



# iQONINGA

Restoring positive, ethical foundations in EC | Libraries of the future as creative hubs | Elevating EC's film footprint



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iQonga - short for 'Iqonga lezemidlalo, ulonwabo, ubugcisa, nenkcubeko' – is a stakeholder publication produced and published by the Eastern Cape Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture (DSRAC) as a central platform for the sharing and dissemination of information pertaining to provincial sport, recreation, arts and cultural programmes.

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**Celebrating**



**YEARS  
OF FREEDOM**

**putting communities at the  
heart of our programmes**

**A**s we mark 30 years of our country's democracy and 27 years since the establishment of the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture, it is an opportune time to reflect on the strides we have made towards the achievement of our mandate as the department, that of making the province a local and global destination for diverse and enriching experiences through cultural, heritage, artistic, and sporting excellence. It is also an opportunity to take stock of how far we have gone as government in the realization of nation-building and a socially cohesive society as prescribed in the country's Constitution and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030.

On its ascension to power the government of national unity inherited a society marred by deep social and economic inequality, and as such used social cohesion and nation-building as the basis from which to re-orientate and re-unite the South African society towards a common purpose, that of a socially coherent and economically equitable society.

In this regard, sport, arts and culture were strategically positioned as catalysts to nation building, unity, peace, reconciliation and social cohesion. These platforms have continued over the years to create space for South Africans to mingle and interact in an environment that is premised on multiculturalism and one that acknowledges and embraces diversity.

As we take stock of the democratic gains towards a socially cohesive society and nation-building, a common understanding of the notion of social cohesion therefore becomes imperative. Out of the many different definitions of this term, one that stands out for me, particularly due to its significance to the mandate of the department, is that of Anna Rita Manca, as cited in the *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research* (2014). According to Manca, 'social cohesion refers to the extent of connectedness and solidarity among groups in society, which include a sense of belonging of a community and the relationships among members within the community itself.'

In our quest to promoting the province as a local and global destination for diverse and enriching experiences through cultural, heritage, artistic, and sporting excellence we have strategically positioned the National Commemorative Days as vehicles to promote nation-building and foster social cohesion. We have made concerted efforts to realize this vision by making sure that the commemorative days are inclusive and relevant to the different communities we serve. This includes collaboration with stakeholders and community-based groups. For every provincial

event held in our communities, the department ploughs back 10% of the total budget spent on legacy projects that serve as incubation to community-based programmes.

We have also refocused our festivals, taking the same approach of partnering with individuals, existing community festivals and small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in our communities for added value, variety of offering, and representation.

Through programmes such as the Music Excellence Acceleration Programme of the Eastern Cape (MEAPEC), our support to eight (8) record labels from the province annually helps to develop the province's musical talent and create opportunities for local artists.

We have provided a conducive environment where budding local writers have penned down local stories to help preserve our heritage and pass on cultural knowledge from one generation to the other in the form of written books. To date, more than 200 writers have benefitted from the publishing of their books and the linkages we have created with various publishers. As we help the writers produce their manuscripts, we also procure some of these books and house them at our libraries across the province.

The department continues to provide access to information and promoting a culture of reading, which includes the provision of library facilities and services in the province. Over 200 libraries have been built to date, especially in previously disadvantaged areas where learners and ordinary community members did not have access to these services.

To ensure that our libraries remain relevant to our communities, the department has embraced the technological evolution by introducing an online service known as the e-Book lending system. This system enables users to access books at the comfort of their homes across the province.

In the same breath, we are looking at introducing other technological elements like robotics, virtual reality and 3D printing at our library and museum service centres which will be integrated in the services offering at these centres in order to attract the youth, keeping them away from social ills.

The provision of archives services has followed the same trend. The department has a number of collections in its repository and has started with digitising provincial archives for ease of access and keeping of records. To this end the department has prioritised records that are frequently in demand by academic researchers and the community, including those of land claims and chieftaincies etc.

Through the Provincial Geographical Names Committee (ECPGNC), we have made significant progress in transforming our heritage landscape through the standization of geographical place names to ensure that the towns and community spaces resonate with the respective inhabitants. To date there are 312 place names that have been standardized in the province, through a transparent and inclusive consultation process with civil society and various stakeholders.

It must be highlighted that the standardization of geographical place names may seem mundane to some, but its significance cannot be overstated. By reclaiming and standardizing our geographical landscape, we assert our cultural sovereignty and reaffirm our connection to the land. In a rapidly changing world, preserving our heritage becomes an act of resistance against erasure and marginalization.

In our efforts to restore and preserve our heritage resources, through the Eastern Cape Resistance and Liberation Heritage Route we have continued to narrate and promote the richness of the province's heritage. It is this rich heritage that has been utilized to brand the province as the 'Home of Legends', a concept we are advocating that it be inclusive of the sport, arts, and cultural sector gains.

In this issue of *iQonga*, we shed light on the numerous facets that shape our collective identity and future trajectory as we delve into topics that resonate deeply with the ethos of our department: from the imperative of restoring positive ethical foundations to the transformative power of resilience in communities like Mdantsane; to highlighting the pivotal role of the Church as social architects and the evolution of libraries into dynamic spaces for intellectual exchange and social cohesion.

Our journey begins with a call for steadfast commitment to ethical restoration. In a world where integrity often takes a backseat, it is incumbent upon us to re-affirm our dedication to ethical principles as a foundation for a cohesive society. Without a strong ethical compass, the fabric of society frays, and progress becomes elusive. As custodians of culture and advocates for societal well-being, we must champion integrity at every turn.

The department's commitment to ensuring its programmes deliver on its mandate and key strategic focus areas remains firm.

Welcome to the second issue of the department's stakeholder publication, *iQonga*. We hope you are going to enjoy the read!

**Yours in Service Delivery,**  
*Sibongile Mpofo*



Hon. MEC **Nonceba Kontsiwe**



## **Steadfast commitment needed to restore positive ethical foundations in the Eastern Cape**

Despite the promise of a better South Africa that rode in on the back of a new democratic dispensation in 1994, South Africa has witnessed a steady decline in the moral fabric of its society. While positive strides have been made towards building a better nation, one cannot deny that there have been major challenges along the way which have hindered us as South Africans from enjoying the fruits of our hard-won democracy. Politically we are on the right track, but much still needs to be done towards the renewal and restoration of our value systems that were once rooted in Ubuntu as a principle and way of life.

**Before we can embark on a journey of moral regeneration as a country, it is essential that we acknowledge the historical context that has shaped the fabric of our society. We cannot negate the effects and scars of what apartheid segregation, subjugation and migrant labour did to the oppressed. The effects run deep, leaving a legacy of broken families and communities grappling with the devastating effects of poverty, alcoholism, unemployment, and teenage pregnancy.**

For decades, apartheid policies systematically dismantled the social, economic, and familial structures of Black communities. Families were torn apart as men were forcibly separated from their loved ones to work in distant cities and mines, perpetuating cycles of poverty and instability. The spatial planning enforced by the apartheid regime further exacerbated social fragmentation, relegating Black communities to marginal and under-developed areas, promoting cycles of deprivation and hopelessness.

The repercussions of these policies continue to reverberate through our society today. Broken family structures, exacerbated by the forced removals and disintegration of traditional support systems, have left many vulnerable to the scourge of poverty and its attendant social ills. High rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, unemployment, and teenage pregnancy serve as painful reminders of the inter-generational trauma inflicted by decades of systemic oppression.

Yet, even in the face of such adversity, there remains hope. The government, both in its national, provincial and regional endeavours has undertaken the task of moral regeneration through its strategic priorities, initiatives and programmes. The Eastern Cape Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture has undertaken, in the unrelenting pursuit of its mandate, to ensure that the moral regeneration project is at the core of its programmes and initiatives.

One of the cornerstones of our efforts has been the implementation of programmes such as *Inkciyo*, a programme aimed at celebrating and promoting abstinence thereby curbing the rampant

scourge of teenage pregnancy and prevalence of HIV/Aids infections amongst girls. Through this programme girls are taught about consent, pregnancy, STIs and HIV/Aids, equipping them with the relevant knowledge to navigate issues around puberty.

Another programme is that of *uLwaluko*, which is the rite of passage for boys. This is an awareness programme aimed at developing boys to men and educating them about the practice of *uLwaluko*. In this regard, the department is looking at refocusing one of its centres to be a circumcision school targeted at women-headed households with boy children. This is in response to women who are not knowledgeable about the initiation rite.

The department has been supporting these programmes and working with different Kingdoms, including the Mngqesha and Nqadu Great Places.

These programmes not only seek to address immediate social challenges, but also promote dialogue and education as essential tools for long-term change.

In line with our commitment to youth development, the department has organised annual youth camps that bring together young people from diverse backgrounds to engage in meaningful dialogue and activities. These camps serve as platforms for consciousness-raising, empowering our youth to become active participants in shaping a brighter future for our nation.

**Over the past five years, we have convened numerous social cohesion dialogues, providing forums for constructive discourse on issues pertinent to our national identity and collective aspirations. These dialogues have been instrumental in fostering understanding and unity, paving the way for inclusive development and progress.**

Looking ahead, we are reminded of the words of Tata Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, who advocated for collective effort in building a society founded on justice and equality. It is incumbent upon every South African to play their part in addressing the social challenges that threaten the fabric of our society. By working together, across all spheres of government and society, we can chart a path towards a future defined by stability, growth, and shared prosperity.

Let us remain steadfast in our commitment to moral regeneration. Together, we have the power to shape a society that upholds the dignity and rights of all its members.

# BREAKING BOUNDARIES

## Mdantsane's revolutionary emergence



Monwabisi Kobese is a heritage enthusiast, heading the Museums and Heritage directorate. He was among the department's first staff intake when it was formed 27 years ago. Mr Kobese is a former member of the Nelson Mandela Museum Council and has been instrumental in the standardization of 312 place names; the repatriation and reburial of 131 remains of liberation struggle activists both locally and internationally; and the building of 100 monuments and museums in honour of the country's liberation icons.

The year 1994 is an important and notable year in the South African historical calendar and holds specific significance for the collective memory of the country, most significantly because it is the year that South Africa held its first democratic election. 2024 marks 30 years since this notable occasion.

South Africa has made tremendous strides over the past three decades, coming a long way from a tragic and devastating past that was marked by bloodshed and human rights atrocities.

The Eastern Cape Province alone has an exhaustive list of massacres that took place around its regions, like the Duncan Village massacres which took place in East London in 1952 and again in 1985, Ingquza Hill massacre in Flagstaff (1960), Egerton bus boycott massacre in Mdantsane (1983), Mlungisi Township massacre in Komani (1985), Bhisho massacre (1992), Northern Areas massacre in Bethelsdorp in Gqeberha (1990).

**Remembrance days like those of Human Rights Day, Freedom Day, Youth Day, and Women's Day are as a result symbolic historical markers that present an opportunity to learn about our history and remember those who sacrificed their lives for the freedoms we enjoy today.**

It is for this reason that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government in the last year dedicated efforts towards observing Human Rights Day in the township of Mdantsane located in Buffalo City Municipality. This extraordinary event was to mark 60 years since the establishment of the township of Mdantsane. Fundamental to this was to recall a history that should never be forgotten and to revive a revolutionary emergence in the township.

Mdantsane like many other townships established during the apartheid era was a part of a major administrative mechanism that saw the forced removal of Black people to align to the political system of that time. The Group Areas Act was legislated by the apartheid government to ensure to these forced removals, with the intention to dehumanise black people, deny them of their human rights, and subject them to averse

actions that were legitimised by laws enforced with bullets and sjamboks.

The Human Rights Day commemoration held at Sisa Dukashe stadium in Mdantsane highlighted the township's fighting spirit and its revolutionary emergence against the odds initially set out against it by the apartheid regime. The programme paid special homage to one of Mdantsane's legends, Nkosana "Happy-boy" Mgxaji, a man who also became one of the country's best boxing legends.

Mgxaji is recognised as Mdantsane's first great boxing legend and as the one who put the township on the map, taking the area from the peripheries it was relegated to and making it a central point of attraction that would go on to be known as the mecca of boxing in the country.

The large crowds at Sisa Dukashe stadium on the Human Rights Day commemoration, were in a way reminiscent of the even larger crowds that Mgxaji used to pull with his boxing matches to the same sporting grounds from as early as the 1970's.

Sisa Dukashe stadium was not even fully built at the time, but became the only space available to black people that would accommodate the numbers pulled by Mgxaji's matches. Incomplete as Sisa Dukashe stadium was, it would become the life force of the township with energy enough to fuel future generations of boxing champions that would also, like Mgxaji, take the township of Mdantsane to the world.

Although Mgxaji never went on to win any world championship titles, his energy, boxing technique and ability to pull crowds from all over the country became the inspiration that saw Mdantsane producing its first world boxing champion, Welcome Ncita, who became the first black South African boxer to hold the IBF junior featherweight title in 1990.

Mdantsane has went on to produce many other South African and world boxing champions like Zolani Tete, Ali Funeka, Zolani Marali, Vuyani Bungu, Nkosinathi Joy and most recently Sivenathi 'the Special One' Nontshinga, to mention a few. All of these are names of people who contributed towards nation-building and social cohesion in the township of Mdantsane. Other prominent names from outside the boxing fraternity who branched out from Mdantsane and became prominent national and international

successes include acclaimed film director, screenwriter and producer Jamil Qubeka, lawyer and politician Dali Mpofu, politician Noxolo Kiviet, renowned professional chef Siba Mtongana, and actor Hlomla Dandala, to mention a few. It is this rich history of this place and its people that sought to re-ignite and inspire yet another revolutionary emergence from the township of Mdantsane. The fighting spirit that lifted the township from the peripheries it was relegated to by the apartheid government is still alive today and ought to be acknowledged.

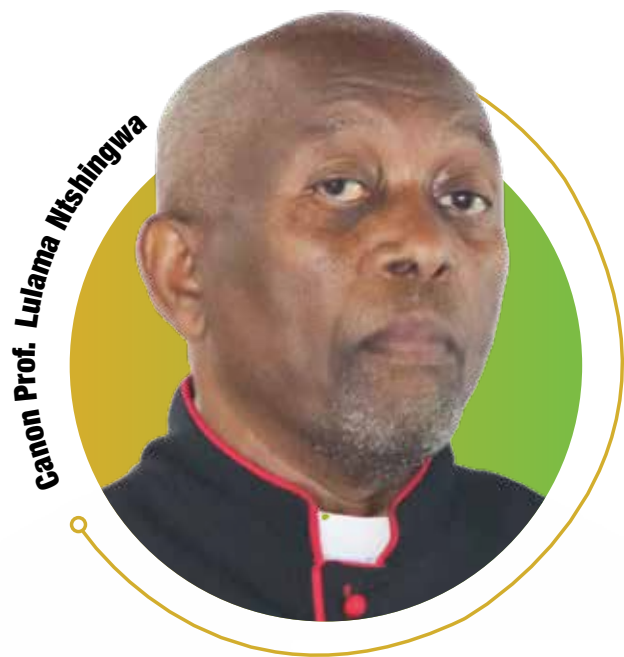
Social-ills such as violence, inequality, the high rate of unemployment - especially amongst the youth, and poor service delivery continue to present challenges for the development of township spaces like Mdantsane. Although these challenges exist currently, it is important that we not focus only on the negative hyper-reality of what comprises township life, but rather advance a more positive and uplifting narrative that promotes social cohesion and nation-building.

Mdantsane is a vibrant space for sports, arts and cultural development and has a growing economy owing to entrepreneurial ventures that are present at almost every corner of the township. The township also has a growing middle class, which is an indicator of the substantial socio-economic development that has taken place during the democratic dawn.

**A reflection on our past is fundamental to helping us realize our democratic gains and the progress that has been made thus far in the promotion and protection of our human rights since 1994. Moreover, these reflections should serve as a reminder for the role we all ought to play in improving our material realities. Mdantsane's revolutionary emergence since the times of apartheid provides the perfect archetype for what is needed to resuscitate our social consciousness and safeguard the future of our growing nation.**

Our efforts should therefore focus on breaking the boundaries created by historical margins to ensure to a South Africa that is more cohesive and united.

# FROM SPIRITUAL GUARDIANS the role of the church in the a cohesion and nation-building



Canon Prof. Ntshingwa is Eastern Cape President of the South African Council of Churches. He has also served as the head of the Eastern Cape Council of Churches and the liaison officer of the Methodist-Anglican Church in Southern Africa, respectively.

**The faith-based community has played an integral part in building the fabric of society in the country, fighting against the country's moral bankruptcy; and continues to shine a beacon of hope on the values of unity and social transformation.**

**The impact of the Church in our country can be traced back to missionaries who founded places of worship, hospitals and schools to provide a consistent flow of African intelligencia. Much of our societal values and ideals have a longstanding history of being embedded in the Church. Many families within our communities, among which did not actively practice faith, embraced the values often ascribed to the Church. These acted as guiding principles that discerned what behaviour was socially acceptable and what was deemed inappropriate.**

**P**rominent figures in the faith-based community, such as the late human rights activist and Nobel Prize Winner, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, are some of the iconic spiritual leaders who have been influential in shaping the nation's moral compass through their contribution to the liberation struggle, leadership skills and sound values.

Emie Durkheim argues that religion provided social cohesion and social control to maintain society in solidarity. Collective consciousness, which is the fusion of all our individual consciousness creates a reality of its own. In recent times, the role of the Church has become the source of contention on its impact on society.

Since much of the groundwork has been laid in promoting education and moulding societal morals and values, the mandate of the Church has shifted slightly. Beyond the Church's existing pre-occupations, it has assumed

the responsibility of alleviating socio-economic, political and economic challenges that plague communities and the country at large.

The faith-based community is a central pillar in promoting social cohesion by caring for marginalized communities. Many have established outreach programmes aimed at caring for children's homes, orphanages and old-age homes, with the mission to effect positive change within their communities and surroundings. Other churches provide care for those who are already members, while they also evangelise to those who have not yet joined. In addition to supporting these institutions, the Church has been under pressure to hone-in on the needs of their communities and find useful programmes to address the challenges faced. Recently, many have established bursaries to assist underprivileged families, conducted informative seminars to inform and educate, as well as initiate soup kitchens to serve the community.

# STO SOCIAL ARCHITECTS

## Advancement of social



Churches across the country have played a significant role in uniting people and building a sense of community by banding together in times of adversity. More notably is the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic which saw people losing family members in their numbers. The Church was effective in showing support to these families despite their affiliation (or lack thereof). Families who had no means of burying their loved ones were extended a hand of grace to give their family members dignified send-offs. Churches in partnership with strategic stakeholders managed to provide psycho-social and spiritual support, as well as trauma counselling to the affected families. It was the role of the church to provide a message of hope to the COVID-19 frontline workers and the rest of those in despair.

It cannot be denied, however, that despite the continued efforts of the Church to evoke positive moral transformation, there are still instances of moral degeneration. In the face of social ills such as unemployment, crime, substance abuse, Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) - the role of the Church is not one that merely provides a palliative effect on the steady growth of moral degradation. However, its mandate is one that acknowledges the challenges we are confronted with and seeks to educate and equip its communities with feasible solutions on ways to overcome these obstacles.

As a religious institution, the primary role of the Church has been that of spiritual upliftment. However, as an entity that exists within society, it broadened its scope from participating solely within the religious spectrum to assume the role of promoting social cohesion. Since the Church is not static, and is forever evolving, it identified the growing need to act as an agent for social change through preaching neighbourly love, peace and forgiveness. This was intended to meet the needs of the communities in which they exist, as they constituted the opinion leaders that informed economic, political and social transformation.

The South African Council of Churches (SACC), a credible and non-partisan coalition of fellowship of different denominations from different traditions, viz. Mainline-Pentecostal and Indigenous Churches, was one of the influential forces in evoking political change, and aiding in the successful battle against the harsh system of apartheid. A religious entity that once had that much influence in the positive reform of our nation should be at the forefront to weighing in on current challenges and instil moral principles. In the face of corruption and other societal ills that threaten peace, this entity should be the calm in the storm, those of ensuring that the voices of the people are heard, particularly the marginalised groups; and educate communities on political and social reforms.

The Religious Heritage Expo is one of the critical flagship projects which was started in 2017 in support of Historic Schools Restoration Project (HSRP) to become centres of excellence.

The theme: *'Restore-Revive-Sustain Church Heritage'* was meant to promote church heritage that would see great historic buildings become national heritage assets. These buildings, Churches, hospitals and schools may be sources of museums, history display and rural-agro-tourism that would not only provide employment but unity and innovation of local communities, transforming missionary symbols of history to African artefacts. As we speak, a statue of Canon James Calata was unveiled by the Premier of the Eastern Cape, Oscar Mabuyane on 30 September 2022 at St. Matthews Anglican Church, Keiskammahoek, which was built in 1885 by London Missionaries as part of Religious Heritage Expo legacy projects.

One of the main causes of social discord is the lack of knowledge and understanding. Government needs to partner with the faith-based community on projects that educate communities on the unique challenges that plague their respective areas. Raising awareness on relevant issues of mental health, substance abuse, and crime should be key focus areas. Practical projects, such as skills development programmes can aid social cohesion, as more people will have the necessary skills to make a living thus alleviating many of the social issues faced.

Now is the time for the church and other religious organisations to come together and heed the call to make our country more socially cohesive through the revival of moral principles and working alongside government to act on mending the challenges faced in our communities. The SACC General Secretary, Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana is leading the Interfaith Forum of South Africa (TIFSA) as a Chairman, this is the platform where great leaders of different faiths in the country join hands to unite people of faith to an organic unit of purpose.

**“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement”**

*2 Corinthians 1:10*

# LIBRARIES OF THE

## dynamic spaces for social & intellectual exploration

**P**ublic libraries have long been cherished as educational hubs, fostering learning experiences beyond traditional classrooms. Growing up in the late-90's, libraries were more than just repositories of books; they were dynamic spaces for social interaction and intellectual exploration. A meeting place for those interested in the pursuit of knowledge.

I was deeply moved when I watched the movie *Titanic* at a local public library, where my friends and I used to gather for film screenings. Additionally, our understanding of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* greatly improved after watching its adaptation at the same library. Moreover, we recognized that the library was the sole place where we could make copies or print documents at the time.

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the role of libraries has become even more critical, especially in regions grappling with literacy challenges like South Africa. Further, in most Global South countries, libraries remain a hub through which information can be accessed to by citizens.

Libraries serve as vital institutions in our communities by providing essential educational resources free of charge. These resources encompass a wide range of materials such as books, internet access, and educational programmes. Learners can conveniently complete their homework assignments, conduct research, or stay informed on current events by reading

newspapers or utilising the available Wi-Fi facilities.

The South African Government's substantial investment in building libraries reflects a commitment to providing free educational resources to communities, particularly those in lower-income areas. However, despite these efforts, the nation faces a persistent literacy crisis, as highlighted by James Stent in his 2023 article based on the 2030 reading panel's findings.

Stent's report paints a grim picture, revealing that fewer primary school children can read for meaning post COVID-19, and a significant number entering Grade two lack basic alphabet knowledge. Furthermore, the lack of a national reading plan, inadequate budgets, inaccurate reporting, and a dearth of vital interventions exacerbate the literacy challenge.

The 2023 Higher Education and Training Fact Sheet underscored a similarly disconcerting situation concerning adult literacy. Although there has been a commendable 2% improvement in the adult illiteracy rate from 2019, almost four (4) million adults remained functionally illiterate in 2021, nearly three decades after South Africa gained democracy in 1994.

Despite these challenges, libraries continue to play a crucial role in addressing literacy gaps. However, to remain relevant, libraries must embrace technological advancements.

Many libraries are adapting to new trends,

incorporating digital devices and tools such as e-books, e-readers, tablets, and Wi-Fi access.

In response to COVID-19 pandemic, the Eastern Cape Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts, and Culture introduced an innovative online library service known as the e-Book Lending system. This initiative enables users to access books from the comfort of their homes, addressing the digital divide by providing internet access to libraries across the province.

In the Western Cape, Cape Town libraries have taken a bold step towards engaging the youth by incorporating video gaming, play stations, and X-Box consoles. The strategy involves incentivizing the youth to borrow books, read them, and submit reviews in exchange for gaming time. This unique approach has not only increased library engagement but has also exposed learners to cutting-edge technology, contributing to the enhancement of their reading skills.

The success of these initiatives underscores the importance of libraries adapting to the changing needs of the community and leveraging new technologies. Libraries of the future should not merely be repositories of books; they must evolve into dynamic centres offering a variety of services. This includes incorporating emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, and 3D printing to meet the diverse needs of their patrons.

The transformation of libraries into people-centric spaces is crucial for their continued relevance.

# E FUTURE

# l interaction



Mr. Sivuyile Ngaba

To achieve this, libraries should focus on creating attractive services that enhance the discovery experience for users. This could involve interactive learning spaces, collaborative projects, and community events that go beyond the traditional image of libraries as quiet places solely for reading and research.

Furthermore, the concept of lifelong learning should be at the core of the library's mission. Libraries can extend their services beyond traditional academic pursuits by offering workshops, skills development programmes, and mentorship opportunities for people of all ages. From coding classes for children, to entrepreneurship seminars for adults, libraries can become dynamic spaces that foster continuous personal and professional development. This shift towards life-long learning will not only address immediate literacy concerns but also empower individuals to adapt to the ever-changing demands of the modern workforce.

Libraries today should also consider the incorporation of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies to create immersive learning experiences. Imagine students exploring historical events through virtual simulations or delving into the world of science through interactive AR displays. These technologies have the potential to revolutionize the way information is conveyed, making the learning process more engaging and memorable. By embracing VR and AR, libraries can cater to different learning styles, ensuring that education

becomes a captivating and a personalised journey for every individual.

To enhance their role as community hubs, libraries could also explore partnerships with local businesses, educational institutions, and technology companies. Collaborations can lead to the creation of innovation hubs within libraries, providing access to state-of-the-art technologies and resources.

These hubs could serve as incubators for start-ups, encouraging entrepreneurship and economic development within the community. By forging strategic alliances, libraries can tap into a broader range of expertise and resources, ensuring that they remain vibrant and responsive centres that cater to the evolving needs of their communities. In essence, libraries of the future should not only be repositories of knowledge but also catalysts for holistic community development.

Research being conducted at the University of Fort Hare, attests to the value and role of libraries, especially in meeting developmental targets. Prof. Willie Chinyamurindi who heads up

Sivuyile Ngaba is an avid social commentator and seasoned communicator whose experience spans more than 15 years in the field of Communications and Marketing in the public sector. Mr Ngaba believes that innovation and public-private partnerships can alleviate challenges faced by government towards service delivery.

the research highlights the importance of libraries to embrace technology.

Prof Chinyamurindi praises the role of libraries in a developmental state - "there is a continued need for our libraries to be state of the art, one way this can be done is through embracing technology. The move should be towards also digital library access in addition to the brick-mortar interface."

Libraries of the future should be at the forefront of educational innovation, serving as dynamic community hubs that cater to diverse needs. By embracing technology and redefining their role in society, libraries can contribute significantly to addressing literacy challenges and fostering a culture of life-long learning.

As we look ahead, it is imperative that libraries remain adaptable and forward-thinking, ensuring they continue to be indispensable pillars of education and community enrichment.



# STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES LANDSCAPE: its relevance in the current conjuncture



Zukile Jodwana is the former Chairperson of the Eastern Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee (ECPGNC) having served the committee in different portfolios. He started as the Nelson Mandela Bay District Committee Chairperson in 2013 and was later appointed to be the ECPGNC Deputy Chairperson and Chairperson in 2017 and 2020, respectively. Mr Jodwana continues to be an adviser to the committee and is currently in the process of writing a training manual for the ECPGNC.

**A** question is often asked whether the transformation of geographical names is a priority, given the countless service delivery challenges confronting the country. The recent name changes have generated a debate on whether the process is still relevant and important, especially now, 30 years into democracy. Some have argued that this process is a waste of resources that could be utilised in other service delivery priorities and that, it does not promote nation-building in that some of the names are difficult to pronounce for other South Africans; while others argue that it is necessary to restore lost heritage and promote reconciliation.

The importance and relevance of transformation of the geographical names landscape should be viewed in line with the restoration and promotion of our lost cultural heritage and the creation of a common cultural heritage landscape as the majority of the current geographical names landscape is reflective of apartheid colonial history and not reflective of our country's diverse heritage.

Herein we intend to discuss the importance and relevance of transformation of geographical names and further respond to some of the objections raised against the process.

## Why are geographical names important?

To understand the importance of geographical names, we must first describe what are geographical names. The South African Geographical Names Committee (SAGNC) describes geographical names as, "names of features on earth that are natural or man-made and adapted, and can be populated or unpopulated."

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) in 2002 established a Working Group on Geographical Names to ensure the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names as means of cultural retention and revitalisation. It follows then, that, they are an integral part of cultural heritage that relates to physical cultural property (monuments and landscape), intangible attributes of groups in society (customs and spiritual) which is inherited from the past and can be passed on to the future. Furthermore, UNGEGN identifies basically two important areas regarding geographical names:

- *They ensure that there is unambiguity in identifying and locating geographical features.*

This means that geographical names must provide unambiguous direction and enable ease of reference for the provision of basic services, infrastructure, and public administration.

What would compromise the unambiguity of geographical/place names are the following:

- o places having more than one name
- o duplicated name (locally and internationally)
- o spelling variants
- o romanisation of names

- *That geographical names must ensure that valuable records of the country's place names are preserved and reflect unique patterns of settlement.*

This would ensure that all research material and other historical data embedded in names is archived for future reference. Furthermore, that geographical names reflect the influence of surrounding landscape (settlement patterns).

It follows therefore that; geographical names enable effective communication for administrative purpose and facilitate economic activities. In the context of South Africa and the continent at large, the importance of geographical names is that they have acted as a "mnemonic device, embodying spiritual and environmental knowledge, history and culture, from the geographical landscape". This means that geographical names have acted as descriptors of features.

Indigenous people have always had their own way of referring to all

features around them owing to environmental, cultural, and spiritual knowledge. They have used seasons, and natural landforms to describe a specific feature. This simply means that geographical names are in all cases carriers of intangible cultural heritage.

Furthermore, place names have also been used to preserve indigenous knowledge and language. This indigenous knowledge relates to how society interacts or relates with its natural surroundings such as different natural herbs or plants used to heal certain ailments and names given to the fauna and flora. Geographical names will always spring from a specific language owing to the community it serves.

### Is transformation of geographical names landscape still relevant?

To answer the question whether transformation of geographical names is still relevant, I would suggest that one reads Professor Jeff Peires's book *"The House of Phalo, 1981"*. In his book on p166, professor Jeff Peires relates what Sir Harry Smith said to the amaXhosa Chiefs at the end of the War of the Axe in 1847:

*"Your land shall be marked out, and marks placed that you will all know it. It shall be divided into countries, towns, and villages, bearing English names. You shall all learn to speak English at the schools which I will build for you... You may no longer be naked and wicked barbarians, which you will ever be, unless you labour and become industrious. You shall be taught to plough; and the Commissary shall buy of you. You shall have trades, and you must teach your people to gums, timbers and hides etc. to sell, that you may learn the art of money, and buy for yourselves, you must learn that it is money that makes people rich by work and help me to make roads. I will pay you. You tell me that many of your youth desire to go into the colony as servants, they shall be allowed to do so..."*

This is a clear indication that the imposition of these English names was a deliberate process to hegemonize and entrench the heritage of colonial masters, ensuring that indigenous names are eradicated and relegated to the periphery.

It is therefore this deliberate exercise that indigenous knowledge and language have for a considerable time, been lost through the imposition of colonial heritage (names) and distorted through the continued disregard of indigenous names. For example, a place known as Alexandria in the Eastern Cape Province, which was named after a missionary, Reverend Alexander Smith in 1856, but little is known about the origin of the name; indigenous people used to refer to this place as eMnyameni - which means 'a

place of rainbow' as uMnyama refers to a rainbow in isiXhosa - owing to the climatic conditions, that produced a frequent rainbow in the area.

The other instance is when indigenous names are corrupted such that the meaning and language of origin is lost as demonstrated in the name 'Kei' (Kei River). Kei is a corruption of a Khoi name Gaai/Kaai which means 'great' or 'something big'. Geographical place naming in South Africa and in the African Continent cannot be disconnected from the 'landscape of fact' or colonial history. The arrival of settlers - which was preceded in some instances by explorers and cartographers - and the wars of dispossession, saw indigenous names being replaced by European (English and Portuguese) names. Settlers have used place naming to reflect what was important to them e.g Monarchs (Queenstown, Queen Wilhelmina), Saints (Port St John's), Surnames of prominent families and individuals (Barkley, Fletcher, Donkin) and names of meaningful places back in their mother country (East London, Berlin, Hanover, Motherwell, Brighton). By doing this, colonial settlers were imposing their heritage and identity, indigenous knowledge, language and culture which is embedded in these names.

Given the nature of liberation in South Africa, the question of transformation of geographical place naming (standardization) should be understood within the broader transformation process of the country, specifically, the transformation of the heritage landscape. The negotiated settlement in this country is as a result of several compromises from political, cultural to economic freedom. Some of the glaring compromises from the heritage and cultural point of view can be identified in the National Anthem (combination of Die Stem and Nkosi Sikelela iAfrika) and the national rugby symbol, the Springbok, which many still feel that it does not represent unity. These compromises were made due to a lot of resistance from mainly minority groups who viewed these as part of their heritage and if these were to be taken away, one would be destroying their heritage and identity.

To embark on a deliberate process to transform geographical names, the government enactment of the SAGNC Act No. 118 of 1998 which establishes a body to advise the Minister on names to be transformed and standardized, ensures that the geographical names landscape is reflective of the demographics and history of our country (including Khoi names).

Since the establishment of the Eastern Cape Provincial Geographic Names Committee (ECPGNC) in September 2003, **more than 300 names** have been standardised in the province. Almost half of this number (125) was for correction of spelling, with 79 for registration of existing and

new names, and only 25 for actual name changes. Of the 25 name changes, only 12 were for major towns or features, inclusive of the King Phalo and Dawid Stuurman Airports.

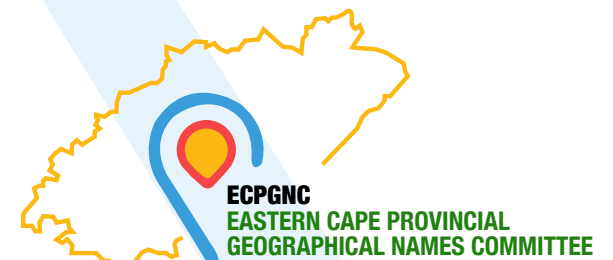
These statistics are a reflection of the slow pace of transformation, such that its intended beneficiaries begin to question its relevance, 30 years into the democratic dispensation; and the fact that "these should be left as there are more important priorities to focus on than to create unnecessary divisions in society". This has created a somewhat considerable and consistent objection to the transformation of geographical names.

What is missing from the current geographical names landscape is: events that shaped our history like the battle of Amalinde and the battle of eGazini; extinct animals such as the indigenous names of sabretooth tiger – Ingwenkala; and names of Khoi origins such as Kamma, Kei, Khamesh which also need to be properly written to preserve and promote the language and its orthography.

In line with UNGEGN Working Group on Geographical Names, it is important to "promote indigenous and minority geographical names" for retention and revitalisation and in line with the spirit of S6(2) of the Constitution of the Republic that "Recognising the historically diminished use and status of indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages."

Therefore, any argument on the relevance of transformation of geographical names should come to the same conclusion that more needs to be done to ensure that our geographical names landscape is reflective of the cultural diversity our country boasts about.

It cannot be enough just to talk about the need to transform without walking the talk. The vision of creating common heritage cannot be achieved until the current geographical names heritage landscape is transformed and restored.



# An inclusive 'Home of Legends' beyond political contributions



Mr Makubalo is well-versed and all-rounded in the field of sport, having played for a number of rugby clubs over the years. He has a keen interest in rural sport development and has served in many committees that promote the advancement of sport, including the Border Rugby Union. His service in the public sector spans over 37 years, with 27 of the years spent at DSRAC heading the sport development directorate, until his retirement in November 2023.

**T**he Eastern Cape is often referred to as the *Home of Legends* – mainly because it is the province that gave birth to some of the country's globally recognised and respected liberation struggle icons who changed the course of history in South Africa. These include, among others the country's first democratic president, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, his successor, Thabo Mbeki and many others who did not necessarily hold office in government.

Apart from these leaders in the political sphere, the *Home of Legends* is also home to some of the country's well renowned figures who have made remarkable contributions in sport, arts, culture and heritage; men and women

born beneath the hills and slopes of villages nestled between the bosoms of the ancient mountains of the province and raised in their cool shadows. These are the men and women who have transcended the challenges of the dusty streets of the townships to etch their names on the big stages of the world.

For decades, the Eastern Cape has been a fertile ground for nurturing sporting talent, producing administrators, athletes, and leaders whose excellence resonates globally. Some of these figures have played a pivotal role in shaping non-racial sport, particularly in rugby, boxing and cricket. Names that resonate with pride include Dan Qeqe, Zola Yeye, and many more who transcended mere athleticism and embodied the spirit of defiance, proclaiming, 'no normal sport in an abnormal society'. In celebrating these sporting legends, we must honour not only their achievements but also the values they embody, those of resilience, unity, and the unwavering pursuit of excellence.

Icons such as Dany Gerber, Basil Kenyon, Rassie Erasmus and Siya Kolisi have etched their names onto the annals of rugby history, their achievements serving as a source of inspiration for future generations. From the dusty fields of Gqeberha to the hallowed turf of Ellis Park, Eastern Cape rugby players have left an indelible mark on the sport, showcasing the power of determination and perseverance.

In the world of boxing, the province has produced some of the most formidable fighters to ever grace the ring. From Simon Sali to Vuyani Bungu, these pugilists have captured the imagination of fight fans around the world, their battles serving as a testament to the human spirit's indomitable nature.

For many boxers from the Eastern Cape, the ring has provided an escape from the harsh realities of societal ills, and their exploits inside the squared ring have inspired a generation of aspiring fighters, instilling in them the belief that anything is possible with dedication and hard work.

Cricket has also served as a vehicle for social change, uniting players of all backgrounds in pursuit of a common goal. Icons such as Makhaya Ntini and Khaya Majola have broken down barriers, shattering stereotypes and paving the way for future generations of cricketers to follow in their footsteps. Their contributions to the sport extend far beyond the boundary ropes, serving as beacons of hope for a brighter and more inclusive future.

As we celebrate the legacy of the Eastern Cape, let us not forget the countless creatives within the creative and cultural sectors who have contributed and shaped the development of music, film, publishing, design, performing and visual arts industry. Their achievements serve as a reminder of the power of heritage, arts and culture to unite, inspire, and transform lives, transcending the boundaries of race, class, and creed.

The late Dr. Latozi Madosini Mpahleni from the province was a global renowned musical pioneer, poet, and storyteller, who performed and collaborated with famous international musicians on national and international stages. She has been recognised worldwide for her sustained and exceptional contribution to the Xhosa culture through the preservation and popularising of isiXhosa musical bows such as *uHadi*, *uMrhubhe* and *Isitolotolo*.

Using the power of the arts to inspire change and foster unity;

actor, playwright and director Dr. John Kani's work transcends beyond the borders of this country. As such, in 2005 he was bestowed with the *Order of Ikhamanga*, which is the highest honour bestowed by the South African President.

From the smooth sounds of Eastern Cape jazz legend, Zim Ngqawana to the politically charged, anti-apartheid theatre productions of playwright, director and actor, Athol Fugard, the icons of the province have cemented their place in the country's history paving the way for young talent to excel locally and globally.

The notion of the *Home of Legends* therefore poses a vital opportunity of re-writing the history of the Eastern Cape to fully acknowledge the province and its icons in all its glory and diversity. Mandisi Aplom and Vusumzi Mba ignited this crucial debate and wrote an opinion piece that was published in the *Daily Maverick* in 2020, urging us to broaden our definition of legends beyond politics to encompass all progressives of the past, including those in the field of play, as well as the heritage, arts and cultural spheres.

**The true measure of a legend lies not in political prominence or societal status but in the impact, they have on the lives of others. It is here in the Home of Legends, amidst the rolling hills, villages and bustling townships of the Eastern Cape, that the true essence of greatness is found - in the hearts and minds of those who dare to dream, defy the odds, and strive for a better tomorrow.**

### Commemoration of National Days

National significant days were celebrated in the different districts of the province with a view to promote nation-building, unity, peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion, as well as to contribute to local economic development.



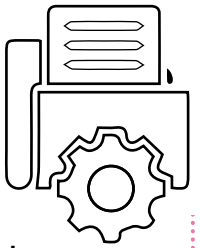
### Library and Information Services

In its quest to encourage a culture of reading and life-long learning, the department unveiled two newly-built library facilities to serve communities in the Sarah Baartman and OR Tambo districts.



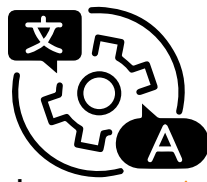
### Archives and Records Management

The archives and records management service's new digital records management system (AtOM - Access to Memory), ensures the adoption of best practices and innovations, and puts the sector at the forefront of digital acquisition and preservation.



### Language Services

Supported by the Eastern Cape's linguistic experts, academics, researchers and language practitioners, the department celebrated 200 years of isiXhosa as a written language. The campaign sought to explore the rich heritage of the written language and the works of some of the country's most prominent literary icons; as well as reduce illiteracy, promote indigenous languages, instill a culture of reading and writing, and inspire an emerging generation of writers.



### Resistance and Liberation

As part of the province's liberation route, the department, in partnership with the national department of sport and recreation, and the Nelson Mandela Museum unveiled two statues of former president, Nelson Mandela, in Mthatha and Qunu.



### Heritage Management

The Eastern Cape Government dedicated the year 2023 to the commemoration of 150 years of Nkosi Jongumsobomvu Maqoma and the role he played in the Wars of Resistance.



### Operation Clean Audit

DSRAC has received its third consecutive clean audit outcome from the Auditor General. This is in respect of the 2020/21 up to 2022/23 financial periods. The department celebrates this momentous milestone and continues to re-iterate its commitment to clean governance.



## How a local TV production elevated EC's film footprint



*Pictured: DSRAC General Manager: Cultural Affairs, HOD of Provincial Treasury, ECPACC council members and management, CEO of Nelson Mandela and ECDC management team during a site visit to the Gqeberha The Empire studios on 15 March 2024*

By Awethu Fatyela

Over the years, the Eastern Cape has emerged as a hub for burgeoning television productions, most recently highlighted by the success of Gqeberha the empire (GTE) an isiXhosa telenovela, produced in collaboration with Tshedza Pictures,

Multichoice, the Eastern Cape Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts, and Culture (DSRAC) and the Eastern Cape Provincial Arts and Culture Council (ECPACC). GTE has not only captured the hearts of viewers but also significantly

contributed to the region's cultural and economic development.

From its premiere on January 6, 2023, to the conclusion of Season 1 filming on July 31, 2023

## DSRAC IN BRIEF:

and the subsequent airing of Season 2 on the 12th of January 2024, *Gqeberha The Empire* has showcased the richness of the Eastern Cape's cultural heritage while creating numerous employment opportunities. The series has served as a powerful vehicle for preserving and celebrating the region's identity.

One of the most significant impacts of GTE has been its role in job creation. The production has provided employment for a diverse range of professionals, including actors, directors, camera operators, editors, and wardrobe specialists. Moreover, the hospitality industry has witnessed a boost through increased accommodation rentals during filming, while small businesses cater to various production needs, such as catering, equipment rental, and transport services.

The economic benefits extend beyond direct employment opportunities. With its captivating location shoots showcasing the natural beauty of Gqeberha and its surroundings, the series has generated heightened interest in the area as well as stimulated the growth of the local tourism sector by attracting visitors and international

production companies.

Furthermore, the telenovela has played a pivotal role in skills development and transfer in the province. Through internships and on-the-job training, the production has equipped local talents with valuable industry experience, fostering a new generation of skilled professionals in the Eastern Cape's film and television sector.

The success of *Gqeberha The Empire* is evident in its widespread popularity and audience reach. With an average weekly viewership of 5.3 million during its first season, the series ranked among the most-watched shows on Mzansi Magic Channel weekdays and DStv Stream. This impressive viewership not only reflects the quality of the production but also underscores its significance as a cultural phenomenon.

The Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture (DSRAC), through its agency, the Eastern Cape Provincial Arts and Culture Council (ECPACC) has been instrumental in fostering the growth of the local film industry. DSRAC General Manager: Cultural Affairs, Ms. Nomathamsanqa

Gobozi-Nibe highlighted the motivation behind the department's support for productions such as *Gqeberha The Empire*.

"Through initiatives like *Siziwe* and biographical documentaries such as *Living Legend*, *Pride*, *Canvas*, and *Ilifa Lomboko*, the department continues to promote storytelling and cultural preservation in the Eastern Cape. These documentaries are in the distribution phase, and we are planning to air them on television, just like *Gqeberha The Empire*.

"*Gqeberha The Empire* stands as a shining example of the potential of television production to drive economic growth, promote cultural heritage, and empower local communities. As the series embarks on its second season, it reaffirms the Eastern Cape's position as a vibrant and dynamic centre for arts and culture in South Africa. The new season brings with it new talent, some seasoned actors and brand new film studios that promise to take the production to new heights," GM Gobo-Nibe further added.

# RECOGNISING THE PROVINCE'S CREATIVE EXCELLENCE



**Local talent and creatives who have raised the Eastern Cape flag high this past year were honoured at the Provincial Arts, Culture and Heritage Awards (PACHA) ceremony held recently in East London in partnership with 6th Annual Eastern Cape Music Awards.**

**The PACHA are held annually in recognition of individuals, groups, organisations or institutions whose careers have had a profound and lasting impact on arts and culture in the Eastern Cape, with the aim of promoting professional excellence in the arts and cultural sector of the province. They have been in existence since 2014.**

# PRONOUNCED bonds through sport



*Eastern Cape Province Premier Oscar Lubabalo Mabuyane led a government delegation visiting Lower Saxony, Germany on 4-11 November 2023 to explore further investment and trade opportunities.*

By Awethu Fatyela

The partnership between the Eastern Cape Province and the State of Lower Saxony in Germany has flourished over the years, fuelled by a shared commitment to utilising sports as a tool for international cooperation and understanding. At the forefront of this collaboration is the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts, and Culture (DSRAC), which plays a pivotal role in facilitating, coordinating, and supporting all projects conducted by sports federations and clubs in the Eastern Cape.

Mr. Gugs Adam, Manager of Federation Affairs at DSRAC underscores the department's integral role in representing the entire sports fraternity within the Eastern Cape Government. With a dedicated officer overseeing the maintenance of the partnership, DSRAC ensures seamless implementation and coordination of exchange programmes.

A highlight of the partnership was the recent exchange programme attended by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) and Premier to the State of Lower Saxony. This programme, involving athletes, sport administrators, coaches, youth, volunteers, technical officials, and academy officials, proved mutually beneficial, fostering the sharing of best practices and cultural experiences between Germans and South Africans.

The Office of the Premier holds custodianship of international relations, with various departments serving as implementors of activities and projects aligned with their mandates. Annual project planning, guided by consultations and interactions between both parties, ensures

alignment with the Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI), the foundational document of the partnership.

Social cohesion lies at the heart of the exchange programmes, with a focus on participants such as athletes, youth exchange programmes, and volunteers. Team and individual sport exchanges serve as cornerstones, promoting cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. Decision-making at managerial and political levels ensures effective leveraging of annual mandates.

The exchange programmes are aimed at enhancing the cultural diversity of the youth, exposing them to international trends while fostering independence and patriotism. With over 25 years of collaboration, the partnership has evolved, with DSRAC emerging as the lead department due to its direct involvement with athletes at the competition level, many of whom have achieved international acclaim through the exchange programmes.

The latest visit to the country by the German counterparts featured a rowing team participating in the Buffalo Regatta held in East London on February 8, 2024. This event not only showcased the spirit of competition but also symbolised the enduring bonds forged through sports diplomacy.

The Eastern Cape-Lower Saxony exchange programme, underpinned by the efforts of DSRAC, exemplifies the transformative potential of sports in fostering international cooperation, cultural exchange, and mutual respect. As the partnership continues to evolve, it serves as a testament to the enduring power of sports to unite people across borders.

## ECPHRA: Custodians of Provincial Heritage Treasures

By Siziphiwe Balintulo

The discovery of 'huge bones' by a herdsman, which were later identified as fossils in Qhemerha Village located in the Joe Gqabi district, under Senqu Local Municipality piqued both local and international academic interest, particularly in the geological field; with expert academic work and research still being undertaken by various national and international universities.

To ensure the preservation of the discovery site, the Eastern Cape Government, through the Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture and its heritage institution, the Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (ECPHRA), has invested in the development of the site as a Fossil Park.

Further to the academic and scientific interest, there has been a huge interest from the surrounding local authorities and communities. This project has generated interest not only for academic research but for socio-economic development of the area and its communities. Highlighting its importance, ECPHRA manager Mr. Azola Mkhosana indicated that, "the economic potential of the area has been identified as key in the development of the site in a bid to boost the local economy. This could see the site added to the list of World Heritage sites in the province."

Some of the key projects that ECPHRA is spearheading include the serial nomination of Klassies River Cave in the Sarah Baartman district, the conservation of Qanda Burial Site in Middeldrift, the rehabilitation of Bullhoek Massacre Burial Site as well as the location of the remains of the late King of the Xhosa Kingdom, King Hintsa. The institution is also responsible for product development, which includes identifying potential heritage resources for development as heritage tourism destinations.

ECPHRA is responsible for the management of various types of heritage resources that are abundant in the province. Its mandate includes, but not limited to the identification, documentation, and assessment of heritage resources, the development of policies and conservation plans, as well as maintaining essential national standards for the management of heritage resources.

# The interface of politics and administration

Mr. Wongama Gela stands as a key figure ensuring the seamless integration of the political and administrative functions in the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts, and Culture. As the Head of Office in the office of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC), Mr. Gela brings over a decade of experience in public service, coupled with a passion for serving the community.

Joining the department in September 2023, Mr. Gela's transition from a successful tenure in local government since 2009 was motivated by his passion for service. When asked about his career in the public service, he shared, «I have always been satisfied with serving our people, and thus my continued involvement in the public sector.»

Mr. Gela reflects on his career milestones, stating that his current role is not too far from his previous positions in the public service. However, he emphasizes the importance of the Head of Office role in ensuring a smooth political and administrative interface within the Office of the MEC.

He underscores the need to integrate policy



Wongama Gela

development, oversight responsibilities, and administrative compliance.

Mr. Gela's leadership principles revolve around delegation, initiative, guidance, and accountability. He values honesty, boldness, a good work ethic, and accountability in his decision-making process.

'Expressing enthusiasm for ongoing projects, Mr.

Gela highlights the department's focus on contributing to social cohesion, nation-building, and provincial unity. He is particularly intrigued by initiatives supporting language development, athletes, artists, and the promotion of the province's heritage.

When asked about crucial skills and knowledge areas for success in his role, Mr. Gela believes that a well-rounded individual with sufficient skills, knowledge, and experience in both administration and politics will thrive in this challenging environment.

Outside his professional life, Mr. Gela is a private individual who values spending quality time with his family. His commitment to public service does not overshadow his dedication to a balanced and fulfilling personal life.

For those aspiring to a career in public service, Mr. Gela imparts a valuable piece of advice: **'Learning and willingness to learn from everyone'** This echoes his continuous pursuit of knowledge and growth, a testament to his commitment to making a positive impact in the department.

# The backbone of Corporate Services

Meet Ms. Ncumisa Fololo, the General Manager of Corporate Services, who stands as the cornerstone of administrative excellence and strategic foresight in the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts, and Culture.

Ms. Fololo's journey through the complex world of municipal governance and human resources management has led to her managing the multifaceted operations of a government department. Armed with a bachelor's degree in Administration, an Honours in Industrial Relations, and a Master's in Public Administration, Fololo has carved a distinguished path through the intricacies of public service. However, it was her initial foray into the



Ncumisa Fololo

role of a Labour Relations Officer that ignited a passion for the transformative power of human resources management within the realm of local government.

From the trenches of labour disputes to the heights of strategic management, her journey has been marked by an unwavering dedication to championing efficiency in service delivery.

Ms. Fololo's transition to the

role of Chief Director of Corporate Services at DSRAC in May 2023 marked a pivotal moment in her career.

Within tDSRAC, she has found a new canvas upon which to apply her expertise, overseeing a diverse array of functions including ICT, legal services, human resources, and strategic management.

As the programme manager for Programme 1, encompassing finance and strategic planning, she has leveraged her multi-faceted skillset to drive excellence across all facets of departmental operations.

In her leadership philosophy, Ms. Fololo embodies a holistic approach rooted in inclusivity, and continuous growth.

According to Ms. Fololo, effective leadership entails the ability to provide direction, offer advice, and inspire others to excel.

Drawing from her extensive experience in local government, Fololo recognises the value of leveraging past lessons and insights to inform present practices. This adaptive approach allows her to bridge the gap between the different spheres of government while maximising the effectiveness of corporate services as a facilitator of service delivery.

She envisions a strategic shift in the realm of corporate services, placing a paramount focus on facility management. She perceives this as a pivotal area that demands heightened

attention and comprehensive enhancement to ensure the optimal functioning and safety of all facilities under the department's purview.

She underscores the importance of recognizing that every facility, regardless of its nature or location, directly impacts the well-being and productivity of the department's employees. Whether it is a library, a recreational centre, or an administrative office, each facility must be meticulously managed and safeguarded to uphold health, safety, and operational efficiency standards.

Ms Fololo epitomises the ideal blend of administrative expertise, strategic vision, and unwavering dedication to public service. Her journey from the trenches of labour relations to the pinnacle of corporate governance serves as a testament to the transformative power of passion, perseverance, and a steadfast commitment to excellence.

# Bridging Borders: on SADC Integration and Youth Empowerment

Vusumzi Mba, a native of Qonce, is a dedicated Christian, academic, and public servant committed to advancing knowledge and effective governance.

Mba is committed and actively engaged in public discourse and advocacy, as evidenced by his participation in significant events and presentations throughout the previous year. One notable event was his invitation and attendance as one of the youth panellists at the South African Development Community (SADC) Public Lecture, held on the margins of the 43rd Summit of Heads of State and Government in Luanda, Angola.

The lecture, titled, *The Dynamics of SADC Integration: Achievements, Challenges, and Outlook*, took place on 12 August 2023 at the Diplomatic Academy Venancio De Moura where he contributed to the discussion with his topic, *Youth, Sports, and Cultural Exchanges in the SADC Region*, highlighting the importance of these elements in fostering regional integration and cooperation.

Furthermore, he participated in the Landless People's Movement (LPM) Policy Conference in Windhoek, Namibia, from 7 - 8 December 2023. At this conference, he presented on the topic, *Creating Employment and Ensuring Growth of the GDP through Sport, Arts, and Culture: Valuable Insights from South Africa*. His insights provided valuable perspectives on leveraging sports, arts, and culture as drivers of economic development and social empowerment within the region.

Through his active involvement in these events and presentations, Vusumzi Mba continues to demonstrate his commitment to advancing dialogue and action on issues crucial to regional development, youth empowerment, and inclusive growth across Southern Africa.

With a Master of Social Sciences Degree in Political Science from the University of

Vusumzi Mba



Research & Policy Development -  
Strategic Management & Development Directorate

Kwa-Zulu Natal, specialising in Land Reform and Public Policy Development, Mba has established himself as a leading voice in his field. His academic journey began with a B. Admin from the University of Fort Hare, followed by a Post-graduate Diploma in Land and Agrarian Studies from the Institute for Poverty, Land, and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape. In the current pursuit of his Ph.D. at Nelson Mandela University, His research interests encompass a wide range of topics, including communication, stakeholder relations, heritage, culture and planning.

Beyond academia, Mba is a respected columnist for several prominent publications, including the Republican Mail, City Press, Daily Dispatch, Herald, and Daily Maverick. He has also lent his expertise to various roles within the public sector, serving as a researcher and speechwriter for the Eastern Cape Department of Education and the Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders.

His professional versatility extends to his work with consulting firms and his role as a speechwriter for numerous politicians across the country. A well-rounded individual, he actively participates in sports such as hockey, cricket, and rugby, while also nurturing a passion for youth development.

## DSRAC bids farewell to two exceptional senior managers



Mr. Godfrey Masithela  
Security and Facilities  
Management Services



Mr. Bafundi Makubalo  
Sport Development  
Directorate

The department closed off the year 2023 by bidding farewell to two of its senior managers who were instrumental in the inception of the department 27 years ago. Mr. Godfrey Masithela and Mr. Bafundi Makubalo retired last year at the end of October and November, respectively.

Mr. Masithela headed the Security, Facilities, and Management Services, while Mr. Makubalo led the Sport Development Directorate. Both served the department for 27 years and the public sector for over 37 years.

Their outstanding leadership and stellar contribution assisted in advancing the province's democratic agenda through the department's key programmes.


The department was privileged to have benefited from these two exceptional leaders. We would like to wish them the very best for their future pursuits.

## VISION

**A United, Active and Winning Province  
through Sport, Recreation, Arts, Culture & Heritage**

## MISSION

**Developing, Preserving and Promoting Sport, Recreation  
Arts, Culture and Heritage for Spiritual, Intellectual, and  
Socio-Economic Upliftment of the people of the Eastern Cape**

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