

## **Q & A with Ries Van Beek**

### **What does innovation mean to you?**

Innovation is a philosophy that thrives on change and creativity. It is an invitation to improve the world and make a place for your ideas in it.

### **How does your organization approach innovation?**

The education ecosystem is embracing and empowering new ideas now more than ever before. There was a time when bureaucracies were thought to reflexively say no and then fight to protect the status quo. However, it is currently an exciting time to be an educator with new ideas; increasingly the answer is ‘yes and how can we make it happen?’

### **Why do you think innovation is important for Saint John and the province?**

Innovation is a more than a business principle, it is a window to a brighter future. While New Brunswick has more than enough grim predictions of demographic disaster, each act of innovation is a step towards a new and brighter future. Maritimers generally excel at sharing and supporting one another. There is an innate desire to help each other through the tough times and celebrate each other’s successes.

### **What are some simple things people can do to drive change?**

People can drive change by recognizing that life is a team sport and that good ideas are a win for us all. Keeping doors open and sharing wisdom will ensure that the rising tide of innovation raises all ships.

### **How is technology changing school curriculum?**

Technology is democratizing knowledge and my students are less and less intimidated by the unknown. Young people possess an optimism that any problem can be addressed by new technology. If we can nurture and cultivate greater self-confidence and resiliency in our youth, we will see them engage in the entrepreneurial sphere in greater numbers.

**Where would you direct people if they wanted to learn more about innovation?**

Enterprise Saint John and Connexionworks are my touchstones for all things innovative in Southern New Brunswick. When I have a question, I never hesitate to reach out to our partners and friendly neighborhood entrepreneurs.