BLG Alumni Spotlight: A conversation with Charmane Sing

Charmane Sing serves as Vice President, Legal & Compliance at Capstone Copper, where she recently celebrated her 10th anniversary. In this interview with BLG Partner Tamara Wong, she shares insights about her career evolution in the mining industry, the transformative power of mentorship, and the enduring value of professional community.

Legal mining expertise: From first steps to passionate advocacy

TW: As Director and Associate GC at Capstone Copper, you're leading legal strategy for a major mining company. How did you end up in mining?

CS: I actually fell into mining: what I was interested in was broadening my experience with a public company. When BLG alum Wendy King, whom I had worked with previously, was looking to hire legal counsel at what was then Capstone Mining, I applied. But once I got into mining, I became passionate about it.

Mining plays such an important role in everyday life that most people don't see. I always say: if you use a cell phone, you should support mining, because you're not going to get it without.

TW: Earlier this year marked your 10th anniversary with Capstone. How have you seen the industry change, and how has this impacted your role?

CS: Market consolidation has been huge. In 2022, we had a combination that doubled the size of our company. We were Capstone Mining and now we're Capstone Copper; that definitely changed my role. There's been a significant increase in compliance work, for instance. There are more job postings for compliance and ESG roles out there, and as an in-house lawyer, I'm increasingly involved in leading initiatives in the sustainability space that traditionally wouldn't have been considered legal work.

TW: What does success look like in your current role, and what energizes you most?

CS: Success for me is being seen as a business partner. It's when we're brought into meetings or projects right from the beginning, and people ask, "What does legal think about this?" I get most energized by team projects, especially global ones. Working through different cultural norms and across time zones to bring everyone together is exciting. I'm constantly learning how to navigate working with people from diverse backgrounds – understanding Japanese customs in negotiations, South American cultural norms, and more – which makes a huge difference in getting things done successfully. It also inspired me to start taking Spanish lessons.

The transformative power of mentorship

TW: Who from your time at BLG has had the most meaningful impact on your career, and what did you learn from them?

CS: I have to mention three people who were most impactful in different ways.

First, Doug Copland, who meticulously honed my technical legal skills. During my articling, he sat down with me and went through an entire technology contract clause by clause, explaining each one's purpose and how it gets negotiated. He would say, "You should never read a contract and not know what a clause means."

Second, Brad Freedman. who taught me to take pride in my work. He made me read a book on technology to understand the industry, emphasizing that "you can't be a good lawyer not knowing the industry." When I started at Capstone, the first thing I did was buy a book about mining, following that same principle.

Third, Blair Rebane, who gave me invaluable wisdom about problem-solving. As a law student, I was great at identifying issues and would proudly bring him a list of problems I'd found. He told me, "Don't come to me with problems. Bring me cannonballs." That visual has stayed with me: don't just identify problems, provide solutions. Be a problem-solver, not just a problem-identifier.

TW: How has your perspective on mentorship evolved throughout your career?

CS: All three of my mentors cared deeply about developing associates properly, and their guidance made a significant difference. I believe in creating the same formative experiences when I work with junior colleagues. I also do informal mentoring through my involvement with FACL [the Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers] and try to help the younger generation navigate challenges, especially cultural dynamics.

TW: Your involvement with Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver seems to reflect your belief in mentorship. Can you tell us more about that?

CS: Big Brothers resonates with me on several levels. Having two sons myself, I understand the importance of positive male role models, and the organization focuses on an area that's underserved: recognizing what boys need developmentally and how mentoring can guide them. When we see Big Brothers and Little Brothers get together at events, it's touching to hear about their experiences. For some communities where parents might be working constantly out of necessity, these mentoring relationships are absolutely essential.

The enduring value of professional community

TW: Why do you choose to stay connected to BLG and the alumni community?

CS: That's the easiest question to answer: BLG feels like home. I owe a lot to BLG for shaping who I am professionally. When I attend BLG events, I remember fondly that these are "my people." Even now, I work with some BLG lawyers and feel very comfortable with them because I articled with them or know them from my time there.

I even got my current role through a BLG connection: Wendy King took a chance on me when I had limited mining experience, and I've learned so much from her approach to leadership. She's been a tremendous mentor.

TW: What advice would you give to young lawyers on developing their professional network?

CS: Be proactive about reaching out and building relationships. Don't wait for opportunities to come to you. Also, remember to pay it forward:

the guidance and support you receive from your professional community should be shared with others coming up behind you. Whether it's through formal mentoring programs or informal guidance, we all have a responsibility to contribute to the next generation's success.