

## A Revised Outline of BessieFest 2007

**GABORONE** will hold a two-day literary and cultural symposium under the aegis of the University of Botswana, on 5 and 6 July 2007. Students and scholars have been invited to present their contributions. (Note that abstracts or outlines are expected by 30 November 2006).

Away from the symposium, several trees will be planted in honour of Bessie Head. At least one newly published book about her will be launched, and there will be several cultural events, including the performance of an original play based on her stories.

The organising committee has worked on a logo and themes to be offered to other groups, schools, the media, and cultural organisations.

In **PIETERMARITZBURG**, her birthplace and early home, the municipality has recently renamed the principal library for her. An organising committee for Bessie's 70th anniversary has been formed at the Centre for African Literary Studies (CALS) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. They have announced a day-long seminar for Thursday, 12 July. A Call for Papers is expected shortly. It is expected that participants will focus on Head's writing about children and childhood.

In **CAPE TOWN**, where she began her writing (and ill-fated political) career, there is much interest in a conference and an accompanying cultural festival. There are many cultural workers, good venues, and the institutional power of several universities. We believe that a program of events will be announced soon, to be hosted by the District Six Museum. An organiser writes, "Cape Town events and information forthcoming soon."

**SEROWE**, where Bessie spent most of her adult life and wrote her most important works, plans an ambitious three-day program of something for everyone. It will run over the President's Day holiday, on 15, 16, and 17 July. It is planned to hold cultural exhibitions and performances, open a small permanent BHead gallery in the Khama Museum, launch the *Catalogue of the Bessie Head Papers*, plant trees, listen to Bessie's friends speak about the author's person and daily life, present national and local writing prizes, and above all hold a town celebration at the proclamation of her home as a heritage site. We hope the local library can be renamed in her honour. This committee is encouraged by the great interest shown by scholars who have come here to study her Papers in the years since her death.

**FUNDRAISING** for the above programs has begun in Botswana. Bessie's ex-husband Harold Head made the first donation to the future Heritage Trust, followed by several of her friends of long standing. The organising committee of the Trust has a savings account at First National Bank in Serowe into which donations can be made from overseas, account number **285367 - 62186298438**, account name "Bessie Head Heritage Trust".

**WORLD MEDIA COVERAGE** is to be desired: newspapers, radio, television, video programs. The local committees have already been approached by several journalists from Botswana and South Africa. Although at least two different groups have mooted BHead films to be shot in the next couple of years, neither is likely to be ready for 2007. We greatly hope a video-maker somewhere will get a grant and make a good documentary video in time for the celebrations!

One **MAJOR PROBLEM** could be that some of Bessie Head's lesser-known works may fall out of print this year; her biography, *Serowe: Village of the Rain Wind*, and *A Bewitched Crossroad* are already almost impossible to find. The fate of the Harcourt/Heinemann list remains uncertain. Please urge the concerned publishers to be ready to meet the projected bump in demand!