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IN THE TRACKS OF THE KHOI-SAN: RESEARCH VISIT TO THE HANTAM, NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

During the period 10 – 16 October 2017, the Acting Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education, Prof Elsa Mentz, visiting professor Sharan Merriam, and Prof Josef de Beer visited the lovely town of Calvinia in the Northern Cape. Calvinia is considered to be the heart of the Hantam area. The purpose of this research visit was to interview teachers who participated in a short learning programme on indigenous knowledge, which was presented to teachers of the Namaqua district in July. During this short course, teachers explored how indigenous knowledge could be introduced in the mathematics and science classroom. During the interviews it became clear that teachers were inspired by the course, and they engaged in very interesting classroom action research. One particular exciting project, was the ethnobotanical surveys that Mrs Marlize Huisamen (Calvinia High School) engaged her Grade 10 learners in. These learners did a survey amongst members of the community on the most important medicinal plants of the Hantam.



Prof Sharan Merriam and Prof Elsa Mentz (middle) with Mr Frans Baadjies (left) and Mrs Christien Baadjies (right)
Frans and Christien Baadjies are from Nama descent, and holders of indigenous knowledge.



Mrs Marelize Huisamen with her Grade 10 learners (Calvinia High School), who engaged in ethnobotanical surveys.



Ms Martie Obermeyer with some of the water purifying projects of her learners

One very interesting story that unfolded, was how Marelize inspired a boy in her classroom, Henrico Thys (see photo below). Henrico was so inspired by this ethnobotanical survey that he went to the Calvinia library to look for books on the ethnobotany of this region. There he stumbled upon prof Josef's Master's dissertation on the ethnobotany of the Agter-Hantam (where Henrico grew up), and in the dissertation he saw photographs of his uncle, Martiens Thys, that was interviewed by Josef in 2009. He was very pleased that he has such a "famous" family, and he is seriously

considering becoming a botanist one day. After all, this knowledge is in his blood! This showed the researchers just once again what an important role a teacher plays in the life of a learner.



Prof Josef de Beer with Henrico Thys, future ethnobotanist