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NEWS

Indian leader, activist Billy Frank Jr. dies at 83



by [DEAN RADFORD](#), Tukwila Reporter Editor
May 5, 2014 at 4:08PM



Billy Frank Jr. — Image Credit:

Billy Frank Jr., 83, whose fight for Indian fishing rights in the 1960s and 70s led to the landmark Boldt decision, died Monday morning.

Frank was a member of the [Nisqually Indian Tribe](#) and was chairman of the [Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission](#) for 30 years.

In 1974 U.S. District Court Judge George Boldt clearly established the rights of 20 treaty Indian tribes in Western Washington to co-manage salmon with the State of Washington and reaffirmed the tribe's right to half the harvestable salmon returning to western Washington.

The Duwamish Indian Tribe is not included in those 20 tribes because it is not recognized by the federal government. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, which is headquartered in Auburn, is among those

20.

The commission announced Frank's death on its website but provided no additional details. It indicated that services are pending.



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Frank wrote a monthly column called "Being Frank" that appeared in local newspapers in South King County. His May column was just released Monday morning. It's about the dangers of transporting coal and oil in trains through Western Washington.

"We are deeply saddened by the passing of our great leader and good friend, Billy Frank Jr. He was a champion for treaty rights, the salmon and a better quality of life for all of us who live here," said Lorraine Loomis, Swinomish tribal fisheries manager, and NWIFC vice chair.

Government leaders praised Frank.

"Billy Frank Jr.'s courage to stand up for oppressed people, human rights, and environmental justice made him an authentic Northwest icon," said King County Executive Dow Constantine in a statement.

"His willingness to sacrifice his own freedom to preserve important native traditions and protect Puget Sound is something that benefits us all and will for generations to come," he said.

Attorney General Bob Ferguson called Frank a "true statesman."

"Billy was a true statesman who brought an optimistic, can-do approach to environmental and natural resource challenges," said Ferguson. "His activism and perseverance helped build the foundation of an enduring legacy that Washington state will never forget."

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