Man Driving: Carmen, give me directions to Appleville Powwow Fairgrounds.

GPS Device: Calculating route to Apple store.

Man Driving: No, no, no... Appleville Powwow Fairgrounds.

GPS Device: Calculating route to Appleton, Wisconsin.

Man Driving: Ugh...

GPS Device: Make two lefts and then a right at the dead end. Make a U-turn, then follow the tree line

until you see two cows standing in a field.

Man Driving: That’s not right. Hey, maybe this guy knows where we're going.

Hey, what's up?

Lee Francis IV: Hey there. You need a little help finding your way around these parts?

Man Driving: Yeah, unfortunately Carmen's a little off today.

Lee Francis IV: Ah, indeed... mapping is complicated, but did you know that Indigenous people have been master cartographers for thousands of years? I'll tell you all about it today on Indigi-Genius.

Man Driving: Who you talking to?

♪ ♪

Lee Francis IV: Cartography, the art and science of graphically representing a geographical area, usually on a flat surface, such as a map or chart. There are many ways geographical areas can be represented and the practice of cartography has evolved throughout the centuries to become more and more sophisticated. Cartography can include traffic routes, political representations, demographics, events, food and television preferences. But, these more recent representations have their roots in the ways Indigenous people have been creating maps for millennia. For Indigenous peoples, cartography is more than just topography or mapping locations. For many Indigenous communities, it's about values, culture and traditional understandings. Perhaps the earliest representations of cartography can be highlighted in the petroglyphs and stone art of numerous Indigenous peoples around the globe. Not only were these artistic and cultural representations, they often held cartographic significance that could determine distances, directions, stories, cultural values and more.

As travel and trade evolved and Indigenous societies became even more complex, the need for portable, cartographic media became absolutely essential, but they were not simply limited to roads and thruways, as many of those topographies were memorized and passed down through the generations. Instead, the maps took on deeper and more meaningful significance for the entire community. The Indigenous mapas in Mexico are a key example of the brilliance of Indigenous cartography. They are not only topographical, but they point out origin and creation stories,

family trees and connections, battles and property boundaries for entire regions and groups of people. Winter counts, from the Northern Plains Communities, show not only battle locations and casualty counts, but important locations and other defining factors for all of those peoples in the north.

Maps can come in so many shapes and sizes and sometimes they can surprise you. As we think of land as the main feature here in North America, the Indigenous peoples from the Pacific Islands view the water in the same way. For them, the land are just small features to help them guide a person across the great expanses of water. It's similar to the way we would give directions, like, “Turn right at the intersection.” Our ocean relations would say, “Turn toward the northern horizon when the star line shifts behind you.” This wayfinding is deeply embedded in that culture and history and gives insight into the very origins of cartography.

I love maps. I've always loved to follow their lines and stories. I remember when the first GPS maps came online and I rushed to get my hands on the new technology. But, over the years, I found myself yearning for the old, hand-held, fold-out maps, with all their creases and tears. I never knew how the practice of modern cartography was so deeply influenced by Indigenous understandings of geography and art, throughout the millennia. And, these understandings

and expressions and creases and folds are all around us, each and every day, here on Indigi-Genius!