

CMGT2324 EL
Narrative Design

Narrative Design Canvas for “Hickory”

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1 Canvas Layer: Player Emotions, Core Mechanics, Events

1.1 Genre & Genre Expectations

Hickory is a *Platformer* at heart with a strong emphasis on *Action-Adventure* elements. Its main mechanics are traversal methods to navigate the game world including running, jumping, wall-jumping, flinging, grappling, and gliding. Additionally, combat and exploration enhance the possibility of using this movement set in a meaningful and fun way, by providing short- and long-term goals to test mechanical mastery against.

1.2 MDA Framework

Mechanics	Dynamics	Aesthetics
Traversal: Run, Jump, Wall-Jump, Boost, Climb, Fling, Grapple, Glide, Swim, Dive	A multitude of traversal methods offers players the possibility to choose their own approach to obstacles or how to reach their goal	Players can choose and master different play styles to navigate environments, and experience a feeling of flow as they switch between traversal methods on the spot to reach their destination
Combat: Pierce with Spear	Using the characters spear to prepare for the next traversal decision and/or gain rewards from defeating enemies	Will players take the risk of taking damage for possible rewards while keeping up the movement flow? (Experiencing challenge and mastery)
Enhancement: Traversal and Combat Mechanics	Build a limited enhancement toolkit for your movement and combat skills from a huge base of options	Analysing new enhancements and getting a sense of progression while unlocking and building a personal toolkit
Game World: Huge Themed Levels Environmental Changes	Explore and play through your favourite areas, different environments offer different challenges	Getting a feeling of discovery and immersion, by exploring different parts of the huge levels, filled with unique enemies, NPCs, and mechanics fitting their theme
Questing Board: Classic Assignments Special Assignments Timed Assignments Boss Assignments	Mission diversity and difficulty changes with game progress	Players feel excitement when encountering a novel assignment, of which they can enjoy the story or test their skills against
Mechanics Progress: Unlocking Traversal Mechanics Unlocking Enhancement Tools	Backtrack to previously inaccessible areas and redesign your character mechanics	Acquiring a sense of completion and mastery, as they unlock all traversal mechanics and enhancement

		tools, to finally explore every part of a level
Character Progress: Enhanced Basic Character Stats	Explore and discover hidden knowledge and take on special assignments to enhance your characters overall endurance or capabilities	As the character develops, players feel more prepared for obstacles that were difficult in the past
Boss Fights	Unique level bosses and boss abbreviations to discover and battle	Players can show off their mastery of the characters basic mechanics and chosen enhancements while feeling the thrill of novel and difficult challenges
Miscellaneous: Character Visuals Village Visuals	Use rewards to customize the appearance of either the players character or the village & NPCs	With the ability to change appearances, players can express their own expectations of visual aesthetics to the game, personalizing their experience in the process

1.3 Story Beats

Plot Point/ Story Beat	Crisis/ Conflict	Stake
How it started	The big flood hits the tribe's town, villagers lose their belongings and loved ones get washed into all corners of the trees system	Separation of the tribe
Finding a new Home	The flood left nothing. Buildings and the soil are destroyed. The tribe needs a new place to settle	Loss of sense of belonging somewhere
The Settlement	There are no huts to sleep in, food to eat, defences to keep out the dangers	Fulfilment of the tribes' basic needs

Adventuring forth	The flood separated some of the tribes' members, they need to be brought back	Restoration of community
Stout Defence	The weakened tribe constantly becomes the prey of new enemies that wants to rule and exploit it	Loss of freedom
Retrieval of an Artifact	Protagonist sets out on his own, to find lost parts of a mask with mystical powers needed to protect the tribe	Restoration of culture, long term wellbeing of the tribe
Strange Wanderer	Protagonist encounters a strange, concealed wanderer, who helps to locate parts of the mask, asking nothing in return	Trusting in someone who hides true intentions could lead to many unexpected losses
Uncovering the Past	While recovering the mask parts, the protagonists unveils the long-forgotten past of the tribe as well as a unsettling prophecy	Loss of history, Uncovering & Identifying imminent danger
The Defender	With the mask restored, the protagonist fully assimilates the role of the tribe's defender and sets out to battle the root of the evil that plagued their tribe for such a long time	Breaking the cycle of exploitation
Happy Ending	-	-

1.4 Narrative Mechanics

Hickory's plot will mainly be told via *Conditional Narrative Mechanics*. The player will choose their own gameplay, yet only after completing certain story relevant quests the get to advance the plot itself. Additionally, there are separated *Optional Narrative Mechanics*, including their own plotlines focused on NPC character development or unlocking of traversal/ enhancement mechanics.

2 Canvas Layer: Player Motivation, Player Goal, Conflict

2.1 High Concept & One Liners

A little ChakaChaka named Hickory tries everything in its power to rebuild a tribe that was destroyed by a natural disaster. Fighting off giant spiders or imperialistic ants are only part of the struggle, next to finding and bringing back lost members as well as improving their new village. However, after uncovering a strange prophecy that could spell doom for their tiny village again, Hickory must leave it behind unprotected to fight the root of all their problems.

Hickory is a unique experience, which couples a 3D platforming movement set of depth with a unique setting and storyline. Fast and responsive controls in combination with self-determinable movement adaptations, will allow players to explore the inside eco-system of an ancient tree, full of obstacles and secrets.

Hickory is a *Platformer* with *Action-Adventure* elements, similar to Super Mario 3D games in a mix with Monster Hunter worldbuilding and questing mechanics. Players take control of Hickory, a small ChakaChaka living in an ancient and mystical tree, that against all odds brings back together his tribe while fighting off dangers of the eco-system.

2.2 Theme & Tone

“Together we make us stronger”

Theme of the game is “Together we make us stronger”, emphasizing the dependence tribal societies have on every member of themselves. They work together and for each other to stay alive, while everyone fulfils a role and becomes essential for the tribes spiritual and physical survival.

Hickory takes on the role of a warrior that helps to rebuild its tribe by taking on various dangerous assignments from other villagers. Threats are plenty, but if they are together hope never dies and the tribe of childlike and expressive little ChakaChakas makes sure to always keep up its own spirit. For every time Hickory

finishes an assignment or helps a villager, the tribe will provide for Hickory in return.

2.3 Conflict, Stakes & Tension

The underlying conflict for the better part of the game is about *Man vs. Nature*, whereas Hickory takes on the various challenges presented by the trees ecosystem to protect and rebuild its tribe. Sometimes this conflict is overshadowed by the second type of conflict *Man vs. Man*, when the player encounters animals with very human traits and ambitions, for example in the form of other tribes or bosses that they must fight. Only towards the end of the plot does the conflict completely switch to a *Man vs. Man* formula, when the protagonist has fully uncovered the hidden identity of the antagonist and defeats it in a pitched battle.

As shown for the Story Beats/ Plot Points, the following stakes are part of the main plot line. During their creation, I had the *Fichtean Curve* in mind as well as *The Hero's Journey*. For the Fichtean curve, there are plot points and corresponding stakes that reoccur in different settings, versions, and combinations of the fictional world. For example, must the player save a lost tribe member and fight a spider queen boss for it, and at another point retrieve a part of the mask and battle a giant weevil boss. Regarding the journey steps, I distributed them over the plot points, where they might occur once the story is fully developed.

Stake (From Plot Point)	Tension	Reoccurring	The Heros's Journey
Separation of the tribe	High	No	Call to Adventure
Loss of sense of belonging somewhere	Low	No	Refusal of the Call, Meeting the Mentor
Fulfilment of the tribes' basic needs	Low	Yes	Refusal of the Call, Meeting the Mentor
Restoration of community	Medium (Call to Adventure)	Yes	Crossing the Threshold
Loss of freedom	High	Yes	Tests, Allies, Enemies
Restoration of culture, long term wellbeing of the tribe	Medium (Tests, Allies, Enemies)	Yes	Tests, Allies, Enemies
Trusting in someone who hides true intentions could lead to many unexpected losses	Low (Meeting the Mentor)	Yes	Tests, Allies, Enemies
Loss of history, Uncovering & Identifying imminent danger	Medium	No	Approaching the Inmost Cave, The Ordeal, The Reward
Breaking the cycle of exploitation	High	No	Approaching the Inmost Cave, The Ordeal, The Reward
Happy Ending	-	No	The Road Back

2.4 Expected player motivation

Regarding the core player motivations, *Mastery* and *Immersion* are most dominant throughout the game, closely followed by *Creativity* and *Achievement*. The feeling of competence and mastery mainly stems from learning and using the complex movement and combat set to reach a destination most efficiently. Players feel like flowing through the environment as they get the hang of their personal mechanical adaptations. Next to the mastery of character specific mechanics, does the mastery of level specific mechanics also contribute to creating an immersive experience for players. As they discover new areas within the huge levels, they encounter NPCs, enemies, and obstacles including unique mechanics which fit the level's overall vegetational theme. Additionally, players can engage with NPCs in the village by chatting and completing their personal questlines or play minigames with them. Right after that players get a big choice of customization, from adapting their personal movement set to changing the villagers and villages look overall. Experimenting and testing out whatever they prefer, however, only works when unlocking all the parts required! Whether taking special assignments to make Hickory stronger, unlocking all parts of the mask or mechanic enhancements, or finding every bit of knowledge about the tribes forgotten history, players get to find, collect, achieve it all and become stronger in the process. Although there is action involved in the platforming, with bits of combat here and there, they are not the focus and rather a reward for those who like to play the game with more action and confrontation.

2.5 GFI Model

Ultimate Goals

Goals	Feedback	Interpretation
Finish the game (Ultimate Goal)	Final cutscene showing a happy and flourishing tribe, as the protagonist returns	"The tribe must be reunited and save"
Remove the antagonist (Imperative)	Dialogue, Final boss, last level	"Defeat the antagonist"
Obtain all mask pieces (Imperative)	Quest board, Mechanics progression, Changing	"Reach the pieces and overcome whatever gets in your way"

	character visuals, Obstacles in levels	
Optimize character (Imperative)	Changes in UI, Changes in Questlines, Quest board, Hidden upgrades	“Make Hickory stronger”
Reach lost villagers in four different levels (Imperative)	Quest board, NPC behaviour and dialogue, Questlines, Mini map, Level overview	“Rescue villagers that were separated from the tribe”
Find hidden prophecy tablets (Imperative)	Special assignments on quest board, villager dialogue, concealed map segments	“Uncover and understand the forgotten prophecy”
Remove enemy bosses (Imperative)	Dialogue, Boss fight, Ending level segment, Quest board, NPC dialogue	“Defeat the bosses”
Configure the village (Imperative)	Questlines, Quest board, NPC dialogue, Changing village visuals	“Upgrade the village to a prosperous hub”
Obtain plot relevant parts of enhancement toolkit (Imperative)	Questlines, Quest board, Obstacles in levels, Hidden upgrades, Environmental obstacles	“Unlock all four elemental enhancements for the core mechanics”

3 Canvas Layer: Player Identification, Player Role, Characters

3.1 Bone Structure Player Character: Hickory

Physiology:

All ChakaChakas are a type of humanoid nut, and the player character named Hickory is, to no surprise, a humanoid hickory nut. Its outer shell is removed, so that only the light brown and woody looking inner shell remains. Hickory wears his nut as its head, which is supported by a body made of all types of woodland scraps. Sticks make up the arms and legs, pieces of pinecone scale cover his joints, tree bark makes up his hands and feet, and his chest is made from a rounded wood stem. This creature has no gender and expresses (As much as

possible for a walking nut), androgynous body features. What can be identified however, is that Hickory is quite young and agile for his age on top.

In comparison with fellow ChakaChakas is Hickory neither big nor small, yet when put into contrast with other animals of the trees eco-system, most will dwarf it. Even though Hickory is a nut, the shell doesn't offer much protection against most threats. Ants might slowly bite through the joints and the squirrel does... well... what squirrels do to nuts. Overall, Hickory is a fairly fragile creature in a harsh and unforgiving environment, and additionally poses a nice and healthy snack for eventual predators. That's why ChakaChakas must bend together to stay alive.

Sociology:

Hickories family is the tribe. ChakaChakas don't have parents, but rather sprout and appear where the tribe makes a place to settle. It often engages with the tribe's culture, holding up traditions like the annual *free fall contest*, participating in dinners with everyone, or singing songs around the campfire. Communication withing this community is emotional and expressive, and Hickory fits in there quite well. Regarding its occupation, Hickory has taken on the task of a *Warrior*, meaning it has specialized in taking care of the most dangerous tasks that would otherwise endanger other tribe members. That includes fighting intruders on the tribe's territory, exploring unknown lands, or in general identifying threats outside the village and taking care of them. Because it is a very dangerous occupation, the tribe is very thankful for Hickory taking it on. *Warriors* are generally well respected as well as included and will from time to time be honoured in rituals.

Psychology:

Hickory nuts are strong nuts, with a shell difficult to crack, and a sweet fruit inside. The player character is just like other ChakaChakas very expressive with its emotions. When happy, Hickory dances, when scared it cowers, when excited it can't stand still. With the coming of age, it chose to become a *Warrior*, not only because it was fit, agile, and strong, but also for the adventure. Not many ChakaChaka get to leave the village, and Hickory really wants to see what is out there. The character is adventurous and curious and smart in his approaches to

obstacles. It holds the tribe above all else and would willingly do anything, even offer its own life to protect it.

Jungian Archetype: The Hero/ Warrior

Hickory is a hero, who saves the village from all kinds of danger. As soon as it possesses the mask and gets seemingly unstoppable powers, its weakness of over confidence and egotism kicks in. Just like the ancient tree and the forest down under, Hickory starts seeing the villages gratitude as something naturally given, and as it is fighting worse dangers it demands more from the village. This tiny flame of egotism is enhanced by the wanderer's manipulations on Hickory, to a level where the village has enough and expels him from the town as punishment. Hickory, without the mask, lives on his own a few days before uncovering the full prophecy and realizing it has been tricked. It comes back to fight the wanderer, who now reveals itself as the antagonist, in a pitch battle to save the tribe from complete extinction.

3.2 Bone Structure Antagonist: Baru

Physiology:

Regarding physiology, Baru (aka the wanderer), has similar features to all other ChakaChakas. Its body is made of wood, pine, and other small wood scraps. However, the special nut that makes the distinction here is the Baru nut as his face. Since it has been a stout warrior of a long lost and forgotten branch of the tribe, Baru bears marks of combat and age to such a degree that no shell further protects its face. In one hand it holds a walking stick, and its face nut wears a great crack from the top nearly to the bottom. Even though Baru conceals itself to the player for most of the game with a cloak and a mask, that specific mask mirrors the nuts facial scar. In combination with the walking stick it gives away his fragile physique.

Sociology:

Baru is the last *Warrior* of a small and desperate ChakaChaka tribe. Baru too possesses a mask, but due to the ever-shrinking size and hope of the tribe, it is losing its potential, as does he as a *Warrior*. To compensate, Baru must work twice as hard, doing unspeakable things in the process to make sure his tribe

barely stays alive. This small community can't celebrate with big feats or fancy traditions. Instead, they opt for small rituals, where they sit in circles and pray together. This is also the absolute extent to which Baru is still involved in the tribe's social life.

Psychology:

Constantly finding ways to prolong the ancient tree's life and taking on tasks far away from his home tribe made Baru isolated, as well as crude and unforgiving in its actions. The only thing Baru remembers and lives for is its duty to protect what is left of the tribe and will, just as Hickory does everything in its power to accomplish it. After the separation from the main tribe of ChakaChaka Baru developed a survival mindset. It saw enough of its people disappear in the unknown, hunted, captured, or lost. And as its tribe waited for rescue and none came, for Baru it was clear that the main tribe left them to die alone and save their own skin. Its distrust for ChakaChakas that are not part of Barus tribe, grows so large that it treats them as a possible threat like everything else.

Jungian Archetype: Thematic Antagonist, disguised as A Sage/ Mentor

Baru, for a better portion of the game, presents itself as a Mentor to Hickory. It teaches about the ancient tree, mask locations, lost tribe members and more, supporting the player character on its difficult journey. However, Baru is a shapeshifter, playing a role to steal Hickories mask, once it has reached its full potential. He crosses the threshold of no return and in disdain towards Hickories tribe and in desperation for his own to survive he becomes a villain towards animals in the entire tree.

3.3 Player Character Type, Recognition, and Role

Hickory is a *Fixed* player character. It has a predefined backstory presented to the player over the entirety of the plot, clear character traits that develop over time like overconfidence and naivety and shows a clear development in skills with game progress (Unlocking movement set, Unlocking enhancements). Hickory has a clear goal of protecting and rebuilding its tribe, while presented with direct and clear actions (Such as taking assignments, defeating an enemy, finding a lost member, etc.) to reach them. Cutscenes for important plot points, like the initial

flooding, finding the lost tribe of ChakaChakas, or unveiling the hidden prophecy inform further over the characters goal and development. As Hickories morals and convictions are challenged by Baru, tension rises to its maximum and the player character reaches the peak of its personal conflict.

4 Canvas Layer: Player Presence, Player Space, Setting

4.1 World Archetype

The world of Hickory takes on elements of a *Changing World* and elements of a *New Frontier World*. The initial catastrophe exposes the tribe of ChakaChakas, which for now has lived relatively save and isolated, to the vast eco-system within the ancient tree. Their old village is destroyed, as is the possibility of rebuilding, forcing them to migrate to a safer spot within the undiscovered territories. Once they find it, they are confronted with all sorts of new flora and fauna, creating conflict and the need for exploration. This happens in the form of the villagers' assignments for the player character. Within these assignments, players need to explore new areas, retrieve mask parts, or combat distant enemies, to rebuild and protect the tribe itself. The change in the world that necessitates exploration is in its source the initial catastrophe but is carried on by the villagers needs within this new world. At the same time does the changing eco-system of the ancient tree put into conflict interests of different societies and people, calling it their home.

4.2 World Bare Bones

Before current story takes place:

- ➔ The ancient tree was once part of a flourishing forest
- ➔ They lived in harmony, where the forest provided it with lots of water and nutrients and the ancient tree provided it with protection against storms, droughts, the cold, or other natural dangers
- ➔ However, the ancient tree started growing so big, that it lost the ability to connect to its fellow trees in the forest down below, and grew ever more isolated

- ➔ At some point both the ancient tree and the forest down under viewed the work they provided for each other as something natural and gradually stopped their efforts to increase their own wellbeing
- ➔ While the ancient tree survived, the forest down under quickly found its end
- ➔ Now the ancient tree stands alone and shrinks gradually until it will reach the size of a normal tree and become vulnerable to the forces of nature again

How does the player know:

- ➔ Part of this background can be uncovered by exploring the ancient trees huge levels. Players will find old abandoned or destroyed ChakaChaka villages with painted murals or even old books presenting part of the story visually
- ➔ The concealed wanderer presents the player with parts of this backstory; however, he alters the information to its advantage, hoping to manipulate Hickory to find and repower the mask and ultimately take it for himself

While current story takes place:

- ➔ The ancient tree has grown very weak, is in decline, and has long lost the ability to defend itself from small intruders
- ➔ Now, many critters have made it their home, some living with it in harmony, others weakening it even further for their own personal gain
- ➔ The ChakaChakas, being one of those “critters” have been native to the ancient tree for many generations now. So many that they have lost parts of their own history to time already
- ➔ Other critters include: Weevils, who are a curse to the trees survival; Ant and Spider colonies, who mostly live in harmony with the tree but not with other critters; Bumblebees, which live higher up top in the trees branches enjoying relative peace and only come down to collect nectar from the lower level flowers
- ➔ There are also bigger animals, for example an owl, a squirrel and a mole who are reigning over their respective parts of the tree

- ➔ All these animals made this their home as a last refuge, since the down under forest is gone and resources are scarce outside the trees eco-system
- ➔ Sometimes harsh weather conditions will harm the tree, which is perceived as a natural disaster by the critters living within

How does the player know:

- ➔ Players will be introduced to most critters and animals throughout the main plotline
- ➔ They can also encounter some by just exploring the levels or following side-plotlines plus their respective assignments
- ➔ Players will get the chance to experience the side effects of harsh weather conditions on the tree themselves in cutscenes aligned with the main plotline (One of them is the initial flooding of the tribe's village by heavy rainfalls entering the tree via a big hole in the bark)
- ➔ They will also see the effects of weather conditions on the flora and fauna of the eco-system in the form of dried out plants or by society migrations
- ➔ Just like the tablets and books within destroyed villages unveil the past, the player finds on them a prophecy for the future as well, showing the trees total demise at the hands of the powerful elements of nature
- ➔ The concealed wanderer again explains and shows only parts of what is happening to the tree

What will happen after the story took place:

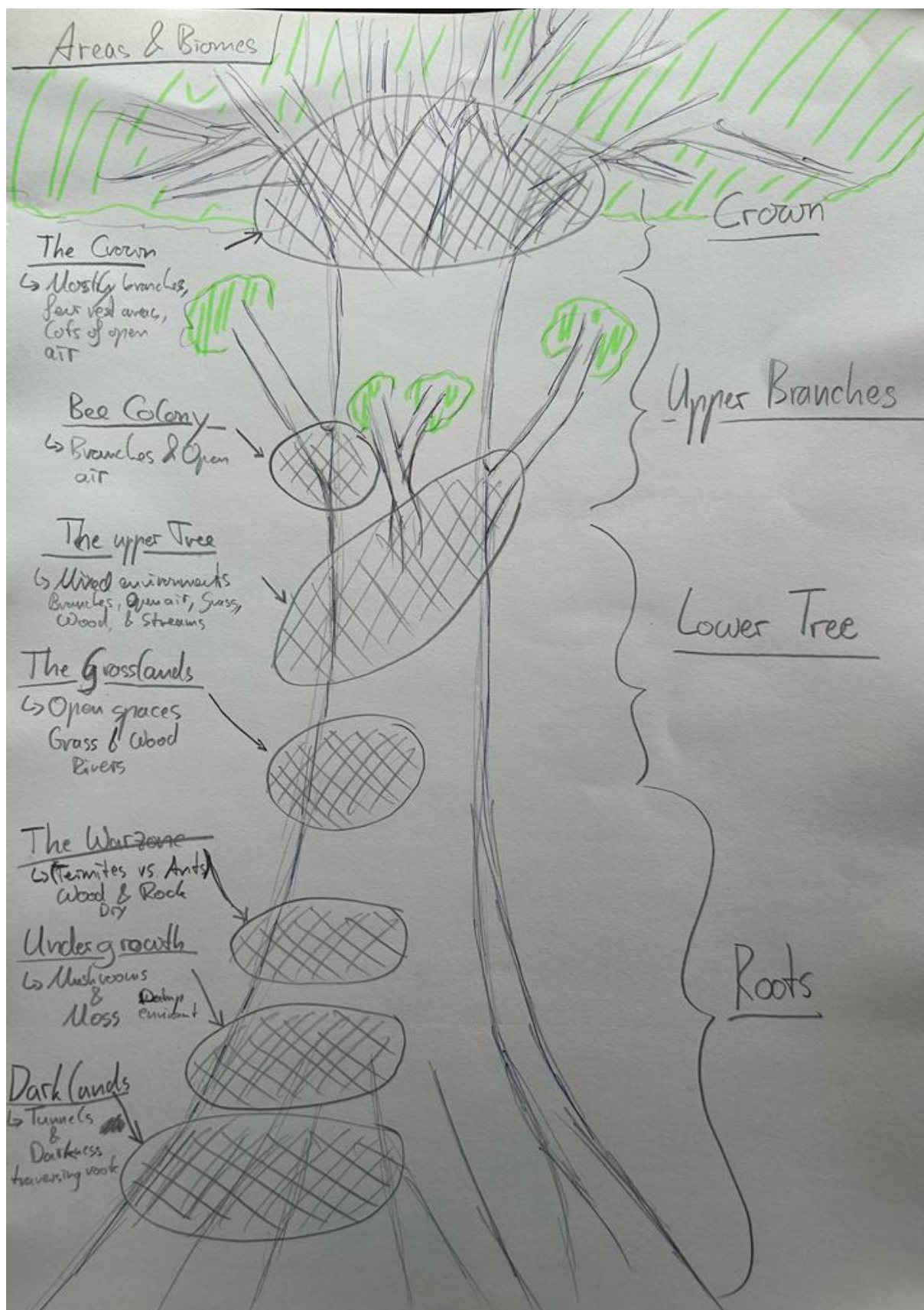
- ➔ Imminent danger through the wanderer syphoning the trees energy to use it for himself has been averted and his suffering tribe is integrated into that of Hickory
- ➔ Since the main cause of the trees conflict has not been changed, harsh weather conditions still plague its eco system and keeps creating new crises to deal with
- ➔ There seems, however, to be hope for the tree, if a brave soul decides to change the future

How does the player know:

- ➔ The changes in society and averted danger will be presented via cutscenes and music

- ➔ In the epilogue, one of the tribe members shows a lost book to Hickory explaining a possible way to save their home tree, teasing the next game and story
- ➔ After the main plotline ends, player can still take assignments, showing that there is a new root of all problems that did not get solved

4.3 Worldbuilding Artifacts



(On a side note) The areas and their respective biomes have changed their distribution as following:

Crown	Upper Branches	Lower Tree	Roots
The Crown	Bee Colony	The Grasslands	Undergrowth
	The Upper Tree	The Warzone	Darklands

This is a basic map of the area and biome distribution across the tree. The biomes (e.g., “The Crown”, “Undergrowth”) are at the same time the levels player will interact with during the game. They have their own personality and theme regarding the vegetation and unique level mechanics. The *Undergrowth* for example, has access to few light sources and is overall a damp place. Vegetation here consists mainly of moss and mushrooms, which fill the level in combination with overgrown rocks and bigger bodies of water. In comparison does *The Crown* feature only few places to get a hold on and offers instead many branches, leaves and lots of open areal space to traverse.

While critters can appear in multiple biomes within an area, bigger animals stick to their specific one. Critters change areas in the narrative based on conflict with other critters, bigger animals, or effects of weather conditions.

Animal	Home Biome	Home Area	Can appear in other areas
Weevils	The Upper Tree	Upper Branches	Lower Tree, Roots
Spiders	The Upper Tree	Upper Branches	Crown, Lower Tree
Ants	The Warzone	Lower Tree	Roots
Butterflies	The Crown	Crown	Upper Branches
Caterpillars	The Crown	Crown	Upper Branches
Ladybugs	The Grasslands	Lower Tree	Crown
Bumble Bees	Bee Colony	Upper Branches	Crown, Lower Tree
Wasps	The Upper Tree	Upper Branches	Crown
Termites	The Grasslands	Lower Tree	Upper Branches, Roots
Bark Beetles	The Grasslands	Lower Tree	Roots

Mole	Darklands	Roots	No
Squirrel	The Upper Tree	Upper Branches	No
Owl	The Crown	Crown	No

Analogues

I have tried to populate the tree with animals that wouldn't only in fiction live in it and habituate its different areas. Additionally, I chose animals that are relatable, and people normally have some kind of connection and different associations with. Finally, I wanted to provide some kind of conflict between those animals, so I chose for example ant and termites to fight their war in the middle of the tree, or the big animals who pose a constant threat to the insects they are feeding on.

4.4 Story Sense

Here, I collected a couple of themes connected to my central theme *Together we make us stronger*, as well as possible exposition types. These themes will be encountered throughout the main plotline, proving that there are dangers the tribes' villagers can only master by working for and with each other. Overall, I want to go for a more visual and auditorial exposition, since it fits the idea of a tribal society better. The ChakaChakas are an expressive and childlike people full of traditions, music, and visual art. Tribal societies very much convey the meaning of community via those mediums. Additionally, it can very effectively and simply convey implicit meaning in comparison to language, which is full of culture and is easily understood differently based on the one who speaks or hears it. However, I plan to include a rudimentary form of communication and written dialogue, which is less about sophisticated sentences, rather than quickly and expressively getting a point across (probably more in the style of "Flood... Undergrowth... Ants... Migrate... Grasslands").

Theme	Exposition Type	Implicit Explanation
The forces of nature are unforgiving	Environmental Storytelling, Mission	There are parts of this world I cannot change,

	Briefing, NPC Dialogue, Cutscenes	however unpleasant they are
Don't trust outsiders	Graffiti, Villainous Monologue, Cutscenes	Only those who participate in the tribe are good
One for all and all for one	Mission Briefing, NPC Dialogue, Cutscenes	I will help the tribe; The tribe will help me
Territory must be defended	Mission Briefing, NPC Dialogue, Loading Screens	This land is important to the survival of our community
Noone gets left behind	Mission Briefing, NPC Dialogue	Every member of the tribe is important and unlosable
Hope never dies	Graffiti, NPC Behaviour	We can always migrate, we can always rebuild, if we work for it together
The unknown is dangerous	Mission Briefing, Environmental Storytelling	We have to know what lies ahead

5 Canvas Layer: Experiential Flow, Player Progression, Storyline

5.1 The First Beat

I imagined the first gameplay beat as an introduction to the first few very basic movement mechanics, as well as a foreshadowing to what is possible in the future. Within the first story beat, Hickories village gets flooded. The player is visually presented (via a cutscene) with a heightened terrain and must bring villagers there to safety (First simple goal). With very guiding level design and the help of another warrior of the tribe, Hickory escorts a group of ChakaChaka to this elevation. At this point, the player can only move, climb, and jump, which is shown by the other warrior leading the group, as it walks, climbs, and jumps towards the end goal. When escaping from the rising water levels, the player is also presented with game mechanics they have not yet any access to. One is presented by the leading warrior, who uses its spear (Which is neither yet available to the player, nor will have the upgrades for grappling) to grapple over

cliffs that are too big to jump. Another one is shown, as a fleeing ChakaChaka joins the group via gliding to it from a small elevation (Maybe the rooftop of a house) they pass on their way to safety. Furthermore, there is foreshadowing of the mask's abilities, via a different ChakaChaka that sometimes drifts by on the water masses and protects the escaping group from a strong wave or drops off other villagers. As the ChakaChaka finally reach the safe height, they look back in the direction of the now completely flooded village and see the following things happening:

ChakaChaka are scattered across the area, some made it to high elevations like Hickories group, some swimming on boats or rafts on the water, some riding the storms strong winds on gliders above it.

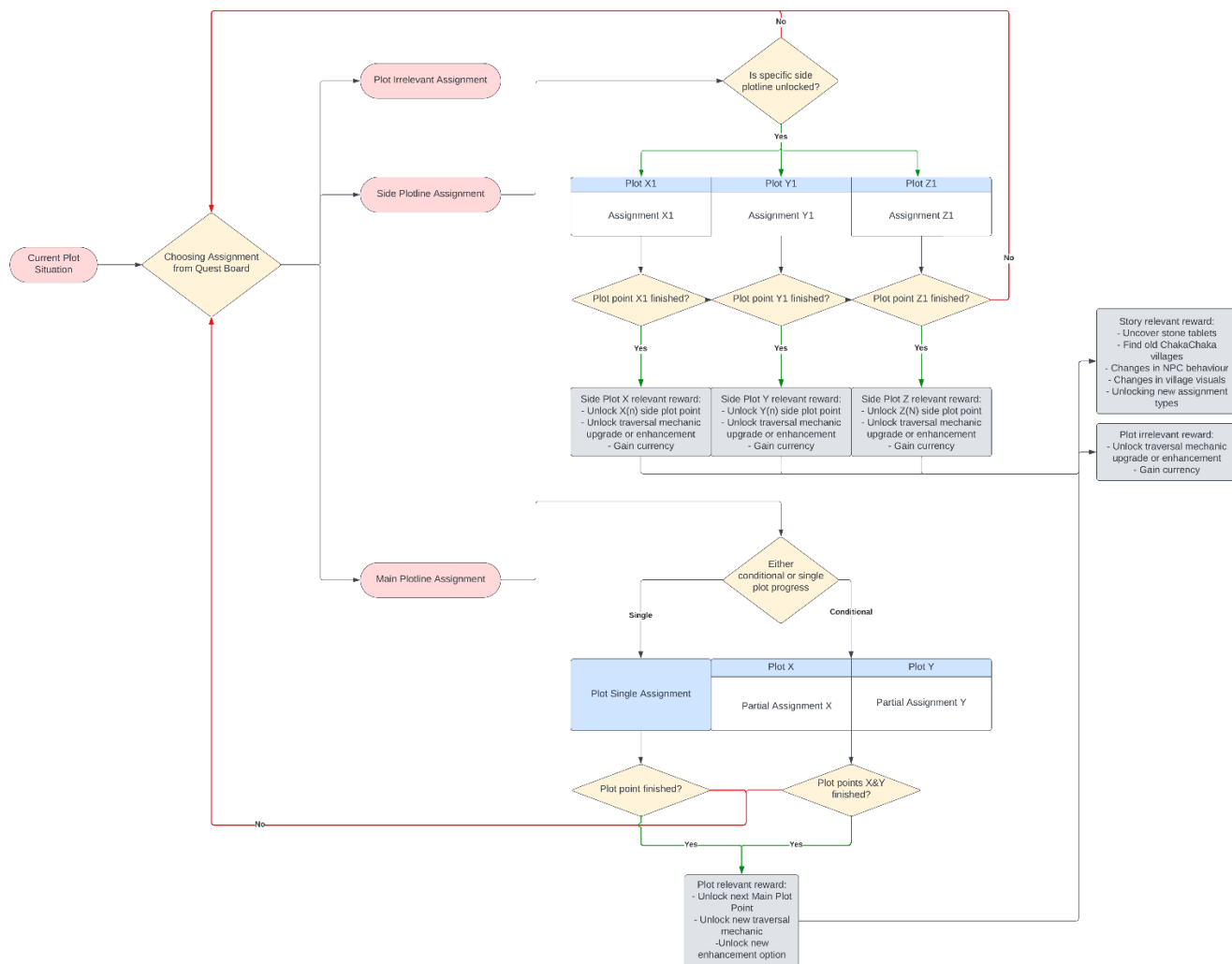
As a very strong wind enters the tree, its innards give way, breaking open in multiple directions. The ChakaChaka on the water get flooded in different directions of the newly opened tree passages, those gliding are being pushed upwards by the strong wind, and those on other elevations flee in holes in the wood to make it to safety.

This is the part of the story beat that lays the groundwork for the future goal of finding lost ChakaChakas and getting the tribe back together.

The overall first beat (gameplay and story included) is a mix of short cutscenes explaining short term motivation and the goal, and low intensity gameplay enhanced by constant visual action.

5. 2 Flowchart: Core Gameplay Loop

This is a flowchart representing the games core gameplay loop. Players start off in the village, where they can engage with the *Quest Board* to choose and assignment of their liking. During that assignment the use their abilities like jumping, piercing, gliding, or enhancing, either to explore the map in open ended gameplay, or until they fulfil the assignments conditions. As soon as conditions are met, the assignment turns into an expedition. Players can now choose to keep exploring, jumping, etc., or go back to the village to adapt their character for the next assignment they take.



5.4 Tension Graph

To finalize, I created a tension graph including the narrative and gameplay intensity for 18 story and gameplay beats.

Story Beat and Narrative Intensity	
How it started	10
Player character relives the day of the flood within a dream	
The new home	1
Introduction to the new village and social setting	
First assignments	2
Player character takes on first assignments and explores the Grasslands	
Trouble with the neighbours	3
The first battles with invasive ants and an ant boss coming from the Undergrowth	
Calm after the storm	5
Tribe celebrates and reassesses their situation. They need to explore the unknown	
Adventouring forth	4
First expeditions into new areas. Searching for clues of separated tribe members	
The big bad boss	4
Fighting spider queen boss, saving a tribe member. Finding first piece of mask	
Meeting the wanderer	7
Player character meets wanderer for the first time	
Collecting pieces	3
Finding and retrieving all different mask pieces	

Forgotten times	7	Player character uncovers forgotten history about its own tribe
Restoring the mask	7	All parts are assembled and put together, but the mask is not at full power
Rescue squad	5	Finally rescuing and bringing back lost tribe members, which in return strengthens the mask
Hybris	8	Wanderer finishes manipulation on player character. PC gets cast out of the village as result of hybris
The true prophecy	10	Player uncovers last part of the prophecy in the camp of the wanderer's tribe
Betrayal	11	The wanderer reveals itself as the antagonist and transfers the Player Characters masks accumulated power into his own
Redemption Ritual	11	Player character returns home to warn the tribe, redemption ritual replenishes the masks powers for good
At the heart of the tree	8	Player character confronts the antagonist during his plan to syphon and transfer the life of almost all living things in the tree towards tree itself
Back to normal	5	Victory celebration, integration of long-lost tribe, and back to taking on assignments

Gameplay Beat and Gameplay Intensity

Learning basics Introduction to walking, running, jumping, climbing	3
Creating tasks Introduction to dialogue and the villages needs	1
Understanding quest board Introduction to quest board and questing overall	3
Fighting evil Player unlocked the spear and gets first combat experience	5
Creating new goals New assignment types and expedition options	2
Developing player character Unlocking and upgrading spear and glider	5
Defeating evil First boss fight experience, new environmental mechanics	7
Creating new goals 2 New assignment types and expedition options, unlocking first enhancement	2
Understanding the mask Unlocking more enhancements and building enhancement toolkit	8
Growing skillset Platforming action, unlock further enhancements and upgrades	4

Growing skillset 2	3	Platforming action, unlock further enhancements and upgrades
Mastering skillset	9	Make full use of a fleshed-out skillset and apply it in the different unlocked levels
Learning old skills	3	Player character loses enhancement toolkit and must traverse without it
Mastering old skills	4	Player masters the use of traversal skills with only spear and glider involved
Fighting against the mask	8	First boss fight against the antagonist, player loses without mask powers against antagonist's mask powers
Redemption Ritual	1	Player engages with other villagers in the ritual
Using the full strength	12	Players can finally utilize all abilities and enhancements in an epic boss fight with the antagonist
Open ended	5	Players can engage with all sorts of varying assignments to their liking

