

Plenary Panel Discussions

"Amazwi Ethu - Our Voices"
10 - 12 October 2025, Durban, KwaZulu Natal

KWASUKASUKELA – the story of the Amazwi Oname project Saturday 11 October | 08:30

Abstract:

Amazwe Oname is a process that began with an invitation to women who lived through the years of political violence and turmoil in the Edendale Valley to tell their stories and let their voices be heard. What happened during those years was hidden by government censorship of the media and is largely only remembered in the stories of the men who played political roles. Through a process of shared storytelling, recording, transcribing and translation 5 small books that contain the stories, in the exact words used by the women, were published in 2023. In 2024 an exhibition based on the stories was opened in the KZN Museum.

In this colloquium the organizer, a facilitator, one of the story tellers and the exhibition designer share their experience of the richness and depth of these stories in a journey from oral to text with the added value of a museum exhibition providing a visual context.



Jabulile Bhengu

Jabulile Bhengu was a principal at an Edendale school during the violent unrest in Greater Pietermaritzburg in the mid-1980s. In the early 1990s, she joined the NGO sector as a development officer, focusing on literacy and skills development for youth and adults. She later worked in the Department of Land Affairs on Land Reform Programmes and in the KZN Department of Transport overseeing development initiatives. She retired from the KZN Department of Education, managing donor-funded projects that supported innovative teaching and learning.



Fiona Bulman

Fiona Bulman began her career as a high school teacher and later qualified as a school counsellor. After a brief stint as a museum curator, she returned to education, teaching language and study skills at a seminary in Imbali township during the 1980s. There, she met Sibongile Mkhize, who inspired her to collect and publish the stories of women living through the political struggles in the Midlands.



Lucia Miya

Lucia Miya has lived in Ashdown all her life, except for a few years working in Durban. In the late 1980s, as a stay-at-home mother, she was caught in the violence in Ashdown due to having a family with both UDF and Inkatha members. She is now a great-great-grandmother, living in Ashdown with her son, daughter, and grandchildren.



Wesley Flanagan

Wesley Flanagan is the Assistant Director: Exhibitions at the KwaZulu-Natal Museum. He holds an Honours degree in Visual Arts from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and has a background in Fine Arts. His work focuses on reimagining the museum as a dynamic cultural space, emphasizing inclusive storytelling, digital engagement, and exhibition design that highlights diverse voices, fosters community dialogue, and promotes learning and reflection.

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Inclusive Voices

Saturday 11 October | 14:00

Abstract:

The 20th Annual LITASA Conference, themed Amazwi Ethu - Our Voices, calls for the amplification of diverse perspectives that shape literacy in South Africa. This panel, Inclusive Voices, explores how inclusivity can transform literacy practices across communities, schools, and cultural contexts.

Madoda Ndlakuse, founder of the Nal'ibali Men's Literacy Imbizo, will share how men's engagement in reading and storytelling fosters healing, stronger families, and positive community role models. Elinor Sisulu, writer, activist, and Executive Director of the Puku Foundation, will highlight the importance of publishing, storytelling, and advocacy in building inclusive and multilingual literacy spaces. Dr Sandra Land, academic and literacy researcher, will draw on her work in multilingualism and adult literacy to examine decolonial approaches to literacy development.

The panel will be further enriched by the perspective of a literacy organisation representative, who will bring insights from grassroots and community-driven initiatives. Together, the panelists will showcase practical strategies and inspire delegates to embed inclusive voices in literacy education, research, and practice.



Madoda Ndlakuse

Madoda Ndlakuse is the founder of the Nal'ibali Men's Literacy Imbizo, a groundbreaking initiative that encourages men to become reading role models in their families and communities. Since its launch in 2022 in KwaNobuhle, Eastern Cape, the Imbizo has grown into a vital platform for men to reflect on their roles as fathers, engage in storytelling, and promote a culture of reading for enjoyment. Recognised as a literacy activist, Ndlakuse is committed to using reading as a tool for healing, empowerment, and community building. His work highlights the crucial role of men in nurturing strong families and building a nation of readers.



Elinor Sisulu

Elinor Sisulu is a writer, human rights activist, and Executive Director of the Puku Children's Literature Foundation. Trained as an educator and journalist, she has combined her passion for storytelling, publishing, and advocacy to champion children's literature across Africa. Sisulu is the author of the award-winning biography Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime and the acclaimed children's book The Day Gogo Went to Vote. Through Puku, she works to develop and preserve multilingual stories for children, ensuring that African languages and voices are celebrated. Sisulu is widely respected for her leadership in education, culture, and literacy development.



Dr Sandra Land

Dr Sandra Land is a Research Fellow in Adult and Community Education at Durban University of Technology. With a background in linguistics and literacy education, she has published widely on multilingualism, mother-tongue instruction, and decolonial approaches to literacy. Her research interrogates the dominance of English in education and advocates for inclusive literacy practices that empower learners in their own languages. Land's expertise spans higher education, adult literacy, and community-based learning, making her a leading voice in the movement toward equitable and multilingual literacy in South Africa.



Phumzile Zikode

Phumzile "Phumy" Zikode is the FLP Coordinator for Literacy and Libraries. She joined the Family Literacy Project in 2000, soon after the project was launched. Her qualifications include an ACE in Adult Education, a Higher Diploma, and a Certificate in Adult Education.

In her role, Phumy writes learning units for FLP's facilitators, particularly for the Nal'ibali reading clubs. She works to develop materials and activities that help children engage in reading, writing, storytelling, arts and book-making in their home languages, fostering a love of reading.