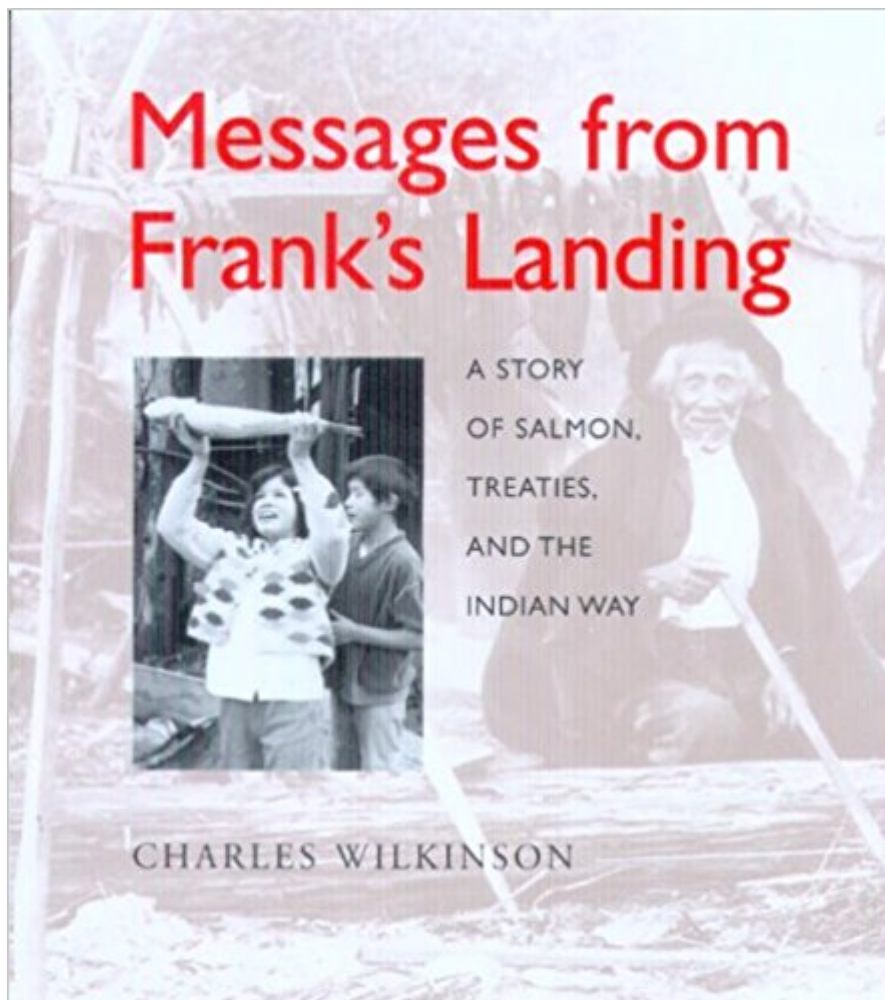




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Messages From Franks Landing : A Story Of Salmon, Treaties, And The Indian Way



Synopsis

In 1974 Federal Judge George H. Boldt issued one of the most sweeping rulings in the history of the Pacific Northwest, affirming the treaty rights of Northwest tribal fishermen and allocating to them 50 percent of the harvestable catch of salmon and steelhead. Among the Indians testifying in Judge Boldt's courtroom were Nisqually tribal leader Billy Frank, Jr., and his 95-year-old father, whose six acres along the Nisqually River, known as Frank's Landing, had been targeted for years by state game wardens in the so-called Fish Wars. By the 1960s the Landing had become a focal point for the assertion of tribal treaty rights in the Northwest. It also lay at the moral center of the tribal sovereignty movement nationally. The confrontations at the Landing hit the news and caught the conscience of many. Like the schoolhouse steps at Little Rock, or the bridge at Selma, Frank's Landing came to signify a threshold for change, and Billy Frank, Jr., became a leading architect of consensus, a role he continues today as one of the most colorful and accomplished figures in the modern history of the Pacific Northwest. In *Messages from Frank's Landing*, Charles Wilkinson explores the broad historical, legal, and social context of Indian fishing rights in the Pacific Northwest, providing a dramatic account of the people and issues involved. He draws on his own decades of experience as a lawyer working with Indian people, and focuses throughout on Billy Frank and the river flowing past Frank's Landing. In all aspects of Frank's life as an activist, from legal settlements negotiated over salmon habitats destroyed by hydroelectric plants, to successful negotiations with the U.S. Army for environmental protection of tribal lands, Wilkinson points up the significance of the traditional Indian world view - the powerful and direct legacy of Frank's father, conveyed through generations of Indian people who have crafted a practical working philosophy and a way of life. Drawing on many hours spent talking and laughing with Billy Frank while canoeing the Nisqually watershed, Wilkinson conveys words of respect and responsibility for the earth we inhabit and for the diverse communities the world encompasses. These are the messages from Frank's Landing. Wilkinson brings welcome clarity to complex legal issues, deepening our insight into a turbulent period in the political and environmental history of the Northwest.

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Customer Reviews

Messages from Frank's Landing is a unique examination of a turning point in Indian sovereignty in the Pacific Northwest. For nearly 12,000 years the Nisqually and Payullup Rivers have provided food, a way of life, and a spiritual force to the Indians of the Puget Sound region. Encroachments on their land and their fishing areas began in 1833 when the Hudson's Bay Company founded Fort Nisqually to enhance the fur trade. Their reservation was decreased significantly in 1854 through a perfidious treaty agreement, triggering the Leschi War, named for the Tribal leader who lost his life for the cause. During World War I, the U.S. government broke part of the treaty, and transferred a section of the reservation along the river to the army as part of Fort Lewis. Three years later, Billy Frank bought six acres along the river which became known as Frank's Landing. In the 1930s, the salmon count fell victim to unregulated offshore commercial boats and to hydroelectric development. The end of World War II signaled a massive population increase, and many non-Indians took jobs as offshore commercial fisherman. This population boom proved disastrous as hydroelectric dams, timber harvests, road and highway development, and pesticides used in forestry and agriculture combined to endanger the rivers. By the 1960s, Indians without fishing permits were the victims of constant raids and sting operations. In this context, Frank's Landing became the focal point for the tribal assertion of treaty rights in the Northwest. In 1962, the state mounted a major raid on Nisqually fisherman during the winter salmon run. The Nisqually's passive resistance was caught on film and ended up in front-page photographs.

Indian law professor and scholar Charles Wilkinson has written an accessible and poignant book about a noteworthy Native American that all Americans should get to know. Billy Frank Jr. (Nisqually) has dedicated his life to protecting of the habitat, natural resources, and way of life for Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest. At age fourteen, he was arrested by Washington state

wildlife wardens for fishing in the Nisqually watershed. During the 1960s, African American civil rights "sit-ins" inspired Native American "fish-ins." This focused national attention on Frank's Landing as a key battleground for Indian demands that the federal government uphold treaty rights to end a century of Washington state interference that jeopardized tribal survival and sovereignty. This struggle created a new level of awareness about Indian fishing rights in the United States. Billy Frank's forebearer Chief Leschi insisted that the 1854 Medicine Creek Treaty secure the reserved "right of taking fish, at all usual and accustomed grounds and stations ... in common with all citizens of the Territory." This treaty provision was violated by the state of Washington until in 1974 federal judge George Boldt ruled that "in common" meant that Indian fishers were entitled to half the harvestable catch of salmon. Despite the resistance to this decision by state officials and commercial fishing interests, the end result has been cooperation between federal, state, and tribal governments over fisheries co-management since the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Boldt decision in 1979. Billy Frank, Jr. galvanized and sustained Native American efforts that produced the most significant Indian rights case of the twentieth century.

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