

# COMMON WEAL COMMUNITY ARTS

# Artful Isolation Activities

## Week Fourteen: Shrinky Dinks



### Spread a message of solidarity with justice-focused shrinky dinks!

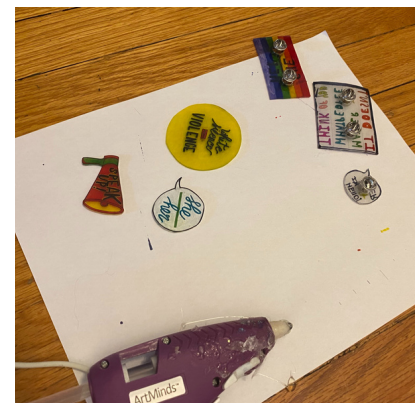
**What are Shrinky Dinks?** Shrinky Dinks emerged in 1973, but reached the height of their popularity in the 1980s. The base material consists of thin, flexible polystyrene plastic sheets which can be decorated with two-dimensional designs. Once heated, the material shrinks and becomes rigid, making it ideal for pins, keychains, and magnets.\*

**Why Shrinky Dinks?** As a child in the early 1980s, our Executive Director, Risa Payant, was very into shrinky dinks. Thirty years later, when her children were small she learned that the same activity she'd loved in her youth was experiencing a resurgence as families looked for ways to reduce waste and reuse recyclables. Recently she's wondered about the potential to use shrinky dinks to spread messages of solidarity. In Risa's own words: "In the past few months, our family has been attending local rallies in support of social justice movements. In a time of social media, a clear message on a protest sign can go a long way to generating support and awareness. I was eager to find ways of disseminating these messages once rallies were over and challenged my family to experiment with creating wearable mini protest signs on shrinkable plastic."

**Suitable For:** All Ages (note that wee ones will need support).

**What You'll Need:** #6 recyclable plastic or shrinkable plastic sheets, pencils, pencil crayons, permanent markers, scissors, hole punch, pin backs, and a hot glue gun or Crazy Glue.

\* Adapted from the [Shrinky Dinks Wikipedia page](#).



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY RISA PAYANT

ACTIVITY SHEET CREATED BY COMMON WEAL COMMUNITY ARTS IN SASKATCHEWAN  
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### Getting Ready:

- Keep an eye on your recycling bin and start collecting #6 recyclable plastic. It can be challenging to find, so if you're impatient you can purchase shrinkable plastic sheets at many local craft suppliers.
- If you haven't been keeping up with social justice movements, now's a great time to catch up. Talk to your friends and family about global movements and how you can use your voice to bring awareness and inspire social change. Take time to talk about the movements you're passionate about and brainstorm images and text that express a message of solidarity.
- Spend some time exploring justice focused hashtags on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and Googling movements such as [Black Lives Matter](#), [anti-racist action](#), [Defund the Police](#), [prison abolition](#), [Solidarity with Wet'suwet'en](#), and [Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#).
- You may also want to consider ways to express your own identity, as Risa's family did, choosing to create [pronoun](#) pins to accompany their mini protest signs.



### Activity:

- Grab some scrap paper and start roughing out your designs. Note that when heated, your designs will become nine times thicker and a third of their original dimensions, meaning that you'll need to ensure design elements and text are large enough to view once reduced.
- Once you're satisfied with your designs trace them onto your shrinkable plastic. Risa's family used pencil crayons and permanent markers, but feel free to experiment with other methods of mark making. Note that oily or waxy materials such as crayons, pastels, and oil paint are not suitable as they may ignite when heated. Consider how you want to display your finished shrinky dink. If you decide to make a keychain, be sure to punch a hole in the plastic before baking.
- Cut out your design and place on a baking sheet covered in parchment paper or tin foil. You can bake multiple designs at a time, just be sure they aren't overlapping and all designs are laid flat.
- Heat your oven to 325°. Note that the plastic gives off a strong odor when heated so be sure to open some windows or even use a toaster oven outside.
- Put the baking sheet in the oven for two to five minutes. Watch your designs bake, it's the most exciting part! And don't panic as designs curl up; you'll know they're done when they've curled, then flattened again.
- Take your designs out of the oven and let them cool. Once cooled, use a hot glue gun or Crazy Glue to attach pin backs or magnets, or thread keychain rings through the hole you pre-punched.

### Reflection:

- What do you notice about your designs? How did they change when heated? What about the colours you used? Did they get more saturated? Darker? Brighter?
- Attach your shrinky dinks to backpacks, jackets, and anything else you can think of. Wear your messages proudly!
- Are there other ways to disseminate your message? Pick your favourite design and reproduce it, dropping it off with loved ones along with a note about why this issue matters to you and details on how they can get involved.
- Share your photos with us via Facebook or Instagram, tagging [@skcommonweal](#) and using the hashtags [#cwshrinkydink](#) and [#cwneighbours](#).