

# Stay-at-home Project with Local Students in Toya-Usu UNESCO Global Geopark

\*NIRE KAGAYA<sup>1</sup>, Yoshiaki Hata<sup>1</sup>, Akihito Kato<sup>2</sup>, Kiyono Kuroda<sup>2</sup>, Koki Takagi<sup>2</sup>, Kazuma Iwamura<sup>2</sup>, Kanako Kitada<sup>2</sup>, Koki Tomita<sup>2</sup>, Mina Shionoya<sup>2</sup>

1. Toya-Usu UNESCO Global Geopark Council, 2. Date-Midorigaoka Highschool

In 2020, it was almost impossible to hold group events and outdoor activities as COVID-19 raged in Japan, and brown bears were spotted in our community more often than ever.

Under such a challenging circumstance, we sought to organize activities in different ways. In this presentation, we would like to give you one of the activities we did while observing the social distancing policy. We will present an educational project, “Let’s make together Lake Toya’s underwater model!”, which was carried out in collaboration with local elementary school pupils and junior and senior high school students.

This project was designed to make a 1/1,000 scale (1.3 m x 1.3 m) model of Lake Toya that reproduces the lake’s topography with local children. The model has been exhibited at the Lake Toya Tourist Information Center.

The nine-month project was developed as follows.

- Stage 1 ( ‘Stay-at-home event’ ): Participants made 148 layered model parts (37 layers x 4 divisions);
- Stage 2: Students of Date Midorigaoka High School Geography Course assembled the parts and painted the model; and
- Stage 3: The students made a presentation, and the model exhibition began.

If you ask a professional to make this kind of model, no one can be involved in the process. We designed this project as a participatory event for the people in the area. A total of 150 people (and their families) participated in making the model, and the completed work will be a symbolic exhibit of the Geopark in the future. We plan to use the model for teaching the history of regional topography formation and the risk reduction of geological disasters.

The COVID-19 pandemic will trigger significant changes to the communication and values that we appreciate. Each Geopark must think of what role the world expects from Geoparks and what contributions we can make to the world. To this end, Geoparks in Japan and the world have done various practices while being aware of the world after COVID-19, which have given us many thoughtful insights and new ideas.

Geoparks in Japan have domestic and international networks such as JGN, APGN, and GGN. These networks’ significance is represented in the diversity that encourages us to simultaneously address multiple challenges based on each region’s unique characteristics, and the oneness that unites us to promote such diverse activities by sharing “failures” and “know-how on success” . In our presentation, we will share with you one of our various practices by talking about our trials, errors, and the resulting success.

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