

## **2025 Black History Month Poster: Ada**

**#AfrofuturismWho was Ada?**

ETFO's 2025 Black History Month poster honours trailblazer Ada Kelly Whitney of Windsor and her little-known history as the first Black woman to be hired to teach in a publicly funded school in Ontario, in 1913. The subtle strength and dignity conveyed by the mask in the image channel Ada's courage, determination, and wisdom.

After excelling as a student, Ada was identified by her principal as having the necessary skills and resilience to return to her school as an educator. As a teacher, Ada provided students with something many schools and boards are still trying to achieve: a learning environment where the educator reflects the lived experiences of their students.

An activist hero through and through, Ada and her husband, Joseph, went on to publish the *Canadian Observer* from 1914-1919, a newspaper that gave voice to Black Canadians and challenged discrimination.

### **Concept**

The poster's stunning visuals reflect the brilliance and resourcefulness of African Canadians.

Inspired by West African wooden mask making traditions, Ghanian Canadian artist Ekow Nimako used approximately 6,500 pieces of LEGO to create the futuristic mask at the centre of the image. Nimako's surprising use of the popular educational medium to blend modern textures and angular forms with an age-old practice is a testament to Black ingenuity and creativity.

The backdrop of stars is a nod to Afrofuturism and signifies how vast and endless the possibilities are for Black youth in Ontario and beyond.

The overall effect is a powerful, visually arresting celebration of Black culture that acknowledges tradition while looking ever forward to a better future.