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In Honor of One of the Northwest's Greatest Leaders: Billy Frank, Jr.

Today, we lost one of the nation's and the state's greatest leaders: Billy Frank, Jr.

Billy Frank, a Nisqually tribal member, changed history. He helped spark the grassroots resistance of tribal people in the late 1960s and 1970s against Washington State's illegal policy of prohibiting fishing off-reservation. Billy was arrested over 50 times during the "fish wars" as were many other tribal leaders. That struggle ended up in the courts. *United States v. Washington*, also known as the Boldt decision, made the 20 treaty Indian tribes in western Washington co-managers of the salmon resource with the State of Washington and re-affirmed the tribal right to half of the harvestable salmon returning to western Washington.

Billy did not rest after that monumental victory, but ceaselessly advocated for stewardship of the blessings we enjoy here in the Northwest: the fishery and the environment that supports and sustains us all. His



advocacy was grounded in the wisdom of his family, his tribe, and the generations that preceded him. Billy's activism ended up restoring habitat destroyed by hydroelectric plants, protecting tribal lands, and promoting cooperative management of natural resources. Most recently, Billy took up the contentious issue of Washington's fish consumption rate—as a civil rights and an environmental issue—urging the Governor not to increase the “acceptable” exposure rate to carcinogens in fish to increase industry profits.

<http://nwifc.org/2014/03/put-people-profits/>

CELP was honored to have Billy serve on its honorary board of directors for many years. In 2012, CELP awarded the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, which Billy headed for thirty years, its *Ralph W Johnson Award* in 2012 in honor of the Commission's work to preserve the waters of this state for all Washingtonians. As CELP said at that time: “In these days when the government agencies tasked with protecting our waters, fish, and wildlife are relegated to protecting their budgets, the advocacy of the Commission has been a critical force in preserving the public's interest in our rivers, streams, and aquifers.”

We at CELP offer our deepest condolences to Billy's wife and family, his colleagues and friends at the Commission, and the members of the Western Washington tribes that the Commission represents.

We are all grieving the loss of a leader and a friend who worked to unite us all, never flinched from a tough position, and whose warmth and wicked sense of humor kept us going. The world is less vibrant with his passing.

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