

## **AMATHOLE DISTRICT UNVEILS THE MEMORIAL GRAVE OF KING NGQIKA.**

**Judy Ngoloyi**

**( Picture taken by Akhona Ngqinambi )**

**KEISKAMMAHOEK:** On 22 September 2009 Amathole District Municipality (ADM) in partnership with the Rharhabe Royal House unveiled the memorial grave of King Ngqika at Burnshill in Keiskamahoek in the Eastern Cape. King Ngqika is known for his great educational and religious legacy that changed the course of history for the Xhosa people.

Ngqika was the son of the Great House of the Rharhabe King, Mlawu, and he died in 1829 after fighting numerous wars with colonialists. He ruled the Xhosa on the Western side of the Kei River from the late seventeen hundreds until his untimely death. His reign was a turning point in the history of the Xhosa people. With the arrival of the British Settlers he allowed missionaries to preach and build schools in his land. King Ngqika was later involved in a bitter struggle against colonialism.

Addressing King Ngqika's family, dignitaries and government officials who came to witness the unveiling of the memorial grave, ADM Executive Mayor Alderman Sakhumzi Somyo said the likes of King Ngqika fought for the liberation of South Africa in different forms. Somyo said the project is part of a bigger plan to rehabilitate all places of historical significance in order to encourage tourism throughout the district. "In line with government's plan of developing rural areas the ADM wants to ensure that rural people can find a way of being involved in the programmes. The ADM also wants to create schemes that can generate income and be of benefit to communities in various ways. If one looks at the bigger picture these schemes will have a potential of eradicating poverty by creating job opportunities," he said.

The project serves to highlight the history and heritage of the little known heroes and heroines of the province that passed away a long time ago. Somyo said we do not want a situation whereby the role that they have played in turning this country around is forgotten by future generations. "I am so glad that children from various schools are part of this honourable day as they are faced with a challenge of learning more about their heroes and heroines. Activities of this nature are a good lesson to them," he said.

So far the ADM has already developed four heritage sites that cut across the length and breadth of the Amathole district. These routes are named after Xhosa kings and heroes and include the likes of Phalo, Sandile, Makana and Maqoma routes. The ADM is also involved in upgrading various heritage sites with access roads, signage, information boards etc.

King Ngqika's great grandson Sqithi Maqoma paid a glowing tribute to King Ngqika. Maqoma said King Ngqika left a legacy of education and religion. It was during his time that Xhosas went to schools and churches. "Today we have schools like Lovedale and

later University of Fort Hare that have attracted Africans from various countries to come to our area for education,” said Maqoma.

Ends.

If you would like to know more about these heritage routes and heritage sites within the district, please contact [info@amathole.gov.za](mailto:info@amathole.gov.za)