Bruce Hucko
Website:  www.brucehuckophoto.com

Bruce Hucko is a freelance photographer, author, art educator and documentary radio producer whose work celebrate people and places in the American West. Art, indigenous cultures, the environment and the relationships that people form with the land figures largely in all of his work. His work is featured in over 17 books and he has contributed to many more. Hucko has produced two NPS interpretive slide shows and the Utah Humanities Council award winning The Canyon’s Edge, a 40-minute, 8-projector, 400-image visual and verbal homage to the Colorado Plateau co-photographed by Tom Till with text and narration by Terry Tempest Williams. Hucko divides his time between his own photography, commercial and publication projects, special projects, local community work and teaching art to children. For the latter he was recognized in 1984 by the Rockefeller Bros. Fund as one of 30 leading art educators in the United States and received a Rockefeller Bros. Fund Award for Excellence in Arts Education.

From 1978 until 1989, Hucko lived on the Utah Strip of the Navajo Reservation where he served as classroom teacher and artist-in-education. That period began an involvement with Indian people that continues to this day. Premier among that work was the exhibit “Have You Ever Seen a Rainbow at Night? The Art Of Navajo Children.” That work has been released in book form as A Rainbow at Night (44-pages, Chronicle Books, 1997).

After a decade among the Navajo, Hucko moved to New Mexico and worked for eight years in northern Pueblo communities. Where There Is No Name For Art: The Art of Tewa Pueblo Children (120 pages, School of American Research Press, 1997) is the result of that relationship. For that book Hucko received a 1998 Southwest Book Award and the 1997 Carey McWilliams Award given by Multicultural Review Magazine as “the best book of the year on the U.S. experience of cultural diversity.”

A Gesture of Kinship
In 2003, Hucko and cultural anthropologist/educator Dr. Donna Deyhle of the University of Utah combined talents and interests to create A Gesture of Kinship. Deyhle and Hucko received a first round grant from the Documentary Studies Program plus additional funding in the second year to complete the project. They then collaborated with the Utah Museum of Natural History to create a touring exhibit.

A Gesture of Kinship is a presentation of “then and now” photographs of Hucko’s former Navajo students combined with their recorded thoughts on personal, community and cultural change and Dr. Deyhle’s insightful comments. It explores the dynamics of cultural change and continuity within a single Navajo community. This documentary project presents 20 composite photographs and a series of recorded interviews. The project began nearly 30 years ago when Hucko worked as an elementary school teacher at Montezuma Creek on the Navajo Reservation (1978 to1989). Simultaneously,
Dr. Deyhle was conducting anthropological fieldwork in the San Juan School District. A resulting partnership led to a series of documentary photographs and insightful interviews with young Navajos. Two decades later, Hucko returned to the community to again photograph and interview his now-grown subjects.

Each composite photograph in “A Gesture of Kinship,” brings together the early photographs and combines them with contemporary photographs of the original subject—in some cases pictured with children of his or her own. These B&W images are overlaid on color depictions of each subject’s home/homeland and are juxtaposed with excerpts from the interviews. Together, the prints offer a view of every day life on the reservation, insights into what changes and what stays the same in a community, and a look at internal and external influences on Navajo life.

The project provides the specificity of a singular place and people while also challenging viewers to consider their own cultural dynamics, expanding the narrative to broadly human concerns impacted by globalization: ethnicity, community, tradition, and innovation. These are images with the potential to dispel stereotypes and to introduce audiences to what it means to be Navajo in the 21st century. As Deyhle and Hucko write:

> Navajo identity is intertwined with the glass, steel, concrete and angled buildings in cities, and with the pinion trees of high mesa tops, the silver-green cottonwood trees along washes and rivers, and the red sandstone bluffs and buttes scattered throughout the landscape of the Navajo Nation. Stories of gods and monsters and trickster coyote intertwine with video games, CNN, and talk shows in Navajo homes--both on and off the reservation. There are many ways to be “Navajo.” Identities are vibrant, situated, contradictory, and divergently shaped by social, political and economic forces.

*A Gesture of Kinship* is a valuable contribution to public understanding of what it means to be Navajo in these dynamic modern and changing times. By providing a focused look at cultural change in one community, it encourages viewers to consider the nature of change and continuity in their own lives.

**Other creative documentary work (completed) –**

**Cowboys & Cave Dwellers: the Wetherill-Grand Gulch Research Project** -
This ongoing project in “reverse-archaeology” traces the history of the Grand Gulch region of Utah, known as the world’s greatest storehouse of Basketmaker archaeology. The WGG team has traced museum collections taken from this region by documenting historic canyon inscriptions and following the clues to where the artifacts now lay in out-of-the-area museums. The work was featured as the centennial exhibit at the Utah Museum of Natural History and is chronicle in two publications: *Anasazi Basketmaker*, BLM, 1991: and *Cowboys and Cave Dwellers: Basketmaker archaeology in Utah's Grand Gulch*, School of American Research Press, 1997.
Eyedazzlers -
Hucko was the photographer for this project that documented the Navajo weaving tradition known the world over as the Germantown Revival style. Fostered by Bruce Burnham, owner of Burnham Trading Company in Sanders, Az. and inspired by the original Germantown style, which developed after the Navajo returned from being incarcerated at Fort Sumner from 1864-1868, contemporary weavers have revived the style with a creative flourish and abiding respect for the sacrifices made by their ancestors. Hucko made B&W portraits of all the weavers, photographed selected rugs and served as part of the project planning team. The touring exhibit, research, magazine articles and the rugs now rest in the collection of the School of American Research.

Voices of Youth -
In 1999, Hucko and radio producer Jack Loeffler created the Voices of Youth (VOY) program for the Western Folklife Center. VOY is an audio/radio and photography project that trains youth in the art and craft of aesthetic documentary work. Using B&W photography and digital radio media, participants explore community-oriented subjects from a folklore or life-ways perspective. Hucko began VOY-Moab in 2002, working in partnership with Grand County High School and KZMU-Public Radio to create a winter course – summer work radio project that has received national and regional attention. VOY-Moab received a 2006 Silver UBEE Award from the Utah Broadcasters Association. All VOY-Moab audio features can be heard at www.kzmu.org/voicesofyouth

Other creative documentary work (in progress) –

Stewards of the American West -
Portraits and short audio interviews produced as radio documentary with real people of the West who naturally care for a portion of the landscape. Portraits are complemented by a small portfolio of the surrounding landscape/area of concern. The first piece in this series was a portrait of rancher Heidi Redd who runs the Dugout Ranch on Indian Creek in San Juan County, Utah. The work was commissioned by the Nature Conservancy as part of the Utah exhibit of In Response to Place.

The Patriot Project -
Inspired by the Jackson Brown cover of “I Am a Patriot,” and the words of American Indian activist/actor/spoken word artist John Trudell, I have been gathering images of the American Flag where it is displayed in non-traditional ways. When possible I interview those involved about their notion of patriotism. When does being a patriot (one who offers allegiance to the land) come into friction with being a good citizen (one who offers allegiance to a government)?
Project Introduction:

A Gesture of Kinship
A Gesture of Kinship is a collaboration between University of Utah professor Dr. Donna Deyhle (cultural anthropology and education) and photographer Bruce Hucko. A Gesture of Kinship presents “then and now” photographs of Hucko’s former Navajo students combined with their recorded thoughts on personal, community and cultural change and Dr. Deyhle’s insightful comments. It explores the dynamics of cultural change and continuity within a single Navajo community. This documentary project presents 20 composite photographs and a series of recorded interviews.

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