



29 OCTOBER 2025

Hoekwil & Touwsrante

Community Dialogue

2025

Meeting
Report

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39th Meeting

The Hoekwil/Touwsranten Community Dialogue held its 39th gathering at the Touwsranten Community Hall on 29 October 2025.

Thirteen participants attended, and it was wonderful to see a fuller circle again. Apologies were received from Audrey, Chris, Captain Morné Heunis, and Odendaal.

Chandré opened the meeting by welcoming everyone - especially the new participants. She explained the purpose of the dialogue, walked through the agenda, and introduced the colourful centre piece from Zimbabwe that brightened the space.

Agenda:



1. A story of dispossession
2. Updates
 - a. The SAPS crime report
 - b. The gym
 - c. Market
3. Assessing the impact of the recent fire and how to prevent a recurrence

Check-In:



Participants were invited to share something that is currently **“firing them up.”** Responses included:

Hearing Collin Wildeman’s story about the forced removals of people from Saasveld (Colin lives in Wilderness Heights and has been a regular participant in the dialogue forum for several years)

The upcoming festive season

The last week of maternity leave

New Projects

The Madlanga Commission

The 12 teenagers who attended the substance-use classes

The centre piece materials

The cream of tartar from the centre piece



Collin's Story

Sharon Appels read Collin's story aloud to the group.

Born of this Land - Saasveld:

A Hidden History Waiting to Be Heard

I stumbled quite by chance upon a group of people, most of whom were from the coloured community, all smartly dressed in crisp white shirts bearing the proud words Saasveld Reunion 2025. At first glance, I assumed they were former students — perhaps alumni of one of the institutions that had once operated on these grounds.

But as they came closer—gathering with a sense of occasion and quiet pride — I noticed something far deeper in their presence. These were not just visitors. Their connection to this land, now home to Nelson Mandela University's George Campus at the foot of the majestic Outeniqua Mountains in the Southern Cape, was not one of academic memory alone. It was something older. Something rooted.

They were, in fact, descendants of those who had lived, worked, and raised families on this very land — long before it became a university. Many of them were born here. Schooled here. Some had even been employed here.

Their link to Saasveld predates its academic transformation, reaching back to a time when it was still a community, a home, a way of life.

Historically, Saasveld housed the Saasveld Forestry College, which relocated from Tokai to George in 1932. Yet these individuals were not simply connected to forestry or education. Their lineage ran deeper — tied to the land through generations. Many are likely the descendants of South Africa's indigenous Khoisan peoples or mixed-heritage communities who lived in relative harmony with both the land and each other, black and white alike.

Then came the rupture.

During the apartheid era, the government's forced removals — driven by the Group Areas Act of 1950 —uprooted thousands across South Africa. Communities like those in Saasveld were declared "white areas," and residents were forcibly displaced, broken from their homes and scattered to far-off locations. In this case, only the white community remained on Saasveld. The rest — families who had known no other home — were removed in the name of racial policy and state control.

As I spoke with them, it became clear that the trauma of that dispossession remains fresh. It lingers not only in memory but in identity. And yet, despite the pain, their warmth was unmistakable. They spoke not only of loss, but also of laughter, of neighbourliness, of children running through fields and forests, of a shared life with nature and with each other.

Collin's Story

Until the siren sounded.

Until the trucks came.

Until they were no longer welcome in their own home.

The story of Saasveld is not only the story of an institution or a landscape. It is the story of a people removed, of histories silenced, and of resilience sustained. It is a voice that must be heard — joining the chorus of other communities across South Africa who have endured dispossession, displacement, and systemic injustice.

In their stories are echoes of South Africa's First Nations — those who first walked this land, who named its rivers and mountains, and who still carry that ancestral bond today. The people of Saasveld have returned, not just for a reunion, but to reclaim their memory, their narrative, and their rightful place in the history of this land.

This story needs to be told ... people were living here!



After listening to the story, Collin spoke about life in Saasveld before the evictions. Around 56 households lived there from the early 1970s. His mother worked as a cleaner and his father at the hostel. His mother passed away before the evictions began.

The rules in the village were extremely strict—children who finished school could not live with their parents and needed signed permits to visit on weekends. Dogs were tightly controlled and often killed, even if kept safely inside the property.

Collin's Story

Police would remove residents from their homes and drop them far away, hoping they would not return. Collin recalled once being slapped by a police officer simply for keeping his hands in his pockets.

Coloured children living in Saasveld had to walk long distances to school. They could only ride buses driven by coloured drivers if there were no white children on board.

One of Collin's friends returned from police training in the Eastern Cape to discover that his parents had been evicted and had disappeared. Collin described the fear of being sent to the tuckshop as a child, knowing bullies would take everything he was sent to buy.

The Saasveld story has been quiet for decades—known only to those who lived it. During a recent reunion, survivors agreed that the story must be told. Collin is gathering these accounts. An 80-year-old man trying to make a land claim discovered that the relevant documents were destroyed in a fire, and Collin is searching for other sources of evidence.

Despite the painful history, Collin emphasized that he holds no anger—he learned from Madiba the power of forgiveness. He has already shared the story internationally, including in Canada and Paris.

Questions, Reflections and Comments

- Flip shared contact details for someone involved in land claims.
- Several participants from Touwsrante related strongly to the story.
- Survivors from Saasveld do not seek compensation—they want their land back.
- The university building on the property was originally used for research.
- Only five families affected by the evictions still live in Wilderness Heights.

Participants expressed deep empathy, noting how many residents simply disappeared after the evictions. Collin's story reminded some of similar events in Kraaibosch. It also highlighted the importance of understanding people's histories when working in diverse communities.

A powerful question emerged:

How does one rebuild a future after being stripped of their humanity?

Updates & Initiatives

Market

There will be no community market for the final term of the year due to hall-booking challenges. The next market is planned for early 2026.

SAPS



Reported crimes over the past two months (a relatively quiet period):

- 1 case of arson
- 7 contact crimes
- 1 attempted murder
- 6 serious assaults
- 2 housebreakings in Hoekwil
- 3 cases of property damage
- 2 thefts in Touwsranten
- 1 theft in Hoekwil
- 1 kidnapping
- 2 housebreakings in Touwsranten

Additional notes:

W/O Kuhn announced the Christmas parade, which will take place on 12 December. Donations of clothes, sweets, storybooks, etc., for children in the area would be greatly appreciated.



Swimming lessons could not begin due to municipal office closures.

Captain Heunis shared updates from the Western Cape Liquor Authority (also posted on the WhatsApp group), including:

- Liquor licenses must be renewed annually.
- Licensed premises may not be rented out or handed to another person.
- No structural changes may be made without permission.
- No alcohol may be sold to persons under 18.
- No other business may operate on a liquor-licensed premises.



Updates & Initiatives

Outdoor Gym

Chandré reported that communication between the convening team and the sports committee about opening of the gym had not resulted in the gym being open, and the key which we had previously handed to the sports committee appears to have gone missing. After checking with Councillor Marlene Barnard, Chandré confirmed that the gym should be open to the community and should be opened daily by the manager of the sports field.

To prevent a recurrence, a new lock with a number code was installed following the meeting. The code: **3690**, was shared with the Councillor and on the Dialogue WhatsApp group.

The gate must remain open in the mornings when Quinton opens the field.

Sive has started community aerobics every Saturday at the outdoor gym — everyone is welcome.

Simon will speak to Jeemon about encouraging the rugby players to use the gym as part of their training.



Touwsranten Fires

There was a substantial discussion about the fire and its impact. Both Ingrid Buys and Simon Mshotana spoke about how they had experienced the fire and the role they played in responding to it.

It was noted that Peter Lapan offered help with fire-prevention measures, including creating a road behind the houses to act as a firebreak. He had some concern that if a road was created more houses would be built on the now open space. Simon has been liaising between Peter and the people living in the informal settlement, and played a key role in enabling communication between residents and emergency services during the fire. Simon has the assurance of the residents of “blinkdakkies,” that no more houses would be built.

Anyone who occupies cleared safety zones may be arrested.

Lawyers are being consulted to help formalise the agreement.

Concerns were expressed about poor communication during the fire and the fact that there seemed to be some uncertainty—fire trucks arrived without water, and some of the fire hydrants in Touwsranten appear to need maintenance.

It was said that more people in Touwsranten need to know what to do in the event of a fire.

It was noted that there are a number of people in Touwsranten who have been trained in fire management and who are willing to assist in the event of a fire. There is an need for people to be organised and their additional training needs to be assessed.



A fire-fighting workshop was held in Wilderness on 1 November 2025.

Municipal issues, such as a broken fire hydrant, can be logged on the My City app.



Check-Out:



Participants shared one thing they appreciated about the meeting:

- Having babies in the room
- Feeling heard and listening deeply
- Being back in the circle, the new faces, and Collin's story
- Good discussions
- The rich interaction during Collin's story
- The space always being productive and informative

Attendees List

W/O Kuhn	Sharon Appels	Flip Theron	Collin Wildeman
Chandre Gould	Sharon Fisher-Buys	Sive Vaaltein	Colleen Magner
Joslynn Benson	Simon Mtshotana	Anathi Vaaltein	Xolani Dakatayo