

Changing the Way We Think: Gail Hansen Cunningham, University of Waterloo, Housing Division

Gail is part of the Housing Division's leadership team. She's a thoughtful woman, who is very considerate in her reflections before she makes a decision. But when she makes a decision, it's literally whole-hearted.

My team was senior and had worked together for a long time. They were comfortable with the way things were done. I was the one who wanted the change. The other groups in our division that Christie had worked with were growing and evolving. It was time for us to do the same.

Christie had an immediate impact on us. We no longer saw change as uncomfortable and daunting. We began to see it as an opportunity.

We went on a retreat where we talked about things we value and want to carry forward, like honesty, courage and trust. Introducing trust into our vocabulary became a grounding piece for us. It made us think about what we would like to evolve to. It was a springboard to new thinking. Now we're all thinking about what we can do better. We trust each other and we know it's okay to experiment. I think Christie was able to do this because of the questions she asked, the "what if" possibilities.

We had a reorganization. I brought the group together and I said this is a difficult situation and I don't have all the answers. It was uncomfortable, but Christie taught me that it's okay not to know the answers. The transparency and open communication were empowering. I was afraid it would backfire on me, but it never has.

What I've learned from Christie is the power of "we're all in this together." I like to think of myself as a realist. I think it's important because it prepares me for the hard questions. But my work with Christie has made me even better prepared.