Increasing land-based learning outcomes for students and increasing collaboration and capacity for staff using an AI assistant

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Teachers in Rainy River often face logistical and procedural barriers when planning experiential learning opportunities, such as field trips. These include navigating safety protocols, permissions, accommodations, and curriculum alignment. As a result, rich experiential learning is underutilized, and opportunities for deeper reflection and transferable skill development are limited.

| Organization: | **Rainy River District School Board** |
Province:	Ontario
Date:	Spring 2025
Lead:	**Heather Campbell**, Director of Education
	RobRoy Donaldson, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Recruiter/ Experiential Learning Lead
	Shannon Westover, Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching Contact (TELTc) and Secondary Curriculum Coordinator
	Karen Supinski, FNMI Coordinator
	Shane Beckett, Elementary Principal

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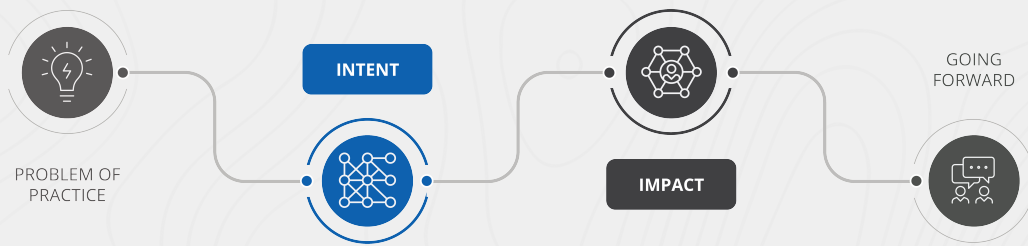
Intent

The Rainy River team developed an AI-powered Planning Experience Assistant to support educators in designing meaningful experiential learning opportunities that are aligned with curriculum, grounded in student learning goals, and responsive to local context.

The tool acts as a planning partner that reduces logistical burdens while encouraging deeper thinking about pedagogy, student reflection, and curricular connections.

Once launched system-wide, the chatbot will guide educators through a structured planning process, addressing logistics, curriculum alignment, safety protocols, accessibility, and pre/post reflection activities. Educators will interact with the assistant based on their specific goals, grade level, and subject area, receiving tailored prompts and resource suggestions to shape the planning process.
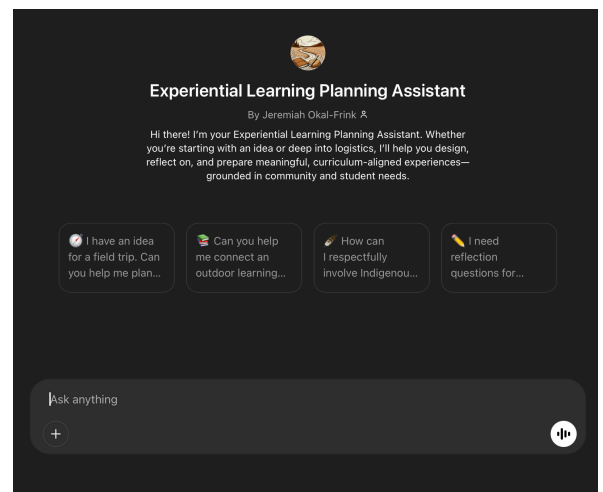
The tool was developed in two coordinated streams: (1) the creation of a responsive conversational flow, and (2) the development of a resource library to form the bot's knowledge base. These resources were curated with attention to accessibility, board procedures, and cultural relevance. Currently, the team is converting an early prototype of the chatbot using an alternate platform, into a final version within Microsoft Studio.

A foundational design principle has been the intentional inclusion of FNMI perspectives and practices. The tool was shaped to support land-based learning, local community partnerships, and culturally grounded reflection. This work is informed through close collaboration with the FNMI Education Coordinator and leadership team members.

In parallel, this initiative is supporting growth in AI literacy and confidence among Rainy River's leadership team. By engaging with the chatbot as a responsive planning tool, educators are developing a deeper understanding of how AI can enhance—not replace—professional judgment. This is expected to lay the groundwork for broader AI integration into instructional practices over time.
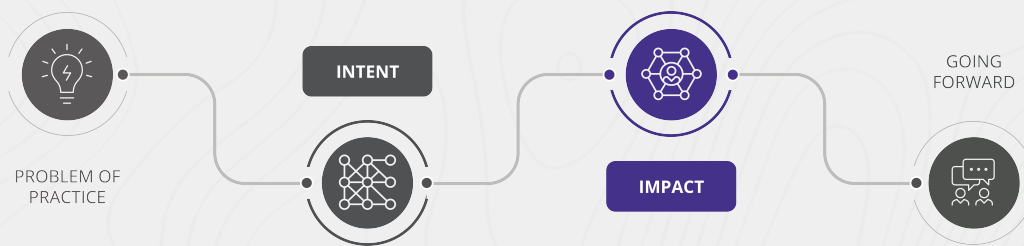
> **"** Professional learning has involved the leadership team being engaged in the design, testing, and refinement of the AI Planning Experience Assistant. Exploration on key themes such as AI Literacy, culturally-responsive design, and experiential learning frameworks have strengthened collective understanding of how AI can support and enhance - not replace - educator judgment and professional practice. **"**
>
> *— Heather Campbell, Director of Education*

Experiential Learning Planning Assistant
By Jeremiah Okal-Frink

Hi there! I'm your Experiential Learning Planning Assistant. Whether you're starting with an idea or deep into logistics, I'll help you design, reflect on, and prepare meaningful, curriculum-aligned experiences— grounded in community and student needs.

- I have an idea for a field trip. Can you help me plan...
- Can you help me connect an outdoor learning...
- How can I respectfully involve Indigenou...
- I need reflection questions for...

Ask anything

PROBLEM OF
PRACTICE

INTENT

IMPACT

GOING
FORWARD

Impact

Although the AI Planning Experience Assistant is still in its early stages, the development process has already led to several positive outcomes. Engaging with the tool's design has prompted district leaders and educators to re-examine the experiential learning planning process, clarifying which supports, resources, and procedural guidance are most essential. This has resulted in more focused conversations about curriculum connections, accessibility, and student reflection, as well as the central role of Indigenous knowledge in meaningful experiential learning.

The planning process has also highlighted the fragmented nature of existing resources. As a result, a concerted effort is now underway to consolidate policies, procedures, and support materials in one accessible location—both for direct staff use and to serve as the knowledge base for the chatbot. This reorganization is expected to benefit the broader system by making support more consistent and easy to find, even before the AI tool is fully launched.
The chatbot's evolution is being documented through multiple prototype versions, capturing how the tool has grown in complexity and relevance. Each iteration reflects refinements based on leadership input, alignment with board resources, and cultural considerations. These development snapshots will help other districts understand the design decisions, constraints, and responsive learning that shaped the tool over time.

By serving as a practical entry point into AI-supported planning, this project is also helping leaders and educators build foundational comfort and confidence with AI tools. This early-stage exposure is contributing to the district's broader capacity for digital innovation and ethical AI integration.
Implementation Plan Highlights:
- **Phase 1 (Current):** Prototype chatbot flow and resource curation; internal leadership testing
- **Phase 2 (Spring 2025):** Microsoft Studio agent build and alpha testing with selected educators
- **Phase 3 (Late Spring/Summer 2025):** Refinement based on feedback; training materials developed
- **Phase 4 (Fall 2025):** School-wide rollout and coaching support for teachers using the tool

The PL Consultant, has guided the Rainy River team through the process of developing the resources needed and then ideas for the chatbot. This has included the initial discussion to help the team focus and shape the idea of the chatbot, with sessions spent then shaping the AI tool's logic, clarifying learning and planning goals, and aligning technical decisions with user needs.

Professional Learning insights

Professional learning to date has focused primarily on the leadership and development team, who are deeply engaged in the design, testing, and refinement of the AI Planning Experience Assistant. Through regular collaborative sessions, the team has explored key themes such as AI literacy, culturally responsive design, and experiential learning frameworks. These sessions have strengthened collective understanding of how AI can support—not replace—educator judgment and professional planning practices.

With the guiancee of the PL Consultant, the team were able to shape the logic and structure of the tool, identifying resource gaps, and aligning the bot's flow with board policies and curricular expectations. These working sessions have served as embedded professional learning opportunities, particularly around AI ethics, responsible implementation, and intentional use of technology in culturally diverse contexts.

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Going Forward

Rainy River is preparing for a District-wide rollout of the AI Experiential Learning Planning Assistant in the 2025–26 school year. While use of the tool will remain optional, the goal is to make it widely accessible to all educators, supported by curated training materials and embedded coaching. The rollout will coincide with the completion of the Microsoft Studio build and refinement of the conversational logic and resource base, ensuring the tool reflects District priorities and practices.

Through the development process, the team has identified promising directions for additional AI supports, particularly for early-career educators as well as new principals and vice principals. One concept under consideration is a second AI assistant focused on the procedural and administrative demands within education —offering task-based support with policies, procedures, forms, timelines, and system navigation. This concept reflects the District's broader aim to reduce barriers for new staff, creating space for more intentional teaching and learning. Similarly, a future-facing leadership assistant could help school leaders consolidate relevant factors across policy, pedagogy, and student needs when supporting staff or making decisions.

Another insight has been the value of AI in supporting more productive conversations between teachers and administrators. A tool that helps educators prepare experiential learning proposals— by prompting them to consider key elements like logistics, safety, curriculum alignment, assessment, and equity—could streamline approval processes and ensure more thoughtful planning.

Each of these potential expansions stems from the core learning of the current project: that thoughtfully designed AI tools can enhance—not replace—professional judgment, while promoting efficiency, equity, and deeper engagement with learning.

Resources:
Interactive Draft Bot on Chat GPT:
https://chatgpt.com/g/g-67cfefee7bec8191874dd4878d4b7fdc-experiential-learning-planning-assistant

Presentation on the Chatbot:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Adg7GGFf_WGTfpoRWEFrS5R12677ABFJ/

Feedback from the Teachers/Users:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/18f6LT5AZLsWaMtwM5cnRvflBWXT-m7t8/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.v6cyg8y9i14x

Chatbot Development Documents:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/14021jhMw1TGcrUALo2TU-3abPplPpX7E/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.83c283twkkdj

Tips and Directions for use for Teachers:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WEEjAxBwmECTgrtyWj4KMFY2n7TAVi8G/edit?tab=t.0

Prompt/System Directions for the Chatbot:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Pq6chwdS6ZexZAuyrkh1ZEhUQpvQxZKw/edit?tab=t.0

Planning Process Provided to the Chatbot to guide it and keep it organized:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_cEpGLC2rFLWurs3q7JmvCOsRfFJq-zg/edit?tab=t.0

Training Document Index:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Q41VgYiXa95JVXN1oSvjg9fiOYqL2hw4/edit?tab=t.0

Quick Walkthrough of the Planning Assistant:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dZHkRPiXWA8IgCz5upkhjmY9XOZjqTd1/view

Detailed Example of using the Planning Assistant:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QZIZhEOFImJaYu2BfDDxRq201cQ0Ieb5/view

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