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NEWS

Tribal fishing activist Billy Frank Jr. dies

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Today at 12:18PM

Staff reports

Billy Frank Jr., a Nisqually elder and tribal fisherman who led the Northwest "fish wars" that helped restore fishing rights for Native Americans four decades ago, died early Monday morning.

Frank, chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and a regular columnist for the Auburn Reporter, was 83.

The commission and Nisqually Tribe confirmed his death. The cause was not immediately known.

In a statement, Gov. Jay Inslee called Frank a "true legend" who fought for others.

"He was a selfless leader who dedicated his life to the long fight for the rights of our state's native people," Inslee said in a statement. "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."



Billy Frank Jr. — Image Credit: Courtesy Photo

Frank was first arrested for salmon fishing as a boy in 1945 — an event that led him on a long campaign for tribal rights, according to The Associated Press. He and others were

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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, the AP said.

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, according to The AP.

Over the next 40 years, Frank continued to advocate for tribal fishing rights and protection of natural resources, including salmon

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				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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Mon, May 5, 9am  
ShoWare Center

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Mon, May 5, 10:30am  
Auburn Library, 1102 Auburn Way S, Auburn, WA 98002

##### Alder Ridge Senior Apartments Open House

Mon, May 5, 3pm  
2800 Alder Street

See all »

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