

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Land Lost

In 1887, the U.S. government passed a law called the Dawes Act. This law aimed to change the way Native Americans lived and used their land. Instead of letting tribes own large pieces of land together, the Dawes Act divided the land into smaller sections, or allotments, for individual families. The goal was to make Native Americans live more like European settlers, who farmed their own small plots.



At first, this might sound like a fair idea, but it caused many problems. Tribes believed land was meant to be shared by everyone, not owned by individuals. The allotments were often too small for farming, and many Native Americans didn't have the tools or money needed to succeed as farmers. Worse, any leftover land that wasn't given to Native Americans was sold to settlers. Over time, this took away millions of acres of tribal land.

The Dawes Act also led to the loss of culture. Native Americans were forced to change their traditional way of life. They were encouraged to speak English, wear European-style clothing, and send their children to schools far from their families. These changes were meant to make Native Americans fit into settler society, but they often caused pain and confusion.

By 1934, the U.S. government realized the Dawes Act had failed. Many Native Americans had lost their land and struggled to survive. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 ended the allotment system and allowed tribes to own land together again. Even so, the damage caused by the Dawes Act continues to affect Native American communities today. Understanding this history helps us see why it's important to respect and protect Native American rights and traditions.