

Budj Bim *Caring for the spirit and the people*

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Abstract: Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape represents the extraordinary triumph of the Gunditjmarra people in having this place recognised as a place of the spirit, a place of human technology and ingenuity and as a place of resistance.

The Gunditjmarra are the Indigenous people of this part of south-western Victoria, Australia. In this landscape, more than 30 000 years ago the Gunditjmarra witnessed an important creation being, reveal himself in the landscape.

Budj Bim (known today as Mount Eccles) is the source of an immense lava flow which transformed the landscape. The Gunditjmarra people developed this landscape by digging channels, creating ponds and wetlands and shaping an extensive aquaculture system, providing an economic basis for the development of a settled society.

This paper will present the complex management planning that has gone into restoring the lake and re-establishing Gunditjmarra management, reversing the tide of Australian history, and enabling the spirit of this sacred place to again be cared for.

Introduction

The ancestral creation-being is revealed in the landscape of south-western Victoria (Australia) at Budj Bim (Mt Eccles). At Mount Eccles the top of his head is revealed, his teeth *tung att* are the scoria cones. His spirit is embedded deep in this place and in the people – Gunditjmarra.

Listing of Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape on Australian's new national heritage list in 2004 was an extraordinary achievement for a

remarkable people. Since, a native title claim has succeeded and more Gunditjmarra traditional country has been handed back.

This paper tells the story of the courage and determination of Gunditjmarra people in their fight for their country and looks forward with their vision of the future and plans to restore Lake Condah with permanent water.

Inspirited landscape

For Aboriginal people, country is a 'nourishing terrain' – a place that gives and receives life. Country is everything – people, plants, animals, earth, water, Dreaming, air, sky – and every Aboriginal person has a country to which they belong (Rose 1996, 7-8).

Each country has its sacred origins, its Dreamings written in the land and known through traditions and cultural practices. Spiritual associations to country through the activities of creation beings at particular places are characteristic of Aboriginal societies throughout Australia. Through story and totems, the land, the people and other species are connected together in a complex web of meanings, responsibilities and reciprocities.

Dreaming or creation time refers to the time in which the land was formed and shaped, and living things created. Ancestral beings were the creators of all things. The Dreaming is ever-present. It is not a past time or a past event that has concluded.

Country is a really important word too. In Aboriginal English it means more than just land.

'People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy... Country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace; nourishment for the body, mind and spirit; heart's ease' (Rose 1996, 7).

For Gunditjmarra people, the whole of their country in western Victoria on the edge of the southern ocean is inspirited – filled with the spirit of creation and rich with significance and stories of the ancestral past.

The 'high head' of Budj Bim is ever-present in the landscape, not as a large feature that dominates visually, but as a presence that is felt as much as seen. The massive flows of lava that accompanied the revelation of Budj Bim completely reshaped the land, flowing through and filling valleys and tributaries of Darlot Creek, covering the land. This flow, the Tyrendarra lava flow, extended to the south for nearly 50 kilometres.

Today, after the sea-level rise following the last global ice age, the lava flow extends 14 kilometres into the sea off the southern coast of Australia.

The revelation of Budj Bim and the lava flow is spiritually connected to Deen Maar, a small island 5 kilometres off the coast. As part of Gunditjmara tradition, Deen Maar is the last stepping-stone for the spirit before it departs this world. The belief that spirits go to an island of the dead or cross some water after death is widespread throughout Australia. One tradition describes how the island was formed when the dead body of a giant was thrown into the sea. There are accounts that the rotting body gives the sea in the area a strange smell (DEWHA Lady Julia Percy Island) Opposite the island, on the mainland, is an important cave - Tarn wirring or the 'road of the spirits' – which formed part of the passage between the mainland and the island. (Clark 1990, 65).

These are just a few of the many stories and spiritual meanings that are alive in Gunditjmara country.

Restoring connections to this spiritual landscape is a significant challenge. Loss of land and traditions are just two of the many impacts of colonisation on Gunditjmara people. Through years of fighting for land justice, Gunditjmara are seeking to reverse these impacts. Recent achievements – National Heritage listing, native title and community initiatives at Lake Condah – are starting to bear fruit.

Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape

Three places heralded the launch of the National Heritage List in July 2004 – one of the three was Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape, listed Budj Bim was listed under four of the nine criteria. It was the first place listed under the new criterion (criterion [i]) designed to recognise places of outstanding significance as part of Indigenous tradition.

The National Heritage List includes places of outstanding importance to the nation as a whole. The Minister for the Environment and Heritage describes the National Heritage List as containing:

‘the nation's most outstanding natural, cultural and Indigenous places and stories that make the country distinctively Australian. It will be something which will make us all feel proud of this amazing country the highest recognition the nation could offer’ (Minister for the Environment and Heritage 2004).

Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape is of outstanding national significance of of Australia because the landscape demonstrates the ‘process through which ancestral beings reveal themselves in the landscape’ (NHL listing).

This process of the revelation of ancestral beings is known from across Australia where it involves Aboriginal people recognising (or having revealed to them) the form of an ancestral being in a feature of the landscape. In Queensland's Atherton Tablelands, Aboriginal creation stories about volcanism are cast within the framework of transgressions and reprisals by ancestral beings (DEWHA 2004a). In the younger volcanics in Victoria, which includes Mount Eccles, the stories are of a creation being Budj Bim (Clark 1990a; 1990b; Built 2003).

The other values of the Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape are also outstanding nationally, and potentially internationally. These include:

- the remarkable and extensive aquaculture systems that enable Gunditjmara society to develop and strengthen

- the sustained and organised Gunditjmara resistance to Europeans in a conflict that has become known as the Eumeralla Wars

- the continuity of connection by Gunditjmara people with their country, and their passionate fight to retain and return culture and land.

The Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape covers two large areas, together 14,000 hectares (or 140 square kilometres).

The Lake Condah – Mt Eccles section stretches from Mt Eccles (Budj Bim) in the east to Darlot Creek in the west, a landscape of rugged stony rises (lava flows) covered with eucalypt woodland. As the lava filled the prior streams, lakes and swamps, a new landscape was created. Lake Condah formed about 8000 years ago, and is one of a series of large wetlands on the edge of the lava flows.

The Tyrendarra section comprises a section of the lava flow to the south of Lake Condah and containing the remains of extensive and 'complex systems of natural and artificially created wetlands, channels, the stone bases of weirs and stone fish traps that were used by Gunditjmara people to grow and harvest eels and fish. The remains on Tyrendarra are part of the same system as the remains in the Mt Eccles/Lake Condah area, and are hundreds and probably thousands of years old' (DEWHA 2004b).

Fighting for country

The extent of Aboriginal dispossession and disadvantage since the arrival of Europeans in Australia is difficult to imagine and painful to describe. In southern and eastern Australia the impacts are especially severe, and many Aboriginal people have been disconnected from country, tradition, language, knowledge and family.

Gunditjmara people retained connections to their traditional country, with two missions being established on country, one right next to Lake Condah. The mission period lasted from the 1860s through to 1918. But even after the official closure of the Lake Condah Mission, Gunditjmara people stayed living there and continued their connection to Lake Condah and the stony rises.

The fight for land justice – the return of their traditional country - was long and hard and there were many ‘battles’. In the mid 1980s, following legal action against aluminium producer Alcoa by Sandra Onus and Christina Saunders, the Victorian State Government commenced negotiations with the traditional owners of Lake Condah. As a result the mission site and cemetery was returned to Aboriginal ownership, and the State government commenced a program of land purchase with the intention of returning this land to the Aboriginal community. The Commonwealth Government passed legislation to enable the return of the mission and other land, using for the only time the power granted to it in the 1967 referendum to pass special laws in relation to Aboriginal people. The significance of the unique legal processes by which the land was returned to the community is also recognised in the National Heritage List (Winda Mara 2008, 25).

Gunditjmara continued their fight for country under the *Native Title Act 1993*, achieving success in 2007. In the decision, Justice North notes that the determination is just one more step in a long history of the fight for recognition, seeing it as part of a continuum which includes the Eumeralla War, legal proceedings against the Alcoa Aluminium smelter and the fight to protect the Convincing Ground. The significance of this finding against the context of previous Victorian native title claims (most significantly that of the Yorta Yorta people) cannot be underestimated.

The latest initiative – the Lake Condah Sustainable Development Project - is another step in the Gunditjmara’s long connection with Lake Condah. The next section of this paper explains how the return of water to the lake will protect its spiritual and other values, and describes some of the policies that have been created to achieve this outcome.

Restoring Lake Condah

Standing on the edge the lava flow, looking across the dry bed of Lake Condah to Mount Eccles on the horizon, the landscape is vast. But there is something missing.

From the 1870s until the 1950s, drains were cut through the deep sediments of the lake, draining its waters into an artificial channel and then into Darlot Creek.

A description of the lake in the *Portland Mercury* (a local newspaper) in the summer of 1843 demonstrates its natural abundance:

‘a splendid freshwater lake ... about a mile and a half long and three quarters of a mile wide, and contains almost every variety of fish in abundance, with swans, ducks &c. It is of considerable depth, and receives a river about 50 yards broad; one side is bold and rocky and contains a number of small coves into one of which a beautiful stream empties itself, and the other side is a gently sloping shore surrounded by a fine tract of country’ (Portland Mercury, 11 January 1843).

As the lake was drained, farmers gained control over the land for the grazing of stock.

But the lake was more than just a natural body of water. It was – and is – a cultural creation. Through a weir lower down on Darlot Creek, Gunditjmara managed the water flows through a system of wetlands from Condah Swamp, Whittlebury Swamp and Lake Condah; together these wetlands cover 500 hectares (5 square kilometres). Within Lake Condah and in other wetland areas towards the coast, Gunditjmara created extensive aquaculture systems to harvest eels and fish.

In Lake Condah itself, these stone and earth structures – weirs, races, canals, walls – enabled active management of water flows and effective trapping using woven nets. Use of deeper pools suggests that eels and fish were held over extended periods, enabling extended use of this resource.

Recent investigation of weir on Darlot Creek has added to Gunditjmara knowledge of the extent of the landscape management practiced in the past.

‘What would happen, these low-lying areas here, the eels would come in here to feed, and then they would come swimming up these areas, the low areas, and then come to these channels. They would then be forced into these channels and moved down through here into places where the holding pens are.

This is part of a farming system. We actually managed the eel. We just didn't come out here and hunt and fish. We actually came out here to collect and manoeuvre and farm and move these eels into places where we wanted them to go so then we could pick them up when we wanted to pick them up’.

Daryl Rose, Gunditjmara Elder, Radio National 2007

Back in the early 1990s, Gunditjmara determined to return water to Lake Condah, bringing it to life again. A management plan was prepared in 1993 and has guided actions since.

The *Lake Condah Sustainable Development Project* is currently the most significant strategic planning initiative for Lake Condah, and establishes the framework for all current activities. The project is an Indigenous initiative that came out of an economic development plan for Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation and was launched in February 2002 with a visit from the Hon. Philip Ruddock, the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The key elements of the project are:

1. To gain national and world heritage listing.
2. To restore & re-flood Lake Condah wetland.
3. To rebuild the old mission Church.
4. To develop land management plans.
5. To develop an international learning centre.
6. To develop employment centred around tourism, accommodation, aquaculture and bush tucker etc.
7. To build a strong partnership of active members supporting the project.

A key part of the project is the return of water to Lake Condah and extensive hydrological studies have been undertaken to determine how this will occur.

In parallel, a conservation management plan (CMP) has been developed to ensure that the heritage values of Lake Condah are fully understood and that effective Gunditjmara management policies and practices are established.

The CMP is founded on an empowering Gunditjmara vision – or *Yarkeem*:

Gunditjmara will conserve Lake Condah. It is an important Gunditjmara place and we have fought hard over many generations to see it returned to us so that we can heal this land. Gunditjmara acknowledge the ancestral Kerrup Jmara and the Kerrup Jmara today.

Gunditjmara will restore the natural abundance of the lake. Water will again flow into the lake and remain there year round, enabling native plants and animals to return and be nurtured by the life-giving waters of the lake.

Lake Condah will again be central to Gunditjmara life and culture. Gunditjmara people will experience the landscape, engage in eel and fish harvesting using the stone trap systems, and apply traditional

knowledge and practices in land and water management. As the water returns into this landscape, we will learn more about the ways in which previous generations cared for and used the land, and we will pass what we learn onto the next generation so that traditions and knowledge are never lost again.

We will welcome guests to Gunditjmara traditional lands and they will experience the landscape with us as we care for the land. This will enable us to share aspects of Gunditjmara history, culture and knowledge may be shared.

Gunditjmara welcome the support and contributions of many other people and organisations to this restoration project.

Restoring Lake Condah will help us achieve our cultural, economic and social aspirations. Lake Condah will become one of the foremost Indigenous cultural destinations, consistent with the aspirations of the local Aboriginal people.

The healing of Lake Condah within a generation is our vision for the future. It is a legacy from us today to future generations who we are asking to carry forward this important work.

From this powerful Yarkeem, five principles have been defined to guide the plan:

The significance of Lake Condah is paramount

Lake Condah is a dynamic living place

Lake Condah sustains Gunditjmara culture and people

Lake Condah is a place of learning

Connections with Lake Condah are strengthened

All uses and users of Lake Condah respect its significance

Lake Condah is a significant place for Gunditjmara people. It has sustained generations of Gunditjmara. At Lake Condah, important aspects of Gunditjmara culture and history are evident; it is a place that has been strongly defended and a place where culture and traditions were being reasserted and renewed. Passing on of knowledge, traditions and connections to the next generation requires that Gunditjmara people have control over access and use.

The Lake Condah landscape is a dynamic place, shaped by nature and people over millennia. The reintroduction of a more natural water regime and the return of the land to Gunditjmara to manage will create an

opportunity to manage the progressive restoration of this landscape, responding and adapting management techniques as the landscape changes.

As the landscape is restored, perceptions of the landscape, its history and its story will change. In fact, the proposal to return water to the lake demonstrates that this change in perceptions is already underway.

A restored Lake Condah will be even more significant. Reintroducing water into the lake will help unlock new understandings of its significance as a Gunditjmara place. And symbolically the return of water represents a significant healing process, and this is likely to heighten the appreciation of the heritage values of Lake Condah and the wider landscape.

For Gunditjmara, Lake Condah will again be an important learning and teaching place: a place where culture and traditions are passed on and where guests will be invited to learn about Gunditjmara culture.

Adaptive management

One of the fundamental approaches built into the CMP is the idea of adaptive management – a learning approach to management. The reintroduction of water to the lake will return a more natural ecological system and seasonal cycles to the lake, enhancing its cultural values. Management practices will need to be responsive to this changing environment.

Adaptive management will use Gunditjmara knowledge and traditions as the basis for an Indigenous approach to land and water management. There are five steps in the adaptive management approach: planning, action, monitoring, learning, and adaptation.

Some of this learning will be formalised for example by documenting the eel trap systems and observing water flows and eel movements so as to add to an understanding of the whole aquaculture system. These systems have not operated to full capacity in living memory.

Because the aquaculture systems were created by past generations of Gunditjmara and because this place is of outstanding heritage value to Australia, great care will be taken before changes are made to the aquaculture structures.

Returning water to the lake could have both positive and negative impacts, and these issues have had to be considered in shaping policy. For example, a significant benefit is that returning water will probably offer the greatest insight into the complexity and operation of the system. On the other hand, it may result in changes to the stone structures that comprise the system, although this has been assessed as an unlikely outcome.

And once water is returned to the lake, the aquaculture systems at Lake Condah will be able to be used again, introducing the requirement for maintenance and reconstruction. Decisions will therefore need to be made about how components of the aquaculture systems are to be replaced or reconstructed, who will undertake this work and how 'new' work will be distinguished. The ephemeral components of the system - nets, bags and weirs - will need to be made. Limited availability of local materials may require new solutions to be developed.

To address this range of issues and based on the proposed learning and adaptive management approach the CMP proposes a two year learning period in which Gunditjmara will monitor the reintroduction of water in relation to the aquaculture system – especially the stone structures that form the traps and races. Gunditjmara will monitor water flows and associated natural cycles, assess the current condition and functionality of the structures, and document any impacts. At the same time, through Gunditjmara collaboration with researchers, universities and other organisations, any important research questions about the aquaculture system will be defined.

All this information will then inform a Gunditjmara decision about which traps should be re-activated for aquaculture and which should be left as historical evidence of the activities of the Gunditjmara ancestors.

Connection to Country

At Lake Condah, Gunditjmara connections that go back millennia will be able to be sustained into the future. These long-term connections are a vital part of Gunditjmara culture and community wellbeing:

Connection to country is not simply a reflection of history. Lake Condah is a living Gunditjmara place and offers spiritual nourishment to Gunditjmara.

'Lake Condah is the heart of Gunditjmara country .. we have always been with the lake and it has always looked after us .. if the lake is good then we are good .. we have been different since the lake was drained by authorities but with water soon to return, we will achieve an important healing for the country and for ourselves.'

Ken Saunders, Gunditjmara Elder

Gunditjmara connections to country reflect a substantial body of knowledge (or intellectual property) handed down from one generation to the next and containing information about the nature or use of objects, sites and knowledge (including as well natural systems, ecological knowledge, flora and fauna, medicinal uses etc).

The experience of the occupation of Gunditjmarra country, however, has impacted on these connections and on the holding and passing on of traditional knowledge about the management of the environment and the operation of the aquaculture systems.

Aboriginal knowledge and intellectual property often goes unrecognised at best, and at worst is exploited. The CMP encourages Gunditjmarra to document their knowledge and traditions, and to take full control over this information. Likewise Gunditjmarra intellectual property associated with land, water, natural and cultural resources is to be recognised and protected, to ensure any economic benefits arising from its use accrue to Gunditjmarra.

Gunditjmarra welcome what western science can bring to an understanding of their traditional country and to processes of repairing the land. Traditional knowledge and science may reveal more than either can do alone.

Other community connections

Lake Condah is also a place of strong connection for people other than Gunditjmarra: for those who live locally and who have experienced the lake over many years; for those who have worked out on the lake documenting its natural and cultural riches; for those who have visited and taken tours with Gunditjmarra people.

Lake Condah will be conserved as a place that has and continues to allow, many community connections to be made with this place, primarily for the Gunditjmarra community and those that they invite to visit as guests, but also for the local community. Opportunities to strengthen these connections will be supported.

Looking to the future

The challenges to be faced are still many until Gunditjmarra country is healed. But the native title decision, the return of land to traditional owners and the return of water to the lake are all important steps in a long struggle for survival.

Country is more than land. The spirit of the land guides Gunditjmarra always. And as the land is healed, the Gunditjmarra story will reveal itself to us again.

Reflooding the lake's very symbolic in lots of ways. I think that what it's about is that it's about accepting Aboriginal culture and history and heritage as important, and I think the symbolism involved in it is going to be so important because this is one of the most important places, we believe, in Australia in cultural heritage issues. So, therefore, to put water back onto a lake will be fantastic.

We will be able to regenerate our fish traps, be able to show it to the world.

Daryl Rose, Gunditjmara Elder, Radio National 2007

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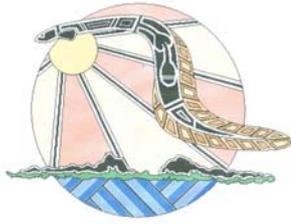
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Leadership Group & Community Update: April 2008

The Return of Lake Condah was held on Sunday 30 March 2008 at the Lake Condah Mission Site. The State of Victoria returned Lake Condah to its traditional owners by vesting the Lake's property title to the Gunditj Mirring organisation.



Proud Gundiymara Elders John Lovett, June Gill, Theo Saunders, Euphemia Day, Christina Saunders, Laura Bell & Amy Saunders in the front row of an exhilarated crowd.

Even with the cold weather and threatening showers, the ceremony attracted 250 people from as far as Mt Gambier and Melbourne.



Gundiymara Dancers Tim Kanoa, Peter Rotumah, Shea Rotumah, Taine Morris & Roger Morris Jr celebrate with traditional dance and song.

Elders Ken Saunders and John Lovett spoke on behalf of traditional owners at the ceremony. The stories moved the crowd as they spoke about life at the Mission site and the Lake when they were young boys.



Elder John Lovett

The Hon. Gavin Jennings, Minister for the Environment and Climate Change spoke on behalf of the State of Victoria while LCSDP Co-Chairs, Denis Rose and John Osborne spoke on behalf of the LCSDP and the broader community.



LCSDP Co-Chairs John Osborne & Denis Rose

Towards the end of the ceremony, the Elders sang the old *The Australian Rag* song that has particular significance for Gundiymara people on their return from World War II.

The Elders also spoke of the strong affiliation that non-Aboriginal families have with Lake Condah.





LCSDP Co-Chair John Osborne & Minister for Environment & Climate Change Gavin Jennings

In January 2008, the traditional owners scheduled the first anniversary (30 March 2008) of the Gunditjmarra Native Title Consent Determination as the appropriate date for the Return of Lake Condah.

The scheduled date of 30 March 2008 presented many challenges for the Victorian Government's Lake Condah Restoration Project Multi-Agency Facilitation Team.

The Team has representation from DSE, the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Southern Rural Water, Parks Victoria and the LCSDP.

Together with the Department of Justice's Native Title Unit and the Victorian Government Solicitors Office, the Team worked hard to produce an innovative outcome that resulted in the return of the Lake to its traditional owners and ensuring the installation of the weir.

As part of the transfer agreement, the traditional owners and native title holders provided a special license for the Victorian Government to proceed with the water restoration activities including the installation of the weir.



Minister Gavin Jennings, LCSDP Manager Damein Bell, Parliamentary Secretary for Justice Brian Tee & DSE Regional Director Ian Voight



Elder Ken Saunders

Elder Ken Saunders provided a poignant reflection for the day by reminding the crowd that back in 2002, many agencies and people did not believe the restoration of Lake Condah, let along the return of the Lake to it traditional owners, was realistic or achievable.



On behalf of the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners organisation, Damein Bell & Thomas Day signed the transfer documents.



Gunditjmarra baby, Peta Sailor shares our hope for the future.



Lake Condah Restoration

The restoration of Lake Condah has commenced with some very important milestones being achieved.

The Environmental Water Requirements of Darlot Creek and Lake Condah by Fluvial Systems has been accepted with the final weir height of 52.4m.

The Lake Condah Water Restoration Conservation Management Plan (CMP) is currently being finalised by Context Pty Ltd. The CMP will provide management policies for the cultural, natural and National Heritage values once the Lake is restored with permanent water.

The Lake Condah Restoration Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is currently being finalised by Dr Ian McNiven. The CHMP directs cultural heritage protection requirements for the weir site.



CHMP Heritage Advisor Dr Ian McNiven, Lake Condah Facilitator Andy Govanstone with the team from Berry Whyte Surveyors at Lake Condah.

GHD is engaged at the Project Manager for the Lake Restoration Project. GHD's Michael Scott has prepared a timeline for the work and permit requirements for the installation of the weir including:

- Preliminary work and construction tender by August 2008.
- Permits and approvals by September 2008.
- Construction by December 2008.



Stone Art @ Kurtonitj

Gunditjmara Artist Vicki Couzens and Celtic Artist Carmel Wallace completed the Dry Country / Wet Country stone art sculpture in November 2007 at the Kurtonitj property.



Carmel Wallace and Vicki Couzens and the Dry Country / Wet Country Sculpture at Kurtonitj.

Vicki and Carmel were joined by Alistair Tune with Gunditjmara participants Travis Bannan, Leon Walker and Yaran Bundle in the construction of the sculpture.

The sculpture is a tribute to the Aboriginal and European drystone work in the southwest of Victoria. The sculpture is now part of the Kurtonitj tour offered by Budj Bim Tours.

Funding for the impressive sculpture came from Regional Arts Victoria, Moyné Shire, Glenelg Shire, Pacific Hydro, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR), Winda Mara & Glenelg Hopkins CMA.

LCSDP Symposium in November 08

As part of the recommendations from the LCSDP Leadership Group meeting in November 08, the LCSDP will be convening a research symposium for projects associated with the LCSDP in November 2008.

The LCSDP Research Symposium will provide the organisational basis for a broader Research Symposium in partnership with the Royal Society of Victoria in late 2009.

Unique Excavations @ Lake Condah

Dr Ian McNiven and his team from Monash University conducted archaeological excavations on a small section of the traditional aquaculture system at Lake Condah during Jan 08. The activity was endorsed by the traditional owners.

The initial work extracted carbon samples from the silt that had built up on the channels over the years. The methodology of the carbon dating is a new process that is still to be confirmed through academic peer review. A second excavation is scheduled for April 08.



The Monash University Team at work at the Lake Condah stone channels.

It is expected that the carbon samples will provide a date of when the channels were worked on by Guditjmarra people.

Winda Mara Timber Industry Project

Young Guditjmarra fellas Stephen Edwards and Bill Bell are currently in Albany WA training to become harvest machine operators. The training is part of a 16 week program provided by industry. For further information about the Winda Mara Timber Industry Project please contact Leeanne Gee at Winda Mara.



Australia 2020 Summit

LCSDP values and achievements will be front and centre at the at the Australian 2020 Summit in April 2008. LCSDP Manager Damein Bell has been invited to participate in the environment, sustainability, population and water stream.

ABC Message Stick Program

The Message Stick Program on ABC TV recently visited the far southwest of Victoria to produce a story on the Lovett Family from Lake Condah and their service in the Australian Defence Forces since World War I.

The story will be in context to *'The Fighting Guditjmarra'* and feature the Guditjmarra's involvement in the Convincing Ground, Eumeralla Wars and the Alcoa action from the early 1980s.

The story is scheduled to be aired nationally on 27 April 2008 to highlight ANZAC day celebrations during that week.



The Message Stick Crew with Elder Sandra Onus (2nd from the left).

Tdo Ceremony @ Tower Hill

Moyne Shire is holding a special acknowledge for the National Apology on Sunday 20 April 2008 at the Worn Guditj Centre at the Tower Hill Reserve from 11am to 3pm .. All Are Welcome !

Budj Bim Tourism

Tourism along the Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape is still progressing at an excellent pace.



The Gilgar Gunditj Place at the Tyrendarra Indigenous Protected Area has finished construction with just the final touches to be done. The eco-toilet has finished construction. The Commonwealth Government's National Heritage Place signage was recently installed



An official opening of the Gilgar Gunditj Place and the unveiling of the National Heritage signage will take place very soon with some very special guests.

With Winter now upon us, guest numbers to the Budj Bim landscape are expected to increase during the next few months.



Northlands Secondary College have been among the guests to the Budj Bim landscape.

LCSDP Learning Centre Development Plan Project

Work on the LCSDP Learning Centre Development Plan has commenced. Funding from the Alcoa Foundation has been provided for the project.

The LCSDP Learning Centre is envisaged to become a sustainable development learning and education resource for the broader Lake Condah region.

It is proposed that the Centre will manage the ongoing research activities associated with the LCSDP, attract further research opportunities with other tertiary institutes and potentially provide training opportunities for people living in the far southwest of Victoria.

RMIT's Global Sustainability Institute is engaged to research the operational scope and management requirements for the envisaged LCSDP Learning Centre.

Consultations will soon be held with LCSDP Leadership Group members and other relevant organisations about the LCSDP Learning Centre.

Next LCSDP Leadership Group Meeting

Friday 13 June 2008 with venue to be advised.

A tour of the Budj Bim landscape will be available for LCSDP Leadership Group members on **Thursday 12 June 2008** commencing in the afternoon.

Please contact Damein Bell to register your interest.

Further LCSDP information:

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