

A Video Game by

Liam Davidson

&

Bethany Hiebert

About



Kindred is a narrative platformer video game developed by Liam Davidson using artistic assets made by Bethany Hiebert. Liam is a digital artist, writer, and programmer passionate about bringing stories to life through interactive gaming media. Bethany is a graphic designer and traditional artist with a wide range of digital skills and a desire to blend the realms of art and technology.

In *Kindred*, you take on the role of a mysterious ghostly force. When a curious young boy decides to follow you through the forest near his home, you must use your powers of possession to help the boy discover the body of his missing younger brother. Together, you will navigate across lakes, up cliffs, over treetops, and through the woods to uncover the truth behind your existence. The actions you take have the power to bring closure to your child companion or incite his demise. When you discover yourself to be the spirit of his brother, will you forever suffer the loneliness of your own loss or force him to join you in the afterlife? The consequences are yours to decide upon in this touching physics-based adventure and its multiple endings.

Steam

Kindred is available for download on Steam with full controller and keyboard support and will be accessible for a larger demographic to experience beyond the exhibition.

Download/Wishlist the game here!



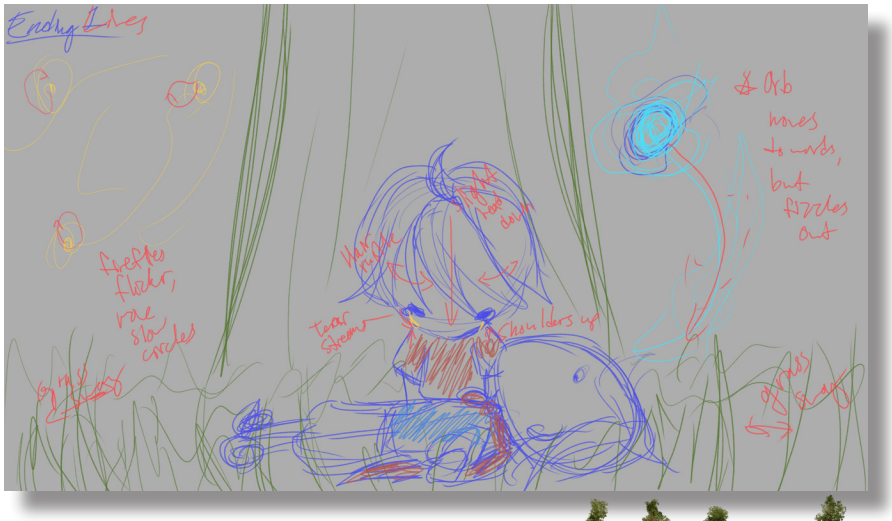
Process

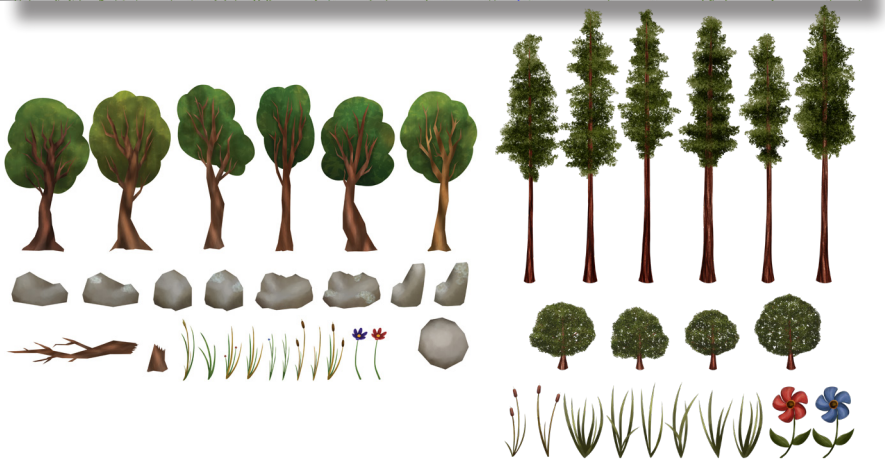
Kindred underwent several changes during the development process. Originally, we planned to have 4-5 levels in a simpler style, but we quickly realized that the scope was far too large for a two-member team to complete in time in a way that we would both be satisfied with the final product. We also realized that it would not be easily playable from start to finish within an exhibition space.

We decided to reduce the game to one, solid, polished level that we would both be happy with. We kept the same story and two endings but condensed it into something that made a lot more sense for us and the context of the exhibition.

Bethany increased the technical quality of the assets and added animated cutscenes. Liam developed the mechanics and game animations with focus, making the gameplay much smoother and polished. We were able to focus on one level rather than divide our time and energy between several levels, and in the end it was the right call.









Liam Davidson

Lead Programmer, Supporting Artist, Video Editor



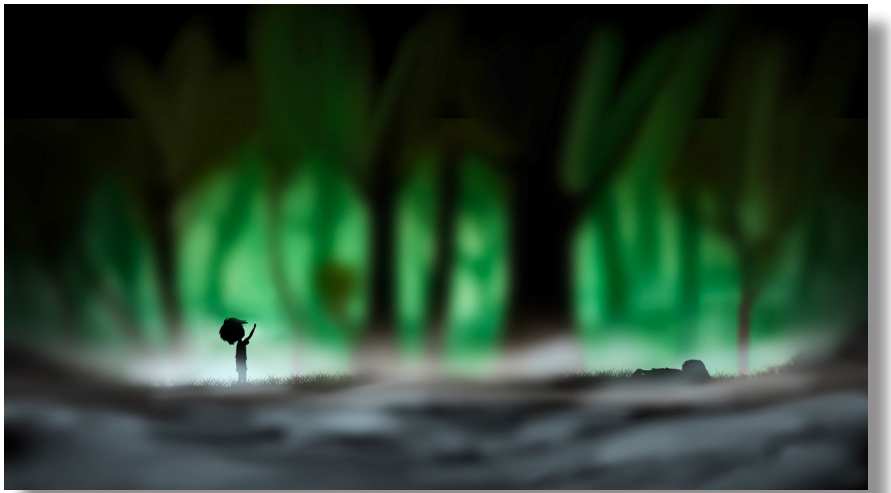
There is so much I've learned while developing this game, both technically and when it comes to working with a partner. From the start of the project, we knew we wanted to create everything ourselves from scratch, meaning no assets or systems from third parties were implemented and I had to teach myself a great deal.

Because I knew I would be working on such a large-scale project, I spent a significant amount of time early on investigating and becoming acquainted with various types of version control for Unity. I settled on PlasticSCM, which has now become Unity Version Control. Using a high-quality version control greatly eased my mind during development and bailed me out more than once when I made a fatal mistake. Throughout the creation of the game, I've been careful to employ proper programming conventions such as documentation, modularization, abstraction, and decoupling. At first, adhering to these practices felt like a limitation, but during the latter half of development, I could feel just how much that extra work was paying off. I was able to easily navigate the massive codebase, and the creation of new assets was incredibly quick since I had made all functionality entirely modular and adjustable.

The greatest technical challenge I had to overcome was the implementation of reactive water physics. There was a lot more trigonometry and high-level math than I was expecting, but I'm very happy with the result I came up with. Dynamic hair and cape physics were similarly challenging, but after several weeks of pondering and working out the math, I'm quite proud of the solutions I came up with.

More difficult than any technical aspect of development for me was learning to effectively work with a partner. As someone who has always preferred to work alone and have full control over what he creates, I struggled to relinquish influence over certain aspects of the game. I was fortunate to have such a talented and patient partner in Bethany who was willing to respectfully guide me on how to work in tandem with her. She's proven to me just how valuable it can be to have a capable partner at my side and the extent to which a project like this benefits from multiple perspectives and skillsets. I'm infinitely grateful to her for the immense amount she contributed to making this dream a reality. Her ideas, insights, and astounding artwork have made *Kindred* what it is at heart.

The most enjoyable part of creating *Kindred* was getting the game onto Steam. It feels so good to know that this project will be able to be experienced by people beyond the exhibition and that all of our hard work will live on. So many hundreds of hours have gone into creating something that I hope will launch a career in game development and that I am truly so proud to have produced alongside my partner.



Bethany Hiebert

Lead Artist, Animator, Voice Actor



This project was one of the most challenging projects I have overtaken yet. I have learned a lot through the process of working on a game and working closely with a partner. I learned new skills and techniques for creating art in a new and consistent style, and I have learned important soft skills that I can take with me into the future.

Generally, my art practice focuses on the human form; in my traditional art, I like to draw hands, and in my digital art I tend to focus on character design. Before the game project, I had never done digital environmental art like this (other than some pixel work in the past), so that in itself was a challenge. During the first half of the project, I was still getting used to creating environments and objects. At the beginning, I honestly found it to be a bit of a struggle to make so many inanimate objects when my specialty was always in human characters. Originally, I wanted to go with a simpler style for the game back when we were planning to have multiple levels. But, while I was exploring textures and getting used to using Photoshop as my main drawing program, each asset was taking far longer than I anticipated. That, paired with a lot of stress in my personal life, had made me feel much less productive than I had hoped to be.

In the second half of the project, I got back on track. We scaled back to one detailed, developed level, and I built up a new style with methods that I could replicated more easily. I made higher quality assets in less time, and I felt much more comfortable with new assets after recreating my old work. I got to the point where I started enjoying the process of making objects that would make up the environment. I liked looking at new brushes and textures to use and finding creative solutions to keeping things consistent yet simple to recreate.

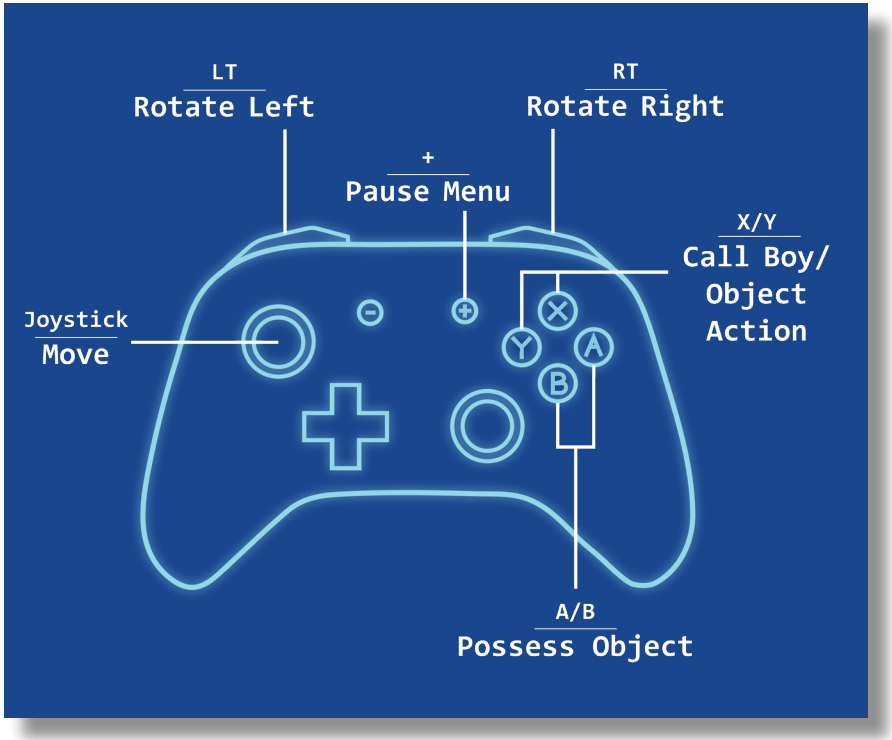
I created the majority of the assets in the game including concept art, created animated cutscenes, menus, voice acted, and found all the sounds to be used in the game. Because of the complex in-game animations, Liam helped create the Boy based on my concept. Each element brought a new experience with it, along with unique challenges. I pride myself on my resourcefulness and well-rounded skill set, which I really showcased in this project.

A big challenge that we both had to face and work through was with our communication. Through that experience, I learned lessons in assertiveness and self-discipline, and worked on my soft skills for working with a partner. I have always been blown away by Liam's talent and skill, and though we had a few rocky moments, I am incredibly fortunate to have worked with someone with as much passion and dedication to this project as him. This entire project would have been impossible without his amazing skills. We are both so proud of what we have accomplished, and it's mind-blowing to see how far we've come. It has always been a dream of mine to work on a video game, and now that dream has come true!



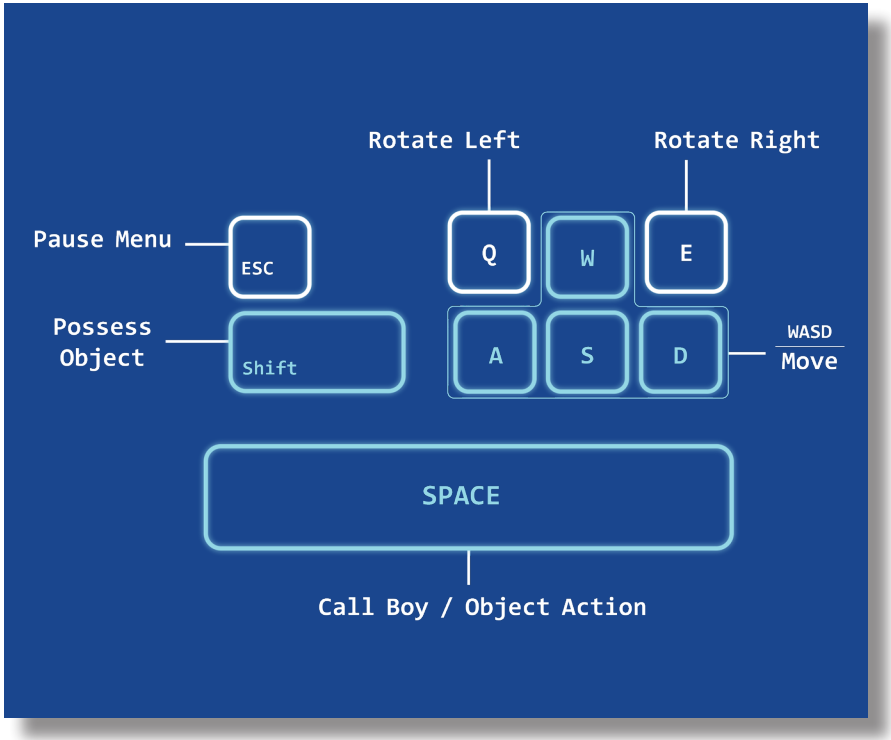
Controls

Controller



Joystick - Move
X/Y - Call Boy / Object Action
A/B - Possess Object
Left Trigger - Rotate Left
Right Trigger - Rotate Right
+ - Pause Menu

Keyboard



WASD - Move (up, left, down, right)
Space Bar - Call Boy / Object Action
Shift - Possess Object
Q - Rotate Left
E - Rotate Right
Esc - Pause Menu

















Download Kindred on Steam!

