

# An international reunion

*Gayle Nichol - August 2021*

After almost two years, she was back.

My best friend of almost 30 years -- a Canadian who now calls Michigan home -- finally made it back to Ontario last month after almost two years behind a closed border. Fully vaccinated and testing negative three times in the span of 72 hours, she was back on Canadian soil and we were able to hug and have a patio lunch to catch up eye to eye. The way it always has been.

It hasn't been impossible for her to return in this time, but quarantines and closed land borders did create hurdles that made it seem like waiting out the worst of the pandemic storm was best done in the safety of a home base.

Finally, with all the testing and waiting done, we were able to come together outside to enjoy an afternoon of conversation that meandered the way that visits with besties always do. We enjoyed lots of laughs, a few tears, silly asides and lots of cold drinks and snacks.

It's an empowering sense of accomplishment to enjoy these kinds of simple freedoms again after fighting so hard for so long, although it is important to recognize that the pandemic is not over, despite how we might feel with two jabs on board. Even as I write this in the weeks after our visit, the Covid news from around the globe is bleak as the Delta variant takes hold in regions of the world where vaccination has not yet made a dent, or worse, where the vaccine is viewed with suspicion or disdain.

Vicky and I spent a bit of time talking about how having had this small taste of normal with a cross border visit actually bolsters our desire to follow the simple rules that will continue to help stop the spread of Covid. I imagine that in a very simple way, this is what it must be like for battle weary troops to enjoy a bit of rest a relaxation from the battle -- a reminder of what they are fighting for. So we both returned to home and work with distancing, masking, and touting the benefits of vaccination.

Here in our corner of the world, there is a bit more waiting to be done before the U.S. government eases restrictions on Canadians who choose short term land crossings. We'll see what they have to say toward the end of the month. Those of us with family and friends we have been missing will continue to watch with fingers crossed and passports in hand. Proof of vaccination and masks will likely be required in the other hand, but if that gets me into the pattern of international travel again, I'm all set.

For Vicky and I, this visit was a good chapter in the story. Two friends reunited after separation. Numbers -- in case counts and vaccination rates -- will tell how the story continues to unfold. As for me, I'm ready to flip to the back page and read the happily ever after.