



THE CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF HAWAII

夏威夷中華總商會



LANTERN

NEWSLETTER

May & June, 2022

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## 2022 Narcissus Goodwill Tour

*by Jamie Lee*

In early June, the 71st Narcissus Queen and Court, members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and guests traveled to Canada for the 2020 Narcissus Goodwill Tour. After landing in Vancouver, the group made their way to various iconic destinations throughout British Columbia and Alberta, including the Butchart Gardens in Vancouver, Lake Louise, and the Columbia Icefield, the largest ice field in North America's Rocky Mountains, located along the border of British Columbia and Alberta and encompassing parts of Banff



and Jasper National Parks. Following the road trip through the Canadian Rockies, the tour concluded back in Vancouver where business visits were made to the Anson Realty real estate and brokerage firm and the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office. Although the 2020 Narcissus Goodwill Tour was delayed two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was a memorable, fulfilling experience for all those who were a part of it. The trip was also the perfect ending to the reign of the 71st Narcissus Queen and Court.



President  
Russell Lau

During these past 12 months, the Chamber has risen to the challenges that COVID has imposed on us and we have survived and thrived. Planning for events this year created the biggest challenge as we had to create multiple contingency plans for entirely virtual, hybrid virtual/in person events, and in person small or large event options. During the prior year, most events had to be cancelled and our financial position for this year looked bleak. Nevertheless, we were able to adjust and held numerous events for both fund-raising and providing community support.

Much credit goes to **Yu Shing Ting**, who kicked off this fiscal year with an August clean-up of Chinatown, in conjunction with the newly created CCCH committee, the Chinatown Outreach Task Force (COTF) headed by **Wes Fong**. Under their combined efforts, hundreds of people, including Mayor **Rick Blangiardi** attended. We had both significant TV and newspaper coverage for this activity. (Later in the year, there were additional Chinatown cleanups and graffiti paint out events.)

Then in October, **Michael Young** coordinated and executed a highly successful Hoakalei Country Club golf tournament, with over 134 golfers and 26 volunteers that raised over three times the normal net proceeds for the Chamber. The financial success of this event kicked off a succession of other successful fund-raising activities.

Next came the December 2 Installation, Awards, and Holiday Party, spearheaded by **Sarah Moy**. This event, held at Jade Dynasty Seafood Restaurant and attended by over 192 guests, including

43 directors, raised over ten times the normal proceeds. All participants were thrilled to be able to get together for the first time during lock down and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the comradery. It was a good way to kick off the holiday season.

Shortly after this event, our focus on fund-raising and community service was interrupted, as we had to deal with flooding in the basement of the Chamber building due to the heavy December rains. We had to consider what to do with the water in the basement and the repairs that might be required. Most importantly, we had to figure out how to clean up the basement of all the damaged stored items. It wasn't until January that we could muster the necessary manpower to get many volunteers to remove the damaged goods so that proper remediation could begin. We owe a lot to the volunteers who did so much heavy lifting of debris and the trucking of it to the dump.

Unfortunately, the COVID Delta variant started to peak in January and February, so we were forced to postpone our Narcissus Pageant to April 2. Even our *Choy Cheng* and Chinese New Year celebration activities had to be cancelled in January.

The only significant event the Chamber helped support in February was the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony held on February 6 where about 800 people attended. Many of the volunteers came from the Chamber, with **Michele Choy** playing the role of the major coordinator. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce Hawaii Foundation played a role of support for this effort as well.

In spite of the new COVID variant, under Michele's experienced leadership, she successfully held the April pageant in a new venue, the Mamiya Theatre at St. Louis School. Michele truly showed her creativity and mastery of the Pageant as she had to reinvent everything for this change. She continued her creativity by following it up with an even more successful Narcissus Coronation Banquet, held once again at Jade Dynasty Seafood Restaurant, another change from the past. Over 250 people attended the banquet and even the Governor **David Ige** and his wife **Dawn** attended. **Stephanie Lum** was the mistress of ceremonies for the event.

Due to COVID, we deliberately downsized all events while being concerned about the fiscal health of our organization. But with the hard work and effort of all of our Executive Committee and the many volunteers, we believe we will finish the fiscal year significantly in the black. As mentioned, the golf tournament exceed three times the past net profit; the Installation, Awards and Holiday party did ten times the past net; and while the Narcissus Festival did not exceed historic profits due to downsizing, it did significantly better than what had been expected due to the savings from the change in venue for the Pageant, the change in the number of contestants, and the change in venue for the Coronation Banquet.

While I have mentioned the primary volunteers for these specific efforts, we have to recognize the many people who have helped. **Jonathan Cook** could always be counted on for every activity, whether managing the virtual board of director connections and committee meetings, to cleaning the basement of the Chamber building and moving of donated heavy furniture and even heavier Chinese jade screens. The phrase "sweating bullets," certainly applies to our next Chamber President.

**Angie Shiroma** was instrumental in getting sponsors for the Golf Tournament and making the very valuable effort in getting the Pageant to perform in the Mamiya Theatre.

**Michelle Wong** worked hard on the golf tournament and could be counted on finding us the wine and loads of support to make the events successful.

**Cy Feng** spearheaded our numerous Chinatown activities, such as passing out COVID vaccination flyers and being a community intermediary as well as helping us clean out the flooded Chamber building's basement.

**Sherman Wong** was very helpful in reviewing and interpreting the Chamber financials and identified the financial shortfalls we would face if our events were not successful.

Special thanks for helping me go out to **Brenda Cochran**, my assistant, who did much to keep my schedule straight and answered many of the questions that were directed to me by everyone.

**Mona Choy** provided a lot of manpower assistance with the clean-up of Chinatown and provided excellent advice as we dealt with the various issues that would come up during the year.



We also need to thank **Jeffrey Lau** and **Delwyn Wong** for their legal advice on Chamber activities and for continuing to oversee legal matters as they came to our attention.

And of course we need to thank **Gerald Chang** for pushing me to complete these President's Messages in a timely fashion and to him and **Angela Wu-Ki** for preparing these Lantern newsletters. A key *xiexie* or thank you also goes out to **Frances Goo** for taking the lead of the Personnel Committee and heading up the search for a replacement for **Wen Chung Lin**. After much effort and various interviews, she recommended, and the special committee agreed to hire **Sonny Zhang** as our new Executive Vice President.

We need to thank **Sonny Zhang** for replacing Wen in the role as Executive Vice President of the Chamber. He has very large shoes to fill, but we are confident that he has the skills and knowledge to perform exceedingly well. Go get 'em, Sonny! We are counting on you.

And lastly, I want to thank **Elvira Lo** for all her financial support and advice to the Chamber and for coordinating the Narcissus Goodwill and Business Tour to Canada in June. She made excellent decisions and she led a very successful tour in early June and the 71st Queen and Court greatly enjoying their trip.

As for Wen and **Tina Ge**, we can't thank them enough for all they do for the Chamber. (Tina was always ready to help and coordinate activities and even got her husband to help clean out the basement of the Chamber building). Wen, thank you for delaying your retirement for this year to help me as President. You made my life a lot easier as you helped me avoid a lot of pitfalls. I wish you the very best on your retirement. We would also like to thank Wen's wife, **April**, for her dedication in supporting Wen in his efforts to promote the Chamber. Wen, we simply can't thank you enough for your 33 years of service to the Chamber.

On May 31, the board unanimously approved the motion to make Wen Chung Lin a lifetime honorary board member, invited to all CCCH board meetings and to participate without the requirement of paying annual dues.

Finally, I would like to thank the Chamber for allowing me the privilege of being the President for this past year, and I have to say that I learned a lot about the Chamber and the community it supports. Most importantly, I learned how to pivot around the constantly changing rules of government regulations around COVID. I am proud that we were able to hold numerous highly successful events for the community, that our fund-raising efforts far exceeded our objectives, and that we are able to leave the Chamber in a very good financial position. Once again, I would like to thank all our volunteers and sponsors that make the Chamber strong.

*Kulia I Ka Nu'U*, Chinese Chamber of Commerce Hawaii!

## 2022 Narcissus Goodwill Tour

by *Elvira Lo*

The Narcissus Goodwill Tour 2022, took place on June 6-14, visiting Vancouver, Victoria, and the Canadian Rockies. There were 42 tour members, including six past Chamber presidents, one officer, and two directors; 71st Narcissus Queen **Jamie Lee** and the First and Second Princesses and their parents were also



on the tour. The best parts of the tour were: no one got sick, hurt or lost, and we didn't have to take the COVID test when we got back home. Hurray!

Day 1, we arrived in Vancouver and had a half day tour, including the Capilano suspension bridge, then a welcome dinner at a 40+ year award-winning Chinese restaurant. Everyone enjoyed the dinner, with double thumbs up. Day 2, we took the BC Ferry to Victoria on Vancouver Island for the day, an hour and a half ride each way, visiting the famous Butchart Gardens, Chinatown, and downtown.

Day 3, we drove to Kelowna, to visit the 42-acre Summerhill Pyramid Winery. Award-winning winemaker **Michael Alexander** came to welcome the delegation and took pictures with the Narcissus Queen and Court. We did numerous ice wine tastings, including the bottle served to Queen Elizabeth II, and many of us ended up buying several bottles. Then we went to nearby Lake Okanagan and the One Nation Alliance sockeye salmon farm. The resort hotel was situated next to the lake, and a lot of us were able to walk around the lake or ride a bicycle, and see different species of birds in the area.

Day 4, we drove to Banff National Park, and had lunch at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, where the GM of the hotel came to greet us. The girls were in their *cheongsams* and tiaras and took pictures with the lake in the background. Then we went on to the Banff where our hotel had a hot spring tub on the roof. Michele, the girls, and young people went to soak in the hot spring.

Day 5, we took a gondola or ski lift to the Lake Louise ski resort mountain, where you can view the lake during the ride to the mountain. There was still plenty of snow. After a buffet lunch at the ski lodge, that afternoon we went to the highlight of the tour, the 240-thousand year-old Columbia Icefield, riding the \$1.3 million Mercedes Ice Explorer to the walk on the glacier,



and a lot of us drank the glacier water, which is supposed to make us feel 10 years younger.

Day 6, we drove to Kamloops to visit the Sunmore Ginseng Factory, the owner **Emma Tseng** came to greet the delegation and demonstrate digging out a real ginseng plant. After a tour of the display showroom, we did some ginseng tea tasting. A gift of ginseng candy was given to every tour member. At lunch, we had ginseng chicken soup, then we headed back to Vancouver.

Day 7, in the morning was our business visitation to the Anson Realty showroom; they closed the showroom exclusively to meet us and share some insight on the real estate in the Vancouver area. Then we went to see three different furnished model units, floor plans, and prices, which are just as expensive as Hawaii. Nevertheless, that was a great business meeting for all of us to view the model units and learn about their expensive real estate. Then we took a short ferry ride to Granville Island, which is famous for seafood, the Granville Island Farmers' Market selling fruit and vegetables as well as local art and craft vendors. Afterward, we had lunch at an award-winning restaurant for *dim sum* in the downtown Vancouver financial district, followed by a visit to Stanley Park and picture-taking at the Totem Poles and Brockton Point lighthouse. Twenty of the delegation were invited to visit the Vancouver TECO office and were greeted by Director General **Angel Liu**. It was a very warm and informal reception for an hour; the girls were dressed up for the reception.

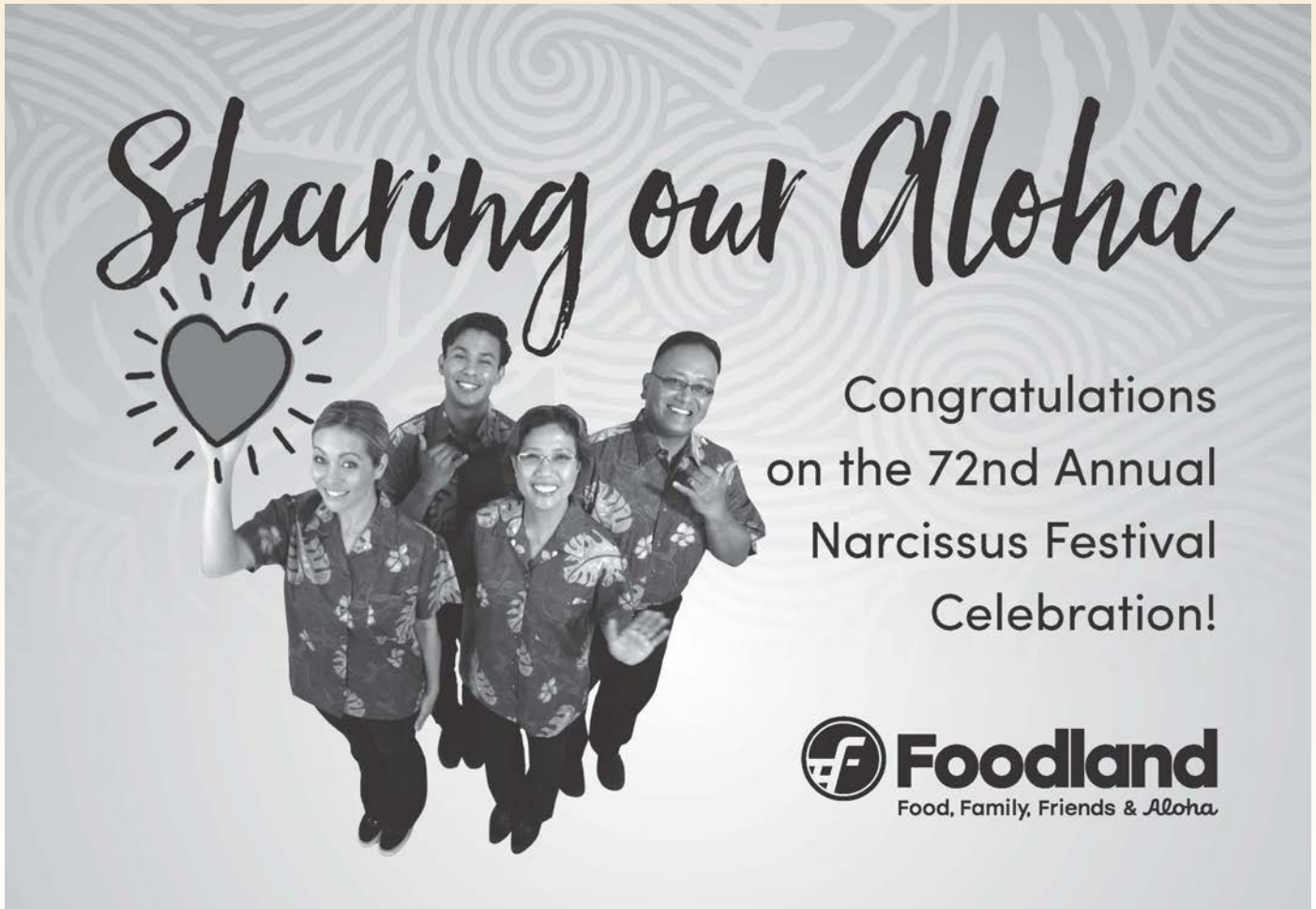
Day 8, was shopping time. We checked out of the hotel and went to a Vancouver outlet mall (there are at least seven around Vancouver), spending three hours there. If you notice, this tour did not have any downtime for shopping, so many of us were able to find some bargains before we headed home. Everyone arrived safely at the Honolulu airport by 10:00 p.m. on June 14.

A special thank you to **Michele Choy** who assisted all the way along the tour, whether it was headcounts on the tour bus, planning a celebration for all the fathers for Father's Day or Sherman's son Mitchell's graduation, since he came to the tour and missed his graduation ceremony.

## Social Security Update

On June 2, the Social Security board of trustees released their annual report on the status of the Social Security Trust Funds. According to the trustees, the outlook for the combined Old Age and Survivors Insurance and Disability Insurance (OASI and DI) Trust Funds are projected to become depleted in 2035; in 2021, the trust funds were projected to become depleted in 2034. Thereafter, the funds will be able to pay 80% of benefits. As such, the trust funds are currently "solvent" or able to meet 100% of benefit payments, even if Congress does nothing to shore up the trust funds.

Ever since its enactment in 1935, one national political party has had a goal of eliminating the "entitlements" of the "socialist"





retirement insurance. What they overlook is that today, more than 65 million recipients have funded Social Security (and Medicare Part A) during their working lives through payroll taxes on employees under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) or self-employment taxes under the Self-Employed Contributions Act (SECA) and the monthly benefit checks are therefore “earned benefits,” not some government handout. In effect, the “taxes” are actually premiums and Social Security is like a defined-benefits retirement or pension plan.

There is a major remedial step that likely may have to wait for the 118th Congress to convene on January 3, 2023. Each year, there is a cap on taxable wage/salary earnings: \$142,800 in 2021 and \$147,000 in 2022. That means that those who are working millionaires stopped paying FICA/SECA some time in February. Senators **Bernie Sanders** and **Elizabeth Warren** propose setting the cap at \$250,000, including capital gains, so that Social Security would be solvent for the next 75 years, a time-frame beloved by actuaries. This change would affect the only top 7% of U.S. households. (Alternatively, if the annual cap was eliminated – “scrap the cap” – Social Security would be solvent indefinitely).

In addition, the proposed Social Security Expansion Act (S. 4365, H.R. 8005) would increase or expand benefits by \$2,400 annually and the annual cost-of-living allowance (COLA) would be based on the CPI-E instead of the broader CPI-W currently used. (The CPI-W is very broad, including all urban wage earners

and clerical workers while the CPI-E is more appropriate for the elderly who spend more for health care and medications than younger people. Former Labor Secretary **Robert Reich** calculates that seniors spend 20-40% of their income on health care. Note that according to the AARP, 23% of Americans 65 years of age or older depend on Social Security for 90% of family income). So if you are or soon will be receiving Social Security (and Medicare Part A), keep an eye on the results of the November general election and which party gains or retains control of Congress.

## Oceania/Jumbo Floating Restaurant

Older Chamber members may remember the arrival of the *Oceania*, “The World’s Largest Floating Restaurant,” which was towed from Hong Kong where it was built in September, 1972, and permanently moored in Honolulu Harbor at Pier 6. It opened with a benefit fund-raising gala for St. Francis Hospital on October 20. A fire onboard in May 1982 led to the restaurant’s closing for five months. The restaurant closed for good in the early 1990s and was eventually towed back to Hong Kong. It apparently started a new life as the “Jumbo Floating Restaurant,” operating until closed by the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Due to pandemic-caused financial difficulties, the Jumbo restaurant owners decided to leave Aberdeen harbor. While under tow during bad weather, the Jumbo may have sunk or just capsized in the South China Sea.



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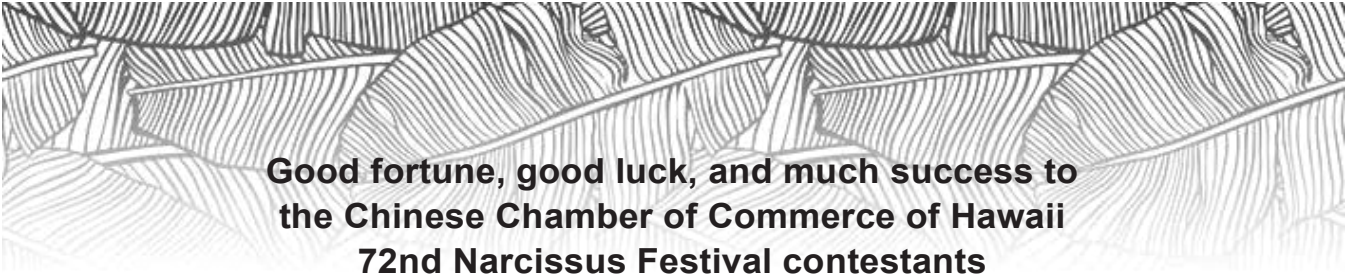
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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jul 4 • Mon

**Independence Day**

Jul 19 • Tue

**Executive Committee Meeting**

Chamber Office – 6:00 p.m.

Jul 26 • Tue

**Board of Directors Meeting**

Simply Sichuan– 12:00 p.m.

Jul 30 • Sat

**Dragon Boat Festival in the Park**

Aala Park – 8:00 a.m.

Aug 23 • Tue

**Executive Committee Meeting**

Chamber Office – 6:00 p.m.

Aug 27 • Sat

**Chinatown Cleanup**

Chinatown District – 9:00 a.m.

Aug 30 • Tue

**Board of Directors Meeting**

Simply Sichuan– 12:00 p.m.

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8 South King Street • Suite 201  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Ph: (808) 533-3181 / 533-3886  
Email: info@chinesechamber.com

Editor: Gerald Y.Y. Chang  
Graphic Designer: Angela Wu-Ki  
Staff: Wen Chung Lin, Tina Ge

## Member News

The Eyes of Hawaii Photo Club will hold a photo exhibit, July 7-27, at the Hawaii State Library, 478 South King Street. Photos taken by club members, including Chamber member and Lantern photographer **Lance Wong**, will be on display in the ground floor front lobby and first floor reading room during normal library business hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Wednesday and Saturday; 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Thursday; and 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Friday.

On Thursday, June 16, Homestreet Bank had a Hawaiian blessing, dedication, and grand opening for its new location at Kahala Mall (which had opened for business on Monday, March 28). Homestreet's CEO, **Mark Mason**, flew in from Seattle and \$5,000 donations were made to Women in Need, Habitat for Humanity, and Kaimuki Waiialae YMCA. Mr. Mason also announced that **Mona Choy** had been promoted to Homestreet Bank regional vice president. Congratulations on the well-deserved promotion, Mona.

Chamber Immediate Past President **Russell Lau** is keeping busy. In addition to taking over as president of the Chinese Chamber Foundation, according to the June 15 *Honolulu Star-Bulletin's*

'Moving On' section, he has been named by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. (FDIC) to its Minority Depository Institutions Subcommittee to the Advisory Committee on Community Banking. Factors (where Russell is chairman and CEO) and all Hawaii banks now have a voice in Washington DC and at the FDIC.

On June 18, 2022, the **John A. Burns** School of Medicine (JABSOM) White Coat Ceremony for the Class of 2024 was held at the UH Manoa's Kennedy Theatre. (For those who don't know, according to Wikipedia, the white coat ceremony is a ritual in over 100 schools of medicine that marks the student's transition from preclinical to clinical health sciences. When the WCC occurs differs from school to school: at the end of the first year, upon graduation from medical school, etc.) One of the members of that class is **Jennifer Wong**, who was the 2019 Narcissus First Princess. Congratulations, Jennifer, on reaching the halfway mark in medical school, a milestone on the long road to a medical degree.

The Chinese Chamber's new president is **Jonathan Cook**, who comes from a Navy family and lived in Pearl City and Salt Lake growing up, graduating from Radford High School. He graduated from George Mason University in Fairfax, VA, with a B.A. in English (Writing Concentration). While running his own business in Washington, D.C., Jonathan met his wife **Austen**, and in 2002, they decided to move back to Hawaii. Since then, he has worked as an SEO and Internet Marketing consultant in Honolulu. Jonathan's membership in the Honolulu Chinese Jaycees culminated in serving as its President and winning the **R. Allen Watkins** award, which recognizes the top Chapter President in Hawaii. Soon afterward, he joined the Chamber, eventually becoming a member of the Board of Directors as well as holding the English Secretary and Third Vice President positions on the Executive Committee. Jonathan and his wife have one son, **Noel**. It should be noted that the Chinese Chamber is a progressive organization and Jonathan Cook is its first Caucasian president.



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8 South King Street • Suite 201 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813