



HERITAGE MONTH 2026 KEY MESSAGES:

BRIEF:

Heritage Month, observed in September, affirms South Africa's commitment to preserving and promoting its diverse cultural heritage for nation-building, social cohesion and sustainable development.

It encourages reflection, celebrates cultural diversity and strengthens belonging rooted in dignity, equality, non-racialism, non-sexism and Ubuntu.

In 2026, Heritage Month is commemorated under the theme: **"Celebrating Our Living Heritage: Strengthening the Ties That Bind Us."** It highlights living heritage as a dynamic expression of identity, memory and belonging through languages, music, dance, rituals, oral traditions, indigenous knowledge, craftsmanship, beliefs and customs.

The Heritage Day event is scheduled to be hosted in KwaZulu-Natal on 24 September 2026 coinciding with Umkhosi weLembe (King Shaka's commemoration).

The theme embraces our country's constitutional diversity and the restoration of human dignity. It positions heritage as a living resource for unity, social cohesion and shared identity, while recognising the histories, cultures, struggles and aspirations that connect people across the country.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
<i>Our living heritage is a shared national resource.</i>	• Heritage Month is an opportunity to celebrate the diverse cultures, languages, traditions and histories that make South Africa unique. • Our diversity is a source of strength and should continue to unite us as a nation.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
	• Our heritage belongs to all South Africans and forms part of our shared national identity, with our living heritage serving as a vehicle for fostering human solidarity while celebrating our cultural diversity. • We recognise our heritage as a unifying force that can strengthen social cohesion, promote mutual respect, encourage active citizenship, and contribute towards building an inclusive society.
<i>The Ties that Binds us</i>	• Heritage must remain a living resource that contributes to social cohesion, nation-building, education and inclusive economic development. • Let us use our shared heritage to foster mutual understanding, dialogue, and a shared sense of belonging that we can use to change lives and empower future generations. • Sport is an integral part of South Africa's heritage and a powerful platform through which South Africans have united across racial, cultural and socio-economic divides. • Our shared history and struggles tie/ bind us together to be a united nation
<i>Together we can integrate our indigenous knowledge Systems into higher education institutions.</i>	• The integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems into higher education represents a critical step towards the decolonisation of knowledge, and the recognition of indigenous ways of knowing as valid, valuable and relevant to contemporary development challenges. • By bridging academic knowledge with community-based wisdom, South Africa can strengthen intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, deepen mutual respect, and promote shared ownership of the nation's intellectual and cultural heritage.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
	• Working together we can embed South Africa's diverse heritage into the learning experience of young people, nurturing pride, cultural awareness and appreciation from an early age. • Heritage education can help shape a generation that values diversity, protects cultural knowledge and contributes meaningfully to nation-building.
<i>Let's celebrate our national unity and strive for social cohesion</i>	• Ubuntu promotes solidarity, mutual respect, empathy and collective responsibility, strengthening the social cohesion envisioned in the National Development Plan (NDP). • Living heritage connects communities through languages, traditions, cultural practices and shared memories, reinforcing our unity in diversity. • Intergenerational and intercultural dialogue helps preserve cultural knowledge, deepen understanding and strengthen relationships across communities. • Active citizenry is central to nation-building, with communities playing a meaningful role in shaping and preserving our shared heritage, as envisaged by the NDP. • The 2026 Milestones of Freedom Campaign provides an opportunity to use our shared history to strengthen national pride, social cohesion and active citizenship. • The Campaign's theme, "Honouring the Past. Delivering the Future", calls on us to celebrate our democratic gains while working together to address the challenges that remain. • Heritage spaces and community initiatives should support education, cultural expression, local participation and inclusive development.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
	Through Heritage Month and the Milestones of Freedom Campaign, we must strengthen a shared sense of belonging and recommit ourselves to building a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa.
<i>Let us celebrate our living heritage by actively participating in Heritage Month programmes.</i>	- Heritage Month provides a vital and unifying platform for provinces, communities and stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment to social cohesion, cultural diversity and the enduring values of Ubuntu. - Living heritage is a dynamic, community-centred resource that not only connects us to our past, but also contributes to nation-building, intergenerational dialogue and inclusive development. - By encouraging broad community participation, Heritage Month amplifies local voices, strengthens cultural expression and celebrates the rich tapestry of traditions that shape South Africa's diverse national identity. - Heritage Month supports national priorities by celebrating our democratic achievements and demonstrating how shared cultural experiences can strengthen unity, belonging and mutual respect among all South Africans. - Through collaborative activities, workshops, community dialogues and cultural events, Heritage Month creates opportunities for South Africans to explore and celebrate their heritage, deepen our collective sense of identity and build stronger, more cohesive communities.

Infographics: Heritage Month 2026

- Heritage Month is observed every September and affirms South Africa's commitment to preserving and promoting its diverse cultural heritage as a foundation for nation-building, social cohesion and sustainable development.
- In 2026, Heritage Month will be commemorated under the theme "Celebrating Our Living Heritage: Strengthening the Ties That Bind Us."
- The month allows us to reflect on our shared history, celebrate our cultural diversity, and ensure a stronger sense of belonging rooted in dignity, equality, non-racialism, non-sexism and Ubuntu.
- The theme positions heritage as a living resource that promotes unity, social cohesion and a shared identity.
- This Heritage Day will coincide with Umkhosi weLembe (King Shaka's commemoration).