



John Poole, on the left, with his son, Johnny Poole, on the right.

At the age of 93, John Poole is Fort Ware's oldest Elder. He was born on October 11, 1912, at the junction of Fox River and Finlay River in a small log cabin. His mother was Martha Tehanawa Poole from the Telegraph Creek area, and his father was James (Jimmy) Poole from Fort Grahame. James and Martha had come to the Fort Ware area around the same time that Hamilton Davie (Aatse Davie) and his group settled here. Jimmy Poole's father, known as Tze-Ga-Ze, had lived up and down the upper Finlay River for a number of years, traveling as far south as Fort Grahame to trade at the Hudson's Bay Trading Post.

John had many brothers and sisters, but they all passed away in childhood except his sister, Mary Jane, and his brother, Pat. Pat's children were Tommy, Annie, and William Poole. Mary Jane's children were Nellie and George Massettoe.

John's parents, Jimmy and Martha, both died from influenza in the late 1930's. John related to his son, Johnny, that during this time, influenza killed many people; one winter 19 people died in the Fort Ware and Fort Grahame areas. John said he remembers Joe McCook and himself having to keep digging through frozen ground to make graves. When both his parents died, he almost gave up, but Joe McCook kept coming around encouraging him to get up and keep on living. John was so grief-stricken at his parents' deaths that he stayed in the cabin with their bodies for two or three days, not eating and not even making a fire. He credits Joe McCook with saving his life. (Joe McCook was Jim, Fred, Annie, Amelia, Donald, John, and Michele McCook's oldest brother.)

John spent the next five years living alone at his trapline base cabin at Bob's Place, below Finbow on the Finlay River. At about that time, he was befriended by Isaac Seymour and two of his sons, Ivar and Pete, who lived up the Finlay River at Seven Mile. They invited

John to join them in trapping up the Pelly River. Through that meeting, John came to know Isaac's daughter, Rachel, and they were married in 1945.

John and Rachel built a log cabin on the west side of the Finlay, across from the village of Fort Ware. John continued to trap and hunt and also worked seasonally at the Hudson's Bay Trading Post in Fort Ware. When Hudson's Bay moved out of Fort Ware in 1953, the Hudson's Bay manager, Roy Paddy, advised John to move out to Summit Lake since there might be "hard times" for a while in Fort Ware. John liked and trusted Mr. Paddy and his wife, who had tutored both John and Rachel in reading and writing English. And so, John and Rachel and their three children, Alice, Johnny, and Pat, moved to Summit Lake. They stayed in Summit Lake, returning usually once a year to Fort Ware by boat from Summit Lake through Crooked River, McLeod Lake, Pack River, Parsnip River to Finlay Forks, where they began the upstream journey on the Finlay River to Fort Ware. This trip could take seven to twelve days and was usually made in the spring. They would visit family, hunt, pick berries, and spend most of the summer in Fort Ware, returning to Summit Lake in September where John worked in a sawmill or planer mill for Chris Nelson.

In 1959, the family, now expanded by four more children (Merv, Randy, Norman, and Howard), returned to live in Fort Ware. In the next few years, they completed their family with two more children, Harold and Kathy. Since 1960, John and Rachel lived in Fort Ware, where John was known as a skilled hunter.

John still leads an active life in the village. He can be seen walking almost every day. Although he has some hearing loss, he visits old friends regularly. When the weather allows, he visit Rachel's grave every day. She passed away January 6, 2004.

He is greatly respected for his wisdom and ability. There are many stories about John's skills in tracking and hunting moose, caribou, elk, and deer. Not only his family but others depended on his knowledge and expertise of the land, plants, and animals. John believes strongly that one should take only what one needs and not waste nature's resources. We are truly fortunate to have John Poole as an Elder, grandfather, and friend in Fort Ware community and Kwadacha Band.

This information is from John Poole as he told his son, Johnny Poole, who collaborated in writing this article. Thanks also to the following people for confirming and providing specific information:

- Mike Abou
- Jimmy Massettoe
- Nora Massettoe
- Eva Poole
- Tommy Poole