

Rick - For your info +
thanks for your
Comments on case.

Attention: News desk
From: Teresa Mallam
Quesnel
Reporter Cariboo Observer
[REDACTED]

Teresa

QUESNEL - An RCMP officer who was once the centre of controversy when he fought for and won the right to wear a turban - a symbol of his Sikh religion - as part of his Mountie's uniform, is being praised for cracking a medical insurance fraud scheme.

Cst. Baltej Dhillon, 25, who joined the Quesnel detachment on May 13, 1991 amid a flash of national and provincial media coverage, is now getting a pat on the back from his superior, Sgt. Rick Kowalewich.

"He worked hard on this one and he deserves a lot of credit. I can tell you that the (criminal investigation) file, is very thick and it took a lot of effort to gather all the information."

Sgt. Kowalewich says the young officer nicknamed 'Matt' (Dhillon of Gunsmoke fame) by the detachment and known as 'Turbo-Cop' in the community is a dedicated police officer.

Dhillon 'inherited' the ongoing fraud file from an outgoing officer who thought Dhillon's knowledge of the East Indian language might be an asset. (The suspects were of East Indian origin, said Dhillon, but they spoke perfect English so his interpretation skills were not required in the case).

He said he persisted with the investigation despite its time consuming nature for over one year until enough evidence had been gathered to persuade the Crown to approve charges. And this week, the constable's efforts paid off.

Three people, all members of the same family were brought before the courts on a total of 75 charges of fraud, uttering forged documents and corroboration.

The case has been remanded for two weeks for plea. Meanwhile, Cst. Dhillon, shies away from any references to his extraordinary efforts in solving the case. But he says fraud is increasing in our society. "I think of this as a serious file."

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To let Dhillon's file
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knocking down people who try to bilk the system is a social as well as police concern, he says.

"Society today is running rampant with

insurance frauds and false ICBC (Insurance Corporation of British Columbia) claims. We as a public pay for losses through fraud - we have to cover it.

"It is in our own best interests to do something about it."

The recently uncovered fraud scheme involves the alleged forging of signatures of four Quesnel physicians in order to claim medical insurance benefits. Some of the bogus claims date back to 1988 and involve a substantial sum of money.

Dhillon says that unlike some of his more active police work which has included high speed chases, hours of street patrols and apprehending fleeing suspects on foot down dark back lanes - this case was completed sitting down.

"This whole investigation took place entirely at my desk - it was conducted there and it was solved there."

Dhillon explains the evidence was put together laboriously, piece by piece, and then the suspects were confronted with what he had found.

The alleged fraud first came to light when the insurance company voiced suspicions about the authenticity of one of the medical documents and asked RCMP to investigate.

Charged in the case are [REDACTED], none of whom are related to the police officer.

It took Dhillon almost three years, from 1989 to 1991 when he graduated from Regina Police Academy wearing the traditional Royal Canadian Mountie serge with his ceremonial tuban, to win his Human Rights battle.

Dhillon has passed his two year probation period and his six month Recruit Field Training (RFT). He is married with a nine month old daughter. His younger sister and mother are also with him in Quensel. He says Indo Canadians often phone him at home seeking advice or asking his help as a liason with police officers when there is a language barrier. This he will readily give, he says, but he resents it when people come to him because of who he is, not what he does as a police officer.

"When they have chosen to come to me only because of my skin color or my cul-

tural background thinking I might give them preferential treatment or work harder on their file because of my East Indian origin, it gets me angry. It just won't happen (preferential treatment)."

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Lawyer for the accused is John Schmitz.

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I have lost my notes on ages of accused but will get them if you need them. I can send along new pics if you want but believe you have file ones. Thanks for your interest in this story, Cheers,

T E R E S A

'Turbo Cop' cracks case

By Teresa Mallam
Special to The Province

QUESNEL — They call him Turbo Cop.

RCMP Const. Baltej Dhillon, 25, once the centre of controversy when he became the first Sikh to wear a turban as part of his Mountie's uniform, is being praised for laying charges in an alleged fraud racket.

It took Dhillon from 1989, when he first applied to the force, to 1991, when he graduated from Regina Police Academy wearing the traditional RCMP serge with his ceremonial turban, to win his human-rights battle.

Victory came when then-solicitor-general Pierre Cadieux ruled he could wear the headgear, a symbol of his faith.

Dhillon joined the Quesnel detachment on May 13, 1991, amid a flash of media coverage.

Now he's getting a pat on the back from his boss, Sgt. Rick Kowalewich.

"He worked hard on this one and he deserves a lot of credit," said Kowalewich.

"I can tell you that the (criminal investigation) file is very thick and it took a lot of effort to gather all the information."



BALTEJ DHILLON
perseverance pays off

Dhillon is affectionately known to his workmates as Matt, for the old Gunsmoke television character, and Turbo Cop to the community for his aggressive police work.

He is married and has a nine-month-old daughter. His younger sister and mother are also with him in Quesnel.

He says Indo-Canadians often phone him at home seeking advice or asking for his help as a liaison with police when there is a

language barrier.

He resents it when people come to him because of who he is, not what he does as a police officer.

"When they have chosen to come to me only because of my skin color or my cultural background, thinking I might give them preferential treatment or work harder on their file because of my East Indian origin, it gets me angry. (Preferential treatment) just won't happen."

Tracking down people suspected of bilking the system is a social as well as police concern, he says.

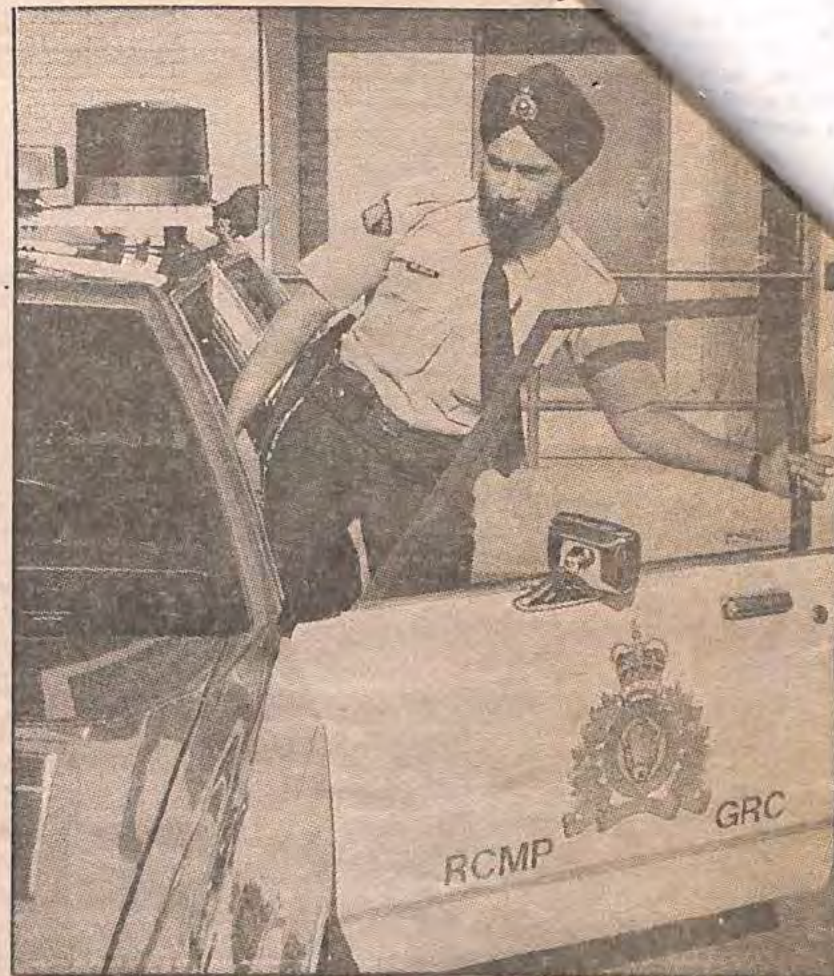
"Society today is running rampant with insurance frauds and false ICBC claims," he said.

"We as a public pay for losses through fraud — we have to cover it. It is in our own best interests to do something about it."

The alleged fraud came to light when an insurance company suspected the authenticity of a medical document and asked police to investigate.

The charges allege the forging of signatures of four Quesnel physicians to claim medical-insurance benefits.

Dhillon says that unlike police work that involves high-speed car chases, hours of street patrols and apprehending fleeing suspects



Staff file photo by Jon Murray

RCMP Const. Baltej Dhillon, praised for investigative work.

down dark back lanes, this inquiry was completed sitting down.

"This whole investigation took place entirely at my desk," he said.

But it took Dhillon more than a year to bring charges.

He inherited the file from another officer who was stumped by the case and thought Dhillon's language knowledge might be an

asset.

The suspects were of Indo-Canadian background, said Dhillon, but they spoke perfect English, so his interpretation skills were not required.

Three people, all members of the same family, face a total of 75 charges of fraud, uttering forged documents and corroboration.