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UCT isiXhosa project connects historically excluded people to geological heritage



Sinelethu Hashibi (left) and Dr Rosalie Tostevin

Photo: Lerato Maduna/UCT

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The aim of the project is to better represent the diversity of languages spoken in South Africa and help connect people who have historically been excluded from scientific discourse with their geological heritage.

The project is called Reclaiming the Rocks: *Ukuthetha ngezifundo zomhlaba ngesiXhosa* and is based in UCT's [Department of Geological Sciences](#) where Tostevin is a lecturer and runs the Ancient Life and Environments laboratory.

"South Africa's rich geological record is one of the greatest in the world. The rocks record exciting developments over billions of years of Earth history, and our goal is to share these stories with as many people as possible," said Tostevin.

Tostevin wrote up short stories summarising the most compelling, relevant parts of South Africa's geological history while Hashibi, led the translation work.

“This project is challenging because many geological terms, and scientific in general, such as meteorite, magma or iron and sulfur have no direct equivalent in isiXhosa. Therefore, part of this project involves building an open access geological dictionary, which in the future, could provide a tool to transform geology departments, museums and public outreach events,” said Hashibi.

The stories are written in simple, accessible language. While scientifically accurate, they aren't aimed at specialists. They could be told as bedtime stories for children or shared around a campfire.

The project is already receiving international recognition and is a recipient of the [European Geosciences Union's](#) public engagement grants. These grants are awarded to outreach projects that aim to raise awareness of geosciences outside the scientific community.

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