In Our Village
The Cradle of Human Kind

A Project by grade six Journalism
The American International School of Johannesburg
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Mr. Eilers and Mr. Tennis for the ideas, help and great support they gave us from the beginning. The idea for this book came from the original “In Our Village” service learning book created by children in the village of Kambi ya Simba, Tanzania. We are indebted to Ms. Cathryn Berger Kaye who brought a copy of their book to our school.

We would also like to thank A.I.S.J. Director, Dr. Beck and our Principal, Mr. Moore, for all their support. Thank you to Ms. Anderson for letting us use the computer lab, Mr. Coyne for using his room as a back-up classroom, and Ms. Coyne for all her guidance of the layout crew. Ms. Soverall helped us connect to Remata here in Johannesburg that did such a super job with the Printing.

Finally, this book would have stayed only an idea if not for the generous sponsorship of Auto Speed Shop.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the three scientists who inspired us – Gregory Hall, Christine Steininger and Ms. Bonita de Klerk. We also dedicate this book to Seung-Mok, our friend, who started this class with us but moved before the end of the quarter. He is off to another school, another “Village”. Maybe he will convince them to start a new “In Our Village” book there!
The Idea of Writing about “Our Village”

We call this book, In Our Village “I.O.V.” It is our service learning project sharing our learning about the cradle of humankind, our origins as a species here in South Africa. So this is our way of sharing something we have learned here in ‘Our Village’.

In this way our village is:

- the American International School of Johannesburg (AISJ)

Our Village is also:

- the City of Johannesburg, the country of South Africa & the Whole Continent of Africa!

Our Village is also:

- the Cradle of Humankind (an area of land to the north and west of our school about 45 minutes away by bus) This is one of the places where the first humans are thought to have evolved from.

We also wrote this book to tell others what we learned about making such a book. From this project, we learned more about planning, researching, writing, lay-out, fundraising and printing. Maybe after reading it you will think of making your own “I.O.V.” book and sharing it with us!
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“In Our Village”
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The History of ‘In Our Village’
By Kaustubh Goyal

Our I.O.V book came as an idea from the book written in Tanzania, in 2005 by people in a village called, Kambi ya Simba. Ms. Cathryn Berger Kaye, while giving our school some training on service learning, shared the story of this first I.O.V. book, and invited us to make our own. There are about 26 I.O.V’s around the world. All these books were written by students around the world, grades varying from 3-12 on all types of subjects. These books can help students tell others about where they live and what they know.

If you are interested in knowing more, there is also an In Our Village website. Our book explains our village, ‘The Cradle of Humankind’. We worked hard, had fun, and learned a lot throughout the process.

The cover of the very first “I.O.V” book
You can read more at:
http://www.inourvillage.org/

A picture of Ms. Cathryn Berger Kaye. She visited our school and gave a service learning workshop.
“Our Village” is located in the southern most country on the grand continent of Africa.

AISJ (our school) is located north of Johannesburg.

This marks where Johannesburg is on the continent of Africa.

This marks where the Cradle of Humankind is.

This marks where our school is (AISJ).
Cradle Project
By Patrick Byrnes

Each year in October, the sixth grade of AISJ is assigned a project based on the Cradle of Humankind, and the concept of Identity. The Cradle of Humankind is an area near Johannesburg, South Africa, where multiple fossils of early humans have been found. It is believed to be one of the places where humans began as a species. In the beginning of sixth grade we were given a rubric to explain to us and our parents what we would need for our project and in our presentation.

Students were grouped in twos and threes. All information used in our project was taken from the school library, books at home and internet, along with information collected in the field trip to Cooper’s Cave and Maropeng Cradle of Humankind Museum. We researched with note cards, collected pictures for our project and wrote paragraphs showing what we learned. Finally, we showed off our complete projects in an oral presentation.

Alexander and Kaustubh’s Cradle Project on the origins of Life
This is Daniel and Robyn’s project comparing the Evolution of Reptiles to that of Birds. We learned from them that reptiles did not evolve much over time but birds did. That is why crocs look almost like they did millions of years ago (according to fossils).

This is the Cradle Project on Language and Communication by Sade and Yuna.

They taught us that our Identity is shaped by the language we use.

AND...UNLIKE the crocs, language has changed HUGELY in just a short time!
Sade Abiodun, pondering this Human collage at the Maropeng museum.

At the beginning of the museum, you go on a real boat ride as a tour.

Charlotte and Daniela standing in front of our ancestors!

THE PATHWAY TO HUMANITY
It All Started Here

This is where it all happened. Our ancestors lived here several million years ago. We know this from fossil records. Some of the fossils were found in caves very near our school. This is because some, like Little Foot, fell into a cave or pit and became fossilized in the rock. We believe that early hominids originated here and then moved to the rest of the world (from here to Asia and Europe, then to Australia, and then much later to North America, and finally South America only a few thousand years ago.

Early humans were hunter-gatherers. This means they collected berries and roots for food or if they were lucky they would find a carcass with meat on it. This means they were scavengers. They would probably take shelter in caves because they did not have huts as yet. They would move with the seasons for food and water. Then later when hominids started to make tools they were able to hunt. This meant that they would have to keep up with the animals. Then ‘we’ eventually built huts and other buildings which led to civilizations such as ours.
Our Visit to Maropeng...
(The amazing world heritage center in the cradle of humankind)

There are Snakes here!

The whole sixth grade (49 of us) outside

Irfan Dewji watches a film about the discovery of Little Foot.

In we go to Maropeng!
Maropeng is the cradle of human kind all the way. The actual museum (inside this mound!) has all the information you could possibly want. It has a room filled to the brim with games that explain everything from how the earth started to how we are today. The experience is like going back in time and looking at your ancestors and how we came to be. Our sixth grade class had the privilege of going to this amazing museum and experiencing all that it could offer.

We went on a boat ride that goes through different climates and ages. When the boat ride was over we were in the ‘game room’ where our teacher, Mr. Tennis, prepared a scavenger hunt. We went wild looking for answers, but the games were as informative as the scavenger hunt. The room was endless! Some of what we found out about our origins was just unbelievable. To come from knowing little about where we came from to what we know today is a huge leap to take in about three months. We are glad to be able to share some of our knowledge with you.
The King of Cooper’s Cave!

Most of the year the Cows are king of Cooper’s Cave and the fields around. This is a special university dig, not a tourist attraction, so more cows visit here than people!

Here are Alex, Abhinav, and Kaustubh traveling with Ms. De Klerk and Ms. Steininger to the cave (fissure).

Thousands of years ago it would have been DARK right here, because this was all INSIDE the cave. Now the roof is gone and you can walk on the floor of the cave without a flashlight!
Cooper’s Cave
By Daniel Grainger

Coopers cave is a desolate place in the middle of nowhere. (Actually, it is on a man’s farm north of Johannesburg) with piles of rock strung about the cave. Part of the cave no longer has a roof. It is open to the sky. Part is still a normal cave: rock walls moist with water from rain and seepage, tunnels going in different directions. You can imagine the sound of porcupines scampering across the rocks. We found quills inside the cave.

There is pit in the middle of the cave surrounded by loose rocks the size of shoe boxes. While we were climbing in there our vibrations made some of the rocks slide into the pit with a crash. It was kind of scary because it was so dark, but no one was hurt. Coopers cave is made of dolomite limestone. Once we were inside, Ms. Bonita De Klerk, a scientist studying the cave, talked to us about the cave and our ancestors.

Part of the cave now open to the sky

The ‘real’ cave-like part we explored.
Ancient Tools

Have you ever wondered how our ancient ancestors ever killed animals or cut up food? The answer is tools, early tools. The origin of tools comes from the species Homo Habilis, around 2.6 million years ago. The origins of tools are still being researched. Ancient tools were made from bone, wood and stone, long before metals were developed. They date stone tools by finding the soil around them and using special methods dating the soil. That gives them the age of the tool.

When we started studying this, we as a sixth grade went to Coopers Cave, and met with a stone tool scientist, Mr. Grant Hall. He loves Ancient Tools and got us excited about making them ourselves.

These are some of the ancient flint tools used for weapons, working with wood or leather, and maybe for planting crops.
Can you find the 8 differences between these two picture?

(puzzle created by Sade)  Answers on next page
Help Robert Broom discover the famous fossil, Mrs. Ples. Find your way IN to Sterkfontein Cave from the outside.

Our "Ancient" Tools
By Gabriella Josefsson

Since the whole sixth grade was too big to go into Cooper’s cave together, one group went into the cave with Ms. Steininger and Ms. De Klerk, the other remained with Mr. Grant to make our own prehistoric stone tools.

Everyone first chose a hand sized round rock to use as a hammer stone. We then searched for a stone that we could shape into a tool using the hammer stone. As Mr. Grant showed us how to make the tools, we all listened eagerly.

We were engaged the minute we started. Everyone’s tools looked different, some big, some small, some sharp, some blunt.

Then Mr. Grant got out some objects we could test our tools on: peanuts, squash, biltong, and even a huge, bloody cow bone with meat still on it! (That is Nora pretending to take a bite!) We sure made a huge mess!

You too can be an ancient human. Go on, make a stone tool, it’s easy... and fun!
I.O.V. Word Scramble

M Y C U V H E A Q I V E J N E
Y G R O T S E C N A M Y I E V
S O D G J H I P W A A E K T O
P L Y I T Q K C R U T E Y L L
H O N O N P V O G N U Y U H U
U T W L U I P F O S S I L M T
E N E T I E M F A C E A X T I
Y O U S N T K O P I C J E V O
R E Q G U R T X H O S U L X N
A L H R E A H L T K Q J D U J
L A D T C O O P E R S C A V E
U P S I H N W A R F G A R R P
X X R Q C T V X O S O A C L R
G F C H C N R N X W Z O D U E
A D O C B L S J X Y L Z T F E

AFRICA
AISJ
ANCESTOR
COOPERSCAVE
CRADLE
EVOLUTION

FOSSIL
HOMINID
LITTLEFOOT
MAROPENG
PALEONTOLOGY
STERKFONTEIN

Is your skull up to finding ALL of these?
Our trip to Wits to gain some wits.

Well, just incase you didn’t know, in the South African language Afrikaans, the $W$ is pronounced as a “V”. During our study of our ancestry our class went on a field trip to The Origins Center at the University of Witwatersrand. We looked at different drawers full of skulls from different time periods and how they were so different from each other.

A large part of the museum is devoted to the San Culture, an ancient tribe in Southern Africa. We saw a video about shamans and their ability to travel to other worlds.

One of the most interesting things about the museum was its room with a giant stuffed Kudu, an animal sacred to the San

Nayun demonstrating how our ancestors jumped to capture food.

The Wits Origins Center has an amazing collection of spear heads, scrapers and hammer stones, AND the oldest piece of abstract Art ever found: 70,000 years old.
Escape from Cooper’s Cave!

Start Here inside the Cave.
Easy Origins Crossword

ACROSS

2. Our School (in letters)
5. Theory Charles Darwin made famous
7. The stuff your skull is made of
8. The furniture you rock babies in

DOWN

1. A museum in the cradle of humankind
3. The large bone in your head
4. A name for us and our ancestors
6. A place where bats live
The Theory of Evolution
By Abhinav

A theory is an idea, formed by discoveries. Evolution is the change of species throughout time. The Theory of Evolution is that life changes throughout generations. The Theory of Evolution was made famous (some say discovered) by a man named Charles Darwin. Darwin was born in England on February 12th 1809. He died April 19th 1882, at the age of 73. Darwin set sail from England around the world on a ship called the Beagle. During the trip, Darwin visited many places, and found many unique fossils. On one trip, Darwin visited the Galapagos Islands. There he found plants and animals that could not be found anywhere else around the world. One peculiar type of bird species, the mockingbird, fascinated Darwin. It appeared to Darwin that this bird was different wherever it lived in the world. He began to think that the environment where it lived made the bird different over time. When the Beagle returned from its long voyage, Darwin studied the fossils which he had collected. He noticed that the species had been altered throughout time, which led him to the theory of evolution. Charles Darwin was interested in science, and was fascinated by life, throughout his life.
The Three Scientists

When we visited Coopers cave, we met three scientists that work the paleontology dig. Their names are Ms. Bonita De Klerk, Mr. Grant Hall, and Ms. Christine Steininger. They were the coolest and answered all of our questions. Ms. De Klerk studies Human Evolution. Mr. Hall studies and excavates Stone Tools. Ms. Steininger studies a little of everything and is in charge of the ‘dig’. What was cool was they let us get down into the dig too and look for fossils. And we found some!
I.O.V

In our village we are united,
We are not separated by race, weight or height,
We are one,
Joined together by our ancestors,
Homo erectus and all,
Together we will not fall,
We have searched the Earth,
Every niche and corner,
Looking for traces,
Traces of origin,
Traces of a link,
Finding majority,
Understanding minority,
In our village,
We are one,
Together under the sun,
And the stars and the sky,
We are one
In our Village

Our school.
See the curved front and tall doors? Our school used to be a horse stable!
IOV Symbolism:

Here is Sade’s original cover idea for our book. The suitcase filled with papers represents the many mysteries that still remain in understanding our species. The skulls on the mantelpiece are for our ancestors. The baby skeleton in the blue thing is supposed to be a cradle for the Cradle of Humankind. (Our teacher, Mr. Tennis, thought it looked like a dog’s bed!) The fire represents how we learned to use one of our most helpful tools: FIRE!
How long ago did our ancestors move away from Africa? Can you guess?

Try to match the Letter from the map with the number of years ago hominids (That’s US) got there. (AFTER THEY LEFT Southern and Eastern Africa!). hominids (that US!) were there. Ps. There are TWO ‘C’s because both places have hominid fossils about the same age.

Answers on the next page in tiny print.
Here is our class on the ground inside Cooper's Cave. Even today, animals like porcupines drag bones and rubbish down into the cave. We found some of their quills. Maybe in thousands of years, they will be fossils too!

Answers to the Map question on the page before: D (North Africa) = 170,000 – 160,000 years ago, C (China & Australia) = 70,000 – 60,000 years ago, B (North Europe) = 50,000 – 40,000 years ago, F (West Coast of North America) 35,000 – 25,000 years ago, E (South America) 15,000 – 12,000 years ago, A (North Central Canada) = 9,000 – 7,000 years ago.
We took this picture of the fields just above Cooper’s Cave. This is what a lot of the countryside around “Our Village” Johannesburg looks like. The weather is usually beautiful. We get some exciting thunder storms though.

Below these fields in some places there are limestone caves. Rain washed down into some of these caves millions of years ago carrying bones and other stuff. Over time they became fossils. In the picture to the right you can see a long fossil of an animal, maybe a leg bone.
You will see this sign as you drive in to the Cradle of Humankind Museum at Sterkfontein Cave.

Here is “Mrs. Ples” a fossilized skull found in Sterkfontein Cave in 1947 by Robert Broom.

In 2002 scientists here in South Africa did a CAT scan of the tooth roots on the fossil and now believe it is the skull of a young male.

The species is about 2½ million years old and walked standing up but was very short.
Here we are with Ms. Christine Steininger, the paleontologist in charge of the dig at Cooper’s Cave. This stuff we are kneeling on is breccia. It is made of fossils, bits of rock, mud and sand all hardened together. This is part of the original floor of Coopers Cave that is now exposed.

Ms. Bonita De Klerk, one of the three Coopers Cave Scientists, in front of the restaurant at Sterkfontein Cave. Besides the cave to explore (where the famous Littlefoot fossil was found), they have a great little museum and gift shop.

Here is our class going into Maropeng, the Cradle of Humankind Museum. It is covered with dirt and grass to make it look like it fits in the environment. Maybe they also did this to help visitors remember that fossils come from
Glossary

Ancestry - the list of your ancestors: your parents and grandparents and their grandparents and on and on and on and on into the past.

Cooper's Cave - a collapsed dolomite & limestone cave named after the owner of the large farm where this cave is located. It is near other paleontology sites: Swartskrans and Sterkfontein cave.

Cradle of Humankind - a term often used to describe the area north of Johannesburg (near our school) where paleontologists have found important fossils explaining the origins of Humankind.

Cradle project - the project our whole sixth grade does each year in partners, each project's topic relating to evolution and the origins of humankind.

Evolution - the developmental process of how a species changes over a long period of time.

Extinction - when a species goes extinct, the last samples of that species dies out.

Hominid - the scientific name for Humans.

Maropeng - The museum of Cradle of Humankind, that is about 45 minutes by car from our school (north of Johannesburg, South Africa).

Paleontologist - A scientist that studies fossils of organisms and related remains.

Sterkfontein Cave - the cave in which fossils of Littlefoot and Mrs. Ples were discovered. They are very important discoveries, since they are some of the oldest and most complete hominids fossils yet discovered.
An important part of Service Learning is letting other people know what we have done. This map shows some of the places we are sending a copy of our book. The idea is to donate a copy to each library in schools AISJ students and teachers used to go to or work for.
Our School

The authors of this book go to the America International School of Johannesburg. We call it AISJ. Our school has about 650 students from grades kindergarten-12. We have a small K-6 campus in Pretoria and a larger k-12 campus north of Johannesburg.

You can see from the photo that our school used to be a horse farm. See the stable doors with arches that are now classroom doors? We have students from 60 nations, and we are the largest international school in South Africa. Our school is extremely interested in service learning projects; this book is an example of one. We like to be involved with our community as much as possible; we also want to make it a better place. We are all incredibly proud to go to AISJ and love it here at our school.
Stone tools and fossils of skulls and bones represent our ancestry. This book explores our identity as humans through discoveries made here in South Africa. We hope that this book will be a key, a key to your understanding our ancestry. It explains where the human race started, all the way through to where we are today at the top of the food chain. While receiving the opportunity to learn about your roots, you also get a chance to have some fun. There are puzzles to complete and differences in pictures to find, but we’ll leave that to you to discover...... Enjoy!

Daniel Grainger, director of Photography for this book, poses with a plaster caste of a fossilized skull