

# NET VIR PRET PROGRESS REPORT – MARCH 2021



Restored puppets for Reboot Eden

## REBOOT EDEN

2020 marked the 11<sup>th</sup> year of puppetry in Barrydale, initiated in 2010 when **Adrian Kohler** and **Basil Jones**, founders of the world-renowned **Handspring Puppet Company**, offered us a 7-year partnership during which they would help us develop world-class puppetry skills. The 7-year journey brought the **Centre for Humanities Research** at the **University of the Western Cape** and the **Ukwanda Puppetry Collective** on board and has resulted in the presentation of an annual Giant Puppet Parade and Performance on the Day of Reconciliation in December each year, with a cast of 150 youngsters of all ages appearing before a huge crowd in the amphitheatre at the local primary school which the Handspring Trust helped us build.



The annual show has provided a focus each year for work across the spectrum of our different programmes, sparking creativity on every side and our staff and youngsters have developed skills in story-telling, script-writing, acting, dance, puppetry design, construction and manipulation, costume, mask and set design and construction and musical composition and performance.

Large questions about social justice, environmental responsibility and endangered species have been tackled and the Parade has also become an instrument in preparing our youth for responsible citizenship by raising their awareness of the issues in the world around them, prompting them to investigate and research, seek solutions, and plan strategies for intervention.

Because the ongoing lockdown made it impossible for us to mount our usual Giant Puppet Show last year, we decided instead to celebrate the 10 years of puppetry behind us by reviving some of the puppets from the past and creating four separate shows on the theme of **Reboot Eden** which would we would film and stream online.



**Herman Witbooi** and his Project Hope team were tasked with restoring the puppets pictured on the previous page which had been lying in storage for some time and in some cases were soiled and damaged. The restoration took several months of hard work and in the end everyone agreed that the restored puppets looked better than ever. The Ukwanda team restored the giant Elephant and the Redfin Fish puppets and brought them up from Cape Town.

The shows were directed by four of our staff members, each assisted by an intern, with our regular puppeteers manipulating the puppets and youngsters, Young Leaders and Interns taking part.

**Jane Taylor** and **Aja Marneweck** from the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR) and the **Ukwanda** team came to act as mentors. Filming and editing was done by our Media Officer, **Nataniël Pokwas**, under the guidance of **Charl van Zyl**. The shows can be seen at these links:

**Booi's Soul searching Adventures:** <https://youtu.be/jUfq0XDjWxc>

**Die Voetpad van die Vrou:** <https://youtu.be/0U8g858qZIM>

**Mnumzane:** <https://youtu.be/ESJ7qE2XIQ>

**Protect the redfin:** <https://youtu.be/osTMGvp8bjQ>

The **Reboot Eden** blog can be viewed at <https://barrydaleparade.wordpress.com/>

In a further development our elephant show was invited to participate in the **Boschendal Harvest Festival** in **Franschhoek** in February. Herman and Clarisa went through on the Friday to run a puppet building workshop with the children of workers on the estate and Angelo and his puppeteers followed the next day for a performance featuring **Mnumzane**, our giant elephant puppet, and the baby, **Alfie**, with the **Dassie** (rock rabbit) and the **Eland** in attendance. Ukwanda and the CHR team joined in.

## PRAYER FLAGS OF HOPE

In tandem with Reboot Eden, we embarked on an initiative which aimed at lifting spirits in our community by stringing up **Prayer Flags of Hope** across both parts of our divided village for the Christmas season. We decided on two themes for the flags – images from past shows, which have often portrayed the plight of endangered animals, and also images which show laughter, joy, celebration and hope.



Secretary Bird admiring the Flags of Hope

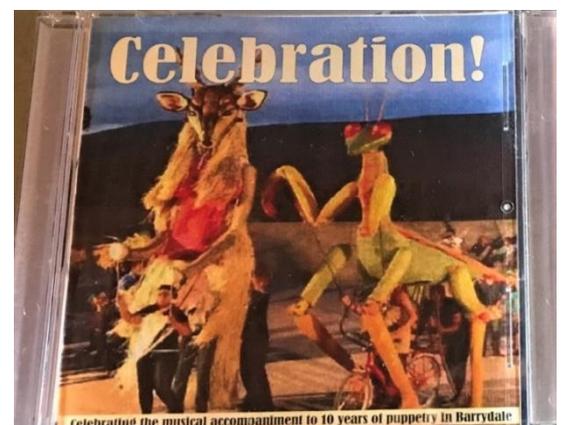
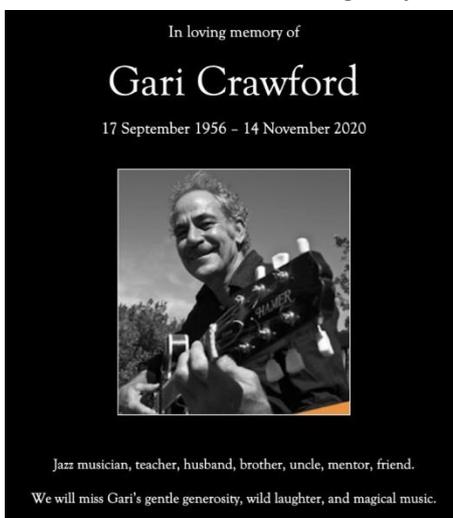
Our youngsters and Interns guided by craft tutors **Cherie Dirksen** and **Clarisa Jonas** reached their target of 1,000 flags which were strung up as planned in the week before the Day of Reconciliation and on the day our puppets strolled around the village and the township to the delight of all.



## CELEBRATION

Under lockdown, our original jazz group, the **Jazz Monkeys**, were back in town from their tertiary studies in Cape Town and our music tutor, **Gari Crawford**, seized the opportunity to get them together to revive and record the many songs they had composed for past shows.

After three months of recording and re-recording, mixing and re-mixing, the result was a **CD** which celebrated the musical accompaniment to 10 years of Barrydale puppetry.



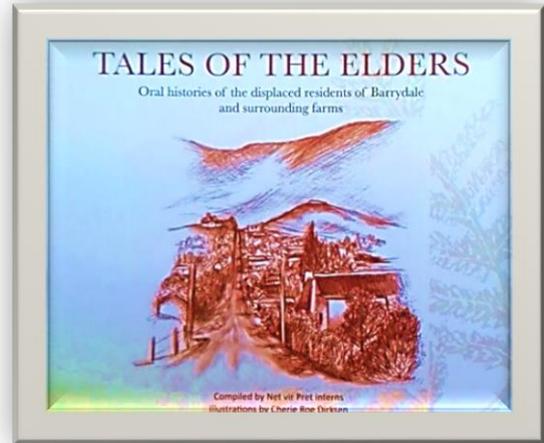
It is with great sadness that we have to report that shortly after completing this work, Gari suffered a massive stroke which took his life. Gari made a huge contribution to our work and we miss him sorely. In the meantime we have appointed **Charl Koch** to take his place.

## TALES OF THE ELDERS

As part of an oral history project, our various Interns over the years have assembled a fascinating collection of stories told by elders in the village about their past experiences.

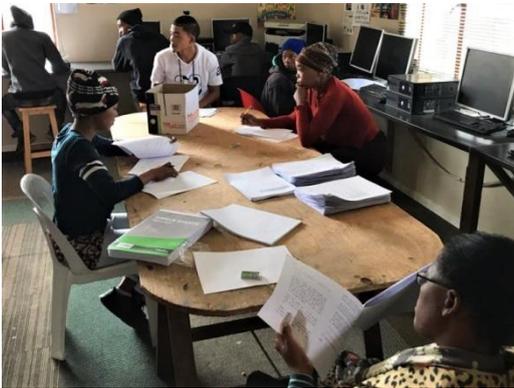
To make them more widely available, Barrydale author **Leslie Howard** translated them into English from the original Afrikaans and we brought them out in December in a handsome bi-lingual publication with illustrations by our art tutor, **Cherie Roe Dirksen**.

Publishing costs were covered through a crowd-funding appeal launched by Cherie.



## COMMUNITY LEARNING PROGRAMME

We are pleased to report that the partnership with the **Breede River Community Learning Centre (CLC)** based in Robertson continued into the new year and a satellite campus has been established at our Centre.



25 students ranging in age from 16 to 34 have registered and **Nolene Schoeman** and her team come up once a week to teach.

CLC's are a new type of institution falling

under the **National Department of Higher Education** and their role is to provide opportunities for anyone over the age of 15 to upgrade their academic level for employability or progression to further study.



## SHAWCO

In an exciting new development, the **University of Cape Town's** student organisation **SHAWCO** has located a **Dell Technologies**

**ComputerAid** converted container at our site. The state of the art facility houses 10 solar-powered computers and an overhead projector. This represents a substantial boost to our ability to



offer computers access to our community.

Shawco personnel, Director **Jackie Stewart**, President **Jaymo Reynolds** and IT Co-ordinator **Marco Charles** came up on a visit and we were able to discuss ways in which our relationship can be strengthened.

## **BUILDING EXTENSION**

For some time space limitations have prevented us from embarking on new ventures at our Centre and we have longed for the opportunity to add to our structure.

We are delighted to report that a substantial award from **Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropy, advised by Richard Rosenthal** has now made this possible. Work has started on the foundations for three new workshop/classroom spaces alongside our existing building.



## **NEW WEBSITE**

With the expert guidance of **Charl van Zyl** we have been able to construct a new and much-improved website at [www.netvirpret.co.za](http://www.netvirpret.co.za)

