

Many members will remember the Grange's national efforts to support the expansion of basic telephone service out into the remote parts of the country quite a number of years ago. And as recently as the mid-1980s, the Grange supported legislation mandating private telephone lines everywhere in the state (can you imagine early dial-up on a party line?).

As communication has moved into the 21st century, the Whatcom County Grange, at our November Pomona meeting, will hear about a new communications project for those out in the far reaches of our own tri-county area.

The Washington Rural Broadband Cooperative (WA-RBC) has been formed as a non-profit cooperative (think PUDs) by the Tulalip Tribes (Marysville) and Seattle-based technology firm Cascadeo. They have applied for \$12.4 million in federal stimulus money to bring a high-speed network into other tribal areas and rural communities. The Mt Baker Foothills has been chosen as the first rural community to be connected by the WA-RBC. If successful, the project will be replicated in other interested rural communities.

Linda Dorsett, a member of the Mt. Baker Foothills Chamber of Commerce and Chair of the Foothills Communications Task Force, will be speaking on this project at the Pomona meeting at Haynie Grange on Tuesday Nov. 10th at 7pm. The public is welcome to attend. If funded, the first phase of the project would bring the high-speed service to public buildings such as libraries, schools, tribal centers, fire and law enforcement offices.

The second phase would then reach out to individual businesses and homes.

Congressman Rick Larson and Senator Patty Murray have both endorsed the project, as well as the Mt. Baker School District and the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office. More details are available at www.warbc.net or through Linda Dorsett at 360-599-2900.