

My COVID-19 Story

Rachel Marchand

OKIB's first COVID-19 patient speaks about her experience and what she learned

For Rachel Marchand, Monday, December 14 started like any other day except for a slight cough. It's a busy time of the year and not a great time to get sick, and yet she couldn't deny the feeling in the back of her throat.

"It felt like a tiny hair was caught. Just a little tickle. I didn't think it was anything, much less COVID-19. Still, to be sure I felt it would be a good idea to get tested. On Tuesday I had a sore throat and decided to work from home, which turned out to be a good decision. By Tuesday I was feeling feverish but felt the symptoms could be related to another issue.

I called the OKIB Nurse Hotline on Wednesday to set up a time to get tested, which I did on Thursday. It was a bit frustrating having to wait to get tested but I understand the Health team has procedures they need to follow to allow me to enter safely.

By Friday I was feeling poorly. I had a fever, bad body aches, foggy brain and really bad migraine-like symptoms that were messing with my vision. My eyeballs hurt so much.

I received a call from my doctor less than 24 hours after my test informing me I had contracted COVID-19. (I had granted OKIB Health permission to forward my results to my family doctor, who made the diagnosis.)

I informed my doctor that I would be using OKIB Health nurses for my health contacts. I did the same when WFN Health and Interior Health

called, all checking in and asking questions about my symptoms, who I had been in close contact with, and more. Unfortunately these calls came when I felt the worst, and the brain fog was bad, so I was barely able to provide coherent answers.

I felt confident using OKIB Health for my COVID-19 testing and follow-up because I feel safer in community, I know the people, and I know OKIB received COVID-dollars for Health and they have the capacity to help. Outside community you are a number; in community people know you and you get treated as a person and not a number.

Like many people, I didn't think I would get COVID-19. I'm in good health and I follow the COVID-19 protocols. I wear a mask at work and I am 15 ft. from my nearest co-worker. But I believe I contracted it at work, from an employee of another business where we shared a common room.



I felt fearful when I was diagnosed. You think about your family and whether you have infected them. You don't know what to expect and it's a new disease so nobody knows exactly what to expect. We are used to getting answers to health questions, so it is frustrating. For example, in my case I lost my sense of taste and smell--normally an early symptom--two weeks in, which is late. Once I got better the foggy brain left and I was able to ask better questions.

Plus, COVID-19 is weird because if you have fever symptoms and are not having difficulty breathing, you are basically left to quarantine and get better on your own. If you did have severe symptoms of course you would contact your doctor. But there is no final test to see if you are COVID-19 free. You just quarantine until the symptoms are gone and then life continues as before.

For me, I live at the tip of the reserve at Whiteman's Creek so I would drive to work in Westbank and come home, never really stopping elsewhere on the reserve. I had to drive to the clinic to get tested but otherwise I was at home. That's the only time when I was out while contagious.

I do worry about backlash from within the community. We have to keep in mind this is a health issue, not a time for moral judgment. Anyone can catch it. I'm a clean freak! I took all the precautions and still got ill. But while I am worried, I also take a realistic view.

Basically I was out of action for three weeks. A nurse from Interior Health finally gave me the OK and I moved out of quarantine. However, I still keep up the protocols. At this point I do not know if I am considered officially COVID-19 free, or immune, or whatever, but I cannot take the chance, for myself, for my family and for my community.

You have to be your own nurse. Listen to your body. Your health is more important than you being at work. If you are leaving your home you are putting yourself and your family at risk. It's a roll of the dice. The lock down is getting tiresome but we have to persist until most people have been vaccinated.

In summary, it was hard for me to find out that I had COVID-19, harder to get through it, and now harder still to read about how people are reacting to those who have contracted it. People want to know who has it but better questions might be how, where, when was it contracted. COVID-19 doesn't discriminate. It can happen to anyone anytime you are out of your safe home bubble zone. I think we need to respect the COVID-19 rules and be less social and safer. That's the only way you can prevent it.

I'm so grateful for OKIB Health nurses. I appreciate being able to get tested in community, to be cared for locally and directly. They provided me with medication, cleaning supplies and personal contact and support that I would not have received off reserve. We need to be supportive, empathic and appreciate those who have COVID-19 and those supporting the COVID cases. I want to thank OKIB Health for taking care of me and being with me on my journey to recovery.

I'm glad my employer gave me permission to be safe and isolate at home if I felt like I was even exhibiting symptoms. That is what saved me and my family and my community. I was educated and informed and I acted on what I felt, and I trusted in the systems put in place. My first call was to the OKIB Nurse Hotline (250-241-7595).

I want others to know my story because COVID-19 is a hard to accept, scary to go through and it's a very lonely virus to overcome when you don't even see the people in your bubble out of fear of contracting or spreading the virus.

So my advice is the sooner you notice your health is "off" or not the same, then isolate, contact the OKIB Health nurses, get tested as soon as possible. Follow COVID-19 protocols to keep others safe and the infection numbers low!"