

## Cold War Artifacts – Logroad: The Baldy Hughes Project

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Part of the Pinetree Line radar defence complex, the Baldy Hughes Air Station was established in 1952 and had a significant impact upon the community of Prince George where it was built. Dykhuis and McElroy conducted extensive research into the history of the base and will produce a site-specific installation based on the radar domes used at the site. Included in the exhibition are archival photographs taken by base personnel, brochures and period documents as well as wall text pertaining to the history and role of the station particularly up until its closure in 1988.

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As one of the more remote sites on the coast-to-coast chain of military radar stations known as the Pinetree Line, Baldy Hughes was something of a dull backwater for the US and Canadian air force personnel posted here (a fact acknowledged by an early Commanding Officer in one of his written reports).

It was only during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 that Baldy Hughes, like every other station on the Line, reached an elevated alert status that demonstrated that even in this relatively isolated location, the full brunt of a dangerous, nuclear-equipped world could be keenly and frighteningly felt.

Following its final closure as a military site in 1988, Baldy Hughes has found life. Unlike many other Pinetree Line stations, it has enjoyed reinvention; both the domestic site where military families once lived, and the operations site where air force personnel once electronically monitored the sky for threats from across the North Pole, survived in new incarnations.

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### Four Wall Drawings

The source image for the wall drawings were downloaded from the internet, then digitally projected onto the wall and graphically manipulated into temporary works of art. These images speak to the past and present functions of radar domes on the mountain site of Baldy Hughes.

- #1. This drawing is taken from a black and white illustration from 1960 of the radar-based lines of defence intended to protect continental North America from the anticipated incoming swarms of Russian aircraft intent on bombing American cities into nuclear oblivion.
2. After decommissioning and dismantling the military radar site at Baldy Hughes, two new radar technologies were built in its stead. The larger radar dome is operated by Nav Canada, a federal agency that oversees all upper level aviation navigation routes. The wall drawing represents the radar coverage of Canada, including the station at Baldy Hughes, since 2002.
3. The second, smaller radar installation on Baldy Hughes is operated by Environment Canada and provides digital weather information about incoming precipitation systems. The source image for the wall drawing was downloaded at 19:00 on Monday 11 July and interpretively captures a weather system of scattered rain showers in the Prince George region.
4. Prince George's airport recently extended its main runway making it the third longest in Canada behind those in Vancouver and Calgary. As part of a strategic initiative to promote Prince George as a competitive destination for incoming Asian air cargo that seamlessly links to North American rail routes, the fourth wall work graphically interprets how the radar site at Baldy Hughes now assists and welcomes the approach of Asian commercial payloads rather than aiding the Cold War imperative of destroying them.

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The wall collage represents the silhouette of the current Nav Canada radar dome. The former decades-long military presence at Baldy Hughes contributed significantly to the economy of Prince George – the collage, beginning at the top with multiple map variants of the provincial region and the local city, is completed with free tourism material offered at kiosks and welcoming centres through out the city. Collectively, this printed matter creates a snapshot of sorts of the current local economy as packaged for visitors.