Dancing A Story
with Dawn Dyson

A QUICK HOW-TO
Here is a folk dance experience with Dawn Dyson, featuring a gesture dance called “Hoe Ana,” from the Island of Rorotonga. Part of the Cook Islands, it is located NE of New Zealand, between French Polynesia and American Samoa.

1 Dawn tells the story of this “journey dance,” and demonstrates the rhythmic gestures that recall their ancestors’ ocean search for the “perfect island.”

2 Can you retell the long journey they made? The gestures capture the key ideas, events and guidance they found in the natural world. Can you recall the gestures used to mime their experiences?

3 Performed as if in a canoe, the basic story sequence includes gestures that show these ideas: birds; gentle rocking of the canoe; calm water; blocking the sun to look in different directions; stars as guiding lights; paddling; calling out to other canoes; the island shape; quick paddling; splashing water; diving into the water; clapping with joy!

4 Revisit the video to perform the dance with Dawn; refresh your recall of movements and the Journey. Share the story of these ancestors using your own words.

THINK ABOUT IT
Can you find the Cook Islands on a map or globe? The Island of Rorotonga? Why do you think the ancestors left their original island? Why might they begin the music by blowing a conch shell?

DIG DEEPER
To learn more about folk dance, check out The Music Center’s Artsource Curriculum: Chuna McIntyre “Brother Sun, Sister Moon.” www.musiccenter.org/education/teacher-resources/artsource-curriculum/
Available-ArtSource-Units/Chuna-McIntyre---Brother-Sun-Sister-Moon---Yupik-Moon-Song/

TRY THIS CHALLENGE
Can you imagine a journey your ancestors might have taken? Identify things that might have happened. Perform rhythmic gestures to tell their story. Sequence the gestures (5-10) creating your own “journey dance.”

Credits: “Hoe Ana” by Pacific Islands Singers (album: Tahiti - 20 Great Favourites)