Heritage Centre

