Unit 49

Hand-out 3:

Research and documentation

#### The Waanyi Women’s History Project

This is the interesting case of an initiative driven by Aboriginal women to counter gender bias in ICH research and documentation is the Waanyi Women’s History Project. It is an oral history project set up by women of the Waanyi Aboriginal community who live near the Riversleigh World Heritage area and surrounding Boodjamulla National Park. The project involved recording sites of cultural and historical significance to Waanyi women within this area since some of them were concerned that these cultural sites and places had not been adequately identified or managed. Two significant contextual factors were:

Women had often been overlooked in a land management system that has tended to assume that men are the primary spokespersons for cultural issues.

Much of the information about these sites is privileged knowledge that cannot be imparted to men and the women were concerned that this placed their sites inadvertently in danger since it was unknown to the park managers.

Sites of cultural and historical significance to Waanyi women were identified for the park managers and protocols for them to liaise with Waanyi women were established, affirming the legitimacy of their role in the management of the sites. The project was carried out by senior Waanyi women with three female archaeologists whom they invited to participate and who were thus used as a political resource in order to gain recognition and acceptance of women’s cultural knowledge and ways of managing and caring for their cultural heritage.