

The Resettlement of Pushthrough 5

Resettlement and Reimbursement

Introduction

Shortly after the residents of Pushthrough signed the petition indicating their desire to resettle and completed their Notification of Intent to Relocate, they each received a personalized form letter from K.M. Harnum, the director of resettlement, acknowledging receipt of their request. He advised that C.A. (Carl) Evans, Field Worker for the Department of Community and Social Development, would soon visit and as soon as his report was received, the Household Resettlement Committee would consider their request and report its decision to residents at the earliest possible date. A letter, dated 9 July 1969, informed Mr. William Simms, the Chair of the Pushthrough Resettlement Committee, that the request from the householders of Pushthrough to resettle had been granted.

Plans Already in Place

The Field Worker's Report for each householder contains a wealth of information. It lists all members of the family who were relocating and gives their ages. It also provides considerable information on family structure within the household, asking the applicant to identify extended family members and those with any disabilities or those who were in any way incapacitated. There were also a series of questions about property, both in Pushthrough and in the new location. In the case of my family, my mother, Minnie Blake, had lived in her home for 27 years.



(Credit: Photos of Newfoundland History Buffs <http://tinyurl.com/b5733x6>)

The house had been in the Lilly family for decades. My mom moved there with her first husband, Samuel Lilly, when they married on 14 April 1941. However, after he died of cancer and my mother married Ben Blake on 2 November 1954, he moved into the house. What happened with the house in the following few years sheds some light on women's property rights of widows in outport Newfoundland. Shortly after they were married, my father purchased land from another resident of Pushthrough, Alex Roberts (though this might have been land on which the house sat.) We also have

four receipts showing our father making payments on the house to the family of mom's first husband, Samuel; the first is dated 22 March 1958 and acknowledges receipt of \$100. The others are dated 21 July 1959, 29 November 1961, and 27 October 1962. Total payment was \$500 which suggests that when her first husband died, Minnie Blake did not get title to the home she was living in with three small children. Title remained with her husband's family. By the time of resettlement she owned the house.



(Ben and Minnie Blake, Pushthrough)

Our home was eventually dismantled by a resident from a neighbouring community. I believe my mother received \$50 in return. She bought a new home in Hermitage.

The Field Worker noted in his report dated 11 June 1969, that my mother identified better educational facilities as the primary benefit to her family from resettlement.

Application for Assistance: What was available?

On 16 July 1965, the Governments of Canada and of Newfoundland and Labrador formally signed the Newfoundland Fisheries Resettlement Program. It was a five-year cost-shared agreement that was renewed again in March 1970. It provided a basic grant of \$1,000 to each household and an additional grant of \$200 for each member of household that moved from Pushthrough and other isolated communities. The basic grant came largely from the federal government. It provided a resettlement grant of \$400 and a fisheries re-adjustment grant of \$200, and it shared equally with the province, a relocation grant of \$400, and the additional grant of \$200 for each member of household.

The actual expenses incurred in relocating the household were also covered. The federal government provided reimbursement of the actual travel and removal expenses of the family and their personal and household effects. This included the transport of fishing equipment and other means of earning a living. The programme did not provide for the cost of the movement or replacement of real or immovable property, and any property abandoned, including the land and all structures that had not been removed, became the property of the Crown, except when fishers continued to use the premises for the purpose of carrying on their work. Receipts had to be provided to show the expenses incurred in the move.

The resettlement program also included a measure of assistance with the purchase of land in the new community. During the first resettlement programme newcomers could move to receiving towns and pretty much build a home or erect those they had moved by barrage or other means anywhere they wished. Later, when those communities installed water and sewage networks they discovered that the lack of town planning had made many of these projects very expensive. Both the provincial and local governments hoped to avoid those mistakes in the second resettlement programme and decided that they needed to exercise greater control over town planning than had been the case when the resettlement programme first began in 1954. As a result, the provincial housing authority created serviced town-sites in at least eight locations designated as growth centres. These serviced lots were much more expensive than Newfoundlanders had been accustomed to paying for land on which to build a house. Building a house had traditionally been a family affair where members of the extended family worked together to cut the wood and saw their own lumber to build their own houses, often on land owned by the family. All new construction had to conform to the National Building Code. With serviced lots averaging between \$3,500 and \$4,000, and an estimated cost of \$12,000 for the construction of a home, the price of housing emerged as a potential deterrent to the government's centralization plans. With family incomes averaging around \$3,600 dollars many households might have difficulty sustaining a mortgage necessary to purchase a home. To address this problem the 1965 resettlement agreement was amended, providing supplementary assistance of up to \$3,000 for a household moving to a larger centre with serviced lots in developed town-sites and grants of \$1,000 for a building lot in other approved resettlement centres.

Some of those who resettled could also take advantage of the various loans and grants offered through the Government of Canada's Manpower Mobility Program which provided householders and their adult children of working age who moved within Canada assistance to seek and to find work.

Application for Assistance Claim

We moved from Pushthrough to Hermitage on Monday, 7 July 1969, two days before Mr. Harnum, the Director of Resettlement, informed Mr. William Simms, chair of the Pushthrough Resettlement Committee, that the provincial Resettlement Committee had approved the resettlement of Pushthrough. Our neighbours and friends, the Rowsells, moved to Fortune less than 4 weeks later on Friday, 1 August 1969. My Grandmother Blake relocated to St. Alban's on 4 September 1969.

I am never sure what I actually remember of the day of our departure from Pushthrough. I was 10. Resettlement was a subject that was rarely discussed in our home, and now I can never be certain if what I remember are my recollections or if I have somehow internalized as my own memories what others have told me since then. I recall vividly the sense of anxiety in the few days before the move when everything was readied for the journey across the bay. I remember the E.W. Riggs schooner that came from McCallum and took our belongings to Hermitage. We even packed into the schooner the supply of coal that we had in the coal shed even though we had an electric and oil stove in our new home in Hermitage and no longer had any use of coal. We must have also taken the white enamel slop pail that we had at the top of the stairs and used for years as a toilet as I recall seeing it in Hermitage long after our move. It was relegated to the shortage room as in Hermitage we had a flush toilet and

She also received \$28.00 for travel expenses, which presumably must have been the amount that Mr. Riggs charged for passage on his schooner (\$4 each, 7 people). His charge for the transport of the household goods from Pushthrough to Hermitage was \$250. I believe that amount was sent to him directly by the Department of Community and Social Development.

My Grandmother, Eliza Garland, remained in Pushthrough until the end of August and was one of the last householders to relocate. I recall my mother traveling to Pushthrough on the CN coastal boat to help her close her home and relocate to Pushthrough, though Grandmother Garland was never content in Hermitage. We still have her Remittance Voucher for \$1,215.87, which included her basic grants, plus her travel expenses of \$15.87 for passage to Hermitage.

Supplementary Land Assistance

Although resettled families were eligible for the Land Supplement Assistance – or what the Field Workers sometimes called Mortgage Payment -- it took more than a year for Minnie Blake’s cheque of \$1000 cheque to arrive from the Department of Community and Social Development. Those moving to communities such as Burego and Fortune would have qualified for the \$3,000 supplement. Minnie had purchased an existing home from Lucy and Oliver Francis who had moved to Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. There were no problems with the home as it had been renovated just a few years earlier, but there were questions about the land on which the house sat.

Community & Social Development GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

DEPARTMENT OF..... Voucher No. 001490

To: BLAKE, MINNIE B.
HERMITAGE
N.F.L.D.

The enclosed cheque covers payment for the following:

Date	Particulars	Amount
Oct 16/70	Mortgage Payment	
	Federal Contribution -	750.00
	Provincial Contribution -	250.00
	Total	1000.00

The question of land ownership has been the source of serious acrimony and bitterness in rural Newfoundland where land ownership is often based on flimsy claims. During the resettlement period a several prominent members of a number of receiving communities came forward to assert their authority over considerable parcels of land on the claim that, for example, their animals once grazed on a particular site or they stored firewood there. This is another subject that if investigated would reveal much about life in rural Newfoundland and also tell us something about how resettled people were treated in their new communities.

Fortunately, the Francis Family had secured title to their land in 1967, after several years of renting it from Frank Ingram, who claimed a considerable amount of land in Hermitage. My mother bought the land on which the house sits from Oliver Francis on 16 April 1970 (though the amount might have been included in the price of the house). Because the Indenture was signed by a Commissioner of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, it was deemed inadmissible by the Registrar of Deeds in Newfoundland and the proper signature of a notary public in Nova Scotia was required. A.W. Toms, the Rural Development Officer, responsible for the file, estimated that the cost of land and services to be over one thousand dollars and recommended the one thousand dollar Land Supplement be paid. Once the proper titles were received, the Department of Community and Social Services paid her a cheque for \$1,000 on 16 October 1970, 75 percent provided by the Federal Government and 25 percent by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. There were also horror stories of people in some communities attempting to exact a fee from resettled householders for existing water and sewage connections once they understood that the resettled householders received additional money from the resettlement programme even though the original owner of the house would have already paid his share. In many communities several families or households would have gotten together and installed their own sewage lines and their own running water before municipal services were available.

However, by accepting receipt of the \$1,000 Supplementary Land Assistance, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador took an interest-free mortgage on Minnie Blake's property (house and land). The mortgage was reduced at a rate of 20 percent annually for each full year of occupancy for a period of 5 years. As she had been in the house for a year prior to receiving the grant, the Government reduced her mortgage by one year. If she had vacated the home at any time before the end of the five years, she would have had to repay to the Government the value of the mortgage, less 20 percent for each full year of occupancy. Each year, she had to apply for the Annual Write-off of Mortgage, and on 23 October 197, after completing the 5th and final request, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador released her from the mortgage. The house in Hermitage was finally hers.

Next: Final Thoughts on Resettlement