



CEO's MESSAGE

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

Dear Stakeholders and Partners of the National Heritage Council of South Africa,

As we enter the final stretch of 2025, this moment offers us an important opportunity to reflect on the work we continue to advance in preserving, promoting, and strengthening South Africa's rich and diverse heritage landscape. November has been a month marked by meaningful progress, thoughtful reflection, and significant celebration, each milestone reaffirming the importance of heritage in shaping our national identity, unity, and future.

This edition of our newsletter brings together stories that speak to growth, knowledge production, cultural identity, and the ongoing process of healing and honouring our shared heritage. One of our most notable developments this month is the appointment of a new cohort of Research Assistants. Their arrival marks a significant investment in strengthening the NHC's internal capacity, enhancing our ability to produce impactful research and deliver programmes that respond to national heritage priorities.

By nurturing young talent, we are ensuring continuity, sustainability, and institutional excellence. Our exploration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) is further deepened through the feature article "Azibuyele Emasisweni (Return to the Source)." This piece invites us to reconnect with the wisdom, spiritual grounding, and traditional practices that have sustained our communities across generations.

In a world increasingly in search of meaning and rootedness, returning to the source is not only an intellectual exercise it is a powerful pathway to collective renewal. We also turn our focus to a complex chapter of our history in "Honest History Heals: The Story Behind the Clash of Tribes – The Venda and the Tsonga." By confronting the uncomfortable truths of our past, we open the door to reconciliation, mutual understanding, and nation-building.

Heritage work demands that we celebrate our triumphs while also engaging with the difficult histories that shape our present. Finally, we reflect on one of the NHC's proudest achievements this year: our participation in the 2025 Legends Awards. This esteemed ceremony honoured individuals whose contributions have left an indelible mark on our cultural and heritage landscape. Their stories are a reminder that heritage lives through those who preserve it, advance it, and pass it on.

As we continue our journey, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to our partners, staff, and communities for their unwavering dedication to safeguarding South Africa's heritage. Your commitment strengthens our collective resolve and ensures that future generations inherit a heritage of which we can all be proud. Let us remain united in our efforts to build a future grounded in memory, dignity, and shared pride.

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



NHC CELEBRATES HERITAGE AT THE 2025 LEGENDS AWARDS



The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) proudly upheld its mandate to promote and preserve the nation's cultural legacy through its participation in the prestigious 2025 Legends Awards.

Held on Saturday, 1 November 2025, at Vodaworld in Midrand, the event brought together cultural icons, thought leaders, and influential figures dedicated to shaping South Africa's heritage landscape.

The Legends Awards is an esteemed platform that celebrates individuals whose achievements uplift communities and reinforce South Africa's cultural pride and unity. The event underscores the essential role of heritage in fostering excellence, strengthening social cohesion, and inspiring future generations.

A key highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Culture and Heritage Category Award by NHC Chairperson, Mr. Tau Masemola.

This honour was bestowed upon Professor Pitika Ntuli, an internationally acclaimed sculptor, poet, philosopher, and scholar whose visionary work has significantly shaped conversations on African identity, spirituality, and consciousness.

Through decades of dedicated scholarship and artistic innovation, Prof. Ntuli has become a central figure in interpreting and preserving South Africa's cultural and artistic heritage.

Professor Ntuli is no stranger to national recognition. In 2023, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 10th Annual Golden Shield Heritage Awards, an event presented by the NHC.

This prestigious honour celebrates individuals who have made outstanding and enduring contributions to heritage interpretation over many years. Recipients are recognized for excellence in areas such as education and training, the

development of impactful interpretive projects, and the promotion of cultural and natural heritage initiatives.

By celebrating Prof. Ntuli's lifelong achievements, the Legends Awards not only acknowledge his profound impact but also reaffirm his status as a true legend in the heritage sector.

The NHC's involvement in this flagship event highlights its unwavering commitment to honouring individuals whose work deepens, protects, and enriches the national heritage narrative.

Looking ahead, the NHC remains dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the custodians of South Africa's culture and heritage, those whose contributions ensure that the country's stories, identities, and traditions continue to be preserved for generations to come.



AZIBUYELE EMASISWENI (RETURN TO THE SOURCE)” A JOURNEY BACK TO THE SPIRIT.

The National Heritage Council (NHC), in partnership with the South African Gallery of Legends and the Ditsong Cultural History Museum, hosted the official opening of Azibuyele Emasisweni (Return to the Source), a profound exhibition by acclaimed South African artist and scholar, Professor Pitika Ntuli.

The exhibition was unveiled on Thursday, 30 October 2025, at the Ditsong Cultural History Museum in Pretoria, celebrating South Africa's rich heritage, artistic excellence, and cultural identity.

Professor Pitika Ntuli, an internationally renowned sculptor, poet, and philosopher, presented his award-winning body of work that continues to resonate with the majority of audiences globally.

Azibuyele Emasisweni features 45 compelling bone sculptures that explore African spirituality, ancestral memory, and collective healing. Created during a period marked by worldwide uncertainty, the artworks embody humanity's search for both physical and spiritual renewal in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The exhibition's title, Azibuyele Emasisweni, translated as "Return to the Source", encapsulates the artist's call for a reconnection with our origins, a reawakening of consciousness, and a re-engagement with humanity's spiritual foundation.

Through his work, Professor Ntuli invites audiences to reflect deeply on identity, belonging, and the delicate relationship between the material and spiritual worlds.

Ntuli's use of bones, a medium rich with symbolism, transforms remnants of mortality into powerful vessels of wisdom, reflection, and healing.

His sculptures transcend artistic expression; they echo ancestral voices and affirm the enduring strength of African cultural traditions. The exhibition's impact and artistic innovation earned it the People's Choice "You-2" Award at the 7th Annual Global Fine Art Awards in Paris (2021), firmly positioning it on the international stage.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, NHC Chairperson, Mr. Tau Masemola, expressed the Council's pride and appreciation: "As the NHC, we are deeply honoured to have recognised Professor Ntuli as a Life Achievement Award recipient at our Golden Shield Awards, an accolade that acknowledges not only his extraordinary artistic contribution, but also his unwavering commitment to restoring and affirming African values."

He further added, "Let us indeed return to the source Azibuyele Emasisweni and draw strength from the wisdom of our ancestors as we continue building a nation grounded in unity, respect, and creativity."

More than an exhibition, Azibuyele Emasisweni is a spiritual homecoming and reminder that heritage is not merely preserved in museums but lives within the soul. It calls on all South Africans to reconnect with the truths that shaped their history, identity, and collective strength.

The exhibition is currently on display at the Ditsong Cultural History Museum in Pretoria until April 2026.

To explore more of South Africa's rich and diverse cultural history, we invite you to visit the museum.

For more information, please visit: www.ditsong.org.za.



HONEST HISTORY HEALS: THE STORY BEHIND THE CLASH OF TRIBES – THE VENDA AND TSONGA



The National Heritage Council (NHC) of South Africa has recently funded a profound heritage initiative titled The Clash of Tribes – The Venda and Tsonga, launched in 2025 by Better Living for All NPC. This project explores the intertwined histories of the Venda and Tsonga communities in Limpopo, aiming to transform tension into understanding through storytelling, memory preservation, and community dialogue.

At its core, the project goes beyond documenting history; it safeguards the lived experiences of families across Makhado, Vuwani, and Malamulele. Through in-depth interviews, oral testimonies, and facilitated conversations, the initiative captures stories of resilience, displacement, coexistence, and the complexities of identity that have shaped these communities over generations.

The project delivers its work in three impactful forms: First, it records oral histories that risk being lost, including personal accounts of life across divided communities and the choices families made during moments of pressure.

Second, it transforms these voices into accessible learning materials, including a printed book that has been donated to schools and public libraries.

Third, it establishes a practical and usable archive for educators, learners, researchers, and community groups. Collectively, these outputs serve as both preservation and bridge-building, ensuring that memory is safeguarded while fostering understanding among future generations.

Project leader Ms. Mashudu Gadisi expressed deep gratitude for the NHC's support: "Funding allowed us to reach rural areas, fairly compensate participants, and create short-term jobs. It turned an idea into reality, transforming interviews and research into a free public resource," she said.

Co-leader Jonathan Masokoma emphasized the project's commitment to inclusivity and healing. "We want parents and grandparents to see their stories honoured, young people to find language for difficult histories, and neighbours to rediscover pride in shared resilience. Our goal is a fuller, fairer South African heritage, one that includes rural voices, women's stories, and unsung heroes," he explained.

The project strives to nurture a shared historical memory that challenges stereotypes, encourages informed dialogue, and inspires communities to move beyond division. By placing authentic local narratives at the centre, it equips classrooms with tools for critical engagement and empowers learners to envision a more united future.

Jonathan further highlighted the project's emphasis on public participation: "The journey does not end with the book. People can access it at their local school or library, educators can incorporate chapters and audio clips into lesson plans, and universities can draw from the archive for research. Families are invited to record their own stories to add to this growing body of memory.

Through social media, radio, and community events, the project continues to welcome reflections, corrections, and new testimonies, ensuring the conversation and healing remain ongoing," he added.

The Clash of Tribes -The Venda and Tsonga stand as a powerful reminder that heritage is not only about the past; it is a living, evolving bridge that connects communities, strengthens identity, and paves the way for a more cohesive future.



NHC STRENGTHENS INTERNAL CAPACITY WITH APPOINTMENT OF THREE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

The National Heritage Council (NHC) is pleased to announce the appointment of three Research Assistants: **Sarah Mojapelo, Tshegofatso Mphahlele, and Mogale Maponya** on six-month contracts. This strategic move marks a significant step in enhancing the capacity of the **Research and Knowledge Production Unit**, as well as advancing the work of the Provincial Committee of Council. The appointments reflect the NHC's commitment to fostering internal growth, operational excellence, and evidence-based heritage management.

Each of the newly appointed Research Assistants brings a strong academic background and specialised expertise to the organisation.



Tshegofatso Mphahlele
holds a Bachelor of Arts in Heritage Studies, History, and Geography, and a Bachelor of Social Science Honours in Heritage Studies.



Mogale Maponya
holds a Bachelor of Commerce in Information Management and an Honours degree in Information and Knowledge Management and is currently pursuing a master's degree



Sarah Mojapelo
holds a bachelor's degree in media studies, a Postgraduate Diploma in Information Studies, and a Master's degree in information science.

Motivated by a passion for heritage and professional growth, **Mogale** noted: ***"I wanted to broaden my passion for heritage and gain experience not only within the research unit but across the organisation. Research requires a broad understanding of different sectors to make a meaningful contribution."***

Before their appointments, all three served as interns at the NHC for two years. During this time, they played key roles in supporting institutional processes, including:

- ◆ Reviewing research papers and policy position papers
- ◆ Participating in the Funding Evaluation and Screening Panel
- ◆ Assisting with the monitoring and evaluation of the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP) and NHC-funded projects
- ◆ Contributing to reporting on the Resistance and Liberation Heritage Route (RLHR) and Nelson Mandela Liberation Sites

In their new roles, the Research Assistants will provide comprehensive research support to strengthen the NHC's contributions to national policy development and heritage sector transformation. Their responsibilities include:

- ◇ Conducting specialised research aligned with NHC priorities
- ◇ Assisting in the drafting of policy documents, by-laws, and strategic frameworks
- ◇ Gathering and analysing data to support evidence-based decision-making
- ◇ Facilitating stakeholder engagements and contributing to consultation processes
- ◇ Producing well-structured research outputs aligned with national imperatives
- ◇ Supporting the development of research agendas, monitoring and evaluation systems, and relevant programmes
- ◇ Contributing to academic publications and enhancing public awareness of heritage initiatives
- ◇ Maintaining accurate project and budget documentation

Tshegofatso expressed her appreciation for the opportunity, saying: ***"I am truly honoured to be appointed as a Research Assistant. This role will allow me to deepen my passion for heritage studies and apply my knowledge in ways that make a real impact."***

Sarah shared her long-term academic aspirations: ***"I'm not where I want to be yet. I still want to grow and develop myself; my appointment as a Research Assistant at the NHC is an incredible opportunity. I am excited to contribute to meaningful heritage work while growing both academically and professionally."***

The NHC is confident that the dedication, skill, and innovative thinking of Sarah, Tshegofatso, and Mogale will significantly contribute to advancing its mandate and strengthening South Africa's heritage landscape.

WORLD AIDS DAY COMMEMORATION



The National Heritage Council of South Africa joined the global community in observing World AIDS Day, honouring those affected by HIV/AIDS and reaffirming the commitment to continued awareness and support.



The programme included a candle-lighting ceremony and uku phahla (ancestral libation), symbolically calling on the ancestors for guidance in strengthening collaboration between Western and traditional African healing systems in the fight against the disease.

This observance reflects the NHC's dedication to promoting holistic, culturally grounded approaches to health and community well-being. End//



UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF RECONCILIATION DAY



2025 • REAFFIRMING RECONCILIATION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Each year on 16 December, South Africa observes Reconciliation Day, a national moment dedicated to healing, unity, and reflection under the theme:

Reaffirming reconciliation for future generations. This day reminds us of the journey our country has taken—acknowledging painful histories while fostering a future built on mutual respect, social.

The 2025 National Reconciliation Day Commemoration will be held at the Ncome Museum in KwaZulu-Natal, Newcastle—a symbolic heritage site that represents dialogue, remembrance, and the bridging of historical.

The National Heritage Council (NHC) will be exhibiting at the national event, engaging local communities and stakeholders.

The NHC team will showcase key programmes, services, and opportunities that support heritage preservation, cultural knowledge, and community empowerment across South Africa.

Through participation in this important commemoration, the NHC continues its commitment to promoting unity and celebrating the diverse heritage that defines our nation.

Reconciliation Day encourages all South Africans to work together in strengthening peaceful coexistence and deepening understanding across communities.

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