



Photo: G. Gagné

New colour design for a Gaspésie Railway Society locomotive

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – The Gaspésie's Railway Society has recently asked Rail GAD, the New Richmond rolling stock repair shop, to do some maintenance work on its locomotive 1819, including a much needed new paint job. The 1819 unit probably had the old Canadian Pacific liveries, a red-orange paint, since the 1970s.

Canadian Pacific (CP) was the original owner of the locomotive that came out of the now-defunct Montreal Locomotive Works shop in April 1958, almost an astounding 59 years ago.

"The locomotive still works very well. We will send our two other locomotives with the old CP liveries for a new paint job at Rail GD when we have the time. It sure gives the Gaspésie Railway Society a better image," says Luc Lévesque, director general of the railway company.

Joey Cyr, director general of Rail GD, points out that the RS-18, the model of locomotive 1819, could be "the most reliable diesel locomotive ever built," because of the

quality of the engine.

"After the end of the Second World War, the Americans, including Alco (American Locomotive Company), recruited some of the best scientists from Germany. At Alco, they asked them to build a narrow and indestructible engine. They succeeded. There is one cylinder head per cylinder. The heads are separated and are part of a set where each head is 100% isolated.

It is not the case for the General Motors engines, for example, where you can have one valve cover for three or four cylinder heads.

The Alco engine also counts on one injection pump per cylinder, which is rare. I have seen a Youtube video of an RS-18 locomotive that has one of its cylinder head pass through the outside wall of the locomotive but that locomotive keeps going because the 11 other cylinders are still working. This is typical of those Alco engines. Locomotive 1819 could be good without major repairs for 20 more years, or at least 10," explains Mr. Cyr.

The Alco diesel-electric

engines were initially developed in Schenectady, New York, where the plant closed in 1969. Montreal Locomotive Works (MLW), which was a subsidiary of Alco, was first bought by a company named Worthington and remained in business, after acquiring the designs. Bombardier bought MLW in 1975 but stopped the fabrication of locomotives in Montreal in 1985.

The Gaspésie Railway Society owns three additional RS-18s. One, numbered 1849 and built in 1958, is in Gaspé, as part of the Amiral tourist train while the other two are numbered 1856 and 1865 and are used almost daily. They were built in 1958 and 1957 respectively, also in Montreal.

Two hours after the January 12 release of locomotive 1819 from the Rail GD shop, three VIA Rail cars, two coaches and a baggage car, entered the building for repairs. They were involved in an accident in Abitibi a few weeks ago. Joey Cyr cannot release any information about that contract because of a confidentiality agreement with VIA Rail.