

PRINCIPAL'S ASSEMBLY MESSAGE

Last week I spoke to you about the importance of making an effort this year to be sensitive to our differences and to better understand each other. I thought a wonderful way of illustrating this is to speak to you about the Nguni breed of cattle which are so special to the Zulu people. Having lived in KwaZulu Natal for some time I became fascinated by this particular breed of cattle. I was fortunate to meet and listen to the author of "The Abundant Herds", Marguerite Poland. (Slide 1). The fascinating thing about the Nguni cattle is that each and every cow has a different name and this name has meaning.

"Each beast in a herd of Nguni is individual in the combination of its colour pattern, horn shape, gender, status and history. Each occupant of the byre has its story, as does any member of the household, and carries its complex identity in the names and terms that describe its attributes." **Marguerite Poland**

In every herd of Nguni cattle the owner will have named every single animal (Slide 2). The unique patterns and colours on the cattle are often linked to birds, reptiles, plants, natural phenomena and the shape of their horns in the naming process.

Here are some examples:

(Slide 3) **nkwazi, (meaning fish eagle)** this is a black beast with a white head and upper shoulders. This echoes the majesty of the eagle after which it is named.

(Slide 4) **fezi, (meaning spitting cobra)** a black or red beast with white marks across its throat, resembling the marking on a spitting cobra.

(Slide 5) **zumbe, (meaning sugar bean)** cream coloured beast speckled with red, resembling a sugar bean.

(Slide 6) **elelumuntu, (in which there lies a person)** beast with a marking on its side which resembles a reclining person.

(Slide 7) **inkomo ebfazi bewela (the beast which is a woman crossing the river)** this colour image brings to mind an image of a woman lifting her skirt to wade through the water.

The naming of the animals is carefully done and the Zulus are able to identify every single one in the herd by their special markings and the names they have given them, each unique and different.

I think you boys know that I work hard at trying to get to know your names. What the Zulus have taught me in the process of naming their cattle is that I need to know much more about you than merely being able to call you by your name. I think we all need to try to get to know each other better; what is behind your name, what are your hopes and aspirations, where do you come from, what about your family etc. It is only in this way that we will truly be able to move to a situation where we have genuine mutual respect and understanding for, and of each other.