



TRIBAL HISTORY

SHARED HISTORY

**DAWES
ALLOTMENT
ACT**

“This new phase of federal Indian policy was known as assimilation, and as bad as the years of warfare and treaty making had been, assimilation would be immeasurably worse.” p. 114

Goal of the Dawes Act

The Dawes Severalty Act was passed in 1887. (Referred to it as Dawes Act or allotment.)

Definition of Severality: the condition of being separate.

The act's goal was to turn Indians into Americans through private ownership, religion, and education.

“It has become the settled policy of the Government to break up reservations, destroy tribal relations, settle Indians upon their own homesteads, incorporate them into the national life, and deal with them not as nations or tribes or bands, but as individual citizens.” p. 113

Natives were to “wear civilized clothes . . . cultivate the ground, live in houses, ride in Studebaker wagons, send children to school, drink whiskey [and] own property” p. 113



3 specific outcomes:

01

break up the tribe
as a social unit,
encourage private
enterprise

02

reduce the cost of
Indian
administration

03

provide a land
base for white
settlement

“We must make the Indian more intelligently selfish.” p. 144

John Oberly, then commissioner of Indian affairs, in 1886 concluded that the -

The Indian “must be imbued with the exalting egotism of American civilization so that he will say ‘I’ instead of ‘We,’ and ‘This is mine’ instead of ‘This is ours’” p. 144





Last Arrow Ceremony

At this ceremony, a Native American would appear in traditional dress and symbolically shoot a last arrow.

They would then reappear dressed in modern-day clothing with farming implements.


Sometimes the traditional clothes, along with other traditional belongings, would be burned as a symbolic gesture of casting away their old “savage” ways and embracing their new lifestyle.



1. Breakup tribal land holdings
(Allotment)

A light orange downward-pointing arrow indicating the flow from step 1 to step 2.

2. Break down the family and reshape
the next generation (Boarding Schools)

A light yellow downward-pointing arrow indicating the flow from step 2 to step 3.

3. Redefine the culture and replace the
religion (Indian Offences)

How to achieve this goal :

INDIAN LAND FOR SALE

GET A HOME
OF
YOUR OWN
EASY PAYMENTS



PERFECT TITLE
POSSESSION
WITHIN
THIRTY DAYS

FINE LANDS IN THE WEST

IRRIGATED IRRIGABLE GRAZING AGRICULTURAL DRY FARMING

IN 1910 THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR SOLD UNDER SOLDIER BIDS ALLOTTED INDIAN LAND AS FOLLOWS:

Location	Acres	Average Price per Acre	Location	Acres	Average Price per Acre
Colorado	5,211.21	\$7.27	Oklahoma	34,664.00	\$19.14
Idaho	17,013.00	24.85	Oregon	1,020.00	15.43
Kansas	1,684.50	33.45	South Dakota	120,445.00	16.53
Montana	11,034.00	9.86	Washington	4,879.00	41.37
Nebraska	5,641.00	36.65	Wisconsin	1,069.00	17.00
North Dakota	22,610.70	9.93	Wyoming	865.00	20.64

FOR THE YEAR 1911 IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 350,000 ACRES WILL BE OFFERED FOR SALE

For information as to the character of the land write for booklet, "INDIAN LANDS FOR SALE," to the Superintendent U. S. Indian School at any one of the following places:

CALIFORNIA: Bakersfield Crescent Dixon Fresno Hanford Merced Owens Palo Alto Red Bluff Tulare	KENTUCKY: Paducah MONTANA: Carrington Gardiner NEBRASKA: Beatrice Harrison Wahoo	NORTH DAKOTA: Bismarck Dakota Fargo Grand Forks Jamestown Minot Mott New Town Sully Towner	OKLAHOMA: Ada Bartlesville Cherokee Cottontown Lawton Muskogee Okemune Pawnee Tulsa	OREGON: Astoria Cannon Beach Eugene Gresham Medford Newport Salem Tillamook Waldport	WASHINGTON: Bellingham Everett Olympia Tacoma Vancouver Walla Walla Yakima
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WALTER L. FISHER,
Superintendent of the School

ROBERT G. VALENTINE,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs

How did allotment work?

Indians still could not buy or sell land—the allotments “owned” by Indians were in fact owned by the government in trust for 25 years. p 146 (Important fact for Cobell case in week 9)

- heads of household received allotments of 160 acres,
- single adults received 80 acres and
- minors 40 acres.

These amounts were sometimes doubled if the land was suitable only for grazing. Married Native women were ineligible to receive land.

In 1891 the act was amended to treat all Native-American adults equally, regardless of their sex or familial status. However, the size of the allotments was cut in half.

The act allowed “competent” Indians to own their land outright. Once the land was owned, it came out of trust and was taxed.

Watch 2 minute video <https://youtu.be/GTfRNtjTMKs>

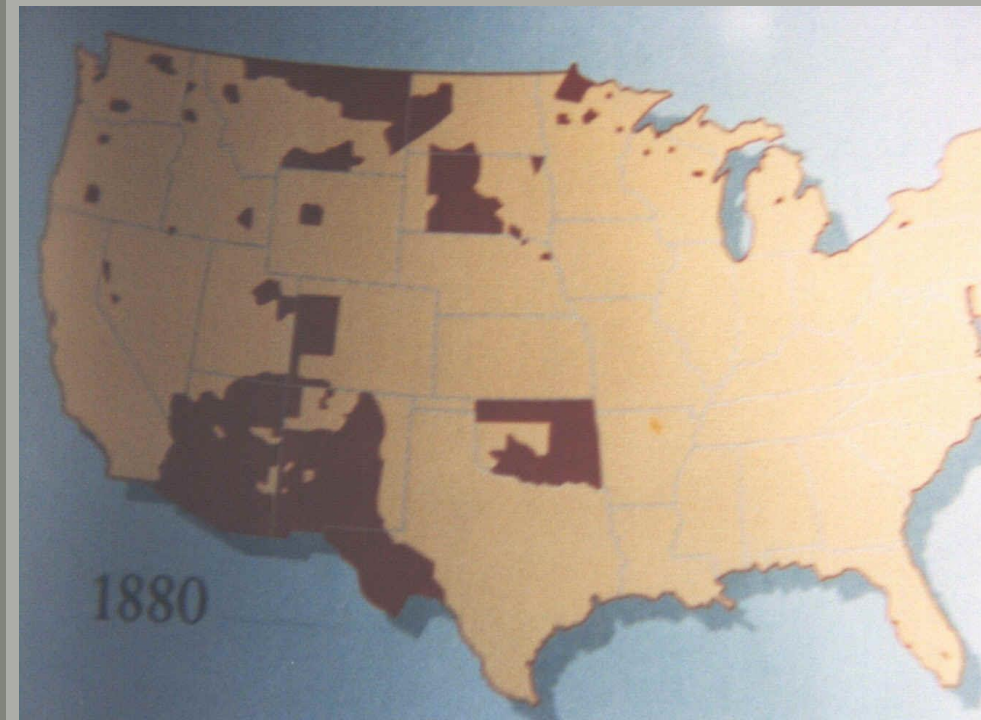
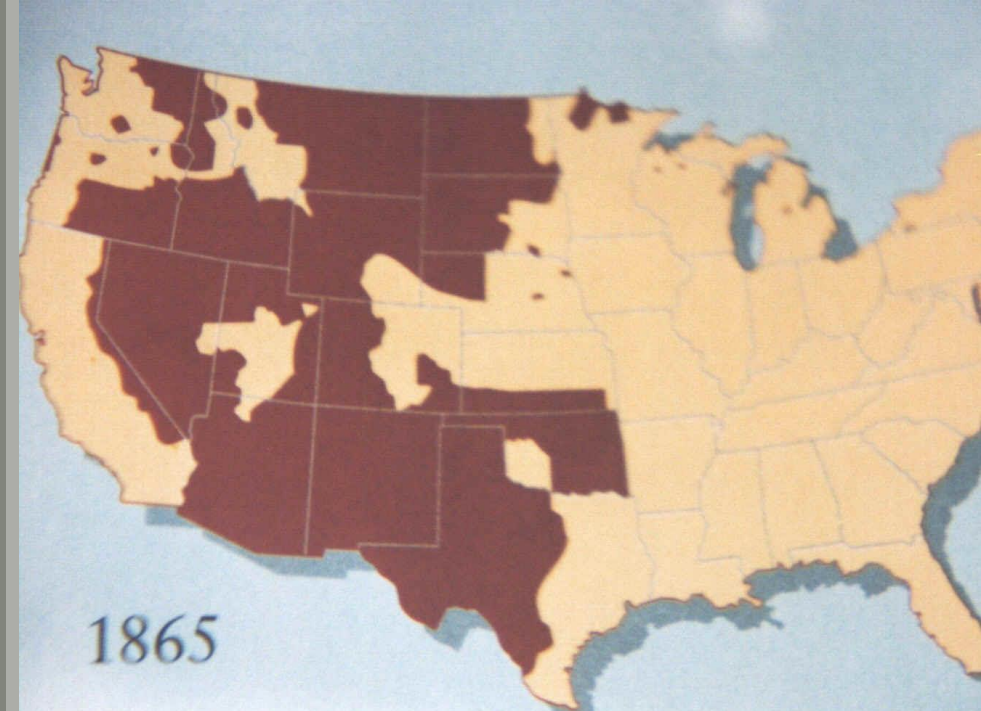
Land Holdings

Land left Indian ownership in 2 ways: surplus land and loss of Indian allotments. Surplus land just went straight to whites. However, within a couple of decades, as much as 95 percent of allotted Indian land would pass into white ownership as well.

This happened for several reasons:

- The land allotted was not suitable for farming.
- The Indians did not have the knowledge or the equipment to make the plots productive enough to make a living.
 - The government was to provide farming equipment but rarely did when it did do so, the cost of equipment did not exceed \$10.
- The government frequently encouraged Natives to lease the land at lower than profitable rates.
- Natives were unable to pay the taxes on the land.
- There was always someone willing to buy the land from them.

From 1887 to 1934—Indian landholdings dropped from 138 million acres to 48 million acres.



Opposition to the Dawes Act

Henry M. Teller, secretary of the interior, said of the act:

The “real aim of this bill is to get at the Indian lands and open them up to settlement.”

“The provisions for the apparent benefit of the Indian are but the pretext to get at his lands and occupy them. . . . If this were done in the name of greed, it would be bad enough; but to do it in the name of humanity, and under the cloak of an ardent desire to promote the Indian’s welfare by making him like ourselves whether he will or not, is infinitely worse.” p. 153





Traditional ways of maintaining order almost all would fall under Indian Offences.

Each tribe had different ways to maintain order among its people.

There were Dog Soldiers among the Lakota and the Bear Clan among the Ojibwe. Both enforced tribal law and kept the peace.

The Whip Man was an official and respected position in many tribes. He would impose punishment and teach children right from wrong.

Some tribes would use a sort of minstrel at public events to demonstrate inappropriate behaviors of other tribal members in a humorous fashion that brought laughter and social corrections to expectable norms.

Many oral stories instilled traditional values & histories in children, such as sharing, respect, and honoring elders.

In many tribes, it was grounds for banishment if you did not share in the work or if you were stingy or selfish.

In some tribe's wealth and prestige was established by how much you could give away, not how much you had.

Indian Offences

The codes stated that **Indian ceremonial life was to be deterred, and adhering to one's traditions was to be punished.**

Individuals or groups who violated this procedure were to be held accountable before the Court of Indian Offences. Punishment usually consisted of the withholding of rations, fines, hard labor, or jail. Specific things that were outlawed:

01

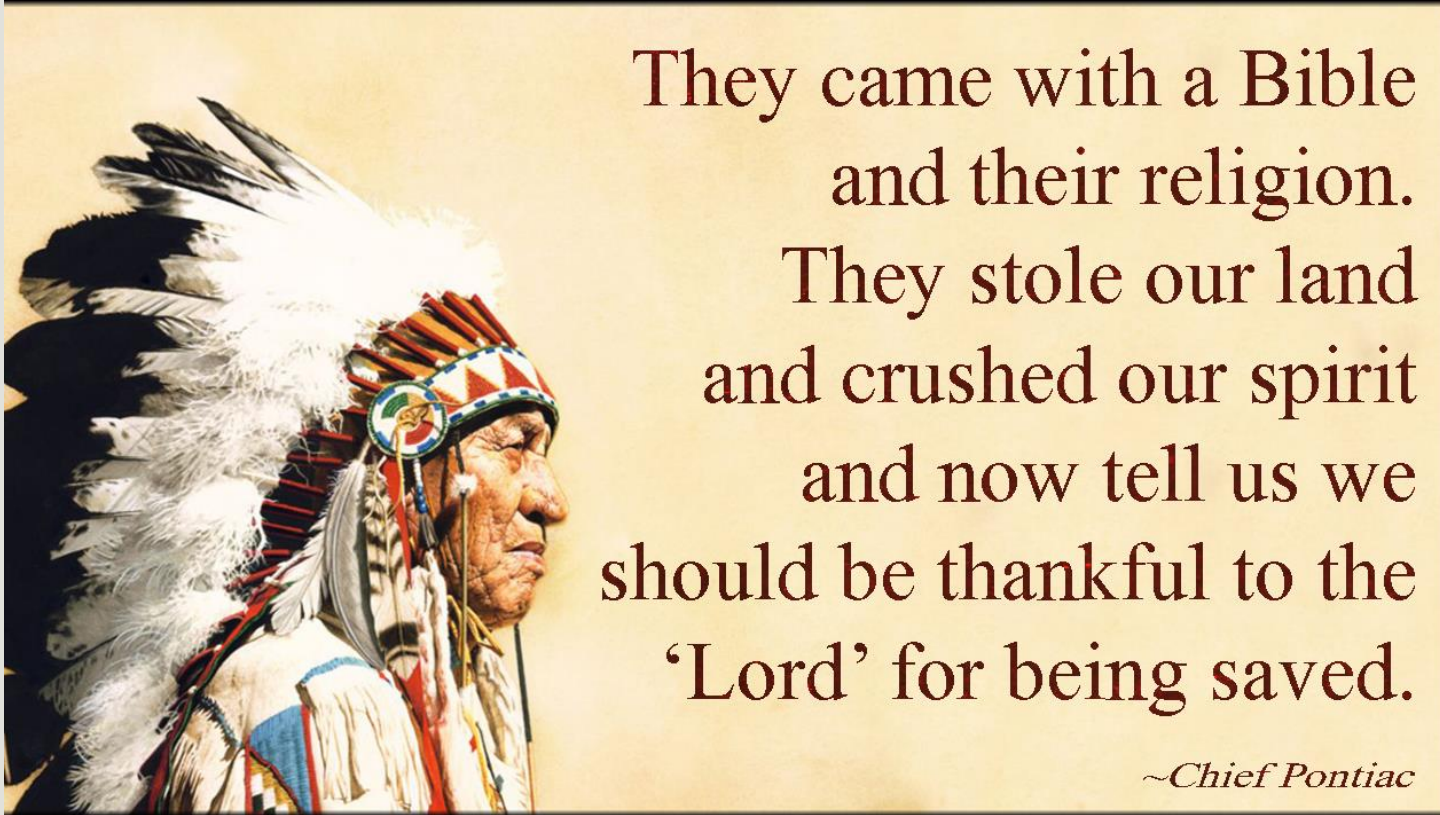
The “sun-dance”, “scalp-dance”, “war-dance” and all other so-called feasts.

02

Plural marriage were outlawed & you on was required to support and provide for their wife and children to the best of their ability.

03

The practices of “medicine-men”, “shaman” are outlawed, as this is a hindrance to the civilization of the tribe



They came with a Bible
and their religion.
They stole our land
and crushed our spirit
and now tell us we
should be thankful to the
'Lord' for being saved.

~Chief Pontiac

Indian Offences continued

4. It is against the law to destroy, steal, or carry away any property of any value from any other Indian. If found guilty you are to return the property or reimburse the person. It is not a valid defense to this crime to claim to be a "mourner". (This offence was targeting the process of a give away that was a traditional mourning ceremony where the dead Indians belongings were given to friends and family.)
5. Any Indian or mixed-blood who shall pay or offer to pay to the family of any Indian woman for the purpose of living or cohabitating with the woman shall be guilty of an Indian Offence.

The Code of Indian Offenses was designed to destroy Indian culture. as a means of making Indians American.

Conclusion

“Indian homelands had been reduced by two-thirds in about thirty years. What the great process of “civilization” had brought to Indian country was poverty, disenfranchisement, and the breakdown of Indian families.” p. 150

1888



1896



Insult to Injury

“That the government stole Indian land in order to fund the theft of Indian children.” p. 146

- Money from surplus land was in part to go towards the well being of the tribes. To the government this meant funding boarding schools.

Henry Dawes, the main proponent of the Allotment Act, had a significant financial interest in the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad, all of which needed right of ways through what had been Lakota land. p. 160

National Indian Defense Association (NIDA) argued that the allotment act was geared more to the benefit of the railroads than the Indians, as it gave the Indians no choice in what land they would get, and the price the government was willing to pay for the “surplus” land was criminally low.

-Image of Chief Joseph who refused an allotment.



*"THEY MADE US MANY PROMISES, MORE THAN
I CAN REMEMBER. BUT THEY KEPT BUT ONE.
THEY PROMISED TO TAKE OUR LAND AND THEY TOOK IT."*

ATTRIBUTED TO RED CLOUD

Assessment

If you had to choose the one aspect of the Dawes Allotment Act (allotment, boarding schools or Indian Offenses) that you think was most harmful to Native American tribes what would it be and why?

(Slide 8 of The Dawes Act PowerPoint) Ask teacher for specific length of reflection.

THE HEARTBEAT OF WOUNDED KNEE



NATIVE AMERICA

FROM 1890 TO THE PRESENT

DAVID TREUER

Resources

Page numbers in this lesson are from Ojibwe author David Treuer's book *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*. The book is an excellent resource from the Native perspective. "An informed, moving portrait of Indian survival, resilience, adaptability, pride and place in modern life. ... Treuer's powerful book suggests the need for soul-searching about the meanings of American history and the stories we tell ourselves about this nation's past." —New York Times Book Review

Additional Resources

Alice Fletcher & the Nez Purse (8 minutes) <https://youtu.be/fKQD08Zr5IU>

- Alice Fletcher was much more diligent in her allotment duty than most. She failed to question the premise of what she was doing but undertook to do allotment in as fair of a process as possible.

Cherokee Almanac: The Dawes Commission (3 minutes) <https://youtu.be/yx9bL8q70jM>