



Our Christmas and New Year celebrations were quiet, solo affairs. On December 31, we stayed up past midnight to make sure 2020 went away.

With a New Year starting, and the pandemic ongoing, we, like many of you, are scrambling to create new plans for the coming season. Our dream of completing our walk across Canada on the Great Trail in 2021 is less and less likely. We feel disappointed that we will potentially have to wait another year. We had hoped to start in March and walk Manitoba in winter-spring conditions. But this most certainly is Not happening this season. For now, we continue to monitor the provincial closures and wait for news of our government relaxing the travel restrictions. Fingers crossed!

Distance walking has taught us many important life lessons. We learned to stay in the present moment and avoid projecting too far ahead as this can lead to frustration or disappointments. It has taught us to enjoy the liminal space. We have described this mental state before. It is a condition of unknown and letting go of beliefs. In this blank space creativity and new concepts can arise. We must be ready and take advantage of a new idea and run-or rather walk- with it.

So, what has shifted for us?

First, our exercise routine needed to change dramatically. Our apartment's gym has been closed for months and the stairs have become popular with the residents and are no longer a good option for cardio. We researched possible techniques that we could utilise with little equipment in our small apartment. Kettlebells and heavy clubs came up as viable options. With help from on-line fitness experts, we designed a weekly routine that blasts our muscles, is great cardio and is fun. We are mastering complex moves and getting stronger and more agile at the same time. We will post our new regime on our website for those interested in trying something new.

We continue to venture out in our neighborhood for daily walks. Our walking



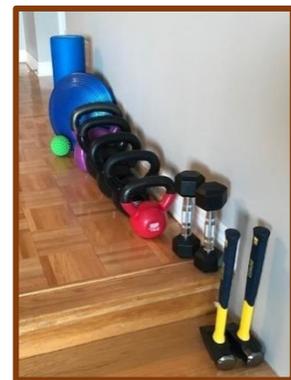
lifestyle promotes devising routes to new grocery stores further away. We stitched together some green-belt walks that avoid main roadways and make for satisfying distance walks.

Second, we have returned to winter hiking/snowshoeing and camping. It is an activity that we loved, years ago, when we lived near the coastal mountains. But the winters are different in Ontario. In a lull between the provincial shutdowns, we ventured for a three-day camping trip in Algonquin Park.

We were surprised to see a good number of other campers enjoying the fresh snow. Luckily, we managed to keep our distance and stay safe.



*We can not wait to get back out there!
However, until COVID-19 is under control we feel we would put small communities at risk as we progress on our walk!*





The weather cooperated with blue skies and temperatures of -10 degrees Celsius during the day and -20 degrees Celsius at night. Being outdoors for those three days was so refreshing for our spirits.

The pure white snow glistened and the ice crystals in the air sparkled. The night skies were clear, and we sat by our fire drinking hot cocoa and gazing at the stars. We returned home feeling well rested and at peace. (We will add some information on winter camping on our website for those interested.)



We hope to be able to venture out again soon. For now, we continue to walk our wintery riverside trails and dream of venturing farther, when it is safe.

Thirdly, we were invited to cohabitate with our good friends on their beautiful farm south of Smiths Falls (75km east of Ottawa). Brian and Celeste own one hundred acres of farm and forest land. They suggested that we could cohabitate in their large home. We would all benefit. They would have some extra hands to help with farm work, we would enjoy living in the countryside, and we would be close to good friends. Creating a ‘family bubble’ with these fine folks seemed like a perfect scenario.



The Farm with dogs, sheep, chickens, and much more!

Celeste and Brian.

In mid February, we will move into their guest suite. As we wait to live on our next walking journey, we look forward to growing a garden, building trails in their ‘back forty’ and walking the ‘block’, a fifteen-kilometer loop around the concession roads. These new experiences will no doubt bring us closer to our friends and expand our life’s adventures toward new paths.

As for the Great Trail, we will likely walk across Manitoba and possibly Saskatchewan. We know now that we will not complete the trail (the Western Provinces) this year. In the meantime, we will continue to live the walking lifestyle in the country. The extra down time will allow us to work on our website, and another long-term dream, writing a book on the walking lifestyle. Maybe the pandemic has a few secret gifts for us after all.