

It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow *deserve* to be poor. You start believing that you're poor because you're stupid and ugly. And then you start believing that you're stupid and ugly because you're Indian. And because you're Indian you start believing you're destined to be poor. It's an ugly circle and *there's nothing you can do about it*.



At the forefront of these challenges is **poverty**. In 2010, the **poverty rate** on reservations was 28.4 percent, compared with 22 percent among all American Indians (on and off **reservations**), and 15.3 percent among all Americans.

Poverty doesn't give you strength or teach you lessons about perseverance. No, poverty only teaches you how to be poor.



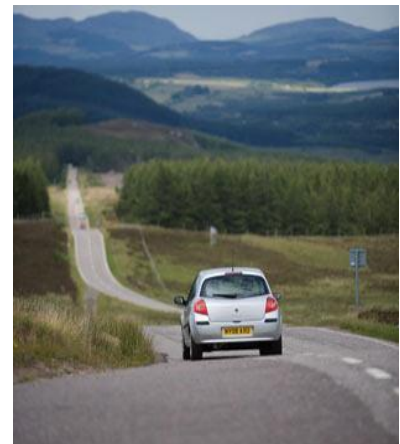
The percentage of homes that are overcrowded on reservations is 3-6 times higher than the percentage of overcrowded homes in the U.S. as a whole (Housing Assistance Council, 2013; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2003; U.S. Census, 2000).

It is estimated that almost 1 in 10 American Indian homes are without safe and reliable water (Indian Health Service, 2011).

More than 60% of the roads within the Indian Reservation Roads system are earth or gravel (NCAI, 2012).

And since the kids and parents at Reardan thought I had a lot of money, I did nothing to change their minds. I figured it wouldn't do me any good if they knew I was dirt poor.

What would they think of me if they knew I sometimes had to hitchhike to school.



Two of the five poorest of the United States' 3,142 counties are located on Indian Reservations. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

<p>I picked up the other boot and dug inside. Man, that thing smelled like booze and fear and failure.</p> <p>I found a wrinkled and damp five dollar bill.</p> <p>"Merry Christmas," he said.</p> <p>Wow</p> <div data-bbox="191 846 479 980" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="496 827 573 896" data-label="Text"> <p>\$5 = \$100</p> </div> <div data-bbox="191 1031 467 1119" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="483 1005 576 1108" data-label="Text"> <p>\$5 = a candy bar</p> </div> <hr/> <p>Native Americans have the lowest employment rate of any racial or ethnic group in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).</p> <p>In the poorest Native counties, only about 1/3 of men in Native American communities have full-time, year-round employment (Beal, 2004).</p>	<p>But I looked over at the Wellpinit Redskins, at Rowdy.</p> <p>I knew that two or three of those Indians might not have eaten breakfast that morning.</p> <p>No food in the house.</p> <p>I knew that seven or eight of those Indians lived with drunken mothers and fathers.</p> <p>I knew that one of those Indians had a father who dealt crack and meth.</p> <p>I knew two of those Indians and fathers in prison.</p> <p>I knew that none of them was going to college. Not one of them.</p> <hr/> <div data-bbox="620 1100 976 1339" data-label="Image"> </div> <hr/> <p>High school graduation rates are also among the lowest of any population. In the states with the most American Indian and Alaska Native students, less than 50% of Native students graduate, on average. (The Civil Rights</p>	<p>I wish I could draw a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, or a fist full of twenty dollar bills, and perform some magic trick and make it real. But I can't do that. Nobody can do that, not even the hungriest magician in the world.</p> <hr/> <div data-bbox="1032 774 1419 1066" data-label="Image"> </div> <hr/> <p>Living conditions on the reservations have been cited as "comparable to Third World," (May 5 2004, Gallup Independent).</p> <p>As of 2011, there were over 120,000 tribal homes lacking access to basic water sanitation services (EPA, 2012).</p>
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