



# ***Inkcubeko nendalo***

## **Bio-cultural Diversity Education Programme**

**Michelle Cocks and Tony Dold**

**“Culture and nature“ - Mini-symposium 6.**  
10<sup>th</sup> Annual Thicket Forum Conference, 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> September 2013

# Bio-cultural Diversity in South Africa

- The cultural and spiritual meaning of nature in South Africa is poorly recorded and often misunderstood.
- Many traditional cultural practices regularly use wild plants, making nature inseparable from cultural identity.
- In our modernizing world cultural practices are threatened by the loss of biodiversity, and, conversely, the cultural value of many plants, forests and animals could be used as an argument to support the conservation of biodiversity.

## What is *Inkcubeko nendalo*?

- *Inkcubeko nendalo* (meaning “culture and nature”), was developed out of the recognition that overexploitation of natural resources threatens not only biodiversity but also indigenous knowledge systems and ultimately South Africa’s cultural heritage.
- Youth need to take ownership of processes to prevent the future loss of cultural and biodiversity.

# What is *Inkubeko nendalo*?

- *Inkubeko nendalo* aims:

- 1) to raise awareness around the link between cultural diversity and biodiversity amongst school learners as the future preservation of both our cultural heritage and bio-diversity relies on young people recognizing the importance and value of nature;
- 2) to provide platforms for discussions around multiple meanings of cultural identity and what is considered important.

- Program is in line with the principles of the South African School Curriculum (Curriculum 2005), particularly the Life Sciences Curriculum of Grade 10 learners and is approved by the Department of Education.

The *Inkcubeko nendalo* team comprises

Dr Michelle Cocks (ISER)

Mr Tony Dold (Selmar Schonland Herbarium)

Mr Mluleki Nkosi (ISER)



# What do we do?

- A number of formal lessons with worksheets and handouts are delivered to approximately 700 scholars at 7 schools in Grahamstown throughout the year.
- Each lesson makes use of a number of well known Xhosa cultural artefacts made from plant material such as sedge mats, grass brooms, a cosmetic fungus and foam-making “dream plants” in an interactive participatory method of teaching. Learners are encouraged to tell their own stories and share their own experiences. This is followed by the argument that cultural heritage and cultural identity are reliant on continued access to the plants, animals, places and spaces that in their entirety make up *indalo* (nature~biodiversity).







# What do we do?

- An assignment that requires learners to conduct a family interview to find out about traditional uses of plants contributes to the Grade 10 learners' continuous assessment (CASS) portfolio.
- An after-hours field excursion to the forest, building on formal lessons in class, has been extremely popular with both learners and teachers.
- An annual weekend excursion to a local nature reserve coinciding with heritage day caters for the most enthusiastic learners.







The forest trip includes a “quiet time” activity which requires each learner to find a comfortable place to sit in the forest some distance from each other where they reflect in silence on their surroundings. Each learner is asked to share with the group his or her experience of nature.

## ***Inkcubeko nendalo***

2009-2012 the program has reached :

- 2 102 learners from 7 schools with 165 contact lessons.
- 759 of these learners went on the forest experience and
- 22 learners on the overnight heritage weekend.

# ***Feed-back from the learners***

## *Class room lessons*

- Inkcubeko Nendalo lessons are educating and interesting especially to us because we live in cities and we don't know anything about wild plants and which plants to use in cultural activities, now we know that we should care for plants so that the next generation can also get these plants”.*
- It is really good program because it teaches about the conservation of plants for the next generation. If we don't have trees our culture events as black people won't be fulfilled.*

## ***Feed-back from the learners***

### ***Forest expereince***

- *“I am happy to be here and its my first time to sit and listen to the different sounds from nature”.*
- *“We do not have time to be quite in township because there is a not of noise”.*
- *“The air is fresh and clean”.*

## **Concluding remarks**

The program provides incentives for young people/learners to use and manage natural resources sustainably by highlighting the close link between cultural diversity and biodiversity;

- Encourages a conservation ethic amongst learners;
- Encourages a sense of the importance of biodiversity to human survival;
- Encourages a sense of pride in cultural identity and diversity.