



AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE HELEN CLARKE MEMORIAL HIGHWAY IN GLACIER COUNTY; DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO INSTALL SIGNS AT THE LOCATION AND TO INCLUDE THE MEMORIAL HIGHWAY ON THE NEXT PUBLICATION OF THE STATE HIGHWAY MAP; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, Helen Piotopowaka Clarke was born in 1846 to a Scottish American father and a Blackfeet mother, Cothcocoma; and

WHEREAS, she spent most of her childhood at a convent school in Cincinnati and returned to Montana just a few years before a group of Blackfeet men murdered her father in 1869; and

WHEREAS, on January 23, 1870, Clarke's brothers participated in the Bear River Massacre (Baker Massacre), during which the U.S. Army slaughtered 217 women, children, and the elderly suffering from smallpox of the peaceful camp of Chief Heavy Runner; and

WHEREAS, following the massacre, Helen Clarke moved to the east coast and had a brief but successful acting career in New York; and

WHEREAS, in 1875, she returned to Montana and found a teaching position in Helena, but experienced discrimination and racism because of her mixed race ancestry; and

WHEREAS, in 1882, Clarke was elected as Lewis and Clark County Superintendent of Schools, one of the first two women and the only person of Indian descent to hold elective office in Montana Territory. She held the position for three terms; and

WHEREAS, in 1889, Clarke left Montana to work for the Department of Interior, Indian Bureau, as an allotment agent. Again, she was met with discrimination—this time for her sex. Officials within the department felt a woman had no business or legal right to work as an Indian agent; and

WHEREAS, in 1901, Clarke moved to San Francisco, where she established herself as a tutor of "artes, elocution and dramatic art." However, anti-Indian prejudices followed her to California; and

WHEREAS, in 1911, Clarke wrote about the pervasiveness of anti-Indian racism: "This very nation looks with eyes askance upon the cultured, the intelligent, intellectual half-breeds of mixed-bloods who reside either off or on reservations. Such inconsistencies in character or principles belong not to a great people"; and

WHEREAS, by the end of her remarkable life, Clarke had proved through experience a bitter truth: no matter how accomplished a woman was, no matter how assimilated a person of indigenous ancestry, America was unwilling to let go of its prejudices against both women and Indians; and

WHEREAS, Helen Piotopowaka Clarke died on March 4, 1923, in the village of East Glacier, Montana, and was laid to rest in the East Glacier Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, the 67th Legislature of the State of Montana honors Helen Clarke for her work in improving the quality of life and equality of opportunity in her time.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Helen Clarke memorial highway. (1) There is established the Helen Clarke memorial highway on the existing U.S. highway 2 from the limits of East Glacier to the limits of Browning.

(2) The department shall design and install appropriate signs marking the location of the Helen Clarke memorial highway.

(3) Maps that identify roadways in Montana must be updated to include the location of the Helen Clarke memorial highway when the department updates and publishes the state maps.

Section 2. Codification instruction. [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 60, chapter 1, part 2, and the provisions of Title 60, chapter 1, part 2, apply to [section 1].

Section 3. Effective date. [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

- END -

SENATE BILL NO. 96

INTRODUCED BY S. WEBBER

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I hereby certify that the within bill,
SB 96, originated in the Senate.

Secretary of the Senate

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2021.

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2021.