

Gunditjmara Budj Bim

PROTECTION

The UNESCO World Heritage Listed Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is an extensive and technologically sophisticated aquaculture system within the Budj Bim lava flow. It's one of the world's largest and oldest aquaculture systems located in Southwest Victoria that dates at least 6,600 years ago.

The aquaculture system was created by Gunditjmara who manipulated and modified local hydrological regimes and ecological systems to sustainably harvest and farm large quantities of the migrating Kooyang (short, finned eel) by manipulating seasonal flooding through the creation of stone channels. Today Gunditjmara cultural traditions, knowledge and practices continue to be part of the six-millennia long connection with the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape.

Gunditjmara's connection to Country along with land ownership and active management enables Gunditjmara to continue to care for Country. Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, the Budj Bim Ranger Program and project partners deliver a range of caring for Country programs to support this. With the aim to enhance the health and protection of Country and its natural and cultural values. Which includes cultural heritage management, native flora and fauna management, cultural fire, building and

maintaining tracks, water management including cultural flows, weed and feral animal control, monitoring, nature-based tourism and more.

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is protected and managed through an adaptive management framework, respecting its customary and legal rights and obligations of Gunditjmara Traditional Owners.

Gunditjmara currently own and manage approximately 3000 hectares of land along the Budj Bim lava flow and most of these properties are declared and managed as Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs).

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape in July 2019 was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List purely for its Aboriginal Cultural Values, following a rigorous process spanning over 20+ years;

'The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape bears an exceptional testimony to the cultural traditions, knowledge, practices and ingenuity of the Gunditjmara. The extensive networks and antiquity of the constructed and modified aquaculture system of the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape bears testimony to the Gunditjmara as engineers and kooyang fishers. Gunditjmara knowledge and practices have endured and continue to be passed down through their Elders

and are recognisable across the wetlands of the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape in the form of ancient and elaborate systems of stone-walled kooyang husbandry (or aquaculture) facilities. Gunditjmara cultural traditions, including associated storytelling, dance and basket weaving, continue to be maintained by their collective multigenerational knowledge'

Gunditjmara worked on several developments that got them to this point, which began in the late 1970s with the Onus v Alcoa High Court case. Although, more recently this included the development of the Lake Condah Sustainable Development project that achieved many of its objectives. This involved having the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape inscribed onto Australia's National Heritage List in 2004 as well as the return and restoration of Tae Rak (Lake Condah) in 2010.

By combining deep time traditional practices that have been handed down for thousands of generations and westernised natural resource management practices, Gunditjmara continue to care for and heal their Country just as their ancestors have for thousands of generations.