**Denis:** [00:00:04] Welcome to the Tyrendarra indigenous protected area.

**Denis:** [00:00:14] It's part of the Budj Bim cultural landscape which was inscribed on the World Heritage List in July last year, 2019, Budj Bim cultural landscape was inscribed primarily because of the values of one of the world's oldest aquaculture systems. It has a scientifically accepted date of construction six and a half thousand years ago.

**Denis:** [00:00:40] In 2013, the Budj Bim in cultural landscape was recognized by Engineers Australia as one of Australia's national landmark engineering heritage sites, along with places such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge with the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme. It was recognised as Australia's first engineering construction, we also have scientific work that has verified that the Muldoon's fish trap is six thousand six hundred years old. This is Darlot Creek, and its traditional name is Killara and Killara means always there, and it's very appropriately named Creek. This creek has never gone dry as far as I know. And it has a wonderful supply of water year round compared with other rivers within the area.

**Denis:** [00:01:30] The only reason that the Gunditjmara people were able to invest time and effort and resources into these more permanent structures, the Stonehouse sites, the aquaculture systems, was that this great water supply meant that food gathering and resource use was exceptional.

**Denis:** [00:01:58] This is one of the 14 aquaculture systems on this 250 hectare property of this wetland. You can see here that the channel has being constructed through the rock. This is the level of bedrock here. A fire was lit on the rock on top of the rock. The rock got really hot. It was then smashed with other rocks and the rubble was pulled there. When it was time to harvest eels, an eel Basket would be placed in the weir.

**Greg Shelton:** [00:02:29] My name's Greg Shelton. I'm a Gunditjmara man, Gilgergunditj Clan, I'm employed Gunditj Mirring Aboriginal Corporation as a World Heritage Ranger.

**Greg Shelton:** [00:02:41] So he is one of Vale eel fish canals used to farm the eels. So the way they would work, you'd have water running downstream, you put your basket in the middle of the canal. Set a few rocks around it to hold it in place. So these fish would come in and we'd get bigger eels in there and and get them for a feed. It's got a smaller opening at the back of the basket. And that was to let the smaller eels travel further down the system. Because the eels eventually travel out to sea right up to the Coral Sea and spawn out there. And in the younger elders, make glass eels make their way back up the systems, which is pretty amazing.

**Greg Shelton:** [00:03:25] The Europeans, when they first started farming the land, they changed the water ways. So a lot of our fish traps don't say water today.

**Denis:** [00:03:33] It was a very complex system that relied on great understanding of country and great understanding of the whether patterns of the climate of the habits of the fishes as well.

**Greg Shelton:** [00:03:51] So here we are at Tae Rak, Lake Condah. Lake Condah was formed around 30000 years ago from the Budj Bim being eruptions, that lava flowed first flowing west and then south right down to the coast. And that's what form like Condah. With the Europeans changing the waters drainage, it use to be dry. We had a weir built further down in Darlot Creek. And now we get water in it all year round. And its brought back hundreds of species of birds.

**Denis:** [00:04:32] We Just got to walk over to that tree line over there.

**Denis:** [00:04:47] The system here has been dated at six thousand seven hundred years old. Some 2000 years older than the pyramids. So Gunditjmara we pretty much farm the eels. Used the basalt rocks, to build our stone houses and engineer fish canals, channels. That why we had eels was all year round. Diversion nets put into holding ponds. And that way we could get the eels there. And then once the water started flowing back out after winter, we could get another, you know, catch him in the baskets that the women wove. So they could work ways.

**Eileen:** [00:05:42] My names Eileen Alberts. I'm a Gunditj woman from the Gunditjmara nation. And the country that we're standing on at the moment is called Kurtonitj. Kurtonitj means where the water travels over the rocks. And this is where I belong. This is my home country.

**Eileen:** [00:06:05] Weaving baskets traditionally belongs to the women. So I’ll only teach women how to make baskets. The only tool you'd need would be, perhaps, the leg bone of a kangaroo, sharpened and at one end, that would be your needle. So if I were to complete this basket, I'd use it for gathering of nuts, and berrries and plant. So sow it to the back of the stitch, turn it into its tail and continue on. If you wanted to white in the pattern, you just turn the grass inside out. So there you have that white pattern throughout.

**Greg Shelton:** [00:07:00] So here we are the Lake Condah weir. This was part of the Lake Condah Sustainability Project. This work was completed in late 2009, started off as the elders wanting water to being like Condah. Putting the weir in slows the water system down, and holds water in the lake all year round now.

**Greg Shelton:** [00:07:25] I'll show you how it works. It's electronic. We can change the level of the door down below there. Before winter we close it up a it, to hold more water in the lake. It comes through Darlot drain, through the weir then it becomes Darlot Creek or Killara, what we call it. It's one of the freshest streams in Australia. Real fresh freshwater.

**Denis:** [00:07:57] Here we have a reconstructed stone house site. When we talk about stone houses on the lava flow, we're talking about using stone as the foundation. The rock is used to provide the stability for the timber frames. Then over the timber frames is earth and then branches. And this one has tea tree in it, for example. The stone site here is very typical of how they are out on country. The opening faces the north east because the winds come from the south west. So its protection here. A fire, generally speaking, was lit at the front of the place, not inside. On one of our properties, the Allambie property, we have recorded 140 plus stone house sites on the property. We talk about having a village there, a couple and one or two children, over 140 sites. You're starting to talk about five to 600, 700 people. We had a sustainable lifestyle on the lava flow. I think that's a really important message that needs to be put through here. That this defies the stereotypes of Aboriginal people as being nomadic and always on the move. We had a pretty much a permanent resident population on the lava flow because of this great water supply, which provided such a rich and diverse food resource. Waterbirds, ducks, swans, other animals, kangaroos, wallabies, possums that would be attracted by the water and plenty of plant resource as well. So a very rich supply of food resource on the lava flow. It enabled Gunditjmara people to spend more other activities such as education, such as the spiritual side of things, looking after family.

**Denis:** [00:09:57] It enabled a very rich and fruitful lifestyle.

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