

Transdisciplinary Ocean Sciences and Ocean Sustainability Activism Symposium

Co-hosted by: Ocean Sciences, Nelson Mandela University and
the Centre for Black Planetary Studies, UNISA

Date: 27 – 28 May 2026

Venue: Ocean Sciences Campus, Conference Hall,
Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha

Programme



OCEAN SYMPOSIUM DAY 1: Wednesday – 27 MAY 2026

Time	Activity	Facilitator	Presentation Topic
09h00:	Welcoming	Prof André Keet	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Engagement and Transformation, Nelson Mandela University
09h15	Context and Overview	Prof Heather Nel (Nelson Mandela University) Prof Hugo ka Canham (UNISA)	Nelson Mandela University Transdisciplinary Ocean Sciences Strategy Black Planetary Orientations to the Ocean
09h50	Panel Conversation	Dr Denise Schael (Nelson Mandela University) Prof Nelson Odume (Rhodes University) Dr Philile Mbatha (University of Cape Town)	Challenges and Opportunities for Transdisciplinary Ocean Sciences
11h15	Coffee/Tea Break		
11h35	Panel Conversation	Dr Bastien Linol (Nelson Mandela University) Lindiwe Makapela (Stellenbosch University)	Deep Waters
12h20	Panel Conversation	Prof Ursula Scharler (University of KwaZulu-Natal) Prof Janine Adams (Nelson Mandela University)	Shallow Water Ecosystems
13h00	Ocean Sciences Campus Tour		
13h30	Lunch		
14h30	Panel conversation	Prof Fikile Nxumalo (UNISA/University of Toronto) Dr Joanne Peers (University of Witwatersrand) Andrew Young (Nelson Mandela University)	Ocean Pedagogies, Advocacy and Technologies
15h50	Panel Conversation	Irna Senekal (Nelson Mandela University) Traci Kwaai (Fisher Child Projekt)	Coastal Activism
16h30	Panel Conversation	Dr Jessica Thornton (Nelson Mandela University) Prof Brendon Barnes (UNISA) Relebogile Rasodi, Xolisa Gwadiso, Prof Nick Malherbe (UNISA)	Ocean Cultures and Histories
17h45	Briefing on Day 2 Proceedings	Irna Senekal	

OCEAN SYMPOSIUM DAY 2: Thursday – 28 MAY 2026

Field Practice – Learning with Ocean Defenders

Time	Activity	Purpose and Resources	Facilitator
Field Visit			
08h30	Engagement at Pollock Beach Ice-breaker (links with ocean)	- Beach collage that represents each group, - Short introductions in each of the five groups	Dr Buhle Francis
09h00	Walking and Talking - Each group “travels” along the coast with their ocean defender guide - Ocean defenders points out elements to take note of and share their story - Group members take “field notes” using text guide on WhatsApp	- Coastline map with rivers set out on the beach - Simulated travel to villages of Hamburg, Wesley and Tyolomnqa along coast - Introduction to ocean defenders’ struggles: fishing rights; oil and gas; heavy minerals and sand mining; resource theft; access to ocean	Digital handout for ‘field visit’ Irna Senekal Dr Buhle Francis Ocean Defenders
10h00	Return to Conference venue Groups convene at parking lot		
10h30	Discussion and Analysis	- Ocean connections from field experience - What are the emerging linkages with participants’ experience/ discipline from field? - What is emerging for participants around solidarity and scholar activism? - Message from ocean defenders to scholars around solidarity and scholar activism	Irna Senekal Dr Buhle Francis
12h00	Evaluation of Day 2 - Ocean wave in sound and movement which expresses emotion at the end of the workshop - Remarks from each of five groups	- Feedback to share learning - Feedback to improve workshop design and organisation	- Koki - Newsprint - Feedback wall in room Irna Senekal
Closure			
12h30	Closing Remarks	Connecting field visit to symposium	Prof Hugo ka Canham
12h45	Word of Thanks		Prof Heather Nel
13h00	Depature		

Information Pack

- Taryn Pereira & Kira Erwin (2023) Surfacing solidarity praxis in transdisciplinary research for blue justice, *Ecosystems and People*, 19:1, 2260502, [DOI:10.1080/26395916.2023.2260502](https://doi.org/10.1080/26395916.2023.2260502)
- Tyolomnqa Heavy Minerals, EIA advertisement in Daily Dispatch: [4935888](https://www.dailydispatch.co.za/article/2023-05-18-tyolomnqa-heavy-minerals-eia-advertisement)
- Assured Turnkey Solutions (2026) Tyolomnqa Sands Background Information Document, <https://1drv.ms/b/c/8c5f3e44796f9b38/IQAmlhmrFOOZTpo-6d4ADgwLHAVFlr5wm0cjGPNN9mhLEHpl?e=Ywfqka>
- Fataar, A., Motala, S., Keet, A., Lalu, P., Nuttall, S., Menon, K., & Staphorst, L. (2023). The university in techno-rational times: Critical university studies, South Africa. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 55(7), 835-843.- <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2022.2142555>

