



PROFILES

WOMEN IN GEOTHERMAL

Promoting the education, professional development, and advancement of women in the geothermal community.



Spotlight on Women in Geothermal – April 2026

Vanessa Salcedo, Graduate Student at University of Alberta

2025 WING Core Value Award Recipient



An Emerging Voice in Global Geothermal

In the evolving landscape of global geothermal development, few voices represent emerging expertise and genuine dedication as clearly as Vanessa Salcedo. Originally from Colombia and now living in Edmonton, Canada, Vanessa's journey reflects resilience, curiosity, and a deep passion for sustainable energy across Latin America. With nearly a decade of experience in geoscience and renewable energy, she is one of the rising leaders shaping the future of geothermal in the region.

Early Career and Path to Geothermal

Vanessa began her path as a geologist, studying at a public university in Colombia. Early in her career, she gravitated toward the environmental and social dimensions of energy projects, an interest that ultimately guided her toward geothermal. Her first major step came with The Dewhurst Group, where she contributed to the Geothermal Development Facility, an initiative funded by the European Union, the German Development Bank, and other partners. The program aimed to accelerate early-stage geothermal exploration across Latin America by offering financial and technical support.

Regional Experience and Project Work

Through this work, Vanessa became involved in geothermal projects across Guatemala, Chile, Honduras, Bolivia, Mexico, and her home country of Colombia. Her responsibilities included managing project applications, reviewing environmental and social compliance, supporting alignment with host country regulations, and overseeing early drilling exploration. These experiences provided her with a strong understanding of geothermal

systems as well as the community and regulatory frameworks necessary for responsible development.

Perspective as a Woman in Geoscience

Despite her extensive contributions, Vanessa remains humble. "I am proud to be a woman in this industry," she shared. "In geoscience, it is not always straightforward for women to advance, especially in Latin America. But I am proud to be part of this community and of what geothermal can mean for the region."

The Moment That Sparked Her Passion

Her passion for geothermal traces back to her undergraduate years. Her university was located near a major Colombian volcano where researchers were conducting geothermal resource surveys. Students were invited to participate, giving Vanessa her first hands on experience in subsurface science. That opportunity sparked a sense of purpose that has guided her ever since.

Graduate Studies and Technical Growth

Today, while wrapping up her remaining commitments with the Geothermal Development Facility, Vanessa is pursuing a master's degree in Integrated Energy Geoscience at the University of Alberta. Balancing graduate studies with part time professional work has been challenging, she admits with a laugh, but she remains committed to expanding her technical knowledge. "Before, I was very focused on the environmental and social side," she explained. "Now, I want to understand how the resource works in general, the technical side of geothermal systems."

Outlook on Geothermal in Latin America

When asked about the future of geothermal in Latin America, Vanessa offers both optimism and realism. Countries such as Mexico, Costa Rica, and El Salvador are well positioned for next generation geothermal technologies. Others, including Colombia and Guatemala, have strong potential but may require more time and investment to advance. She has already visited geothermal fields such as Los Azufres in Mexico and Ahuachapan in El Salvador, experiences she describes as inspiring.

Life Beyond Work

Outside her professional life, Vanessa describes herself as a "cozy person." She enjoys spending time with family, reading, watching movies, caring for animals, especially cats, and traveling. Despite the demands of her academic and professional schedule, she remains grounded in simple joys that bring comfort and balance.



Advice for the Next Generation

For young people, especially young women, considering a career in geothermal, Vanessa's advice is straightforward: "Go for it." The field offers the chance to contribute to meaningful change while working at the intersection of science, sustainability, and innovation. "Geothermal is a beautiful initiative," she said. "It aligns with everything the world is moving toward. You can truly make a difference."

Looking Ahead

As she continues her studies and prepares for the next phase of her career, Vanessa hopes to remain connected to geothermal development in Latin America. Whether in Colombia, Chile, or another part of the region, she dreams of helping bring cleaner and more resilient energy systems to the communities that need them. Her journey is still unfolding, but her passion, humility, and determination already make her an inspiring presence in the geothermal community and a powerful role model for future leaders.

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