



LISUP 4

Innovative technology reaches out to Donkerbos

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September 2018

Donkerbos community

Donkerbos community had the opportunity to meet, mingle and share ancient stories as well as show off their creative skills to the tech team from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST).



Figure 1 The women listening attentively

The partnership between NUST and the Embassy of Finland has created the local Inclusive and Collaborative Technology Innovation Hub which aims to explore how digital technology can be used to develop or improve products and services in Namibia.

Donkerbos as one of the targeted remote areas had the privilege of a 2-day visit headed by Ms. Angelica Bergmann and her team of professionals to capture stories, ideas and art skills on video. Traditional stories handed over from elders to personal experiences specific to San were told with pride and flair. The Donkerbos San community proudly spoke in their native language. The

stories were translated into English by Ms. Helena Afrikaner one of the growing number of proud young San women, she recently completed her studies from UNAM with a Diploma in Accounting and Auditing. Helena did justice to the stories, she made sure to capture and carry the stories through as intended by the artist. The community expressed how proud they were to have an educated San woman working with them.

The age-old important tale of the ostrich eggshell in many aspects of the San daily life was not left out. The ostrich eggshell has been used over the centuries as a food source, to carry precious water over long distances, grinded into a soft powder it is used as medication or broken into pieces to make beads for necklaces/bracelets. It was an experience close to none which created an atmosphere of excitement and expectation under the huge camelthorn tree.



Figure 2 Sharing of stories under the camelthorn tree

Young and old shared different stories of daily life in the resettlement farm and further identified various materials used to produce products for adornment or for sale.

The project aims to include marginalized communities into the innovation process and to ensure that products developed by marginalized communities also have a chance to enter the market successfully.

This could be in any form ranging from product production, storytelling, traditional knowledge etc. but with a tech component incorporated. The project is already working with a group of urban San, where they are developing augmented reality tourist accessories.

This visit to Donkerbos was to develop these products further with the Donkerbos San community in order to capture a more authentic side of the culture such as images, cultural pieces, living environment etc. The other aim is to generate a means of income for the communities through participation in this initiative.

NUST with Ms Bergmann will visit Donkerbos again to finalise the process, show and share developed products and a possible business model can be developed between the community and the project which will not disrupt the day to day life.

The Desert Research Foundation of Namibia will be the liaison between the NUST the Donkerbos community.



Figure 3 Children were also a part of the process