

Model of Billy Frank Jr. statue unveiled in Olympia before 2025 debut

Billy Frank Jr. was a famous and legendary activist. He fought for fishing rights for Northwest tribes. He was a member of the Nisqually Tribe. In 2025, a statue of him will be placed in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C., our nation's Capital. This is important because it will be the first time a statue of a modern Native American is on display in the Statuary Hall.

A clay model of a statue of him was shown at the state Capitol in Olympia. The clay model is called a marquette. The marquette shows Billy Frank Jr. smiling and sitting on a river's edge as salmon leap from the water.

"The best of Washington is now headed to Washington, D.C.," Gov. Jay Inslee said Wednesday.



Learn About Billy Frank Jr.

Billy Frank Jr. was a well-known fighter for tribal **treaty rights**. Indian tribes' right to fish was promised in **treaties** they signed in 1855. Tribes gave up much of their land in the treaties, but they did not give up their right to fish, hunt, and gather foods. Washington state would not allow tribes to fish in places where they had fished **since time immemorial**. It did not matter that judges ordered Washington state to follow the treaties. Washington state would not follow the law.

Billy Frank Jr. and many others took Washington state to court to let a judge decide. In 1974 Judge George Boldt agreed with other judges who said that tribes had a right to fish in the places they had always fished. These places are known as **“usual and accustomed”** places.

In 2014 Billy Frank Jr. died at age 83. A year later, President Barack Obama awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Billy Frank Jr. and gave the medal to his daughter.



A 4-foot maquette of Billy Frank Jr. unveiled at the Capitol in Olympia on Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024. (Aaron Barna / Washington State Legislature)