

ADDRESS BY PREMIER T S P MAKWETLA AT THE MPUMALANGA HERITAGE INDABA HELD ON 07 JULY 2005 AT THE MBOMBELA CIVIC CENTRE, NELSPRUIT

The Acting MEC for Culture, Sport and Recreation;

The Mayor of Mbombela Local Municipality;

The CEO of the National Heritage Council;

The CEO of the South African Heritage Research Agency;

The HOD of the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation;

Culture, Sport and Recreation officials and other distinguished Heritage activists;

Distinguished guests;

Members of the media;

Comrades, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a privilege that we have been accorded the courtesy to grace this important event, the Mpumalanga Heritage Indaba at Mbombela Municipality, our provincial capital.

On behalf of government in this province, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the organisers of this Indaba for this valuable initiative to give impetus to the popular but inchoate movement for the rehabilitation and restoration of our collective memory and identity.

Once again, may I declare our immense indebtedness to the First National Bank and the National Heritage Council for their inspirational partnership in the endeavour to sponsor the Renaissance of the genuine identity of our province, our country.

On April 8, 2005, a day after we launched the Mpumalanga Heritage Research Project, "Die Laevelder", one of our regional newspapers, published a big colourful picture of myself, taken on the day of the launch, with headlines which read "*Premier amidst fraud charge*". Reason, because the Land Claims Commission has granted restitution rights to the community of Botshabelo, which the Premier happens to be a descendant and member of.

"Die Laevelder" says the allegations (of fraud) are based on a research paper published by a certain Dr Phillip du Toit, who argues that "*the descendants were not the original owners of the land, but refugees who had been fleeing from Chief Sekhukhune and were given refuge by the missionary Willem Merensky*" in 1865. Du Toit further adds that, "*they were at the station by the grace and favour of the missionaries.*"

It is this and many other similar stories that cry for the attention of the endeavour we are seeking to give momentum to today.

This initiative must assist municipalities, our Mayors, Mayoral Committees and councillors to identify the many things that constitute the broad spectrum of our heritage in their municipalities.

Let our communities acquire the skill and capacity through training and education to promote public involvement in the identification of heritage resources.

We hope and wish that the South African Heritage Resources Agency will facilitate a process whereby issues relating to heritage resources and their value will increasingly be introduced into school curricula, and universities and other tertiary institutions will be encouraged to increase heritage management programmes.

Programme Director, may I wish all participants at this Heritage Indaba a fruitful engagement and a pleasant experience. It is our hope that the South African Heritage Resource Agency and the broader public will identify

places and things with qualities so exceptional that they are of special significance to be declared provincial and national heritage sites.

Back to the future.

I thank you.