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Reflections for the Openings/Launches of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Conference

The Ubers are getting a workout!

Travelled into town to the Municipal Theatre of Temuco for the official launch of the conference. The Chilean Governor, Regional Governor and Mayor were there to open the conference.

There were lots of cultural presentations (dancing and singing) and the Mayor introduced a 12-year-old boy who spoke well about youth and engagement with geoparks. A great ambassador for the future. There has been a lot of emphasis on engaging youth, education of young people and building resilience and sustainability.

The afternoon saw a similar opening of the cultural display and posters in a marque. Both Dr Kristof Vandenberghe (Chief, UNESCO Earth Science) and Nikolaos Zouros (President Executive Board of Global Geoparks Network) spoke passionately at this event about the role of geoparks and the changing emphasis from purely geology to a more holistic approach for geoparks. And there was more dancing and singing. The posters on display are remarkable with much through out into their creations. Many display organisers wore traditional costumes and there were displays of local produce from each of Chile's regions. While geology and geo-artefacts were on show culture and traditions played a significant role in the displays. Then there was the launch of the weaving display. Amazing that most UNESCO Global Geoparks were represented.

Very exciting all round with lots of fellowship and emotional catchups.

Reflections for the First Day of Presentations of the 11th UNESCO Global Geoparks Conference

The Ubers are still getting a workout! Continuous rain ...

Travelled out to the northern campus of the Catholic University where we were informed, they closed the university for the duration of the conference and the students assisted with the conference coordination.

I had a 9.15 start and found that the presentations were meant to be 10 minutes with 5 minutes for questions. Not happening, for anyone!

Starting at 0900 and rolling every 15 minutes made it a bit of a challenge of one wanted to go to a different session for a particular speaker but somehow, we managed. Presentations became a bit rushed but well worth being there. Some were in Spanish which made things a little difficult for non-Spanish speakers like me.

My presentation was three squished into one as I could only load one abstract through the website, but I managed to cover the developments in Australia, potential geoparks in Western Australia, mentioned the four active Local geoparks and then finished off with our significant Genestream project. It seemed to go over well.

Other presentation that I focused on were from Aspiring geoparks to see how they were setting about achieving UNESCO status. Many have the same issues, lack of community awareness, lack of government support, lack of resources. But the UNESCO geoparks program is the fastest growing compared with World



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Heritage Areas and Biosphere reserves both of which are top down managed (government).

I sat in on Nikolaos Zouros presentation about the Global geoparks Network, where it started, what it has achieved and where it is going. Brilliant, then in response to a question from the audience he presented a further and impassioned answer that I wish I had the opportunity to record. Geoparks are going places, the GGN is reshaping itself to keep up with the growth and we can't rely on government or grants for our future growth.

I spoke with Nikolaos following his presentation about our "situation" in Australia. His response, keep doing what we are doing, of training is required talk to GGN. I suggested a video session with government officials and received a positive response. We at Geoparks WA and the Australian Geoparks Network will build on that.

Very exciting all round with lots of fellowship and emotional catchups.

Reflections – final day of the 11th UNSECO Global Geoparks Conference in Chile

12 September 2025

Yesterday took in the field tours. I chose the visit to an Indigenous village where we were welcomed into their community with an excellent luncheon and tour of the Auracaria forest near their village. The Welcome included an outline of the Indigenous Mapuche community background and their endeavours to retain the forests for their use, and to stop logging. The seeds are used for a variety of foods including roasted seeds, flour for bread and pastes. Following lunch, we were taken on a guided walk in the snow, stopping at selected places for explanations of their use of "pinon" nut, seeds from the Auracaria trees, it is an amazing industry.

The last day was taken up with Workshops where GGN wanted input to several concepts including Indigenous engagement, and branding. There were forums on climate change, geological heritage and geodiversity, gastronomy and education. I chose the Indigenous Workshop followed by the Branding Workshop (for GGN).

In the background the GGN continued its administrative meetings as part of their approvals processes for new and revalidation of geoparks, planning and annual general meetings. One day, we, that is Australia, might once again participate ... when we achieve our UNESCO Global Geoparks.

Dr Alan Briggs

President – Geoparks WA