

Courage comes in Red; Canadians get unprecedented access to RCMP missions in new series.

Friday, October 30th, 2009 | 12:10 pm

Canwest News Service

The men and women in red; Mounties with the funny hats; Musical Ride – just a few things commonly associated with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. But Canadians are about to get to know the RCMP beyond the uniforms, hats and horses in the television documentary series *Courage in Red*.

The 13-part series, premiering Sunday on the Outdoor Life Network, is an unprecedented look at how these officers in red operate, what they're doing to keep Canadians safe and the dangers they face every day in this post Columbine- 9/11 world.

"It was a huge journey of discovery for myself and my team," says executive producer Colin McKeown. "I didn't realize how many jobs they had. The breadth of their missions is quite huge. It's staggering what they do."

Each episode of *Courage in Red* focuses on a different aspect of the RCMP; topics include the training involved in protecting foreign dignitaries visiting Canada, international peace keeping missions, Emergency Response Teams and the handling of meth and ecstasy labs.

This is the first time the RCMP has allowed such exclusive access. McKeown, who has security classification from his days in the Navy, says his opportunity came out of a combination of good timing, and the credibility he earned from his documentary series *Truth Duty Valour*, which looked at Canada's military and had been viewed by several members of the RCMP. In the end, the Mounties got their man and, in return, allowed McKeown to showcase Canadians the RCMP without any spin or negative connotations.

As McKeown explains, the RCMP has realized the importance of being less mysterious to the public.

"The RCMP is evolving in a very positive way and realizes they need to communicate (more) with Canadians and let them know how they're protecting them," he says. "Five years ago they didn't want to do that because they felt that would be a breach of security and they're a more secretive culture. Wherein today, they want to get that message out."

McKeown adds that it just seemed like an appropriate time to make such a series.

"Everybody knows the RCMP, but people don't (BEGIN ITALICS) know (END ITALICS) the RCMP," says McKeown. "They really don't understand all the tasks they have, all the missions they have, all the units they have across Canada and overseas."

Despite the unprecedented access McKeown and his team were given, the RCMP is still very much a covert operation.

"Trust me, there were things we obviously couldn't tape or training they wanted us not to show, but they still need to tell Canadians what some of the units are that they have and how they're protecting (Canadians). I think they've realized that," says McKeown, citing Episode 12 as just one example. "Clan Labs" focuses on how the RCMP are tackling the country's meth and ecstasy problem.

"Canada unfortunately has the glorious reputation of being the biggest producer of ecstasy in the world," McKeown says sardonically.

They're working with other police forces to try and help civilians understand that they might have a clan lab in their neighbourhood, even a very good neighbourhood, but you don't realize it because the lab operators are using kids and

their home as a cover, explains McKeown.

Out of the 13 episodes, the ones which struck a personal chord with McKeown are Clan Labs and Safe (Episode 10) because he has children. Safe is the name of a strategy developed to provide vital information to RCMP upon arriving at the scene of a school shooting.

“Any parent that watches (Safe) will be deeply moved,” he says. “It hits close to home.”

Filming Courage in Red was an “eye opening” experience for McKeown.

“I really didn’t understand how much they were involved and in how many things... They work long past their normal work hours to make sure things happen,” says McKeown. “They’re really concerned. I mean, how can you not be if you’re in the RCMP because you’re exposed to so many bad things? They have a professionalism and dedication that, quite frankly, I haven’t seen in too many places.”

Courage in Red premieres Sunday, Nov. 1 at 10 ET / 7 PT on Outdoor Life Network.



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