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Sutherland reburial dates confirmed for November 2023

Following the relevant authorisation by the Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture earlier this year and a permit granted previously by the South African Heritage Resource Agency, the University of Cape Town (UCT) confirms that the Sutherland Reburial will take in November 2023.

The reburial programme will be held over three days on Friday, 24 November at UCT; Saturday, 25 November en route to Sutherland; and Sunday, 26 November in Sutherland.

In 2018, UCT disclosed that during an archiving audit, sacred human remains of nine people from Sutherland were identified as having been unethically brought to the university in the 1920s by a medical student.

UCT's Vice-Chancellor (interim) Emeritus Professor Daya Reddy said: "We have admitted to this wrongdoing, apologised for the injustice, and acknowledged this as a shameful chapter in UCT's history.

"A collaborative process to redress, make amends and provide closure was implemented, working with the Sutherland community and two families – the Abrahams and Stuurmans – who share surnames with some of the nine. These families were identified through an extensive public participation process and represented the nine on behalf of the Sutherland community. We acknowledge it is not possible to reverse the injustices the Sutherland Nine were subjected to over a century ago."

It has been five long years since UCT embarked on a process of restorative justice. What followed was a long process which included – among other things – engagement with the families and the relevant stakeholders. There were also delays experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which made it impossible to organise a reburial of this nature due to the limitations then around public gatherings.

The three-day programme will unfold as follows:

- Friday, 24 November: Wrapping ceremony and renaming ceremony at the Faculty of Health Sciences. This ceremony entails the blessing and renaming of two rooms in the Anatomy Building, which were named after Professor MR Drennan who accepted the remains from the student, as well as the naming of a newly-established Garden of Remembrance.
- Saturday, 25 November: Journey to Sutherland, including symbolic handover of the sacred human remains at the N1 turn off into Sutherland.
- Sunday, 26 November: Church proceedings (open public session) and reburial thereafter at the historic cemetery (closed family session).

"I wish to acknowledge the Sutherland community along with both the Abraham and Stuurman families for their grace, patience and cordial collaboration in this process, noting that the delays could not have made this process any easier for them. I also acknowledge the broader Abraham and Stuurman family members from multiple provinces, who have been brought together by this moment as an extended family and have meaningfully participated in and offered support towards the dignified return of the sacred remains to Sutherland," said Reddy.

He also acknowledged the national Department of Sports, Arts and Culture; Northern Cape Premier's Office; Northern Cape Department of Sports, Arts and Culture; Karoo Hoogland Municipality; the San community and Northern Cape and Western Cape indigenous leaders for walking this restorative journey with UCT; and the UCT Sutherland Reburial task team for handling this process on behalf of the institution.

Reddy concluded: "We look forward to an opportunity to not only co-host this historic event to ensure that the Sutherland Nine's sacred remains are reburied with dignity, but also to have UCT atoning for the bleak chapter in our history in a process that will include other restorative justice interventions to be co-created with the family and the community of Sutherland."

- [Visit the 2019 feature page for more on the Sutherland Reburial.](#)

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