

UNESCO CHAIR ON INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES WEBINAR SERIES

**Ubuntu in nature: tugging at our
knowing strings**

Presented by

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Nelson Mandela University, George Campus

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About the Webinar:

What can we learn about intercultural competencies from Ubuntu expressed in nature? Without the requisite linguistic moorings for a deeper understanding of this African philosophical phenomenon, I turn to two fields of study more familiar to me as a natural scientist. This exposition on intercultural competencies draws on two of my home disciplines: archaeology and ecology. I will draw on examples from my native Cape Floristic Region, a phytoregion renowned for its mega-diversity of plant species and its significance in the evolution of anatomically modern humans, for inspiration on how we might approach intercultural competencies in a relational way. As nature does.

About the Speaker:



Dr Rhoda R. Malgas is a researcher and senior lecturer at Nelson Mandela University's School of Natural Resource Science & Management at the George Campus. With a focus on sustainable natural resource use and biodiversity conservation, her work bridges the gap between ecological science and community-based natural resource management. A Ph.D. in Conservation Ecology (Stellenbosch University) and degrees in Botany, Environmental Science and Archaeology (University of Cape Town) have primed Dr Malgas for a career in transdisciplinary scholarship. Taking a social-ecological systems lens informed by her own heritage in Fynbos landscapes to her research, Dr Malgas has a deep commitment to understanding the intricate relationships between people and their environments, particularly in the context of South Africa's rich yet vulnerable ecosystems.

Her research explores the sustainable use of wild-harvested species, the endurance of socio-ecological systems, and the role of indigenous knowledge in conservation practices. Dr Malgas has supervised and been involved in several interdisciplinary projects that aim to integrate traditional ecological knowledge with modern conservation strategies, fostering collaboration between academic institutions, local communities, and graduate students.

Dr Malgas is also a passionate educator, dedicated to mentoring the next generation of environmental scientists, especially those who are first generation graduates. She has published in peer-reviewed journals and contributes to local and international conferences, where she shares her insights and ideas about sustainability science as an African scholar. Through her research, teaching, supervision and outreach, Dr Malgas continues to make contributions to the fields of natural resource management and conservation, with a particular emphasis on sustainability and community engagement in Southern Africa.

Dr Malgas is the founder of student-centred NGO, The Small Things Fund, and serves on several advisory boards focused on conservation and social change. She also serves as an associate editor for the African Journal of Biodiversity Conservation.