

CAPEARGUS NEWS
Ravensmead residents want Khoisan language included in Hardekraaltjie cemetery restitution process



The Tiervlei community and Stellenbosch University engage on the Hardekraaltjie restitution and memorialisation initiative. Picture: Supplied

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Written by
Staff Reporter

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Cape Town - In an effort to collect the oral history of the former Tiervlei community – now known as Ravensmead – Stellenbosch University and community members recently engaged about the university’s restitution of the Hardekraaltjie cemetery.

The university, which has been in consultation with community members with ties to the Hardekraaltjie cemetery over the past two years, has committed to a restitution process for the cemetery which extends across sections of land it owns or controls, including the Tygerberg Hospital and Prasa.

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The university gained ownership of the decommissioned cemetery where its Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS) is currently located and where people from the Tiervlei community were buried.

The engagement follows a call by Professor Aslam Fataar from the university's Transformation Office for a "deep human-centred community participation process" in the restitution process which must culminate in appropriate commemoration of those buried at the site.

The community members hinted at the importance of contextualising the cemetery's restitution process within the history of the indigenous people who lived in the Tiervlei area before colonialism, the need to accommodate the local indigenous Khoisan language in the restitution process, and the importance of raising the consciousness of young people about the project.

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"They recommended that the Context Board be erected, which offers a statement of the ongoing process, objectives, and community participation methodology of the restitution process, including the Khoi language, in addition to Afrikaans, isiXhosa, and English."

The university's Department of Sociology and Anthropology lecturer and researcher on the project, Dr Handri Walters, highlighted some of the findings from interviews with some community members and made use of old maps of the area to facilitate a conversation about the cemetery, its location and its relation to the university and Tiervlei.

Walters's presentation also included a list of people who were buried at the cemetery based on information provided during the interview process.

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Walters said the university was committed to doing what the apartheid government failed to do in recognising the cemetery as the final resting place of people with valuable lives and acknowledging their lives even in death.

Fataar said the heritage restitution process involved descendants and those who resided in the environs around the cemetery.

She said the university was working with Heritage Western Cape on appropriate commemoration procedures, including long-term management of the Hardekraaltjie site.

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