



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #EC-15-001

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**TITLE: Support for Legislation to Redesignate the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, Located in Washington State, as the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, and to Establish the Medicine Creek Treaty National Historic Site**

**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, Tribal sovereignty is an inherent authority exercised by all federally recognized Indian tribal governments and has existed continuously since before European contact; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States Constitution, U.S. Supreme court decisions, and hundreds of treaties, federal statutes, and regulations all recognize that Indian Tribes are distinct governments with inherent rights, power, privileges, and authorities; and

**WHEREAS**, Billy Frank, Jr., a Nisqually Tribal member, grew up fishing for salmon and steelhead on the Nisqually River, and he was on the front line in the battle over treaty-guaranteed Indian fishing rights during the 1960s and 1970s; and

**WHEREAS**, as a peerless advocate of tribal treaty rights and natural resources, Frank was arrested more than 50 times defending the tribes' established treaty rights to fish, hunt and gather shellfish; and

**WHEREAS**, Frank's courage and Northwest tribes' resistance as a part of the Fish Wars led to the landmark 1974 ruling by federal Judge George Boldt in U.S. v. Washington, which upheld the treaty-reserved salmon harvest right of the tribes, establishing them as co-managers of the resource and affirming the tribal right to half of the harvestable salmon returning to their historic fishing sites; and

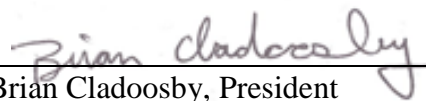
**WHEREAS**, the Boldt decision upheld the Northwest tribes' treaty rights – the treaties their ancestors signed with settlers so the tribes' way of life would persevere – but it also represents a case of the nation honoring its obligations and values; and

**WHEREAS**, as the long-time chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, he advocated tirelessly for the protection of tribal natural resources for the benefit of all peoples, such as securing a number of key agreements between the tribes and various local, state and federal officials that strengthen treaty-guaranteed fishing rights and environmental protection laws.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that NCAI hereby supports federal legislation, known as the “Billy Frank Jr. Tell Your Story Act,” that would redesignate the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, located in Washington State, as the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, and which would establish the Medicine Creek Treaty National Historic Site within the wildlife refuge to commemorate the location of the signing of the Medicine Creek Treaty of 1854 between the United States Government and leaders of the Muckleshoot, Nisqually, Puyallup and Squaxin Island Indian Tribes.

#### **CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Executive Committee of the National Congress of American Indians, held via a poll of Board Members, June 1, 2015 in Washington, D.C. with a quorum present.

  
Brian Cladoosby, President

**ATTEST:**

  
Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary