

Stonehammer Global Geopark: the first three years of establishment

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Global Geoparks complement museums and science centres, and provide visitors with geological, historical, and cultural stories. Although all are members of the Global Geopark Network (GGN), they vary widely in size, include very different geological stories, and have different knowledge histories of exploration and cultural connections to the people living in the area. To examine knowledge gains associated with Stonehammer we collected questionnaire data from park visitors during the first three years of operation (2011, 2012, and 2013). Participants completed a short questionnaire that included nine questions measuring concepts central to the Big Ideas outlines by the Earth Science Literacy Initiative (2009). In total, 641 participants completed the survey ($N_{\text{Year 1}}=309$; $N_{\text{Year 2}}=124$; $N_{\text{Year 3}}=208$); 52.2% of participants were from the Saint John area, 6.4% were from other areas in New Brunswick, 15% were from other parts of Canada, and 23.4% were from countries other than Canada. Overall, our participants had high earth science literacy and, on average, were aware of 7.73 of the Big Ideas. Further, all participants had similar scores, regardless of their home location. We also asked questions to determine if participants were aware of the establishment of Stonehammer and, as would be expected, a larger proportion of local visitors were aware of the geopark. Interestingly, the percentage of local participants who were aware of Stonehammer dropped significantly from Years 1 to 3, which could be attributed to the fact that there was a media blitz surrounding the initial establishment of the geopark. It is encouraging to note that almost 50% of participants who were aware that they were visiting a geopark reported that they learned something during their visit.

Presented in Theme 2