


mean that they will come,” Driscoll said. “It costs a lot of money to operate a network regardless of whether it is wireline or wireless.” Cooper said that while the large wireless carriers may only require a one-time start-up grant to bring wireless services to unserved areas, small wireless carriers need ongoing support to do so.

### Expected Outcome of the Reform Process

Cooper and Driscoll agreed that the FCC would seek public comments on the recommendation, and then choose whether to implement all of it, parts of it, or none of it. Cooper said that during this process, OPASTCO can continue to negotiate with other major industry players in order to find common ground. Driscoll said that a proposed consensus plan offered to the Commission should be narrow, focused, and tailored to benefit consumers. 

## PANEL

### The Native Telco Experience: Bringing Service to Tribal Lands

**D**erek White of the National Tribal Telecommunications Association (NTTA) moderated a panel discussion on initiatives to overcome barriers to deploying telecom services on the nation’s tribal lands. White said that NTTA helps policymakers understand that although access to voice services is necessary to ensure primary safety, different groups of Native Americans have different needs regarding telecommunications services. “Our mission is driven by the fact that we recognize that the solutions that we, individually as telephone companies, have derived are not cookie cutter,” White said. “We don’t have the same area territories, mountains, and terrain. We only provide the models that we’ve chosen, and that work for us, the eight tribal telephone companies.” White explained that NTTA

focuses on relaying their success stories to other tribes that would like to pursue the group’s proven strategies and solutions. “Today, our service penetrations have increased 650 percent for Gila River Telecommunications,” White said. “Some have increased 980 percent, with 98 percent penetration in some of our tribal areas of the eight tribal telephone companies.”

### Ensuring Public Safety

White offered the tragic bus accident that occurred near Mexican Hat in southeast Utah as an example of the need to ensure access to voice services on tribal lands. On Jan. 6, 2008, a tour bus carrying 52 passengers veered off the roadway and overturned, resulting in nine deaths and dozens of injuries. White explained that, in the past, Native Americans living on tribal lands were forced to walk several miles to the nearest phone in order to report such accidents and direct emergency service vehicles to where victims were located. He said that NTTA is working very hard to improve voice penetration rates to change this.

### Understanding Differences Among Tribal Communities

According to White, important distinctions exist among tribal communities that make development of metrics necessary to measure Native Americans’ access to telecom services difficult to accomplish. “There are no concrete metrics that we feel measure connectivity,” White said. “In some of our talking points, as we move forward, we’ve looked to provide some incentives to carriers, or even tribal communities across the nation, to have a choice and preferred carrier because they choose to serve that tribal community better.” White commended recent progress made to address Native American issues in the congressional farm bill, and thanked OPASTCO and other groups for supporting these initiatives.



**Derek White of the National Tribal Telecommunications Association provided an overview of issues affecting deployment of telecom services on tribal lands and moderated a panel of native telco carriers.**

- Ensuring Public Safety
- Understanding Differences Among Tribal Communities
- Examples of Tribal Success Stories

### Examples of Tribal Success Stories

Joining White on the panel were Jose Matanane of Fort Mojave Telecommunications in Arizona, Bill Bryant of Saddleback Communications in Arizona, and Godfrey Enjady of Mescalero Apache Telecommunications in New Mexico. Each panelist discussed the penetration rates in his individual service area when he arrived, efforts taken to improve the quality of their networks, and the economic development that this facilitated in their tribal communities.

### Fort Mojave Telecommunications

Matanane said that Fort Mojave serves parts of Ariz., Calif., and Nev., and has about 1,054 tribal residents enrolled. Today, the company has about 1,000 loops, and offers cable television and Internet via DSL. Business customers include agribusiness, gaming, and tourism, and the company will serve a new industrial park being built in the area. When he first arrived, the voice penetration rate was 38 percent and unemployment was 50 percent. Today, the penetration rate is about 98 percent, with un-

employment around 1 percent. The tribe and local businesses it supports contribute about a third of a billion dollars back into the local economy. Matanane described the economic development that this growth has made possible, calling it the building blocks of the community.

### Saddleback Communications

Bryant said that Saddleback is the exclusive provider of voice and transport services for the local community, which is challenging in an area surrounded by major metropolitan cities including Scottsdale, Mesa, Tempe and Fountain Hills. In 1997, 25 percent of the community did not have access to landlines. In 2007, Saddleback built its own IP infrastructure and upgraded its DSL offering. The company now has about 2,500 voice customers, 700 DSL customers, and 200 business customers. The tribal council created an economic development zone spanning eight miles along Arizona Highway 101. Over the last 24 to 36 months, it has become some of the most coveted real estate in the Phoenix area. Bryant forecasts that the zone's workforce will increase in size from about 6,500 currently to more than 100,000 in the next 10-20 years. "We are very pleased that we can speak the language and deliver the technology that meets the needs of fairly sophisticated telecom users," Bryant said.

## OPASTCODEOPLE

OPASTCO's Associate Member Committee created a new showcase for fellow associate members—the First Annual White Hot Innovations showcase, which gave convention attendees the chance to get up close and personal with these white hot innovators during breakfasts before the general sessions:

Occam Networks  
VIXXI Solutions, Inc.  
Quintrex Data Systems  
Pannaway Technologies  
Mapcom Systems  
Warinner, Gesinger & Associates,  
LLC & Sagemark Consulting  
MultiProcess Computer  
Comporium Communications  
Amino Communications  
Watershed Networks



Rick Sailor of Amino Communications accepts the blue ribbon as winner of the White Hot Innovations Showcase.



### Mescalero Apache Telecommunications

Godfrey Enjady explained that Mescalero Apache Telecommunications in New Mexico was started in 1995 for the tribe's 4,000 members as part of an economic development plan. "The tribe was looking for ways to stimulate the economy," Enjady said, "and the only way to do that is through rebuilding infrastructure on the reservation." Before the company was launched, only 40 percent of residents had voice services. Today, 99.9 percent of the reservation now has access to the network, with fiber covering 90 percent and DSL available to nearly all residents who want it. Enjady explained that many native Americans around the nation are now demanding advanced services that are only provided on tribal lands by NTTA member carriers. He now travels to consult with different tribes to help them understand how to offer these services. Enjady emphasizes creating opportunities to improve residents' skills and abilities to enable them to compete for jobs in the information economy. "Corporate and associate members out here, I appreciate you guys for helping Mescalero Apache Telecom get started," Enjady said. 