



# Hard Times

*Dear Dr. Per Cap:*

*You write a lot about investing. I know that's important but most months I'm struggling just to pay the light bill. I work when I can but there aren't a lot of jobs here and most pay minimum wage. What advice can you give someone who is having a hard time staying afloat?*

*Signed, Hanging On*

Dear Hanging On

Thanks for keeping it real. I try to maintain a good mix of topics that interest a wide range of Native readers but my apologies when they miss the mark. I also realize that much of the financial advice out there simply assumes that a person has a solid foundation on which to build, i.e. stable employment, adequate shelter, and access to banking. However, that isn't always the case in parts of Indian Country.

Usually when a person struggles to manage living expenses, one of two hurdles is setting them back - either they don't make enough money or income to pay expenses, or they live beyond their means with too many expenses. Sometimes it's a combination of both. Unfortunately, solutions such as increasing income or reducing expenses are easier said than done, but it sounds like income is your main challenge so let's begin there.

For starters try to generate a little more money every month. If jobs are scarce think about a nice side hustle to help make ends meet. I see so many Native people who are natural self-starters. Almost every community has that person who drops by a few times a week peddling breakfast burritos, fresh baked bread, or homemade pies. You have vendors selling Indian tacos, burgers, and other eats from roadside stands. There are artists and craftspeople who sell their works. And some get the whole family involved like the folks who deliver firewood during winter. I've even seen people run mom and pop bingo games out of their living rooms. Not sure if it's legal but I won't tell.

Do you have a unique skill or hobby that could be monetized with a little creativity? I'm thinking you do so don't hold back. Who knows your side hustle might just turn into a full time business. I know times are tough. I really do but try to keep a positive attitude and explore your options.

Here's another suggestion. Many tribes offer financial fitness workshops. Classes taught by housing departments, community development non-profits, and other programs are usually free and a great way to learn how to budget, set goals, and take control of your money.

I'd also like to share a new resource I've created with a partner - a website called [nativesonabudget.com](http://nativesonabudget.com). Check it out. It's loaded with personal finance tips along with a monthly podcast and a Facebook group to keep you focused.

Lastly, reach out to me anytime at the email address below if you'd like more personal assistance or just an ear to listen. I'm happy to chat by voice or text with any of my readers about financial challenges you face. We got this!

***Ask Dr. Per Cap*** is a program funded by First Nations Development Institute with assistance from the FINRA Investor Education Foundation. For more information, visit [www.firstnations.org](http://www.firstnations.org). To send a question to Dr. Per Cap, email [askdrpercap@firstnations.org](mailto:askdrpercap@firstnations.org).