

KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo hails Premier's decision to rename Lower Umfolozi War Memorial Regional Hospital

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It is indeed with befitting honour that the KwaZulu Natal Premier, Hon Willies Mchunu has announced the renaming of Lower Umfolozi War Memorial Regional Hospital at Empangeni to be now called Queen Nandi Hospital. Premier Mchunu made this announcement during his presentation of the State of Province at the Royal Show Grounds in Pietermaritzburg.

Lower Umfolozi War Memorial Regional Hospital is a designated Mother and Child Hospital which is dedicated exclusively to the care of obstetrical, gynaecological and neonatal patients. It is situated at King Cetshwayo Health District and serves as a referral to the whole region including parts of Zululand and UMkhanyakude Districts.

We are proud that this all important health facility that averages approximately 10,000 deliveries, and performs approximately 2,000 gynaecological surgery procedures, per year is named after this heroine. This is one hospital again that forms part of the decentralised training centres, together with Newcastle and Port Shepstone hospital complexes now accredited to offer training to 5th year student doctors.

It was indeed with embarrassment in which we acknowledged that despite her illustrious and important role Queen Nandi played in the formation; life and growth of the Zulu nation; she remained one of the least celebrated women in our history. We are thus very grateful to Premier Mchunu for invoking Queen Nandi's spirit and bestowing the dignity; respect and honour this gently but strong willed Queen deserved.

History tells us Queen Nandi raised her son Shaka amid dejection and hardship being shunned away by the community because she bore an 'illegitimate' child. One prolific writer: Soka Mthembu, in describing the life she led had this to say: *'A side often not told, is that she was one of the greatest single parents who ever lived. When confronted by animosity, rejection, insults, and humiliation, she nevertheless raised her son (Shaka) the best way she could --- never to give up on life ---to have strength of will, and to believe in his destiny'*

Her son, King Shaka, grew up to be the most revered and powerful monarch in history. Queen Nandi died on October 10, 1827 and her grave can be found outside Eshowe, off the old Empangeni road. Her name is now forever immortalized in this life giving and saving healthcare institution.