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## Tribal fishing activist Billy Frank Jr. dies



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by GENE JOHNSON and PHUONG LE / Associated Press

Posted on May 5, 2014 at 11:44 AM  
Updated today at 2:04 PM

SEATTLE -- Billy Frank Jr., the tribal fisherman who led the Northwest "fish wars" that helped restore fishing rights for American Indians four decades ago, has died at age 83.

The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission on Monday confirmed his death.

Frank was first arrested for salmon fishing as a boy in 1945 -- an event that led him on a long campaign for tribal rights. He and others were repeatedly arrested as they staged "fish ins" demanding the right to fish in their historical waters, as they were guaranteed in treaties when they ceded land to white settlers in the 19th century.

In 1974, U.S. District Judge George Boldt affirmed the tribes' right to half of the fish harvest -- and the nation's obligation to honor the old treaties.



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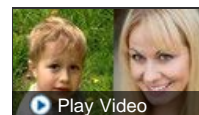
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Frank continued to be an environmental leader and activist for salmon recovery.

Statement from the Nisqually Tribe:

*"The Nisqually people are mourning the sudden passing of Billy Frank Jr. this morning.*

*"Billy dedicated his life to protecting our traditional way of life and our salmon. For more than 60 years, Billy was in the center of action on behalf of the Nisqually people and of Native Americans throughout our country. Along the way, Billy achieved national and international recognition as a towering figure protecting treaty rights, natural resources and the environment.*

*"Billy will be sorely missed and long remembered. On behalf of the Nisqually people, the tribal council expresses our sincerest condolences to Billy's family."*

Statement from Gov. Jay Inslee:

*"Washington lost a true legend with the passing of Billy Frank, Jr. today.*

*"He was a selfless leader who dedicated his life to the long fight for the rights of our state's native people. Billy was a champion of tribal rights, of the salmon, and the environment. He did that even when it meant putting himself in physical danger or facing jail.*

*"I'm thankful Billy was here to see the 2014 Legislature pass a bill helping to overturn convictions from treaty protests. Billy was right on this issue and the state owed this gesture of justice to him and others who jeopardized their liberty to fight for treaty rights.*

*"Billy never wavered in his conviction and passion. He stressed to me the spiritual and cultural relationship that indigenous people have with salmon.*

*"His work is the foundation of an enduring legacy that will never be forgotten in Washington state.*

*"He once said, 'The Creator put that salmon there for it to survive.' I thank the Creator for putting Billy here to make sure we never forget what he fought for.*

*"Trudi and I send our condolences to Billy's family, friends, tribal members and everyone across the state and the country who mourns the passing of this great man."*



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