Episode 3: Building Futures

Lesson Title: Forged by Many: Immigration and the Making of Colorado

Author: Michelle Pearson

Episode Description:

Building Futures: Entrepreneurship & Identity traces the entrepreneurial spirit of Coloradans who forged economic pathways despite discrimination, limited capital, and systemic barriers. These stories reveal how enterprise, labor, and innovation built communities and created lasting cultural legacies.

Throughout the episode, children's voices—including students from immigrant families, Indigenous, Black, Latino, and neurodivergent youth—reflect on work and identity, connecting historical entrepreneurship to modern opportunities. Utilizing archival materials and visual sequences, Episode 3 emphasizes that Colorado's economic development has always been driven by diverse individuals who carved opportunity from challenge.

Lesson Inquiry Questions:

1. How did early entrepreneurship in Colorado reflect the diverse backgrounds of the Indigenous Peoples and others who come to Colorado?
2. What cultural factors and systemic barriers influenced the development of the entrepreneurial spirit in Colorado communities?

Lesson Description:

In this lesson, students explore how immigrant entrepreneurs shaped Colorado's economic and cultural development despite facing significant barriers. Centered on the inquiry question "How did immigrant entrepreneurs identify and capitalize on economic opportunities in early Colorado?," students examine the lives of six

historical figures—including Chin Lin Sou, Barney L. Ford, Adolph Coors, David May, John Kernan Mullen, and Otto Mears—through biographies and formal portraits.

After viewing Episode 3 of *Becoming Colorado* and building foundational vocabulary (entrepreneur, immigrant, bootstrapping, assimilation), students engage in a jigsaw activity where they research one entrepreneur's country of origin, business achievements, challenges faced, and lasting community impact using a four-column graphic organizer. The lesson culminates in a group share-out and a reflective exit ticket connecting historical entrepreneurship to Colorado's economy today, where immigrants continue to drive significant business ownership and economic output.

Grade Level/Time Needed:

8th Grade/ 60-70 minutes

Lesson Inquiry Question:

1. How did immigrant entrepreneurs identify and capitalize on economic opportunities in early Colorado?

Supporting Questions:

1. What does it mean to be an entrepreneur?
2. What types of challenges did immigrant entrepreneurs face when establishing their businesses in Colorado?
3. How did non-mining businesses (such as bakeries, dry goods stores, laundries, breweries, and tailoring shops) prove more financially stable than gold or silver mining itself?
4. In what ways did immigrant business owners use their international training or cultural connections to import goods, secure credit, build their business, or attract customers?

Lesson Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify and recognize how immigrant entrepreneurs helped to build Colorado over time through their business and networks.
2. Understand the challenges entrepreneurs faced while building a company or business.
3. Reflect on the impact immigrant entrepreneurs have had on Colorado and still do today.

Background Knowledge / Contextual Paragraph for Teachers:

This lesson focuses on the history of immigrants who established successful businesses despite many barriers in Colorado including socio economic, cultural, and legal barriers. Most immigrants came to Colorado for opportunity in the form of acquiring land, starting a business, or settling with a family, but they built more than that with their ingenuity, creativity, and hard work. From breweries to banks, from railroads to grain elevators, successful immigrant entrepreneurs helped to build Colorado businesses.

It is important to recognize that today, immigrants represent 12.2 percent of Colorado's entrepreneurs, who generate an estimated $1.8 billion in business income and employ at least 60,000 workers in the state annually. Other data from the Colorado Fiscal Institute reports in their two-pager Immigrants Power Colorado's Economy, that in addition to their roles as employees, immigrants are significant contributors to Colorado's business community. According to the latest census data, immigrants represent 11.5% of workers but make up 15% of business owners. Collectively, these workers and business owners generate $54 billion of economic output, with immigrant contributions to the state's GDP closely mirroring their share of the labor force.

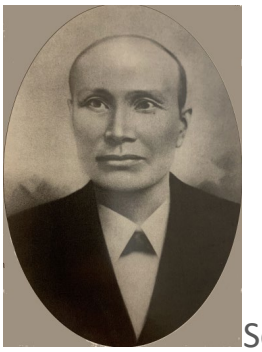
Building Background Knowledge for the Student:

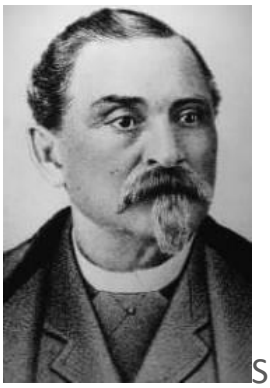
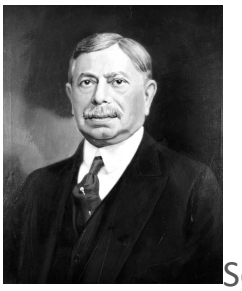
Many students will have a general background acknowledgement about westward expansion and the development of Colorado. Most will not have a deep

understanding of the immigrants and business people who helped build the state. Opportunities for building background knowledge for students include:

- Start with a bellringer writing prompt having students answer one of the following questions:
    - What is the definition of an entrepreneur?
    - If you had the opportunity to start your own business, what would it be?
- While watching Episode 3 prior to the mini lesson and student inquiry lesson is recommended, it is not necessary.
- Provide vocabulary support for students by defining these key terms:
    - **Entrepreneur:** A problem solver, risk-taker, and creative thinker who starts their own business.
    - **Immigrant:** A person who leaves their home country to live permanently in a new country.
    - **Bootstrapping:** Building a business from the ground up.
    - **Assimilation:** When a person or group adopts the habits, language, and traditions of a new community to fit in.

Lesson Sources:

1. Source 1: Chin Lin Sou Biography
2. Source 2: Chin Lin Sou formal portrait
3. Source 3: Barney L Ford Biography

4.  Source 4:Barney L Ford formal portrait
5. Source 5: Adolph Coors biography
6.  Source 6: Adolph Coors formal portrait
7. Source 7: David May Biography
8.  Source 8: David May formal portrait
9. Source 9: John Kernan Mullen biography
10.  Source 10: John Kernan Mullen formal portrait
11. Source 11: Otto Mears Biography

12.  Source 12: Otto Mears Formal Portrait

Lesson Materials Needed:

1. Paper and pencil for students for brainstorming and an exit ticket.
2. Digital or printed access to the biographies of the entrepreneurs and their formal portrait (Determine what is needed based on group size- Six biographies are included here).
3. Graphic organizer for notetaking during the jigsaw activity.
4. Ability to project primary sources on a large screen if desired.

Lesson Instructions:

1. Start with a bellringer writing prompt having students answer one of the following questions:
    a. What is the definition of an entrepreneur?
    b. If you had the opportunity to start your own business what would it be?
2. Watch the film *Becoming Colorado: Episode 3: Building Futures: Entrepreneurship and Identity.* Hold a large group discussion about what students saw and heard in the film, and what their key takeaways were for the episode.
3. Have students create their own graphic organizer in their notebooks by creating four columns on a page and labeling them with the following headings:
    a. Colorado Immigrant and Birth Country
    b. Business Facts (3 Facts)
    c. Challenges this Entrepreneur Faced (2 challenges)
    d. Changing the Community (1 way)

4. Break the students into groups for a jigsaw activity (Groups can be as large as six students due to the available resources) and complete the jigsaw.
5. After the completion of the jigsaw, have students share out in a large group format what they learned.
6. Complete the exit ticket for the class.

Strategy Instruction Differentiation:

Materials can be adjusted for the needs of students for this lesson. Opportunities for differentiation include:

- Provide a fill in the blank graphic organizer for students
- Differentiate the reading level of the biographies for students. Some already have this capability built in if the reading is on Colorado Encyclopedia.
- Provide a means for the text to be recorded or "read" to students.
- Complete the activity as a large group instead of the jigsaw.

Assessment:

Provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning and connect to the entrepreneurs they have studied in this lesson. Provide an exit ticket for students to respond to one of the following prompts. The educator can give the students a choice of a prompt or decide to select one for the entire class to answer. Suggested prompts include:

1. Select two Colorado Immigrant entrepreneurs and explain how they overcame challenges to create successful businesses in the state.
2. How did immigrant entrepreneurs help build community or give back to their communities once they were successful?

2022 Social Studies Standards:

8.1.1.EO.a – Use and interpret documents and other relevant primary and secondary sources pertaining to United States history from multiple diverse perspectives.

8.1.1.EO.d – Construct a written historical argument supported by relevant evidence and logical reasoning demonstrating the use or understanding of primary and secondary sources.
8.1.2.EO.d – Evaluate the impact of gender, age, ethnicity, and class during this time period and the impact of these demographic groups on the events of the time period.
8.5.1.EO.c – Analyze the changes in the development of human capital over time through education, apprenticeship, entrepreneurship, and work experience.

Extension Activities:

1. Have students research other contemporary Colorado immigrant entrepreneurs to explore the impact they are having on the state's economy using online resources and the resources below.
2. Have students research and identify Colorado industries, brands, historic neighborhoods, and businesses which are connected to immigrant entrepreneurs.

Additional Resources:

- The Impact of Immigrants on State and Local Government Resources memo from the Legislative Council Staff of Colorado provides more information on economics and immigration.
- Immigrants Power Colorado's Economy Fact Sheet provides more specific information on immigration and the economy.
- Immigrant Entrepreneurship is an excellent website which provides biographies on immigrant entrepreneurs from across the nation.