



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 conclude the year and enter the December/January period, the National Heritage Council (NHC) reflects on its ongoing commitment to preserving, promoting, and safeguarding South Africa’s heritage. This edition highlights key activities undertaken during the period under review, including the commemoration of 40 Years of COSATU in Soweto, marking a significant milestone in the country’s socio-political history.

It also reflects initiatives to preserve the living heritage of boxing in the Eastern Cape, recognising sport as an important part of community life and identity.

The NHC continued monitoring the Echoes in Silence project, which documents and promotes the heritage of the Soweto Deaf community, reinforcing the Council’s commitment to inclusive and representative heritage practices. We also pay tribute, In Memoriam, to Dr Natalie Skeepers, in recognition of her contribution to heritage scholarship and transformation.

It further includes an opinion piece, Healing as the Heartbeat of National Unity, reflecting on the role of heritage in reconciliation and social cohesion, as well as highlights of the NHC’s participation in the Joint Strategic Planning Session in East London and ongoing international engagements.

The Council notes the departure of Ms Mathabiso Chamane and thanks her for her contribution to the work of the NHC.

I thank all staff, Council members, partners, and stakeholders for their continued dedication and support, and wish everyone a safe and peaceful festive season and continued progress in heritage transformation and social cohesion in 2025.

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



NHC SUPPORTS AMACHUNU HERITAGE CELEBRATION



The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) participated in the amaChunu Heritage Celebration held on Sunday, 7 December 2025, in Msinga, KwaZulu-Natal. The event was hosted by the Mchunu Royal Authority in partnership with the Mchunu Traditional Council.

The celebration honoured King Phakade, son of Macingwane, the last king of the amaChunu before their defeat by British colonial forces in the 19th century. It aimed to promote cultural preservation, social cohesion, and youth education.

AmaChunu communities are spread across KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape, and other parts of South Africa, with the main royal house located in Msinga.

Speaking at the event, Ms Matanato Ngwaila, NHC Preservation and Promotion Coordinator, highlighted the importance of preserving living heritage and ensuring that cultural knowledge is passed on to younger generations.

She also commended the amaChunu Royal Authority for its continued commitment to safeguarding and promoting its cultural practices.

Through its support of the amaChunu Heritage Celebration, the NHC reaffirmed its mandate to protect and promote South Africa's living heritage while advancing the values of Ubuntu, social cohesion, and nation-building.



STRENGTHENING CULTURAL TIES: NHC AND TURKISH EMBASSY ADVANCE NEW PARTNERSHIP



As noted during engagements with project stakeholders, “This project broadens the meaning of heritage by ensuring that Deaf histories are not only preserved, but also seen, heard, and valued within South Africa’s national story.”

The project is structured around four key focus areas: Deaf-led oral and Sign Language history collection; archival preservation of photographs, documents, and artefacts; community exhibitions and public showcases; and education and awareness programmes.

The event brought together the National Heritage Council of South Africa, the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, the First Lady of the Turkish Embassy, and South African crafters supported through Brand South Africa (BrandSA).



At the request of the First Lady, the NHC identified and facilitated the participation of local artisans, ensuring that community-based heritage crafters were central to the exchange.

During the visit, crafters showcased their heritage-inspired works to the Turkish Ambassador and embassy officials, highlighting their creativity and skills while fostering meaningful people-to-people connections based on shared values of cultural preservation and mutual respect.



The exhibition forms part of an ongoing engagement process, with the MoU expected to be finalised following the first official meeting with the First Lady, building on initial discussions with her delegation.

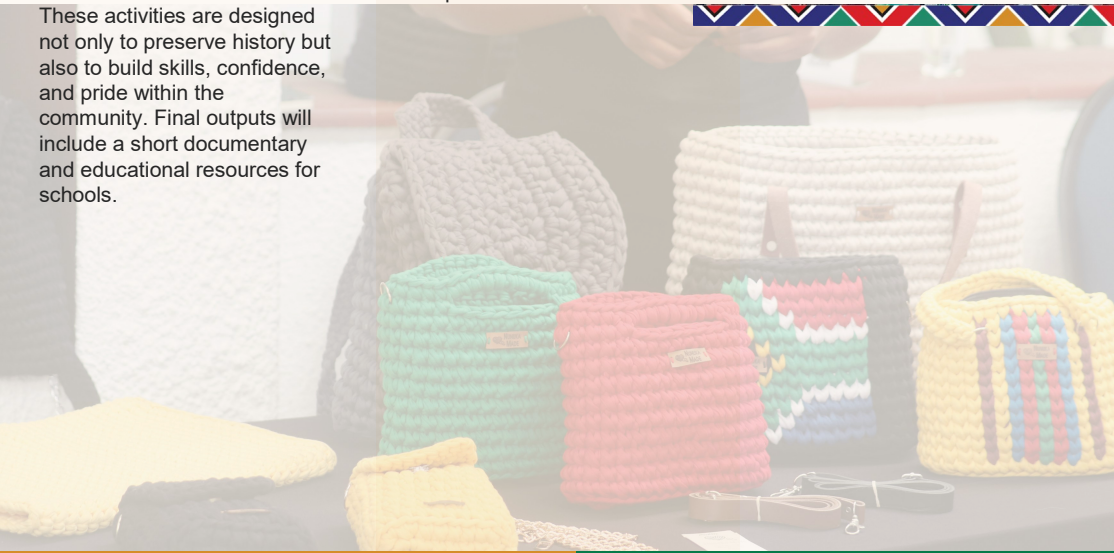
The agreement will provide a framework for continued collaboration in the fields of arts, culture, and heritage.

This initiative emphasises the NHC’s commitment to promoting cultural exchange, strengthening bilateral relations, and positioning heritage practitioners as cultural ambassadors who contribute to social cohesion, economic participation, and international understanding.

End.....

Core activities include training Deaf youth as researchers, conducting SASL-based interviews with elders, digitising heritage materials, establishing a digital archive, and hosting exhibitions and cultural events.

These activities are designed not only to preserve history but also to build skills, confidence, and pride within the community. Final outputs will include a short documentary and educational resources for schools.



PRESERVING THE LIVING HERITAGE OF BOXING IN THE EASTERN CAPE

and promoting South Africa’s heritage



The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC), through its National Inventory Office (NIO), has documented the lived experiences of former boxers and boxing officials from the Ubuntu Boxing Fraternity in the Eastern Cape as part of efforts to preserve South Africa's intangible cultural heritage.

This initiative responds to the country's obligations under the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which calls on State Parties to identify and record living heritage practices that shape community identity and continuity.

Living heritage includes knowledge, skills and traditions passed down through generations, often preserved through personal experience rather than written records.

The Living Heritage Unit engaged three respected knowledge bearers at the request of Boxing South Africa and the Ubuntu

Boxing Fraternity, a body made up of former boxers and officials.

The documented individuals were Mr Duntywa, a former boxer and ring official; Mr Mbinda, a former boxer; and Mr Thembeni, a former boxer and promoter

Each played a meaningful role in the development of boxing in the Eastern Cape, particularly during its transition from amateur to professional levels. Through interviews and documentation, the NHC captured personal stories that reflect more than sporting achievement.

The knowledge bearers shared how boxing provided discipline, mentorship and hope for young people, often serving as a positive alternative amid difficult social and economic conditions.

Their accounts reveal boxing as a powerful community practice that fostered unity, resilience and personal growth.

The Eastern Cape's long-standing reputation as a hub for boxing talent is reinforced through these narratives, which highlight the province's contribution to South Africa's sporting and cultural history.

By preserving these voices, the NHC ensures that the human stories behind the sport are not lost.

This initiative supports government's commitment to inclusive heritage preservation and recognises community custodians as vital carriers of South Africa's living heritage for future generations.

End.....

NHC COMMEMORATES 40 YEARS OF COSATU IN SOWETO



Through its Resistance and Liberation Heritage Route (RHLR) unit, the National Heritage Council (NHC) participated in the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), held in Soweto.

The event recognised the vital role of organised labour in South Africa's history and democratic development.

Formed in 1985, COSATU emerged as a major trade union federation that extended its focus beyond workplace issues to active participation in the mass democratic movement.

The federation played a significant role in the liberation struggle, representing the largest organised worker participation as a social sector during the fight against apartheid.

The NHC exhibited at the event, using the occasion to collect and document information for the National Inventory Office.

The trade union movement was identified as an important component of South Africa's social and industrial heritage, with a rich history that requires preservation for future generations.

Local non-profit organisation Tsosoloso ya Batsha was also a participating stakeholder.

The organisation works to create platforms that enable young people to engage meaningfully in the labour movement, ensuring continuity by encouraging youth to contribute with the same commitment and values demonstrated by previous generations.

The event highlighted the continued relevance of organised labour and underscored the importance of safeguarding its heritage as part of South Africa's national story.

End....

NHC MONITORS “ECHOES IN SILENCE” PROJECT TO PRESERVE SOWETO DEAF HERITAGE

The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) has reaffirmed its commitment to inclusive and representative heritage preservation through its ongoing Provincial Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Round.

As part of this national initiative, NHC delegates recently visited the Deaf community in Soweto, Gauteng, to assess progress on the project ***“Echoes in Silence: The Invisible Voices of Soweto Deaf History.”***

The site visit formed part of the Gauteng leg of the M&E Round. Similar monitoring activities were conducted concurrently in other provinces, reflecting a coordinated national approach that ensures consistent oversight, accountability, and support for NHC-funded heritage initiatives.

During the visit, it became clear that “Echoes in Silence” is more than a heritage project; it is a deeply personal effort to reclaim stories that have long existed beyond written records.

For members of the Soweto Deaf community, the project represents recognition, dignity, and the opportunity to see their lived experiences reflected in South Africa’s heritage narrative.

The project is a pioneering initiative aimed at uncovering, preserving, and celebrating the largely undocumented history of the Deaf community in Soweto.

By placing South African Sign Language (SASL) at the centre of its methodology, the initiative directly addresses historical marginalisation while honouring Deaf culture, identity, and resilience.

It also seeks to foster understanding and connection between Deaf and hearing communities.

As noted during engagements with project stakeholders, “This project broadens the meaning of heritage by ensuring that

Deaf histories are not only preserved, but also seen, heard, and valued within South Africa’s national story.”

The project is structured around four key focus areas: Deaf-led oral and Sign Language history collection; archival preservation of photographs, documents, and artefacts; community exhibitions and public showcases; and education and awareness programmes.

Core activities include training Deaf youth as researchers, conducting SASL-based interviews with elders, digitising heritage materials, establishing a digital archive, and hosting exhibitions and cultural events.

These activities are designed not only to preserve history but also to build skills, confidence, and pride within the community.

Final outputs will include a short documentary and educational resources for schools.

Approved for funding in the 2025/2026 financial year, the project received an allocation of R120,000, with the first tranche of R60,000 (50%) disbursed in October 2025 following revisions to align the project plan with the approved budget.

The site visit formed part of the NHC’s due diligence process to confirm that funds are being utilised in line with approved activities and project objectives.

Project implementers attended an NHC Capacity Building Workshop on 30 September 2025, where reporting, governance, and compliance requirements were outlined.

During the site visit, the NHC further provided hands-on guidance and shared practical templates for contracts, invoices, and narrative reports, reinforcing its supportive role beyond compliance monitoring.

Funds were received on 23 October 2025, and implementation is currently at the planning and preparatory stage. Approximately 30% of the first tranche has been utilised, primarily for essential tools of trade such as a laptop and printer, as well as employee stipends.

Due to communication challenges and a desire to ensure full compliance, the project team deliberately delayed major expenditure until further guidance was received from the NHC M&E unit.

Research activities and interviews are scheduled to commence in January 2026.

The NHC confirmed that the project operates from SANDA’s offices in Soweto, which are well-equipped and suitable for implementation.

All required documentation was made available during the visit, reflecting transparency and a strong commitment to accountability.

Key recommendations included avoiding unfunded purchases and cash transactions, reviewing the cost implications of film editing services, and minimising travel-related expenses where possible.

Through initiatives such as “Echoes in Silence,” the NHC continues to expand South Africa’s heritage landscape by recognising voices that have historically been excluded.

Once completed, the project is expected to contribute to the formal recognition of Soweto’s Deaf history, empower Deaf youth with research and storytelling skills, raise public awareness, and promote meaningful inclusion, ensuring that these stories are preserved not only in archives, but also in the hearts and minds of future generations.



NHC BIDS FAREWELL TO MS MATHABISO CHAMANE AFTER DEDICATED SERVICE



On Friday, 5 December 2025, the National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) bid farewell to its Chief Audit Executive (CAE), Ms Mathabiso Chamane, during a farewell function held at the NHC Boardroom.

The farewell was hosted to honour and appreciate Ms Chamane's service, leadership, and dedication to the organisation. During her tenure, she played a critical role in strengthening governance and accountability within the NHC.

As Chief Audit Executive, Ms Chamane provided strategic direction and leadership to the audit function.

Her responsibilities included coordinating internal audits through outsourced service providers, managing all related audit processes, and overseeing the coordination of external audits.

She ensured that combined assurance efforts were effectively aligned among all stakeholders.



In addition, she managed audit resources, including the audit team and budget, to support the effective execution of internal audits.

Reflecting on her journey, Ms Chamane said, ***"I started the Women Navigating the Future Network here, and I will never grow tired of it because it was born from service."***

In moments of noise, I found grounding in community, people who reminded me of who I am." "Every challenge pushed me toward reflection and shaped the leader I have become.

I have grown through fire, and I carry that growth with deep gratitude." She added. In closing, she encouraged colleagues to embrace purpose-driven leadership: "When you plant a seed with intention, it continues to grow. ***Each of you contributed to who I am today, and I will never forget that."***



Speaking on behalf of the NHC Chief Executive Officer, Dr Thabo Manetsi, Advocate Tshepo Maake expressed appreciation for Ms Chamane's contribution to the organisation.

He wished her well in her future endeavours, noting that her hard work and dedication would be greatly missed.

Advocate Maake also used the occasion to highlight the importance of internal audit functions, which he noted are often misunderstood.

He explained that internal auditors are not there to punish people, but to guide, identify risks, and provide early advice on potential challenges before they escalate.

He emphasised that close collaboration with internal auditors helps prevent problems and ensures there are no surprises during external audits.

He concluded by stating that compliance is a long-term journey that requires sustained effort, collaboration, and trust, but that the outcomes are ultimately beneficial.

The NHC extends its best wishes to Ms Chamane as she embarks on the next chapter of her professional journey and thanks her for her valuable contribution to strengthening governance and accountability within the institution.

End...

OPINION PIECE: HEALING AS THE HEARTBEAT OF NATIONAL UNITY

Nearly three decades into our democracy, South Africa remains a nation defined not only by its history, but by its unwavering determination to forge a future rooted in unity, justice, and shared purpose.

Each December, as we mark Reconciliation Month, we are reminded that reconciliation is not a single event nor a symbolic moment—it is an ongoing journey of healing that requires honesty, courage, and collective responsibility.

This year's theme, "Reaffirming Reconciliation for Future Generations," calls us to confront an undeniable truth: we cannot build a united nation without first healing the wounds that still shape our social landscape.

The emotional, cultural, and socio-economic scars of our past continue to influence how South Africans relate to one another. Healing, therefore, becomes more than a moral imperative—it is a national necessity.

Healing begins with reflection. Reconciliation Month offers every South African a moment to pause, to look inward, and to acknowledge not only how far we have come, but also how far we still need to go.

While we celebrate tremendous progress—from the dismantling of apartheid laws to the establishment of democratic institutions—we must also accept that inequality, exclusion, and mistrust remain deeply rooted. Genuine healing requires confronting these uncomfortable realities, not to dwell on them, but to transcend them.

Healing also requires renewal. Our Constitution envisions a nation grounded in human dignity, equality, non-racialism, and non-sexism.

To give life to these values, South Africans must rebuild the social bridges that have been weakened by division.

This means investing in dialogue, fostering empathy, and embracing the diversity that has always been our greatest strength.

Just as heritage, arts, and cultural practices bring people together, community-led dialogues, intergenerational conversations, and collaborative solutions breathe renewed life into reconciliation.

Most importantly, healing demands collective action.

The journey of reconciliation cannot rest solely on government or institutions—it rests on all of us. Each South African, whether in rural villages or bustling cities, whether young or older, has a part to play.

The National Dialogue, which is rolling out across the country, stands as a powerful reminder that healing and unity can only flourish when people are active participants in shaping the society they wish to live in.

**We heal when we listen.
We heal when we understand.
We heal when we choose unity over division.**

South Africa's strength lies in its people—vibrant, diverse, resilient. When we commit to healing, we reaffirm our promise to future generations: a promise of a cohesive, inclusive, and prosperous nation where every person can find belonging and opportunity.

Reconciliation is not the closing of a chapter; it is the writing of a new one. And healing is the ink that will allow us to write it together.



NHC REPRESENTATION AT JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION – EAST LONDON



Ms Matanato Ngwaila, Coordinator: Heritage Preservation and Promotion, represented the National Heritage Council (NHC) at the Joint Strategic Planning Session with the Majesties' Forum and the South African Queens Council, held in East London, Eastern Cape.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Velenkosini Hlabisa, described the session as a significant milestone in strengthening the institution of traditional leadership.

He highlighted the establishment of the Majesties' Forum (2024) and the South African Queens Council (2025) as inclusive platforms that amplify the voices of kings and queens in national

development, while reaffirming the importance of unity, consultation, and collaboration across government and traditional institutions.

Minister Hlabisa further emphasised the role of traditional leadership in addressing social challenges, safeguarding cultural practices, protecting communities, and advancing nation-building.

He underscored the critical contribution of queens in community well-being and in protecting women, youth, and children.

The NHC was invited to present on the preservation and promotion of heritage, including information on heritage funding and grant programmes available to communities.

The engagement reaffirmed the Council's commitment to active participation and meaningful contribution towards the empowerment of traditional leadership through integrated and inclusive developmental growth.

End.....

EVENTS CALENDAR

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE – 21 FEBRUARY INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY – CELEBRATING LINGUISTIC HERITAGE

Observed annually on 21 February, International Mother Language Day reaffirms the global commitment to linguistic diversity and multilingualism. Established by UNESCO, the day calls on nations to celebrate and use as many languages as possible, highlighting the vital role languages play in fostering inclusion, dialogue, and sustainable development.

Languages are among the most powerful carriers of both tangible and intangible heritage. They preserve memory, transmit knowledge across generations, and give expression to cultural identity and lived

experience. By promoting the use and protection of mother languages, societies not only safeguard linguistic diversity but also strengthen cultural continuity and mutual understanding.

As UNESCO affirms, advancing mother-tongue use encourages multilingual education, deepens awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions, and nurtures solidarity rooted in tolerance and respect. In celebrating our many languages, we honour the richness of our shared heritage and reaffirm the values that unite humanity.

End.....

EVENTS CALENDAR

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY – 21 MARCH

Human Rights Day in South Africa is historically linked with 21 March 1960, and the events of Sharpeville. On that day 69 people died and 180 were wounded when police fired on a peaceful crowd that had gathered in protest against the Pass laws. This day marked an affirmation by ordinary people, rising in unison to proclaim their rights. It became an iconic date in our country's history that today we commemorate as Human Rights Day as a reminder of our rights and the cost paid for our treasured human rights.



IN MEMORIAL: DR NATALIE SKEEPERS

The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) mourns the passing of our esteemed Council Member, Dr Natalie Skeepers, who passed away unexpectedly on 15 December 2025.

Dr Skeepers served the NHC with distinction, integrity, and unwavering dedication.

As a member of the Corporate Governance Committee and the Audit, Risk and Governance Committee, she made significant contributions to strengthening governance, accountability, and ethical leadership within the organisation.

She was also deeply passionate about human resource matters, consistently advocating for staff development, organisational wellbeing, and sound institutional practices.

Reflecting on her contribution, NHC Chairperson Mr Tau Masemola shared:

"Dr Natalie Skeepers was a principled and dedicated leader whose work ethic and professionalism were evident in everything she did. She brought depth, integrity, and a people-centred approach to Council deliberations. Her passion for human resource development and good governance left a lasting imprint on the NHC."

Beyond her work with the NHC, Dr Skeepers was widely respected as a Governance, Risk and Compliance Specialist and Safety Engineer.

She was recently sworn in as a Board Member of the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) on 26 November 2025,

where she had already begun making meaningful contributions to discussions on legislative reform and the sustainability of community media.

Although her time with the NHC and MDDA was brief, Dr Skeepers' impact was profound. Her professionalism, quiet strength, and commitment to ethical leadership will continue to inspire those who worked alongside her.

The NHC extends its heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, and colleagues during this difficult time. Details regarding memorial or funeral arrangements will be shared once guidance is received from the family.
May her soul rest in eternal peace.