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Indigenous hopes for heritage status

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In a quiet, ancient stretch of Lake Condah, the Gunditjmara people have caught eels in traditional stone traps for at least 6000 years.

Yesterday, descendants of Victoria's southwest Aboriginal peoples heard Malcolm Turnbull grant them their wish -- Australia's commitment to seek World Heritage status for the site.

On the lake's shore, the Prime Minister told the crowd that he had been deeply moved to see "such ancient structures of engineering and ingenuity".

"Looking at this ancient work built by your ancestors, built time out of mind, is really quite something in the same week that the first indigenous MP Ken Wyatt was appointed to a government ministry," he said.

The World Heritage process has started with a crucial first step, the Turnbull government's nomin ation for the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape at Lake Condah to be included on Australia's World Heritage Tentative List.

It is likely to be considered by the UN World Heritage Committee in 2019. If it succeeds, it will be Australia's 20th World Heritage listing and the only place listed solely for its indigenous cultural value.

Tyson Lovett-Murray, 27, led the delegation accompanying the Prime Minister on a quick tour of Muldoons Traps, a complex of spillways and ponds designed to channel eels for easy harvesting in funnel-shaped baskets.

"I told them how they work, how Gunditjmara used to smoke the eels in hollowed out trees and trade them," Mr Lovett-Murray said.The Lake Condah Mission and its lake were handed back to the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation in the mid-1980s.