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RESOURCES AGENCY

111 HARRINGTON STREET, CAPE TOWN, 8000
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TEL: (021) 462 4502 FAX: (021) 462 4509

OUR REF.: 9/50/004
DATE: 20/08/2012

YOUR REF.:

FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION - FAKSIMILE-VERSE DING

TO / AAN: Mr. P. Mfuzwe for Prof. van Staden
Walter Sisulu University

FAX NO. / FAKS-NOMMER: 047 502 2839
086 647 6485

FROM / VAN: NOLITHA NGCALI

MESSAGE / BOODSKAP

Please find attached letter.

SENDER / AFSENDER: NOLITHA

NO. OF PAGES / AANTAL BLADSYE: 4, includ. cover

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**111 HARRINGTON STREET, CAPE TOWN, 8000
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TEL: (021) 462 4502 FAX: (021) 462 4502**

DATE: 17 August 2012
ENQUIRIES: Mrs Regina Isaacs
OUR REF: 9/501/0014

Professor van Staden
Walter Sisulu University
Nelson Mandela Drive
Mthatha Campus
Province of the Eastern Cape

Dear Prof. van Staden

REQUEST FOR URGENT INTERVENTION AND MEETING: CONSERVATION OF THE BROSTER BEAD COLLECTION AT THE WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY

The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), established in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act No. 25 of 1999 is mandated to identify, manage, conserve, and promote South Africa's heritage resources.

During 1999 the then National Monuments Council (NMC) (subsequently superseded by SAHRA), identified the Broster Bead Collection (the Collection) as a significant Collection that should be declared as a Specifically Declared Collection for some of the following reasons:

- The collection attempts to cover all spheres of culture religious and social activities,
- Objects that make up the Collection were worn by both the simple, sophisticated, royal and today they are used sporadically in fashion designs;

- The widespread use of beads points to some priceless heritage. Indeed beads are reminiscent of the past. It is important that they be preserved for future generations as they link the past with the future.

Following discussions with Dr. Lamla (responsible for the Collection) at what was then known as the University of Transkei and after a visit to the institution, it became apparent that the Collection was at risk. It was haphazardly stored and displayed in a room that did not have climate control and was not conducive for the conservation and curation of the Collection to ensure that it is preserved for future generations.

The Collection associated with the Qebe community, currently housed in the Africana Library, include exhibits that show aspects of indigenous knowledge systems, aesthetics, religion, traditional medicine, economic activity and social life in general.

Over the years, the management of objects has remained on the SAHRA Archaeology, Palaeontology, Meteorites, Heritage Objects and Burials Units Permit Committee's (Permit Committee) agenda. On 23- 25 June 2009, June Hosford was appointed to do a conservation assessment of the collection as well as to make recommendations that would aid the WSU on how to conserve the collection for future generations. The conservation recommendations were made in the form of phases, clearly stipulating what could be done in the short, medium and long-term. At the time, the need for an appropriate repository was again highlighted.

Currently, the Collections are locked and kept in the Africana Library in glass displays and they are accessible to students and researchers. One professional Librarian and a Senior Librarian Assistant is responsible for curating the Africana and Special Collections. Although they are passionate about and committed to their jobs, they are not trained to curate and conserve the Broster Bead Collection which is probably the reason why the conservation recommendations made on SAHRA's behalf by June Hosford was not implemented.

Subsequent to realising that the conservation recommendations were not implemented, SAHRA arranged for conservation and curatorial guidance from East London Museum who indicated that they would do so once the Collection is housed in a suitable repository at Walter Sisulu University.

At the Permit Committee meeting held in 13 October 2011, it was decided to address a letter to the Vice Chancellor of WSU to inform him of the concerns. The Vice Chancellor referred to the matter to the Office of the Chief Operations Officer who confirmed that there were processes underway to deal with this matter.

It became apparent that progress was not being made on the conservation of the Collection and Permit Committee then agreed to approach WSU Chairperson of the Council, Dr. Somadoda Fikeni so that he may intervene to ensure that the Collection is budgeted for and proper storage space allocated so that the declaration process would commence. It was subsequently established that Dr. Fikeni had resigned and that WSU was under administration.

In 2012 the SAHRA Inventory Unit started the process of inventorising the collection which was by then housed in the WSU Library and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the two institutions.

After a visit to WSU on 17 April 2012 forming part of the inventory process, the National Inventory Unit forwarded a report to the Heritage Objects unit which stipulated that the Broster Bead Collection was not properly managed after and as a result is deteriorating day by day, leaving some of the objects damaged and others destroyed. We know that the staff responsible for the collection is doing their best but given their lack of resources including training and proper storage facilities, their hands are tied.

After all the interventions made and resources ploughed into this Collection, SAHRA is deeply concerned by this state of affairs. Therefore, we request your need for urgent intervention by allocating adequate storage/display repository. Once this is done, East London Museum would provide conservation and curatorial training and SAHRA can begin the process of declaration.

We are looking forward to having an urgent meeting with you in September 2012 and your office is welcome to give us three dates.

Thanking you in advance.

Kind regards,



SIBONGILE VAN DAMME (MS)
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

From: REGINA ISAACS
To: Geraldine Morcom
Date: 2012/08/29 03:33 PM
Subject: CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE TO WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY (9/2/503/0014)
Attachments: East London Museum.pdf

CC: NOLITHA NGCAI

Dear Geraldine

It has been a long time since we last communicated, therefore it was good to speak to you on the phone today.

As discussed telephonically, I hereby confirm that my colleague (Nolitha Ngcai) and I shall be meeting with you on 19 September 2012 at 13:00 en route to Walter Sisulu University. The purpose of the meeting would be to follow up on the assistance that the previous Director offered to make staff available who would assist with the conservation of the Broster Bead Collection housed at the Walter Sisulu University (WSU). See e-mail in this regard, attached. The names of the staff members (blurred in e-mail) who would assist with conservation are Ms Geraldine Morcom and Mr Gregory Smit.

At the proposed meeting, we would like to discuss how East London Museum (ELM) would, via SAHRA, assist the Walter Sisulu University to ensure that the Broster Bead Collection is conserved according to best practice. Since the WSU is already aware of the assistance that would be coming from ELM and we have a meeting scheduled with them the following day, we would like to inform them how the assistance would practically be undertaken.

We look forward to meeting you on 19 September 2012 at 13:00.

Regards

Regina