Keep It Burning

1. Game Mechanics

Control members of a small nomadic prehistoric tribe. Gather wood for the fire. Scout out new and better locations. Discover new skills and tools to overcome challenges. Craft and repair equipment. Learn to communicate. Interact with neighbouring tribes using combat, stealth or diplomacy. Balanced resource harvesting with sustainability.

2. Genre

Survival / Crafting / Exploration / Adventure / Comedy?

3. Player Fantasy

Surviving in a prehistoric world. Engaging humorous adventure.

4. Platform and Controls

Windows PC final build, testing using HTML5 Web Browser. Keyboard and mouse control.

5. Spatial Abstraction

2.5D. Fixed isometric grid size. Additional layers to represent mountains and chasms.

6. Avatar

The adults in the tribe are all playable. The adult male character is best suited for high strength tasks, chopping wood, carrying heavy items, and combat. The adult female character is best suited for harvesting fruits, berries, and herbs, stealth exploration, and crafting. She's the one that is responsible for keeping the fire alive all the time.
The elder character is focused on diplomacy, skill discovery and animal taming. Children characters are not playable.

Only one character is playable at a time, with the other characters remaining at the base camp.

7. Camera Perspective

Isometric 2.5D. Fixed angle. No rotation.

8. Goals and Scores

Keeping the fire alive is the main game loop. Chop down trees and bushes for firewood. Experiment with burning other discovered items for different effects.

Discover each land's native tribe and trade, or steal supplies and tools.

Explore each biome for hidden technology to allow the tribe to move onto the promised land.

Unlock crafting blueprints. Learn the ultimate technology - fire.

The only score kept is the number of days survived.

A cave painting of the game's main story is available following the death of the tribe.

9. Progression and Variety

The game will start in spring, and trees are growing in abundance. Summer will see additional fruits and berries growing. Autumn will be characterised by the changing of the tree colors. Winter will be unforgiving and require additional wood to keep the fire burning. Hunting animals will be more difficult.

Harvest trees too aggressively, or clear cut entire forests, and no trees will regrow meaning more time has to be spent travelling further afield to obtain wood to keep the fire burning.

Discover abandoned and broken tools left by other nomadic tribes. Spears allow for easier combat and fighting off curious critters. Axes speed up the wood gathering process, and allow access to previously inaccessible areas. Improve the campfire with a stone fire pit. Learn how to craft a torch or portable fire carrier. Learn the secrets of cooking from friendly tribes.

Explore hidden caves and learn the history, art and tools of tribes that called them home.

Befriend animal companions including small critters, birds, sabre toothed tiger and a wooly mammoth.

Develop your sneak skill and take the stealth route to steal fire or tools from a neighbouring tribe.

Negotiate with discovered tribes for new blueprints or resources.

Travel to new lands with different weather systems and resources.

Return to different lands in different seasons to survive the harshest weather.

Each playthrough leaves a mark on the landscape.

10. Tension and Rest

Constant threat of the fire burning out. Careful (and guided) choices around overharvesting can lead to an easier time harvesting wood.

Fire upgrades allow for longer burning fire with less wood. Returning to previous campgrounds and stockpiled resources during bad weather.

11. Obstacles and Penalties

Each level will have a hidden zone with a cave to discover.

Overharvesting trees or bushes will lead to deforestation and additional travel to find firewood.

Weather conditions.

12. Resources

Wood is the primary resource required for keeping the fire alight. Wood is also required for most tools.

Stone is required for upgrading the campfire

Berries, and animals can be used for food.

Animals can be harvested for furs and components for upgrading tools.

Blueprints can be discovered by the elder dismantling a found tool, or traded with another tribe.

Inscriptions in the caves in the form of rock pictograms will provide information and clues about the location of certain elements and the area in general. These clues are deep hidden in certain caves waiting to be discovered by the player.

13. Decisions

Players can choose to stealthily try and steal or trade tools and resources from neighbouring tribes.

Choosing to overharvest will have deep consequences for following seasons.

14. Simulation and Chance

Player influences tree respawn by not over harvesting trees and bushes. Tree regrowth will be simulated seasonally.

Climatic conditions are out of the player's control (storms, wind, flood, rain, lightning) and will influence the gameplay and are critical to keep the fire safe.

Berry bushes left with berries will spawn more berry bushes.

Diplomacy will be based on choices, not randomized.

15. Storytelling

The story begins with the arrival of a group of primitives to an unknown land.Soon we will know that they are australopithecus since they know, although rudimentary, the use of fire. This ability will help them survive (as long as they can keep the flame alive) and attract the greed of other potentially dangerous tribes nearby. Inevitable encounters with these strangers will largely determine the fate of our group; should they negotiate or defend?, fight or run to survive?.

The story unfolds in chapters, with scripted triggers that will put our group in a new situation at each level and move the adventure forward.

The dialogues will be made entirely using 'cavemojis', a simple version of emojis with cave aesthetics. These symbols will illustrate concrete and very straightforward actions (eat, sleep, poo, attack, flee), with some degree of humor, and clues about the actions that can be carried out on that specific level.

More clues and information can be gathered inside the caves where other tribes have left their legacy for future generations and as and as a testimony of its own existence. Transcendence is an important narrative factor in this game.

16. Art Direction and Style

Pixel art style on isometric perspective.

17. Animation and Visual Effects

FX for the fire is essential to keep the player's attention focused on this element and to use as the source of light, casting shadows or illuminating dark areas as caves or unknown zones.

Carrying torches lights areas and creates shadows.

18. Sound Design

Audio effects will be used to keep the player informed about possible dangers (animals, insects, other tribes) and highlight elements of the environment with which they can interact (trees, water fountains, etc.).We plan to use a royalty-free sound library to cover these needs.

Music should be lighter, fun with the prevalence of sounds coming from percussion instruments as much as possible.