

Incident Name: Bailiff Fire, origins in the State Resource Area but also burning on the San Bernardino NF

Date: October 30, 1967

Personnel: Frank Rios from the Tohono O'odham Nation in AZ

Age: 21

Agency/Organization: BIA crew from Sells AZ, a member of the Tohono O'Odham Nation (formerly Papago Tribe).

Position: firefighter

Summary: During a week of Santa Ana winds and multiple large fires throughout southern California, 200 Native American firefighters from Sells AZ were flown in to help hundreds more firefighters fight the Bailiff Fire on the San Bernardino NF. The fire had begun in a house near Cabazon in Riverside Co. Santa Anas were blowing and 24,000 acres burned in 36 hours. Frank Rios died on the night of 10/30 while battling the fire. The Baliff Fire flared up at night on a steep slope. Fellow firefighters last saw Rios poised on a big rock near Cabazon shortly before a sudden wind whistled down the eastern slope of Mt San Jacinto sent them scurrying from an advancing wall of flame.

Clyde Doran the Forest Supervisor of the Coronado NF near Rios' home in Arizona said that an autopsy showed Rios had suffered a fractured skull and was burned to death. He added that preliminary reports indicated Rios may have fallen while trying to escape a flare-up.