



## Interview Transcript: Gloria

Gloria works in the health clinic at Long Plain First Nation and is a wife and mother.

Location: Long Plain First Nation in Manitoba

Type of cancer: Breast

Year of diagnosis: 2008

Age at diagnosis: 58

Treatment: Lumpectomy, Chemotherapy and Radiation

Date of interview: February 2010

My name is Gloria Westcoup. I'm from Long Plain First Nation in Manitoba. I'm sixty years of age and I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008. I'm about six weeks away from my final treatment and hopefully everything will be fine.

### Diagnosis

I decided to go for a mammogram that I'd been ignoring for a number of years. And all of a sudden I said, "Well, maybe it's time." And sure enough, I went. I guess they'd been trying to get a hold of me for a few months. I don't know; I was either gone or not at home anyways. And then when they finally got a hold of me. They kind of gave me a little bit of heck because they'd been needing to get a hold of me and they wanted me to come into Winnipeg to get more tests. And then I met with the surgeon and they told me. He told me that I had breast cancer. So, then my husband happened to be with me that time and we were both, I think, devastated. But he was my rock. He's been my rock through the whole thing so that was good.

### Sharing the news

Some people dealt with it fine but other people, like my mother, did not want to believe it. She just kind of put it on the back burner and didn't want to talk about it. My sisters were OK and everybody else I spoke with was OK. But my mother just, I don't know, she was in denial I guess. This was not happening to her daughter. But she sees I'm OK today. She still doesn't talk about it. She knows what I've been through.

### Travel

I had my first chemo in Winnipeg and then I had the following chemos here at the Portage [District General] Hospital. And then the radiation was the worst because I was back and forth to Winnipeg for 20 treatments and it's Monday to Friday every day. You're in there and home and that's like two hours there and two hours back. And that was the worst part because I couldn't rest. I was always on the road it seemed and then I'd get home and go to bed because I was so beat. And my poor husband, he had nobody to cook for him. So my poor

daughter was coming over and cooking. But anyway, we survived.

### **Losing my hair**

That's the part that didn't happen until about a month into it or maybe even more; probably about six weeks. And I was starting to think, "Oh, maybe I'm one of the lucky ones. I'm not going to lose my hair." And then all of a sudden one day, I was in the shower and I was washing my hair. I pulled my hand away and it was full of hair. And I thought; "Now it's starting." Within a week it was gone. That was really difficult for me. I couldn't handle being bald. So Cancer Care did provide wigs but they're not good wigs. So my husband took me to the Bay and bought me a wig. And I was OK. I wore a lot of hats and scarves in the beginning. I wore my wig when I was out. But when I was at home I wore a baseball cap.

### **Out of the house**

I was ready, when I was doing radiation, to go back to work because the radiation to me wasn't really all that [bad]. It was tiring but it wasn't hurting me, not like chemo. So I was ready to go back. I'm out of the house now and not sitting in the house looking at four walls and wondering what I'm going to do today when there wasn't a whole lot I could do anyways because I wasn't allowed to. But I just wanted to get out and be back in the land of the living.

### **Reflections**

I didn't know how to deal with it in the beginning. Like I said, my husband was my rock. He sort of talked me through it and said we're going to get through this. And now we seem to be on the home stretch. I hope. I've still got a couple more treatments to go and then I'll be done and hopefully they'll have a good prognosis for me. I think it's given me a more positive outlook on life. I don't dwell as much on things that I can't change anymore. I just sort of go day to day. And I'm just happy to be here every day sort of thing: that they were able to find this and that I can go on, that I do have the ability to go on. I try to put it at the back of my mind but it comes up every once and awhile and I just hope that things are going to turn out OK. But as far as I'm concerned, it's gone.