



## WHAT'S MORE

- *Don has lived in rural Manitoba for more than forty (40) years, and has worked and volunteered in the non-profit/volunteer sector for more than thirty (30) years*
- *The strength of Don's work is at its core because of the excellent colleagues and community partners and friends*
- *Don has been guided through a constellation of mentors, and strongly advocates the importance of mentorship in community*
- *In addition to his achievements, he finds solace in Refereeing basketball in rural Manitoba Portage, and golfing in the summer times, and spending time with his family, including four grandchildren*

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# Highlighting Rural Researchers

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## Don Boddy

Small Centre Support Manager | MANSO

### GETTING TO KNOW DON BODDY

Don Boddy is a dedicated advocate for rural communities, bringing a unique perspective rooted in a lifetime of experience living and working in rural Manitoba. A self-proclaimed “rural guy,” Don’s personal and professional journey exemplifies a deep commitment to fostering community connections and addressing the distinct challenges faced by smaller, often overlooked centers.

Outside of his professional responsibilities, Don stays actively engaged in his community through personal interests, such as refereeing basketball and playing golf. These activities not only allow him to travel extensively within rural Manitoba but also provide an additional avenue to connect with various individuals and communities across the region.

Don’s role as the Manager of Small Center Support at the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO) places him at the forefront of immigration and settlement work in rural Manitoba. This work focuses on aiding small, rural communities in creating spaces where newcomers can thrive.

### RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE

Don’s pathway into immigration and settlement work began through initial involvement in settlement services in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. This early experience in the field resulted in a steep learning curve, driving him to visit various settlement offices across the province to better understand the scope of the work he would be conducting. This hands-on, proactive approach defined the foundation of his career, as he found his passion in being on the ground and working with communities to find solutions.

Over time, Don transitioned from working at the community level to serving on the board of MANSO. During his tenure, he was instrumental in organizing a pivotal rural conference, which brought together organizations from across Manitoba to exchange knowledge and collaborate. This event highlighted the unique needs of rural areas and led to a successful funding request for a dedicated rural coordinator. Through this event, he became inspired to further explore how his position and experience can truly foster support for newcomers and immigrants as they navigate settling in a new community.



*I see my role in research as really helping to build bridges – to connect the researchers with the settlement staff. And I love when I actually get involved in doing research.*



Reflecting on his career, Don acknowledged the importance and influence of mentorship in his life. He emphasized the importance of embracing the concept of a "constellation of mentors," whereby drawing inspiration from individuals both near and far has influenced the way in which he conducts his work. This personal network has shaped his perspectives, helping him navigate complex issues with empathy and an openness to diverse viewpoints.

## ONGOING RESEARCH AND CURRENT PROJECTS

As part of his work with MANSO, Don is engaged in several impactful projects aimed at enhancing community cohesion and supporting newcomers in rural Manitoba. One of the initiatives he is particularly excited about involves digital storytelling in collaboration with English Online. This project will be focusing in working with Indigenous Elders as guides, allowing participants to create digital stories that reflect their experiences and identities.

Don plays a vital role in bridging gaps between academic researchers and settlement practitioners. By facilitating partnerships and ensuring research findings translate into actionable community practices, he ensures that the work has tangible benefits. Another major focus of Don's current efforts is advancing rural inclusion and participation in community activities. In Portage, he is spearheading an initiative to bring together key players in the local basketball community, with a focus on increasing accessibility for newcomers, immigrants, Indigenous participants, and those facing financial barriers. This initiative aligns with Don's overarching goal of creating inclusive, community-driven opportunities.

Beyond these local projects, Don is also contributing to international collaborations. His engagement with Japanese researchers provides valuable insights into immigration policies and practices on a global scale. This exchange has offered a comparative lens, aiding Don and his colleagues in advocating for more robust support structures in Canada.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Don Boddy's work exemplifies the profound impact one individual can have on fostering inclusivity and resilience within rural communities. Through his leadership, dedication, and vision, Don continues to address systemic challenges while amplifying the voices of those who are often underrepresented. His approach—rooted in humility, curiosity, and a commitment to lifelong learning—serves as a model for effective community engagement. Whether mentoring emerging leaders, advocating for inclusive policies, or creating spaces for shared stories, Don is steadfast in his mission to build stronger, more connected communities across rural Manitoba and beyond.

