

Source 3

Selected testimonials from local cultural and political leaders, as well as research partner organisations in Namibia

UoA14 Impact Case Study

“Enhancing the visibility of marginalised perspectives and non-pecuniary values regarding land and ‘nature’ / ‘natural capital’”,

lead author Sian Sullivan with Mike Hannis and Chris Low

The selected testimonials collated below in reverse chronological order, clarify the perceived significance of the underpinning research in Namibia for the UoA14 ICS “Enhancing the visibility of marginalised perspectives and non-pecuniary values regarding land and ‘nature’ / ‘natural capital’”, lead author Sian Sullivan with Mike Hannis and Chris Low.

The testimonials focus on how research carried out for the Future Pasts and Disrupted Histories, Recovered Pasts research projects has influenced and enriched understanding, awareness and wellbeing regarding the heritage and ancestral land concerns of indigenous people (Damara / ǀNūkhoe and ǁUun) in west Namibia, in connection with environmental management and access to land. Note that for some authors here, their first language is Khoekhoegowab.

Comments have been recorded through a range of mechanisms, including written testimonials, WhatsApp messages, recorded messages and even songs.

Testimonials included here are ‘to whom it may concern’.

Also see collated statements in accompanying excel spreadsheet.

10/11/2020

Letter received from Gaob (King) Justus ||Garoëb, recognised Paramount Traditional Leader of ꞛNūkhoe, Namibia.



10th November 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

It is with so much gratitude that I am writing this little note of appreciation on research done by Bath Spa University and particularly by Professor Sian Sillivan and team over the years. I have seen her work starting from her Thesis works and recent paper entitled Understanding the Damara/ꞛNūkhoe and ||Ubun Indigeneity and marginalization in Namibia.

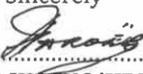
I am the King/Kai-Gaob the paramount traditional leader of the forgotten ꞛNūkhoe, referred to as the lost people or Damara as they are commonly known today. ꞛNūkhoe, together with the Sān (yellow Bushmen) are the first inhabitants of this 'useless waterless or acrid' country Namibia. Yet of body knowledge in this enlighten world remains limited for our people. It is disheartening that even the Missionaries of God, who brought the new civilization to this country, mostly portrayed negative stories of our people, bordering to virtually non-entity or subordinates.

Reading new developments from writers such as Prof. Sian Sullivan and Welhemina Suro Ganuses, and late Seth Boois and Tsukhoe Garoes amongst few give us hope that our history and customs will be written down and shared with future generations to come. I could see that work of Prof. Sullivan even went deep into archives to retrieve archived documents and such efforts are well-received by our people with highest appreciation and royal order.

Our people are very excited and for an old leader of age of 77 years, professionally researched work gives us better hope. Many of us researched and know a-lot about our history and customs, but never found time to write. It is against this background that I am thanking you very much for your interest and love for our people, language and in-depth research conducted about this forgotten ꞛNūkhoe/Damara people, which research others regarded as a none-issue but you ultimately arrived at true findings of scientific or anthropological nature.

Please continue with the extraordinary and formidable work. I look forward to future collaboration and support in particular with the young people in research and educational endeavors, where possible.

Yours Sincerely


.....
GAOB JUSTUS ||URUHE ||GAROËB
KAI-GAOB ꞛNŪKHOEN ||AES

Cc. BATH SPA UNIVERSITY

Also reported in blog at <https://www.futurepasts.net/post/future-pasts-scholarship-is-praised-by-damara-traditional-leader-in-namibia>

25/10/2019

Letter received from Mr Fredrick //Hawaxab, Senior Traditional Leader, Namidaman Traditional Authority, Kunene Region



NAMI-DAMAN

TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY

Phone: +2640818026285

E-mail:
hawaxabfredrick@gmail.com

City, Sesfontein
P.O.Box8

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Professor Sian Sullivan has worked in Nami-daman traditional community for the past 25 years as Principal Investigator for future pasts.

During her stay and conducting research on culture and Environment she has greatly contributed towards Conservancy formation and mapping of places that were previously inhabited by Nami-daman traditional community.

Her work of mapping springs and places of inhabitation has contributed a lot on our presentation on Ancestral land claims during August this year, recent cultural performance that were organized by her at Kai-As spring has also awoken the memories of our grandmothers and Fathers.

Her research on culture has also activated our youth, to showcased their rich culture.

Nami-daman traditional community is very much proud of what she has done for them and would co-operate with Professor Sian Sullivan in whatever she is doing even in the future, because she is trustworthy.

Therefore Nami-daman Traditional Authority do not have any hesitation to work with Professor Sian Sullivan.

I remain
Yours faithfully

.....
Fredrick F. //Hawaxab
Senior Traditional Leader
Nami-daman Traditional Authority
Sesfontein, Kunene Region.

sent by email 25/10/2019



Logo
Name

Additional comments from Mr Fredrick || Hawaxab

Senior Traditional Leader, Namidaman Traditional Authority
Resident of Sesfontein, Kunene Region

Testimonial 28/09/2019:

“She [research participant and elder of Sesfontein community] also did appreciate [the] Kai-as tour, it stimulate[d] her mind and [she] could recall past happenings at Kai-as particularly her first born son and how she collected veld [field] food with him.”

Context:

Email correspondence regarding inclusion of an elder in Fredrick || Hawaxab's family - 90-year old Hildegaart | Nuas - who has been part of Sullivan's research since 1994 and who in this testimonial is sharing her appreciation for and reflections on the recent filmed 'Kai-as festival' facilitated by Sullivan through the *Future Pasts* research project and which took Hildegaart with the Hoanib Cultural Group from Sesfontein back to a key place - Kai-as – where, prior to a series of evictions they and their ancestors were once able to play their */gaidi* (praise songs) and *arudi* (healing dances).

This journey took place on 22-24 May 2019 and was filmed. There is a preliminary short film online [here](#). The full film of this event, made with Bristol-based film-maker and [Namibian film-expert Oliver Halsey](#), is called [The Music Returns to Kai-as](#) and is on the dedicated vimeo site for the Future Pasts project. The film received its first public screening as part of a well-attended [online public event hosted by BSU's Research Centre for Environmental Humanities](#) (40-50 participants).

An outcome is that the Hoanib Cultural Group, the Sesfontein Conservancy and the Namidaman Traditional Authority would like this event to become an annual cultural festival that supports Namidaman cultural heritage in connection with the conservation and tourism concession of Palmwag in which Kai-as is situated, although currently COVID19 and associated travel restrictions prevented this from happening in 2020.

A blog celebrating Hildegaart's 90th birthday in 2019 and including three short films is online [here](#). It has been viewed several hundred times (x463, 04/02/21) and shared on social media.

Testimonial 27/09/2019

“once again thanks very much for your kindness, willingness to contribute towards Nami-Daman culture revival and upliftment”

Context:

Email correspondence regarding Sullivan's contribution to the reporting process of the Namidaman Traditional Authority to the Namibian government's Ancestral Land Commission 2019, and ethnographic and oral history research in the area generally.

Testimonial 03/08/2019

“Let me take this opportunity and acknowledge the contribution of our research partners such as Sian Sullivan the Principal investigator of Dama/#nukhoen and //ubun cultural landscapes mapping, Wilhelmina Suro Ganuses English translator, Ruben Sanib, Fillimon /Nuab, Frans //Hoeb, Noag Mukakara Ganaseb, Michael /amigu Ganaseb and Christophine Daumu Tauros that has immensely contributed towards the, realization of this attached photos as annexures.”

Context:

Acknowledgements in ‘Conclusion’ of “Ancestral Land claim Presentation Nami-Daman Traditional Community, Sesfontein, Kunene Region”, submission in August 2019 to the Namibian government’s Ancestral Land Commission by the Namidaman Traditional Authority, Sesfontein, Kunene Region, lead author Fredrick ||Hawaxab. This submission included by request the following report (ICS evidence **source 1**):

Sullivan, S., Ganuses, W.S., |Nuab, F. and senior members of Sesfontein and Anabeb Conservancies 2019 [*Damara / #Nukhoen and //Ukun Cultural Landscapes Mapping, West Namibia*](#). Report to Namidaman Traditional Authority, Sesfontein.

2/10/2019

Dr Jeff Muntifering

Science Adviser, Save the Rhino Trust (Namibia) www.savetherhinotrust.org

“Sullivan presents a paper that describes in detail the ethnographic and oral history mapping work conducted by the author with local people spanning 2 decades. This is incredibly value [sic] work that is a shining example of the importance of inter-disciplinary research to tackle (or improve) the current conservation crises particularly by given greater voice to the indigenous people, who often, as Sullivan eludes to, are marginalized ‘conservation refugees’. In addition to the oral history mapping, a very interesting a useful historical literature review provides some interesting context to both the paper and otherwise difficult to find reference material. The paper offers numerous insights useful to better understand how various nuances in the current CBNRM practice that could (should) be adjusted to improve inclusivity and depth. A specific noteworthy section is the ‘Local Context’ which emphasizes the importance on ‘who’ is provided a voice at negotiating CBNRM decision-making. ... no one previously has conducted local-level, oral history mapping to the depth that the author has.”

Context:

Practitioner review of research in **ref. 1**

Sullivan S 2019 [Maps and memory, rights and relationships](#): articulations of global modernity and local dwelling in delineating land for a communal-area conservancy in north-west Namibia. [Future Pasts Working Paper Series 7](#) ISBN 978-1-911126-15-7

5 March 2019

Letter from Dr Gillian Maggs-Kölling, Executive Director, Gobabeb Namib Desert Research Institute



05 March 2019

To whom it may concern

Support for Project, "Finding Hurubes: A Land That History Forgot"

The Gobabeb Research and Training Centre is an educational trust (a non-governmental organisation) operating under a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of the Environment and Tourism. Gobabeb's mission is to serve as a catalyst for the gathering, understanding and sharing of knowledge regarding arid environments, especially the hyperarid Namib Desert. It has a broad focus across multiple disciplines, ranging from meteorology, geology and geomorphology to ecology, biodiversity and physiology of organisms and biological communities to applied, social and developmental sciences relevant to Namibia's and African peoples.

Recognising a lack of in-house capacity within the discipline of ecological anthropology, Professor Sian Sullivan from University of Bath Spa in the United Kingdom was invited to become an Associate Researcher of Gobabeb. As a result, we have been affiliated with her project called *Future Pasts*. Moreover, her research that focuses on cultural and conservation landscapes, local ecological knowledge/'ethnoecology' (particularly with Dama / #Nūkhoen peoples), ecological surveys, and historical narratives regarding southwestern Africa, has made a valuable contribution to Gobabeb's ongoing programme '*The significance of the Namib Desert endemic !nara (Acanthosicyos horridus) as a keystone species in ecology, phenology, culture and horticultural potential*' (MET permits 2311/2017, 2190/2016, 2023/2015).

The new project *Finding Hurubes: A Land That History Forgot* is a logical outflow of this previous work. This proposed oral history research project will expand documentation of selected key places in southern Kunene Region, spoken of by elderly Damara / #Nūkhoen and ||Ukun informants as part of where and how they lived in the past. Most of the researchers, guides and key informants named in the new research permit application were included as coworkers on our collaborative MET permits for the !nara project, i.e. S. Sullivan, W.S. Ganuses, F. |Nuab, F. ||Hoëb, and N. Ganaseb. In addition, Mr Oliver Halsey, is a previous volunteer at Gobabeb, and continues to work closely with the centre on various natural history studies. Based on our experience, we have no hesitation in commending the Principal Investigator as a researcher of the highest integrity, who is committed to develop Namibian capacity and works closely with relevant Namibian organisations. She and her experienced team will deliver an output that we are convinced will meet the highest technical, academic and ethical standards. The project will furthermore make an important contribution to document cultural heritage with individuals who are amongst the last people living today having a direct memory of these sites and their local histories.

Gobabeb thus supports this proposed project without reservation and strongly recommends the research permit application of Prof. Sian Sullivan and co-workers for approval.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gilligan Maggs-Kölling".

Dr Gillian Maggs-Kölling
Executive Director

P.O. Box 953, Walvis Bay, Namibia
• tel +264-64-694199 • fax +264-64-694197
• gobabeb@gobabeb.org • www.gobabeb.org

Board of Trustees: Mr Teo Nghitila (Chair), Dr Anna Matros-Goreses,
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Dr Gillian Maggs-Kölling (Executive Director)

14/09/2018

Following a public lecture given at the Museum in Swakopmund, Namibia, Damara / ǀNūkhoe *Future Pasts* local collaborator Welhemina Suro Ganuses wrote the following testimony of the attendance of her family members and acquaintances in Swakopmund – it should be noted that Damara / ǀNūkhoe attended the lecture from Swakopmund's township area of DRC, their attendance in this space itself being something of a research impact since the colonial history and presentation of the Museum tends to be quite alienating and distant to people living under township circumstances.

People of Sesfontein and
 ǀKwaraeb are very happy
 about the work that Sian
 Sullivan doing in north west
 of Namibia and they support
 to come and listen our presentation
 about ^{in Swakop} Nara, of up north of
 Sesfontein and they were surprise
 that she can spoke Damara
 language they were very ~~pleas~~ very
 very happy and encourage us to say

we have at least something on
 a paper telling the people from
 where we are coming and we
 are also happy to see our Springs
 and place on the map in our
 ǀKwaraeb Thank you Sian
 well done and also for Welhemina
 Suro Ganuses kai-aios !!!

We wanted to show those
 who wanted to take our land
 and claim the ownership of
 our land ǀhubs Sian Sullivan
 deliver us from ~~that~~ ownership
 of the land. Thanks a lot
 kai-aios once again.

MUSEUM
 SAM COHEN LIBRARY

Presentation @ the Museum

**!Nara harvesters
 of the northern Namib**

13 September 19 o'clock

by **Sian Sullivan** (Bath Spa University and Gobabeb Research and Training Centre)
 and **Welhemina Suro Ganuses** (Save the Rhino Trust Namibia)

The endemic plant *Nara* (*Acanthosicyos horridus* Welw. ex Hook.f.) of arid south-western Africa has been associated with use, exchange and cultural values for Khoe-speaking peoples living in the ǀKwaraeb River valley in Namibia. Oral histories recorded since the 1990s in the Namib north of the ǀKwaraeb, however, indicate that *Nara* harvesting and husbanding were also important for Khoe-speaking peoples in this more northerly area. Memories of places, life events and livelihood practices in the western reaches of ephemeral rivers north of the ǀKwaraeb have now been documented through returning with senior people to localities of past dwelling in these areas. These are places from which people were progressively excluded, as access to the coastal areas of this northern part of Namibia became restricted for diamond mining (in the 1950s) and latterly due to the establishment of the Skeleton Coast National Park (in 1971). This paper presents material from on-site oral history research in remembered localities now closed to their former inhabitants. In doing so it considers the significance of returning to past places in prompting recollections and re-imaginings of pasts often only present as faint traces (if at all) in formal historical record.

Free entrance, donations welcome
 Presented by Gobabeb and the Scientific Society Swakopmund

14/09/18

Testimonial by Mr Jansen Taurob (with Mr Samuel Ganuseb), living in Swakopmund (the 'location', Dorstland, DRC), who are both members of families from Sesfontein involved in oral history research for *Future Pasts*. Transcribed from recording by Sian Sullivan, made after *Inara* public lecture, Swakopmund Museum, Namibia, Sian Sullivan and Welhemina Suro Ganuses.

Sian – I would just like to talk to you about your visit to the talk last night and just to hear your views about the talk, if that's ok...?

Jansen – yes, well, it was actually – I'm originally from the west – the part which the talk was about. I'm originally from there, and some of the people [referred to in the talk] in the pictures are relatives of mine. These are people that I personally know, that sort of raised me. So the oral history that you were relating through your talk is something that I'm already conversant with – that I basically know about. But there were parts which I had never heard about, so it was an eye-opener for myself as well, because - it was really beneficial for myself as well.

Talking about the specific topic of *Inara* [*Acanthosicyos horridus*] which you were talking about – I think there is still more to be done in terms of research. What you gave us was an eye opener – also basically about us, the people. You see you were taking the audience and myself back to my roots. Reminding me of where I'm coming from and the plants – not only about the *Inara* plants. But the *Inara* plants also form a significant part of our lives in the past, from which today we are actually separated, so to say.

But the landscapes, as you were saying in the book you were referring to [Sullivan, S., Ganuses, WS., Hannis, M., Impey, A., Low, C. and Rohde, R. 2019 *Future Pasts: Landscape, Memory and Music in West Namibia*. 2nd edn. Bath: Future Pasts – Jansen is referring to the 1st edn, from 2017] – I like to read also that book. It was a fantastic presentation. I think [inaudible]... the presentation was informative. We definitely learned a lot from it about our people, the history, their movements, how they came from the area of the desert where the *Inara* plants were actually a part of their lives and now where they are today. How we could relate with them and their questions that you ask about where they were living in the past, the landscapes – their area of being in the past – it was really informative to me. And I think I want to see more research done on this process, because it [the talk] is not only about the *Inaras*, it also influences our perception of the past [= *changed understanding*] and the present life that we are living. And where we perhaps – not us but the future generations – are perhaps going. It might be a story that will be left untold. And if it is untold I am afraid that a lot of our history will be erased – totally erased – and we will not be known. And we won't be knowing where we are coming from. Which part of the country we belong to, and so on.

So basically, I thank – err, I don't know whether to say Sian! [me, you can say Sian, of course!], I thank you very much for really showing interest in this specific part of Namibia, which is a forgotten land, I should say. The people that are forgotten, and the land that has been forgotten. Our history which is not told. The greater history of the Damara people is

not told – but at least you volunteered – you felt you need to research not only the *Inara* but also the people, where we were living.

So, in the future I would really request whoever is out there, including yourself, to further extensively, extensively, research on this – the people, the faces, the land – you know they say that Namibia is the land of contrasts, of different faces. So I think – I will also want our picture, our face, our words that we are saying – now who can do these things, who can place our face there? The researchers who are involved and interested in finding out our faces – who are we? You are bringing the who I am – and making it alive. [inaudible] – and where I am coming from. Thank you very much!

Sian – thank you, and we must also say that Welhemina, Suro, has been so important in working with me.

Jansen – yes, we will also – I would also like to really thank her and anybody else whom I saw – the faces that I saw [in the talk] – our faces – the faces that I saw who were on the video who honestly during the research cooperated and were willing to share their past with you in order to enrich your research. They are a great part of the community and if they are not taking part on this kind of research who will tell their story? Who will bring their face to the map? - Of the different faces of Namibia. So the interpreter, the assistant of the research – Suro Ganuses is also my niece, who has done a great job. I could see you are speaking – I almost forgot! Your clicks - *!gai ga a!* [are good!] – [laughter] - *!haos* [a word I used in the talk] – I was amazed by your clicks! It was really fantastic.

Sian – thank you so much – I can now write that down and I will share it on our website if I may?

Jansen – yes, you may – with great pleasure – you can share whatever we discuss.

