



The Traffic Accident Project

An impromptu observation and
documentation

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The Traffic Accident Project

By Carol Vaage

We heard the crash. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! 4 cars are smashed!

The Event

Experiences that happen in the child's world are worth studying. This project was a one-day event precipitated by the traffic accident that happened in front of our school while I was on morning supervision. The bell to start school rang, and all around me the conversation and chatter that I heard was 'We heard the crash. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! 4 cars are smashed.' The interest, passion and curiosity were full blown, so my question was how to handle this event for maximum learning.

My class was humming with questions and talk, so I gathered them in the story corner to talk about options. The children desperately wanted to check out what was happening. They had so many questions. I asked them if they wanted to document the event for all the kids in the school who could not go out and watch what was happening. Protocols were set - about where we would stay, so as not to interfere with the proceedings. We were to be quiet, so we could listen. They would tell me which photos to take. So, our decision meant postponing the regular learning that was scheduled.

My reflections: *I could pedagogically defend this decision to abandon the regular plans for the day for this emergent topic, as it would cover so many curricular outcomes. The connection between community events and emotional learning was strong, and yet it would be at arm's length view of a potentially traumatic event. There did not seem to be any injuries in the accident, so it would be safe for young children to document.*

Observations

We went out to front of school to document, but the first thing the children did was start to point fingers at what they were seeing. I asked them if they were in an accident would they want people pointing at them. So, all hands went down immediately.

They chatted amongst each other making sense of what they were seeing. Children told me when to take a new photo, for example, when the fire trucks came. The discourse among the children was rich with descriptive language and explanatory comments. They were deepening their understanding of what was happening, sometimes with excitement (fire trucks and police) but also with compassion as they saw one of the women involved in the accident rush into her husband's arms when he arrived.

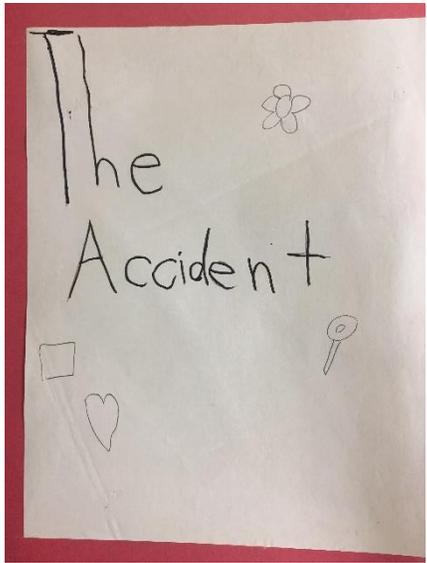
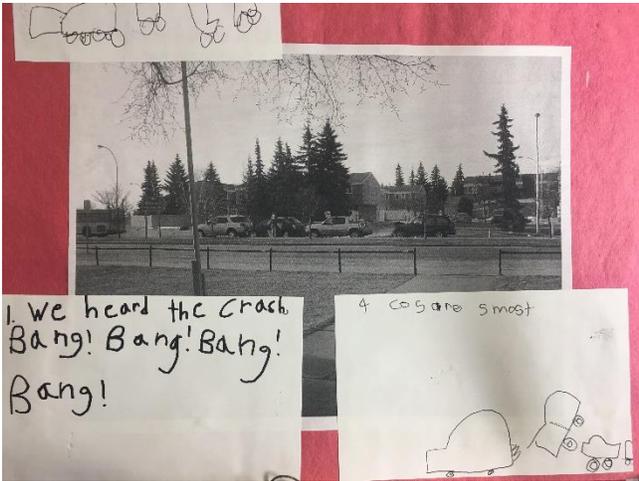
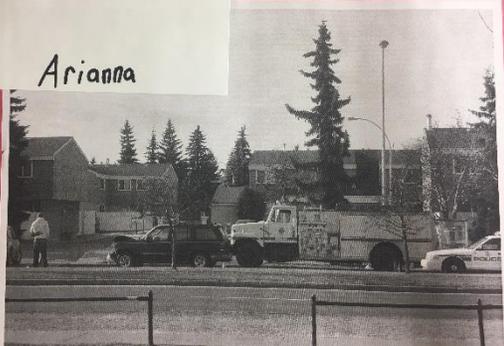
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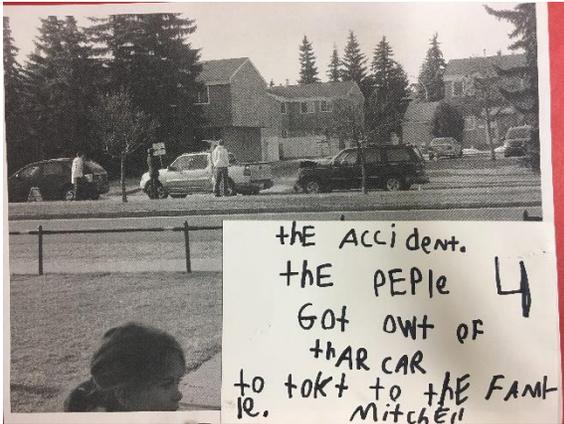
Back in classroom, I did a quick print of black and white photos and asked the class which child would want to write the caption for that picture.

We stapled up the mounted photos with handwritten text and a description of what we observed. We managed to finish posting it all on the bulletin board outside our classroom before the first recess. Other classes noticed it and stopped to talk about what they saw. Then the parents and teachers stopped to read as well.

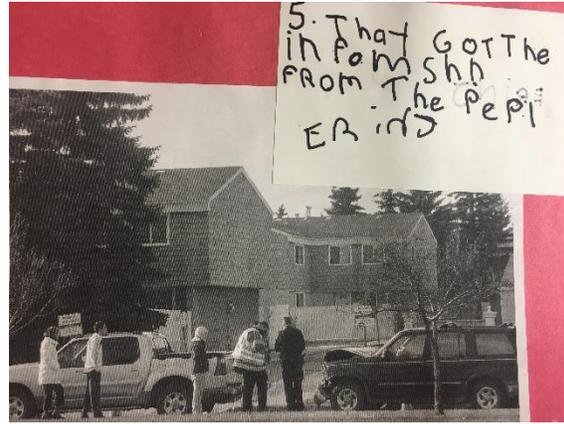
We contributed to the 'world' knowledge by being reporters, by sharing our experience.

Here is their news report.

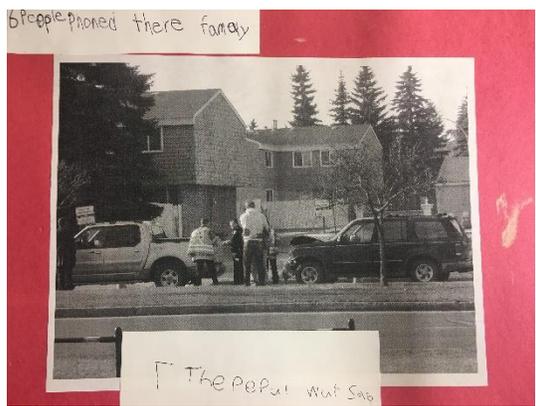
	 <p>1. We heard the crash. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!</p> <p>4 cars are smashed</p> <p>We heard the crash. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! 4 cars are smashed</p>
<p>2. The fire truck came.</p> <p>Arianna</p>  <p>The fire truck came.</p>	<p>3. the ambulance came the ambulance left because there was no one hurt.</p>  <p>The ambulance came. The ambulance left because there was no one hurt.</p>



The people got out of their car to talk to the family.



They got the information from the police officers.



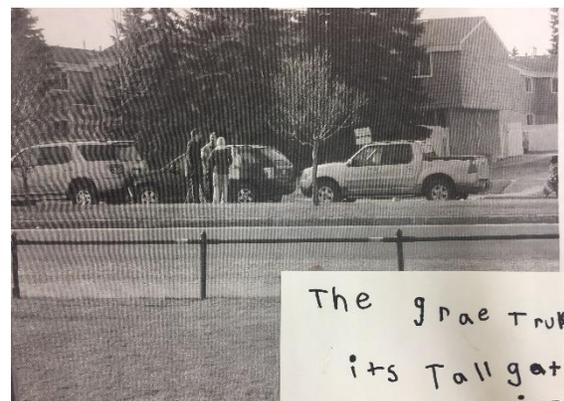
People phoned their family. The people were sad.



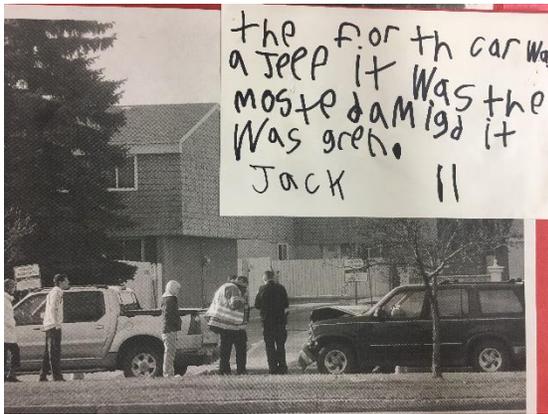
The front vehicle didn't have much damage.



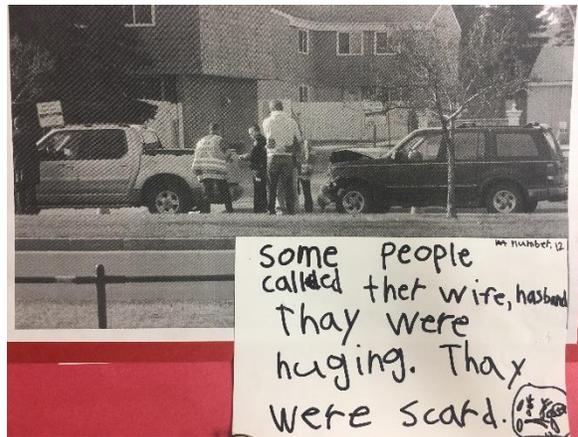
The second car was squashed in front and back and there was a little girl in the car.



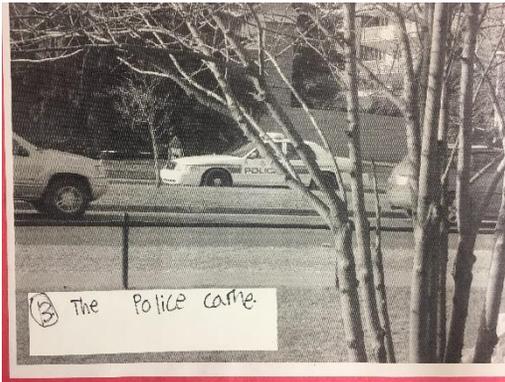
The gray truck – its tail gate was damaged.



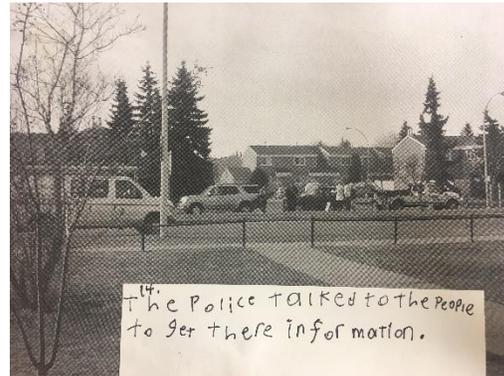
The fourth car was a jeep. It was the most damaged. It was green.



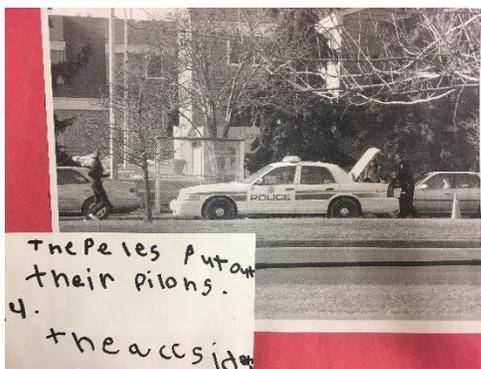
Some people called their wife, husband. They were hugging. They were scared.



The police came.



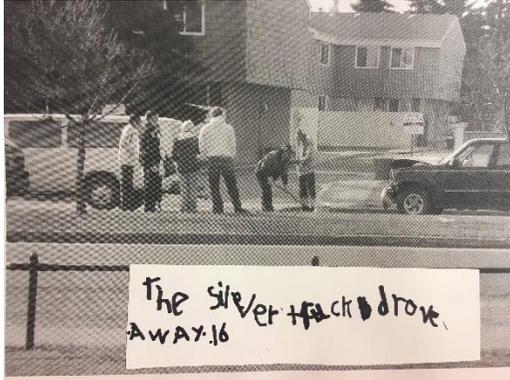
The police talked to the people to get their information.



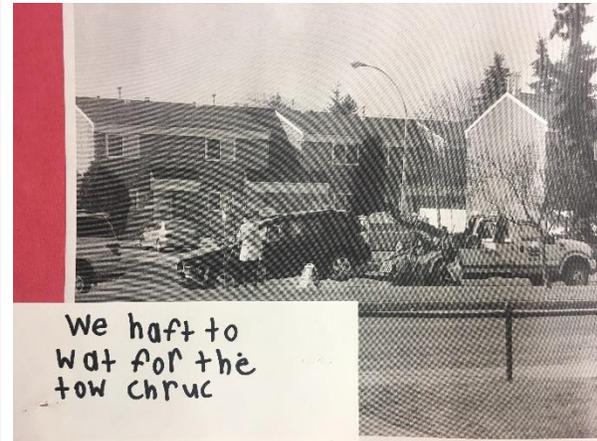
The police put away their pylons.



The firemen went home.



The silver truck drove away.



We had to wait for the tow truck.

My reflections: *The children were news reporters using age-appropriate methods to share what they observed. Both factual and emotional content was reported. Traffic accidents are frightening events but doing the observation of how an accident gets processed seemed to help reduce the anxiety.*

I also noticed the adults who read this documentation talked among themselves about previous accidents, or things that they should prepare for in case they were in an accident.

The next day, I asked the children if they wished to continue investigating this topic but there was no interest. They had explored and satisfied their curiosity, but it was not a topic they wished to study in a deep dive.

This project showed me once again that young children can contribute to the world's knowledge in significant ways.