In the sphere of federal Indian policy history, the effects on and actions of real people often get lost in the reiteration of final court decisions and legislative acts. Students and scholars of policy might understand the human nature and importance of people in these decisions, but frequently the histories told of policy fail to convey this. The real-world implications of laws, acts, and court decisions are the backbone of why it all matters. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in examining fishing rights for tribes in the Pacific Northwest. In his new book, *Treaty Justice: The Northwest Tribe, the Boldt Decision, and the Recognition of Fishing Rights*, Charles Wilkinson not only aptly provides the larger historical context for what is arguably one of the most important court decisions of the twentieth century regarding rights but, more importantly, also conveys the human element.

Wilkinson's goal with this book was to examine how the cases that make up the Boldt decision affected and still affect people (native and non-native) in the Pacific Northwest and beyond, as well as the environmental, legal, and cultural landscape from the 1970s forward. Embedded in this goal is to make a book usable for tribal members on an issue vitally important and symbolic for tribes (even those outside of the region), academics, and the general public. These are lofty goals, considering the complexities of treaty rights and legal history; further, fishing rights specifically involve a complicated history and an often-misunderstood rendering of treaties and treaty rights. For these goals, Wilkinson meets and exceeds them all handily.

Wilkinson's research is extensive, including, most importantly, oral histories and personal interviews. Through all of this, he brings alive not just the court case that reaffirmed treaty rights (the decision Judge George Hugo Boldt handed down in 1974 as well as the subsequent Supreme Court ruling that affirmed Boldt's ruling) but also...
the multitude of events that led to it. He reflects on the fiftieth anniversary of the decision and effectively demonstrates the importance of the ruling on lives and culture since the 1970s.

This work contributes to the body of literature in federal Indian policy in a number of ways. First, Wilkinson provides an in-depth study of the context surrounding tribal fishing, prior to treaties, treaty abrogation, and changes in settlement. He provides the context of changes in federal policy in the twentieth century and ties it in with activism from those most affected by a denial of treaty rights: Pacific Northwest tribes. It is in this context that Wilkinson has perhaps his biggest contribution: taking a case and making human connections. He pays careful attention to the role of individuals and their purposeful activism in bringing fishing rights to the foreground of public discourse, ultimately resulting in a court decision that upheld rights long ignored. Perhaps the most important aspect of this work is that Wilkinson has made this topic approachable and understandable. This is a book that can easily be used in a college classroom, demonstrating a case study of how legal decisions are made and why they matter. But it has real-world applications outside of academia for tribal governments, for environmentalists, and for anyone interested in the interplay between culture and treaty rights, making it usable for the general public.

Legal history and legal decisions do not happen in a vacuum, and the historical and cultural context found within this book make clear the connections between past and present. Wilkinson begins with a synopsis of the police raids during the “fish wars” of the 1970s that directly led to the Boldt decision. Introducing the major players and themes of the fish wars allows for Wilkinson to demonstrate how connected fishing rights in the twentieth century were to larger tribal history as he then leaps back in time to examine the history that led to this legal conflict. The book places a heavy emphasis, rightfully so, on the importance of salmon in the history of the Pacific Northwest, and oral histories provide a valuable reminder of the extensive influence salmon and salmon culture had in the West. This background paves the way for an understanding of the different cultural views when Europeans arrived in the region, and Wilkinson does an able job in providing federal policy in the early years of the republic, including ideas of removal and land occupancy versus ownership rights. Examining the Stevens Treaties of the 1850s in which Pacific Northwest tribes successfully retained their fishing rights, both on and off reservations, Treaty Justice demonstrates how linked the activism of the 1970s was to the activism of tribal leaders who fought for fishing rights and specific sites during treaty negotiations. The earlier legal decisions and legislation, including reservation- and assimilation-related acts, provide the context in which tribes found that their activism needed to move into the twentieth century and through decades of effort to reclaim fishing sites and treaty rights.

Throughout the book, people take center stage. This is an important aspect of Wilkinson’s work, as individuals often get overlooked in many legal histories. Wilkinson does not just detail the history of affected tribes, such as the Lummi, the Makah, and the Quinault; he also provides a human face within all of this. He discusses specific people who worked in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to fight for their tribe’s rights. Billy Frank Jr., who chaired the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission for three decades and who was an integral participant in the Boldt case and the activism preceding it, asked Wilkinson to write this book. Frank, a member of the Nisqually tribe, believed that a thorough examination of this history is vital to the people of the Pacific Northwest, and Wilkinson’s book demonstrates the reality of this. The collaboration of Wilkinson with different tribes is seen readily in the extensive oral histories and interviews he procured, again making his
work stand out for its humanity and human connection.

In *Treaty Justice*, as Wilkinson details treaty rights, fishing rights, and opposition to tribal fishing, one major issue that stands out is that the people opposed to fishing rights and opposed to Boldt's ultimate decision did not understand the context of treaties, tribal rights, and salmon. With this book, no one has that excuse of ignorance again.

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