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*Further understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present through undertaking and publishing research, and providing access to print and audiovisual collections*

## Donations from Canberra families boost AIATSIS collection

20 June 2011

**Recent generous donations by two Canberra families of archival recordings and five valuable paintings are a priceless addition to world's largest collection of materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lifestyles and cultures.**

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra was recently gifted five valuable Central Australian watercolours painted in the 1960s and several rare audio recordings from a Aboriginal Land Rights Conference held in Sydney in the early 1970s.

Mrs Leigh Murray, of Hughes, generously donated the five watercolours painted by Hermannsburg artists some 50 years ago which are now valued between \$15,000 to \$20,000.

“The paintings belonged to my 92-year old aunt, Mrs Joan Bolton, who now lives in Queanbeyan and she wanted to make sure that they were not locked away in some private collection and we decided to donate them to the Institute.”

Mrs Murray said that her aunt bought the paintings at Hermannsburg during their travels to Central Australia with her husband in the very early 1960s.

AIATSIS's Audio Visual Archives Collections Manager, David Jeffery, said the five watercolours – all landscapes – were reminiscent of the work of reknown Western Arrernte artist Albert Namitjira.

“Two were painted by Otto Pareroulta, and three of the others are by Helmut and Edwin Pareroulta and one is the work of Brentan Raberaba. Recent auctions of Otto's work, for example, have sold for between \$3,000 and \$5,000,” Mr Jeffery said.

The other donation, from Ms Joan Garvan, of Lyneham, are rare recordings from the 1970's of well-known Aboriginal activists speaking at an Aboriginal Land Rights 'teach in' organised by the Aboriginal Land Rights' Support Group in Sydney.

Some of the recordings feature speakers such as the late Joe McGinness and Mick Miller, Lawrence Dugong, Marcia Langton, Pat O’Shane, Steven Albert – and many others.

“The Aboriginal Land Rights Support Group was a group of non-Indigenous people who offered support to Indigenous people who were actively fighting for land rights at that time.

“I was a member of that group as a young person living in Sydney at that time,” Joan said.

“I donated a lot of papers and newspaper cuttings many years ago to Tranby Aboriginal College but I thought it appropriate that AIATSIS take charge of protecting the tapes – particularly as AIATSIS also holds the collection of the newsletter that the support group published for several years.”

Joan, who grew up in Sydney but moved to Canberra many years ago and married here, recently completed a PhD at the Australian National University and is President of the Australian Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement, whose patron is Dr Jackie Huggins.

“I thought these tapes are a valuable part of contemporary Indigenous history and should be properly cared for,” Joan said.

The Institute’s growing archive holds almost a million items of unique and priceless audio and videotape, photos, film records and written material of Indigenous peoples’ ceremony, culture, lifestyles, art, music, languages, and oral history.

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