



A Brief Glimpse of Assimilation Policy -The Dawes Act¹

Definition: Assimilation – Becoming part of a group by giving up your own ways of doing things.

In 1887 the U.S. Congress passed the Dawes Act.

The law's goal was to make Native Americans live like European Americans, to:

- ❖ wear Euro-American clothes
- ❖ cultivate the ground
- ❖ live in houses
- ❖ ride in Studebaker wagons
- ❖ send children to school
- ❖ drink whiskey
- ❖ own property individually

To accomplish these things, the law:

Allotted or assigned ownership of plots of land to individual Indians on various reservations

Required Indians follow U.S. laws rather than tribal governments

Ultimately, as a consequence of the law the tribes lost much of the land on their original reservations and whites settled on what was previously Native land.

In 1887, 138 million acres of land belonged to Native peoples.

By 1934, only 47 million acres of land belonged to Native peoples.

The Dawes Act was repealed in 1934.

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