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## Trusting Intuitive Knowledge to Inform the Design of a Curriculum Model

**Carolyn Mamchur (Dr.)**

*Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University Burnaby, BC, Canada*

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### ABSTRACT

A curriculum developer encourages other educators to trust their lived experience to guide their curricular choices by identifying her own process in creating a program that embraces archetype to encourage students to involve themselves in the use of social media which is healthy and fun, which promotes the reading of literature and the writing of narratives, and which develops personal self confidence and empathy for others.

**Keywords:** Intuitive knowledge, Lived experience, Social media, Archetype, Literature, Reading, Writing.

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I've been a person who enjoys designing courses and program since my teenage years as a secondary language arts teacher in a small prairie town school. That pleasure has followed me everywhere. As a professor of education I've been fortunate to have had many opportunities to practice my craft. And happily, the courses and programs have been successful.

People often ask me how I do it. They have ascribed my methods to several theorists: Vgotsky, Combs & Soper, Dewey. Several students have written their dissertations analyzing my courses or programs using paradigms developed by others. The truth is, my choices have come from my lived experience, and I found research to support my ideas when I needed to publish or write grant proposals.

My friend and colleague from OISE, Dr. David Hunt, wrote an important article entitled "How to be your own Best Theorist" (1984) in which he encourages teachers to develop their own theories, and not rely so heavily on outside agencies, such as researchers and professors. Teachers have to implement the theories in the crucible of real life and he honored their ability to devise sound methods and activities. I lean toward agreeing with David.

This is not a popular idea at most universities. There is, and I suppose, has been for a very long time, a belief that it is always best to rely on research to guide your thinking and your teaching. I must confess to having experienced the very best teaching from those with intuitive knowledge rather than those who follow the dictates of someone else's knowledge.

I have a hunch that a lot more educators follow their intuitive knowledge than like to admit it. It is as if intuitive knowledge is not to be trusted. I think that is a huge mistake. I want to admit to the influence of my lived experience on my curricular choices. I want to encourage others to listen to their inner voices and be guided by them.

This paper is an analysis of the lived experiences that have guided my unconscious, and conscious choices in creating a curriculum model that uses archetypes to encourage students to read literature in a social media context.

This project was initiated as a response to the educational challenges we face today. In responding to the challenge of a decline in reading skills, a vanishing of literature from the curriculum and from people's lives, the hunger to belong, the obsession with trivia via social media, I felt propelled towards a model that uses archetypes to entice young people to engage in exploring literature to discover "themselves" in the work. The union between ancient and cross cultural archetypes and the use of communications media for sharing in a nonschool setting afforded me opportunity to question some of the age-old adages about learning to read, comprehending and remembering what we read, wanting to read, and engaging with others as a result of the reading.

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**\*Address for correspondence:**

bipulrabha@gmail.com

What made my mind go in that direction? Why that choice over so many available to me? What inspires an educator, researcher, theorist to investigate and attempt solutions to challenges that emerge in their purview? A simple and obvious response might be that it is the job they have chosen to do. Why does a shoemaker make shoes? It's the job. Another response might involve a healthy mix of curiosity and altruism and personal satisfaction.

I also believe one's choices are driven by the desire to pull together various aspects of one's expertise and experience in order to refashion them to bring new understanding or new solutions to the world.

I invite the reader to walk with me into the pages of my personal history to see the birth of the elements that comprise the curriculum model I am examining in this paper. The elements have been with me for a very long time. I have a hunch most of the original ideas we come up with in our maturity have roots that reach back into our formative years.

## **IDENTITY**

Erikson (1968) defined identity as a lifelong process that develops in an unconscious manner “for both the individual and to his society” (1980, 122). This identity develops through life as a result of the individual and his relationship to society. What am I about to describe is my own identity as a reader and writer and as a person who has dedicated part of her life to influencing the identities of students in a way which supports positive self concept and ability to engage in the world as a confident and caring participant.

Literature played an important role in my life. I am ever grateful for its impact and its contribution to my humanity. My passion for literature and the teaching of literature comes from a belief I share with Dana Gioia, poet and Chair for Endowment of the Arts.

Well you know, I think that literature is one of the necessary human studies, because the beginning of human wisdom is to recognize that, you know, we are the product of history. That millions, billions of people have lived before us. They led lives that are startlingly similar to ours even though they were in different places and different times. And what literature allows you to do is to create a conversation with the past and the present out of what you can imagine and create a future. And so it gives you a sense of the reality of other people's lives from the inside – from the “dailyness” of their existence – not only in the peak moments, but in their ordinary moments. And what text, I think, does is build compassion. It builds humanity. (Gioia, 2008)

I thought it was normal, the reciting of poetry. It was normal for us, anyway. Looking back, I suppose my mother and her boyfriend and I, an only child raised in a hotel in a northern prairie town, were an odd family unit. We had a lot of rituals. A favorite was the all night party around a fire. Friends would be invited, garlic sausage and white buns, Bohemian beer and rye whiskey would abound. This ritual took place just across the bridge on the edge of town in a cleared area surrounded by the beauty and smell of Northern Pine.

We'd all take turns reciting ballads. My mother loved *The Song of Hiawatha* and had memorized most of it. Her boyfriend loved Longfellow and I had a preference for ballads that had a dark and romantic side. At age five, I had quite a few under my belt, and one of my favorites was *Dangerous Dan McGrew*. “Were you ever out in the night alone and the moon was awful clear” . . . . and then the ending, oh, I loved the ending. “He fell across the barroom floor. Dead.” Dying over the love lost. Could there be anything better? Yet when I recited the ending, everyone laughed. It mystified me. In later years my mother explained that I always ended with “deader than a doornail”, to add emphasis, I suppose. It was a favorite saying of my mother's and I used her favorite sayings as often as possible because I wanted to be just like her.

Bonfire poetry recitals were the beginning of a love affair with literature that had me teaching literature as a high school teacher in that same prairie town when I was still a teenager myself. When I was Director of Curriculum in a School for Delinquent Girls in Sedley, Sask., every girl was literate by the time I left. My method of teaching literacy? Pragmatic love of literature. It was a sad statistic that most of the girls in the school would spend most of their lives in prison. I didn't lie to them and promise them that if they learned to read they would get good jobs. Instead, I told them that literature held the key to escapism. If you could read a good book and really comprehend it, you could get lost in the book and you could be anywhere, anytime. That made sense to them. And they all learned to read.

Literature is at once specific and general. The general makes it universal, and the reader can relate to good writing in a personal way. That is why it is important to read literature, not just words. Good literature contains the secrets of life and when we read it, it rings true. We are connected to the other. Without it, we cannot imagine the life of the Other. We cannot imagine what it is to be someone else. “Metaphor is the reciprocal agent, the universalizing force; it makes possible the power to envision the stranger’s heart” (Ozick, 1989, 279).

My girls were introduced to other worlds, worlds they had not yet imagined, but worlds where people suffered and hoped and loved and made mistakes. “You are never really alone when you can read. And hopefully, you will learn to be more accepting, more understanding, more tolerant of yourself and of others,” I promised. I’ll never really know if that happened, but I do know that the possibility was now theirs.

A love of literature stayed with me through my studies, through an undergraduate degree in literature and graduate degrees in the teaching of literature. I felt totally at home in the world of narrative. Each time I turn a page, I am back in time, five years old, half asleep, warmed by a fire, surrounded by the familiar smell of burning wood, ancient pines, spicy sausage, yeasty beer. I am home.

Archetypes were also an early part of my life. I was unaware of Jung’s notions of the collective unconscious and the inherited storehouse of our common experiences. But I was deeply aware of the power of one part of that storehouse. Born to a non-practicing Catholic, I attended a Catholic school non-the-less. Miraculously, the nuns who taught in our little Saskatchewan town had newly arrived from France and brought with them two amazing things: a European education and Holy Pictures.

The Holy Pictures were given as rewards for obedience or good grades. I worked hard for those Holy Pictures. I papered the walls of our hotel room with them. I especially loved the Blue Madonna. I loved Saint Theresa, too. She had to wear brown and black. I was sure it was because she was messy and spilled things on her dress the way I did and her mother made her wear brown as my mother warned me she would.

Those Holy Pictures were my first introduction to the world of archetype, the Archetype of the Madonna, the Mother, of the Warrior, Joan of Arc, of the Care Giver, Mary holding the dead Jesus in the Pieta.

I imagined myself as all of these. I became the Care Giver, putting all my dolls to bed in my little cot, one of those they let you have for kids in hotels. My mother would come in to kiss me goodnight and she would find me curled in a ball at the end of the bed, or even on the floor, determined not to disturb my sick children. She re-arranged us only to find me back on the floor in the morning.

I lived the lives of the Holy Pictures and those stories must have influenced my thinking more than I realized for when I went to the University of Florida to study language with Ted Hipple and writing with Harry Crews, I was deterred in my research path by Isabel Myers and her work in type theory. The world of Jungian archetypes felt like a natural place for me to be. Furthering my studies at the Jung Institute in Switzerland followed, as did a study with Carol Pearson in Washington, DC. Archetypes became firmly established as a way for me to make sense of my world.

A third thread in the tapestry of influences in my life came in the form of personal expression. Coming from a story telling family, it was a fairly easy transition to writing stories. I wrote stories as presents at Xmas, Easter, Valentine’s Day. I wrote stories to explain myself to others, hoping the story would say what I found difficult to admit directly.

When I became a teacher of language arts, which included both the teaching of literature and the teaching of composition, I wanted my students to write stories that increased their sense of personal identity, as they had for me. Bruner’s (1996) work reinforced my belief in the power of narrative to help students develop a strong sense of self. He proclaimed that through the narrative view, a version of the world can be created by the individual that would enable the individual to see a place for himself in the world (39). The selection of topics that were personally relevant became sacred in my teaching, not only for teaching good composition skills, but for forming a positive identity around language. Before I had ever read Bruner, that idea just made common sense to me.

I instinctively make a choice and then find myself delighted when I discover a recognized expert has written something that endorses what I am doing. The research of others gives me the courage, and often the language, to be inventive, to trust my natural inclinations. Though no one else in our little school used narrative as a teaching tool, I did. I abandoned the tradition of spelling and grammar and invited my students to write stories.

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As a young teacher with only nine months of Teacher’s College to guide me, I knew little about how to teach students to write compositions. But I did know that what one wrote about was very important. Assigning topics such as “what I did for my summer holidays” or “pretend to be a ..... and imagine a day in that life” did not work. Unless you had an outstanding event happen that summer, such as your crazy second cousin robbed a local bank and your dog stole the money from him and you returned it to the bank and became a hero, the assignment is a real challenge.

Personal experience had taught me the dangers of such artificially imposed topics as “The day in the life of”. I had been given the assignment of “a day in the life of a pencil” by my sixth grade teacher. I had written about the pencil writing a story. In the story, the pencil could either kill someone or save them. The pencil had a lot of power. The pencil was excited by the power and decided to kill the character. Then the pencil felt badly and erased the part of the story, but the eraser didn’t work and the character was doomed to die.

I thought I’d done a good job. It wasn’t the kind of story the nun, my teacher, had expected or wanted. She’d wanted my pencil to come with a little girl to school, lie in a pencil box, be sharpened, etc. Well, I didn’t have that kind of imagination. I had no idea how to make that into a story. My teacher took my story to Mother Superior. The two nuns studied my words, shook their heads and clucked their tongues. Then I got the big lecture about sin and how my mother was living in sin with a married man.

I’d had that lecture before. I wanted to explain that my mother had to live in sin because her boyfriend was married to a woman who had run off with the circus and they had to wait seven years before he could be released from that marriage and be free to marry my mother. But I didn’t. I didn’t think they would believe me, even though it was the truth. And it might make my mom and her boyfriend look even worse in the nuns’ eyes. Things were bad enough as it was.

So, I listened to how my mom would burn in hell and I listened to how her sin was making me write awful things and I had to go to confession and not write about awful things any more.

I never forgot that event and I choose not to assign such topics to my grade ten students. Instead, I had them write about things they had experienced. In the beginning, I simply instructed them to write about anything they wanted. But such an idea was so new that most had no idea how to do that. So I began to assign topics that were universal. Topics like fear, hope, excitement. My principal was worried that I would invite unacceptable work. He said I was on dangerous ground. He warned me to be careful and to stop all this nonsense. I was stymied. I wasn’t sure what to do. And then, by magic, a lifesaving book landed in my lap. *Teacher* by Sylvia Ashton Warner (1963).

Sylvia had discovered something called key vocabulary as a way to teach young Maori children in New Zealand how to read. The children would tell Sylvia a story and she would select key words out of the story and write them on a small cardboard and put them in the child’s individual ‘reading’ box. The next day, she would pull out the card and ask the child to read the word.

The words that children remembered were their key vocabulary words and they centered around fear and sex.

Universals. I went back to the classroom charged with the support of a woman thousands of miles away. I assigned topics such as “My most embarrassing moment” and “The night that scared the pants off me” and my students began writing with renewed fervor.

The topics were archetypal. The stories became archetypal. My students began winning all the writing prizes in the school. But I didn’t feel really satisfied. I hadn’t yet learned how to improve the stories once they had written them. As a student of literature, I had a sense of what good stories needed. I encouraged my students to read and to learn from the authors. What strategies did the good writers use.? We tried to imitate those strategies.

But still wasn’t satisfied. It was a sort of hit and miss program. I needed a structure. I needed some way to talk about the process writers experienced, not just the strategies they used. Once again a little book fell into my lap. *A Teacher Teaches Writing* by Donald Murray (1968).

You, the reader, may think I am contradicting myself. I am promoting a belief in lived experience and then I am telling you how I turned to the experts for advise. My belief in trusting intuitive knowledge does not suggest you ignore the experts. That would be foolish. Instead, I urge teachers to trust their instincts and when they get “stuck” or want guidance, seek out the experts that you need for your particular situation.

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It is a matter of order of things, of which comes first, of having the expert serve your purpose, rather than religiously following the dictates of some one else's path

It is interesting that both experts I used in my early years as a teacher were themselves experts who learned through their own lived experience. Sylvia Ashton Warner developed her methods of key vocabulary in the classroom. Donald Murray learned to teach writing by being a writer himself and reflecting on the process. The name of his book, “A Writer Teaches Writing” is what attracted me to him in the first place.

Murray broke the complex linguistic expression of writing into seven different skills, each one crucial to good writing. Using his seven skills as an editing tool, I was suddenly able to pinpoint the part of the writing process where the students went wrong. The feedback I could give them could really improve the writing.

I suddenly had a system, a way to teach my students to think about their writing as a writer does. I entered the world of research and university teaching armed with marvelous gifts from my childhood and two little books that had given me the confidence to trust my lived experiences.

### **THE CHALLENGE**

Face book changed the world. It made possible uprisings in Egypt, it made it possible for an angry girl in Sputville to malign her classmate in a way for every student of the school, and the whole world to see. Powerful. Frightening.

A very bright grad student, Doug Tenant, made a presentation on the horrors of social media based on his experiences as Educational Technology Coordinator in a very prestigious school. He invited us to imagine a world with very little adult involvement, where rules were created by young people, that seems to be outside of the rules of regular “civilization” at times, and where young people can be injured and re-injured with no one coming to their aid. He was describing social media.

I was shocked to learn that 15% of teens have received a nude photo of someone they know via text. Doug threw out a challenge: that as educators it is our responsibility to teach students to use social media – instead of fight it. That challenge really stayed with me.

Another aspect of social media bothered me. I was astonished when I witnessed people I knew who were among those thousands who felt a need to send out photos of such things as what they had for supper. Why? What was it about our world that motivated people to share such trivial communications with strangers? Who really cared what anyone had for supper except the person preparing or eating that supper?

A possible explanation presented itself in the form of Robert Putman's (2001) interesting book, *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*. His research revealed that a new phenomenon was occurring in North America. More people were bowling than ever before. But, they were bowling alone! His research, out of Stanford, showed us to be a lonely society who rarely invited friends over for an evening meal, who spent only minutes a day in conversation with our children, who were basically on our own in a busy and technological world.

If our society could be described by one archetype, I would say it is the Orphan. We are desperate to belong.

We join gangs to belong, we buy ridiculously expensive clothes with labels on the outside of the garment so that we can belong to the group who can afford to wear DNKY clothing. And now we send the world photos of our food to belong to the world who eat nice suppers.

What could I, as a university professor, do to make social media a positive aspect of learning? Clearly the answer did not lie in creating rules and regulations around social media use in classrooms. Many had tried that and failed. It was about having something to do that students cared about doing. And something to do that would offer opportunity to live more fulfilled lives. What? What had fulfilled my own life with the most joy? The memory of literature and archetypes and writing narratives somehow guided my research without my being conscious of their influences.

### **VALIDATING MY LEARNED EXPERIENCE**

Though instinct and lived experience were driving forces behind the curricular programs I created, the research on reading validated my choices, armed me with the data I needed to get funding and opportunity to do research and create curriculum in a university setting.

Historically, students have been advised to familiarize with texts, and traditionally the familiarization process has included such things as reading a table of contents, the introduction, and the material at the end of the book. Nist and Holshuh (2002) write, “Students who take the time to warm up before reading remember more of what they’ve read. As an added bonus, these students are also able to concentrate better and make stronger connections between ideas” (166).

I agreed with that notion, but searched for a more personally relevant approach to this familiarizing process. How could I get students to “warm up”, get a focused interest before reading the literature; but without giving advanced organizers which I found often limited student comprehension and enjoyment, focusing on “finding the right answers”?

Walberg and Tsai (1983) first coined the term the "Matthew Effect" to describe the fact that, without intervention, some students rapidly develop and build upon strong literacy foundations, and other students languish behind their more fortunate peers. And by 2015 many were languishing behind.

Cornwell (2010) in Ware, (2012) states that in classrooms all over the country there are a number of middle school students who can read but choose to shy away from reading because the stories in the curriculum and the teacher resource books are either too difficult, too boring, or have no connection to the adolescent students of today. One overwhelming reason that middle school students tend not to read is the lack of motivation (Ware, R. 2012, 1).

Motivation certainly needed to play a large role in my curriculum model. My idea of motivation was personal relevance. I didn’t like motivation gimmicks. I wanted my students to read because reading was important to them. My students in the reform school learned to read because it was an escape for them into another world, and they learned to write because it was an important form of connecting to the outer world. I was challenged to find a way to motivate that was more universal and was available on line.

Monson and Sebesta, (1991) reminded me that educators have been trying to determine reading interests in students since Jordan’s early 1921 study and there is a need to be more careful about how we define interest. I couldn’t agree more. They borrow from Dewey’s 1913 definition of interest –“a form of selfVexpressive activity, that is, of growth that comes through acting upon nascent tendencies” (664). Monson and Sebesta conclude, “The importance of the readingVinterest construct seems fully established. Its centrality in promoting voluntary or free reading (Morrow, 1987, Fielding, Wilson, & Anderson, 1984), reading instruction (Anderson, Scott, Hiebert & Wilkinson, 1985), and assessment (Asher, 1980) is recognized” (671). My goal was to engage students in a dynamic approach to reading which captures the reader’s primal interest in self and selfVidentity and leads to a selfV expressive activity in the telling of stories. Their research was pushing me closer and closer to an archetypal approach to my research and curriculum development, though I couldn’t yet really articulate it as such.

Flood and Lapp (1991) convincingly refer to research that suggests that comprehension instruction is failing those students who cannot read easily. Quoting Carver who argues that the question ‘Can Comprehension Skills Be Taught’ can be answered with a resounding ‘No’, ” they argue, instead, for “implementing a process approach that fosters constructivist notions” and advocate a reader response method, as proposed by Rosenblatt as early as 1938, in which “literary meaning is a ‘transaction’ between the reader and the text and every reader responds differently because every reader is unique” (733). I was determined to develop a model that recognized and honored that uniqueness yet had universal appeal. It wasn’t enough, of course, to be motivated. Students had to comprehend. A constructivist model appealed to me very much.

It seems an obvious but often ignored fact that it is not enough to simply read; reading demands an engagement in order for the fiction to have any value. If we believe what Dillard (1982) says, that engagement essentially, “does not exist” for them it is little wonder so many students do not see the importance or pleasure in reading literature. “People will generally resist activities for which they see no justification. If the learning that students are asked to undertake seems to have no purpose or connection to their own interests and concerns, they may well resist it” (Brookfield, 2006, 220).

Research by Velasco & Bond (1998) had made similar claims years earlier, saying that personal relevance and personal identification impacted perception and comprehension of narratives. Too often students do not remember what they read, and too often that is because what they read does not feel important to them. They do not concentrate long enough to let the truth and beauty of the story to capture their spirits and minds the way regular readers do. Too often they have not had the advantage of what Glasser (1969) calls “the three basic requirements for good education – involvement,

relevance and thinking” (115). I was energized by the fact that these same notions kept repeating themselves in the research.

Wilhelm (2004) suggests that “Although reluctant readers need help to re-conceive of reading as a productive and personally important pursuit and to gain control over strategies of making meaning... instructional activity may have often worked to convince them that reading is a passive pursuit in which they have no authority or ownership.” (469). I was clearly searching for a different kind of reader response initiative.

I recognized that because of social media, young people are motivated to read more today than would have naturally happened previous to Face Book. But what are they reading? What I ate for supper. Too often words at once personal and impersonal, close, and distant, lacking real intimacy, commitment, relationship, with no real person at the other end, just a white screen where black words and posted photographs can reach thousands of strangers in a single flick of the finger.

To me there was a greater problem than the seemingly trivial nature of a lot of social media transaction. I worried about the loss of part of what it means to be a creative, engaged being. I’m not alone. Calkins (1991), writing about the breakthrough work on reading and writing that happened in New Hampshire, reminds us about the importance of creative thought to the whole process of reading and writing. “The problem is that writing (and reading) well has everything to do with giving sustained, focused attention to a project” (101).

In talking about the essential ingredients of creative thought, Vera John-Steiner, author of *Notebooks of the Mind*, says, “There are differences among human beings in their willingness to pursue and hold the power of ideas and it is within this domain that the similarities and differences between thought in its mundane and creative forms may live” (1997, 9). “What we are losing in this country and presumably around the world is the sustained, focused, linear attention developed by reading” (Gioia, 2008).

Would it be possible to create curriculum that promoted focused attention in a social media context? Could I counter the attraction of the briefness of a Twitter? I wanted a curriculum that would provide opportunity for sustained thought on one particular aspect of reading and writing that would be personally relevant, motivating the student, while utilizing the lure of the computer and direct energy in a positive way? Could not the attraction associated with social media be turned to advantage, creating relationships that promoted personal identity? Students gain a sense of ownership in their learning when there is social interaction among them in an environment that enables students to discuss and construct meaning from the text” (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000, in Ware, 2012, 31).

Computers open the world as they isolate. I’d seen the isolation on a visit to elementary schools in Japan. Government officials, educators were grabbing with a terrible ‘epidemic’. Homeboys. Young men were electing to stay in their rooms, their only companions, computers. They didn’t work, they didn’t go to school, they didn’t have friends, they didn’t engage with the family. They lived locked in their rooms, a self inflicted exile from the world of the living. Their escape from the pressures of a rigid society was to opt out of real life.

On a less horrific scale, I see games where people get addicted to living the pretended life of an avatar, where children have computer pets instead of real ones, and grow computer plants instead of real roses.

How could I find a way to make the computer a personally relevant device to open doors instead of close them? Could I find a way to say to the student that she was important? That she was not alone, but was a member of the world with a special story and a special connection to others.

Vygotsky (1981) observed that “it is through others that we develop into ourselves and that this is true not only with regard to the individual but with regard to the history of every function” (160-161). I was determined to make the focus of my research project to create opportunity for students to use computers to create relationships by sharing ideas and stories in the broader, more global, online community at a personal and interactive level.

There is another aspect to reading in Tweets and Face Book messages that worried me. It is the issue of comprehension and of developing good reading skills and a sophisticated reading identity. The skills of good readers and poor readers are not the same, with just a matter of degree of a specific skill separating them. They have very different ways of reading.

Good readers are able to identify which things are important to read and which aren’t. “They can suppress or inhibit information and can map information into an ongoing structure” (Gernsbacker, 1990 in Knox, A., 2008, 1).

“Poor readers don’t have this discriminating ability and are less efficient at using their prior knowledge or background information to support understanding” (McNamara, 1997; McNamara & McDaniel, 2004 in Knox, A., 2008, 2)

As I worked my way through this array of research looking at motivation, at personal relevance, at interactive learning, at sustained attention, at being able to map information, images kept formulating in my mind’s eye. Archetypal images. I felt the archetypes would help me find an answer. I wasn’t sure how, but I couldn’t shake the feeling that archetypes would play an important role in the curriculum I was about to create.

Jung (1971) describes archetypes as the “accumulated experiences of organic life in general, a million times repeated, and condensed” (400). He (Jung, in Pembroke, 2007) further insists that “Our personal psychology is just a thin skin, a ripple on the ocean of collective psychology . . . and the archetypes are the real decisive forces, they decide the fate of man” (56).

Juanita McLean Cole and Veleshia Hilliard (2006) assert that “the extent to which a learner engages in a task depends largely on the cultural content of the task and the familiarity of the context in which the information is presented (Serpell & Boykin, 1994; Shueder, 1999; Valsiner & van der Veer, 2000; Wertsch, 1998)” (2). The value of using archetypes is that they are universally accepted in all cultures and are recognized by individuals as the stories we are living in our daily lives. What’s more, I deeply believed as Jung did, that “Cultures with vital mythic images support the individual in attaining a sense of self, facilitate maturation and guide social interaction” (Jung, 1996, 17).

The challenge was becoming clearer, and the answers lay in my heritage and in my training and in my reading. The threads that came together to weave this curriculum model were my love of literature, my knowledge of archetype, my ability to teach writing.

Ron Jones, (2011) President of Symetri Internet Marketing, promotes the use of social media and defines it as “a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking, and bookmarking online. Most social media services encourage discussion, feedback, voting, comments, and sharing of information from all interested parties.” I was determined to take this positive approach.

Why not create a site where students would be invited to determine their own preferred archetype, read the description that archetype represents, familiarize themselves with the art and music and films and TV shows that represent that archetype, then read short stories whose main characters represent that archetype?

Students could then be invited to join the “Archetype Club” where they could meet and dialogue with other young people who are experiencing that archetype in their lives. They could share favorite movies and songs and tell one another stories.

Students would have the opportunity to “publish” their own ideas – paintings, songs, stories, to build a growing library of archetypal examples.

Viola! The curriculum model was in my mind. But now, I had to build the pieces. How I did that is another story.

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## **AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**



As a professor Carolyn Mamchur focuses her teaching and research on creative writing and Jungian psychology. As a writer she publishes education articles and books, children’s books, poetry, scripts. As a person deeply connected to engagement with nature, she created a botanical garden in WA and a teaching farm in British Columbia where she and her horses, llamas, dogs and feathered family work with teachers, counselors and clients wanting healing and improved communication with others.