

Our ancestors who overcame natural disasters: A case study focused on Toya-Usu UNESCO Global Geopark

*Asami Nakaya¹

1. Toya-Usu UNESCO Global Geopark Council

Toya-Usu UNESCO Global Geopark is located in the southwestern part of Hokkaido (the northernmost island of Japan). The geopark includes Mt.Usu, an active volcano, as a major geosite as shown by its major theme of coexistence with the volcano. The area to the south of Mt.Usu faces the sea and has been inhabited by people since the prehistoric Jomon period. Inhabitants of the area have been supported by abundant seafood and spring water from the volcano. Many settlements were formed along the coast, but the volcano's eruption during the Edo period (17th to 19th centuries) cost many lives. The indigenous Ainu of Hokkaido, who were living in the Mt. Usu area, described the volcanic eruption and their aftermath in epics (known as *yukar* in the Ainu language) and passed them down to ensure their descendants would be prepared for another possible eruption.

This presentation will focus on Ainu epics and archaeological sites that remain in the coastal area to highlight the history of those who have overcome natural disaster, such as repeated volcanic eruptions and tsunamis. We will also share information about disaster mitigation efforts that have been under way at the geopark.

Keywords: Geopark, Eruption disaster, Ainu People