

# Conference Bridging Ages South Africa

## Social Cohesion through Time Travels

### Port Shepstone. 20 - 21 October 2010

For the people of Port Shepstone in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa the Bridging Ages Conference held in this seaside town was a first and historic occasion. It was indeed a privilege and honour for the Port Shepstone Twinning Association the local host. The conference was opened by the Hibiscus Coast Mayor, Nolwazi Shusha.

The conference theme "Social Cohesion Through Time Travel" was most appropriate and significant for the conditions of our young and fledgling democracy.

Time Travel has been implemented in South Africa in four provinces commencing in 2006. The conference, in dealing with the ten recorded SA Time Travel sites/scenarios, various speakers and study circle discussions, brought home the need for recording our history from all perspectives.



Engaging all sectors of the community (with oral history being a key component of recording this history) is very effective in developing a sense of ownership of the process and ultimately the history itself. It also became apparent that Time Travel can be used as an effective tool in a "healing the nation" process, as presented by Prof Radikobo Ntsimane.

The 142 conference delegates came from five provinces in South Africa with individual guests from Sweden and Belgium. Their backgrounds included museum personnel, various government departments especially from Arts, Culture and Education, museums, educators and civil society.

Delegates participated in the first recorded Time Travel in Kwa-Zulu Natal located in the 1905, pre Bambatha Rebellion, period. Also significant is that this year 2010, marks the 150 years anniversary of the arrival of the Indentured Indian labourers. The 1905 Time Travel recorded history talks to all aspects of the period viz the character of colonialism, the resistance of the Zulus and the plight of the Indian labourers.



The barge arrives in the harbour with new labourers from India, Time Travel to 1905.

The wide ranging exhibition, showcasing Twinning history and up to date projects, recorded Time Travels in SA, various cultures, civil society work, tourism and focus on the work of our democratic government, was educational, interesting and appropriately commemorated this occasion.

It was a singular achievement to facilitate the fantastic cooperation between the Twinning Association, various partners such as KZN Museum Service and Olof Palme International

Center, many volunteers, who toiled and borrowed to make the conference a huge success.

With very limited resources, it was the people participation and ownership that made this conference most cost effective. It has demonstrated that if one engages with communities, anything is possible. The media has also been most supportive with wide coverage, as have business and various cultural groups.



Minister of Arts and Culture, Weziwe Thusi.

The conference dinner, was highly successful with 250 attendees. Again, it was well planned and every delegate, govt. official, mayor, member of Parliament and ordinary community member was mesmerized by the drama presented by the Ikhwezi Le- Afrika Arts and Culture organisation from Umzumbe, music by eSayidi College, and the Indian and Zulu dances. But the highlight was undoubtedly the students of the pilot schools who spoke about the impact of Time Travel on learning and education. We were very privileged to have Deputy Mayor, Clarence Johnson from the Cape Winelands District as one of our speakers at the conference dinner.

Even our Minister of Arts and Culture Weziwe Thusi, ensured that she came on the second day to endorse the conference. Her department has already adopted this methodology for transformation of the museum service. The Time

Travel method has demonstrated the value of involving all sectors of society and removing the barriers that otherwise divide us through race, class, religion or language. The highest levels of achievements can only be accomplished through networking and working in total cohesion with programmes designed to meet societal challenges.

We thank every person who made a contribution towards this most memorable and successful conference.

*Gulshera Khan  
Port Shepstone Twinning Association  
Conference Co-ordinator and Bridging Ages South Africa  
secretary.*

Comments from conference delegates:

*"Social cohesion in several ways"*

*"Bring together community"*

*"A Time Travel is a mind-blowing experience"*

*"Talk of the town"*



Indian traditional dance.