

Thilak Tennekone arrived in Prince Edward Island from Sri Lanka in 1992. As the first Sri Lankan family on the Island the Tennekones saw firsthand the need for diversity and inclusivity in our Island communities and he has spent the better part of the last 25 years doing something about it. In 1993 he was one of the founders of the International Tea House on PEI, which was a series of multicultural education programs intended to promote cultural diversity in our community and designed to raise awareness across the Island. Thilak continued to lead and build upon these programs till 2015.

Thilak is a dedicated community volunteer, undertaking roles such as Chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee with the Town of Stratford, Member of the PEI Immigration Task Force, President of the PEI International Friendship Association, a founding member of the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada, Member of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO Advisory Committee on Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination and many other groups and organizations representing Local, Provincial, and National interests.

Since 2000, Thilak has worked diligently as the Diversity Consultant for the Government of Prince Edward Island, strategically developing policies, practices, and programs on diversity and inclusion management in the public service. Thilak's leadership has helped to create an environment which has enabled our Provincial leaders to meet the needs of our changing and diverse population.

During his time with the PEI Government, Thilak completed his diploma in Adult Education from UPEI in 2001, and completed his Master of Education in Leadership and Learning in 2006. Thilak has also obtained his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Colombo in Sri Lanka prior to his immigration. His educational training has helped in the design, development and facilitation of the diversity training and cultural awareness education he has been creating over the past 18 years.

Thilak's efforts have been widely celebrated over the last number of years. In 2014 he was the recipient of the Community Appreciation Award presented by the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada. In 2015, he was recognized with the RBC Top 25 Canadian Immigrants Award for being a diversity champion, and in 2016 he received the PEI Human Rights Excellence Award for the Advancing of Human Rights in PEI.

Away from his volunteer and professional work, Thilak is often found onstage sharing his unique Sri Lankan music at one of the many cultural events taking place throughout the year. Thilak has been living on the Island with his wife Hema, and UPEI alumni sons Gayan and Jayoda (both graduated from UPEI).

The UPEI Alumni Association is proud to honour Thilak's hard work and determination to create a welcoming, diverse and inclusive province with a 2018 Distinguished Alumnus Award.