



KIMBERLEY TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL WINS TOP HONOURS AT THE 2025 HERITAGE SCHOOLS OUTREACH PROGRAMME

Kimberley Technical High School from the Northern Cape has claimed first place at the 2025 Heritage Schools Outreach Programme (HESOP) national competition, hosted from 6–10 October 2025 at the Kruger National Park in Skukuza, Mpumalanga.

The event, jointly organised by the National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC), the Department of Basic Education (DBE), South African National Parks (SANParks), and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), brought together learners from across the country to celebrate and preserve South Africa's diverse cultural and natural heritage.

The Heritage Schools Outreach Programme is one of the NHC's flagship youth initiatives aimed at promoting heritage awareness, cultural appreciation, and environmental stewardship among learners. Each year, schools from all nine provinces compete in regional rounds, with the top teams advancing to the national event.

This year's programme featured the following provincial champions:

- * New Hope Secondary School (Gauteng)
- * Desmond Mpilo Tutu Secondary School (Western Cape)
- * Kimberley Technical High School (Northern Cape)
- * Risinga Secondary School (Limpopo)
- * Molebatsi High School (North West)
- * Mathubeszwe High School (KwaZulu-Natal)
- * Hlonipha Secondary School (Mpumalanga)
- * Clarkebury Agricultural School (Eastern Cape)
- * Lephola Secondary School (Free State)

Throughout the week, learners participated in a rich schedule of research presentations, heritage excursions, and cultural performances, all designed to deepen their understanding of heritage preservation and its role in building national identity.

A highlight of the 2025 HESOP was a visit to



the Albasini Ruins, a historic 19th-century trading post situated within the Kruger National Park. Learners explored the ruins and learned about João Albasini, one of the region's earliest traders, who played a significant role in cross-cultural exchange and commerce between local communities and European settlers.

The visit provided learners with a unique opportunity to connect classroom theory with real-world history, reinforcing the importance of conserving historical sites as tangible records of the nation's shared past.

The week-long camp concluded with a prestigious awards and prize-giving ceremony on Thursday, 9 October, recognising learners and schools for their outstanding contributions to heritage education and cultural preservation.

Kimberley Technical High School was crowned the overall winner of the national competition, followed by:

1. Clarkebury Agricultural School (Eastern Cape) – Second Place
2. New Hope Secondary School (Gauteng) – Third Place
3. Lephola Secondary School (Free State) – Fourth Place

Speaking after the announcement, Chuma Sikhweza, a Grade 11 learner from Kimberley Technical High School, expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to participate in HESOP 2025.

"The presentations and excursions opened my eyes to the depth of our national heritage. I have gained a new appreciation for how culture connects us, and I plan to use this experience to make a difference in my community," she said.

In his keynote address, Dr Thabo Manetsi, Chief Executive Officer of the National Heritage Council, applauded the educators and learners for their commitment to celebrating South Africa's living heritage. He emphasised that heritage should not be confined to commemorative days but should be integrated into everyday life.

"Our heritage defines who we are and what makes us proudly South African. We must not only preserve it but also pass it on. Heritage is not a one-day event; it must be lived and experienced daily," he remarked.

Dr Manetsi further encouraged young participants to see themselves as future custodians of heritage, responsible for ensuring that the nation's cultural identity continues to thrive.

The success of HESOP 2025 shows the NHC's ongoing commitment to heritage education and youth development. By engaging learners through experiential learning and national collaboration, the programme continues to inspire a new generation of South Africans to value and protect the cultural and natural treasures that define the country.

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CEOs MESSAGE

Dr Thabo Manetsi, Chief Executive Officer, National Heritage Council of South Africa

Champions of African heritage towards social cohesion

It gives me great pleasure to welcome our valued stakeholders and partners to Volume 3, Issue 5 of the NHC newsletter. This publication continues to serve as an important platform for sharing insights into our operational progress, community engagement, and initiatives aimed at promoting and preserving our nation's rich heritage.

This edition highlights the success of our recent HESOP programme in Kruger National Park, Skukuza, Mpumalanga. You will also find great stories reflecting our commitment to employee well-being during Employee Wellness Day, as well as hands-on learning experiences from our Heritage Management and Conservation Course at the Richtersveld Cultural Landscape. Additionally, there will be a heartfelt farewell to two valued members of the NHC team.

At the NHC, our mission is to actively advance, promote, and celebrate South Africa's heritage. Over the past months, we have achieved significant milestones, and we invite you to read our newsletters to learn more about our progress.

I extend my sincere appreciation to our dedicated staff, stakeholders, and partners who continue to support the NHC. Our progress is made possible through collaboration, trust, and shared commitment. I urge all stakeholders and partners to continue safeguarding our country's heritage. Together, we can promote, protect and preserve our country's heritage for our next generations.

Thank you for your continued engagement and support. I look forward to sharing more successes and insights in future editions of the NHC newsletter.

**Warm regards,
Dr. Thabo Manetsi
Chief Executive Officer, National Heritage
Council of South Africa**



NHC PRIORITISES MENTAL HEALTH AT THE 2025 EMPLOYEE WELLNESS DAY



The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) demonstrated its continued commitment to employee well-being through the successful hosting of the 2025 Employee Wellness Day (EWD) on Friday, 3 October 2025. Organised by the Human Resource Management (HRM) Unit, the event aimed to promote holistic wellness among employees, in alignment with the



national workplace theme for 2025 "Prioritising Mental Health in the Workplace."

The initiative reinforced the Council's belief that its workforce is not merely staff, but its intellectual capital, the core of its operational strength and innovation. The EWD connected themes of work, health, and well-being, placing a strong emphasis on creating supportive environments that reduce stress, prevent burnout, and enhance mental resilience.

The programme offered a variety of wellness and educational services to support both the mental and physical health of employees. Activities included mental health literacy workshops to increase awareness and reduce stigma around mental illness, open dialogues about emotional well-being, and demonstrations on condom use and safe sexual practices.

Employees also benefited from HIV testing, blood glucose and blood pressure screening, and massage therapy sessions aimed at relaxation and stress relief.

Delivering a keynote presentation, Ms Anastasia Tlhapane from Mabebe Wellness and Solutions defined mental health as an essential aspect of overall wellness, encompassing emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual balance.

"Mental health affects how we think, feel, and act, influencing our ability to handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices," she explained. She urged employees to view mental wellness not as a personal issue but as a collective responsibility within the workplace.

The highlight of the day came when Ms Ponatshego Mafihla, a breast cancer survivor, shared her courageous journey of survival and recovery. Speaking candidly, she recalled the physical, emotional, and social challenges she faced during treatment.

"I went for chemotherapy and lost my hair. My self-esteem suffered, and I lost friends who could not cope with my condition," she shared. "But I found strength in my son and in supporting others facing the same battle."

Her testimony served as a powerful reminder of the importance of compassion, early detection, and community support. "If you find any lump on your body, go and see a doctor. Early detection is very important," she urged.

Throughout the event, NHC staff engaged actively in discussions and activities that encouraged open communication, empathy, and self-care. The EWD also highlighted the Council's recognition that employee wellness is central to productivity, creativity, and organisational sustainability.

By hosting the annual Wellness Day, the NHC continues to champion a culture of care, awareness, and prevention, ensuring that its employees have access to resources that support both their physical and mental health.

Reflecting on the success of the event, the Acting Human Resource Manager, Mr Sonti Pudikabekwa from the HRM Unit emphasised that wellness initiatives of this nature are not once-off events but part of an ongoing effort to build a healthier, more motivated workforce.

"Through continuous engagement, education, and collaboration with health professionals, the NHC is creating a workplace where employees feel supported, valued, and empowered to prioritise their well-being," he alluded. The 2025 Employee Wellness Day ultimately confirmed a simple truth: when employees thrive, organisations flourish. By investing in the mental and physical health of its people, the NHC is investing in the future of heritage preservation and national development.





THE HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION COURSE OFFERED HANDS-ON LEARNING AT RICHTERSVELD CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

As part of the second implementation of the Heritage Management and Conservation Course, the National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC), in collaboration with the University of Pretoria (UP), recently conducted a field visit to the Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape (Richtersveld) in the Northern Cape.

Recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Site, the Richtersveld has diverse stakeholders that are integral to the management of the site.

These are the Northern Cape Department of Sport, Arts and Culture; South African National Parks (SANParks), the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and the Nama Community under the Richtersveld Communal Property Association. It serves as a living classroom for heritage students and specialists, offering valuable insight into conservation and cultural challenges.

The visit was led by Dr Mirriam Tawane from the NHC and included research assistants from the organisation.

The UP delegation consisted of internationally renowned Archaeologists Prof. Nick Shepherd from Aarhus University, Denmark, and Dr Sven Ouzman from the University of Western Australia. Heritage students participating in the programme are from Ditsong Museums of South Africa, Taung Skull World Heritage Site and Richtersveld Botanical and Cultural Landscape.

This diverse group of heritage practitioners explored several significant heritage sites under the guidance of Mr Avron Thomas from the Northern Cape Namakwa District's Department.

The first site visited was one of the five historical fountains in Port Nolloth, which, at one point, was a source of water, which, according to Mr Thomas, was one of the reasons why the Indigenous people remained in the area. "Despite the fountain's cultural and historical importance, it remains neglected, with building developments encroaching on the historical site," he expressed.

At the second site, known as the Midden, Mr Thomas explained that it was historically a fishing area for Indigenous communities, marked by seashell remains scattered on the ground.

However, Prof. Shepherd and Dr Ouzman highlighted conservation challenges: "There has been insufficient research on the middens, and ongoing deterioration threatens this important heritage due to nearby building developments." Prof. Shepherd further emphasised the educational potential of the site, noting, "Middens could serve as a valuable educational resource, especially for children to learn about cultural history through outreach programmes and direct interactions with the site."

The visit also included a tour of the mine dumps and the Wondegat sinkhole, where fossilised plants were discovered. Dr Tawane highlighted the vulnerability of these rare fossil plants and stated,

"These heritage resources require urgent protection from extreme weather, theft, and interests from private collectors." Mr Thomas revealed plans to develop a museum in Koebus, suggesting, "The museum could also house a donation of fossil plants to the World Heritage Site, enhancing community and visitor engagement."

At Koebus, the group was welcomed by Mr Nikodemus Swartbooi, chairperson of the Richtersveld Communal Property Association (CPA). He shared that the CPA has been foundational for the Nama Indigenous community's development. Yet, he admitted, "Koebus and the CPA are still not where we aspire to be; there is much room for growth."



A pressing issue identified during discussions with Mr Thomas, Mr Swartbooi, and Mr Marrio Maggott, a member of CPA, was the erosion of the Nama language due to Apartheid-era policies. "Under Apartheid, the Nama people were forced to use Afrikaans exclusively, causing limitations on the recent generations to speak their mother tongue. Efforts to revive the language faced setbacks.

There were previous attempts by the province to revive the education of the language. This was done in collaboration with the Namibian Government, but the programme faced several challenges that led to its failure.



Even extensive of a Local Teacher to teach the subject in a local school was affected by financial limitations, Mr Maggott explained.

"There is a significant literature gap regarding Nama language teaching materials in South Africa, especially when compared to Namibia, which exacerbates the risk of language extinction in the Koebus community." He added.

The visit emphasised the complexity of conserving the Richtersveld Cultural Landscape, balancing heritage protection with community development and educational needs.

It highlighted the necessity of coordinated efforts among heritage organisations, local communities, and international experts to safeguard the unique cultural and natural heritage of the RCL for future generations. End//



NHC BIDS FAREWELL TO TWO DEDICATED TEAM MEMBERS



The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) celebrated the contributions of two outgoing team members, Mr. Nceba Gawula, Acting Information Technology Manager, and Candidate Attorney (CA) Tholiwe Mkhonto, Legal Officer Intern. NHC bid them a fond farewell with a day filled with gratitude, reflection, and celebration. The event took place at the Chef Caspers Upstairs Café in Pretoria, Gauteng, on Friday, 24 October 2025.

The day opened with a warm welcome from the Acting Human Resource Manager, Mr. Sonti Pudikabekwa. His words set a reflective tone, reminding staff members of the occasion's significance. "Today, we celebrate not just the achievements of our staff members, but the wisdom and commitment they have shown in steering NHC to greater heights," he said.

The farewell became a moving recognition of employees whose vision and dedication have left an indelible mark on the NHC's governance. Colleagues shared their personal stories and presented the departing members with tokens of appreciation,



highlighting the relationship they have developed during their tenure.

The outgoing IT Acting Manager, Mr. Gawula, expressed his gratitude, highlighting that "NHC is an organisation of opportunities, a place where its size and the magnitude of its work allow individuals to grow and make meaningful contributions to heritage preservation." Tholiwe added to the warmth, saying, "Colleagues, I just wanted to say a sincere thank you for the beautiful farewell party."

I was genuinely moved by the effort, the laughs, the kind words, and the warmth you all showed. It is not easy saying goodbye, but you made it feel like a celebration of everything we have shared, and I will carry that with me."

She concluded, "Working with you has been more than just a job; it is a journey filled with collaboration, growth, and a lot of good memories. I have learned so much from each of you, and I'm grateful for the support, the challenges, and relationships."



NHC MOURNS THE PASSING OF NATIONAL LIVING TREASURE, MR. MACKSON MAVUNDA

The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) joins the nation in mourning the passing of Mr. Mackson Mavunda, a revered custodian of South African heritage who was recently honoured as a National Living Treasure at the Golden Shield Heritage Awards (GOSHA) 2025 held in Mpumalanga.

For more than four decades, Mr. Mavunda devoted his life to the preservation and promotion of Vatsonga cultural heritage through traditional dance, music, and mentorship. His unwavering commitment to cultural education and youth empowerment has left an enduring legacy on the heritage landscape of South Africa.

A visionary leader in the arts, he founded the Mahatlani Dance Group in 1980, which later became part of the Gazankulu Youth Movement. In 1990, he established the Caravan Traditional Dance Group, championing indigenous dance forms such as Xigubu and Mchongolo.

In his later years, he continued his mission through the African Indigenous Instrument Preservation NPC, where he trained young people in traditional music and performance. His recognition as a National Living Treasure reflected his lifelong dedication to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage — from dance and music to oral storytelling and

“Mr. Mavunda represented the very essence of what it means to be a Living Treasure — a guardian of tradition, a teacher to the youth, and a living archive of our collective identity,” said Dr. Thabo Manetsi, Chief Executive Officer of the National Heritage Council.

The NHC extends its heartfelt condolences to the Mavunda family, his colleagues, and the broader heritage community. Further details regarding memorial and funeral arrangements will be shared once confirmed. May his legacy of cultural pride, creativity, and preservation continue to inspire generations to come.