

Kai Ika project – feeding the people

A shipping container has been modified into a fish filleting station and distribution hub to enable a Mangere marae to dramatically increase its supply of tasty fish heads and frames to feed families in need.

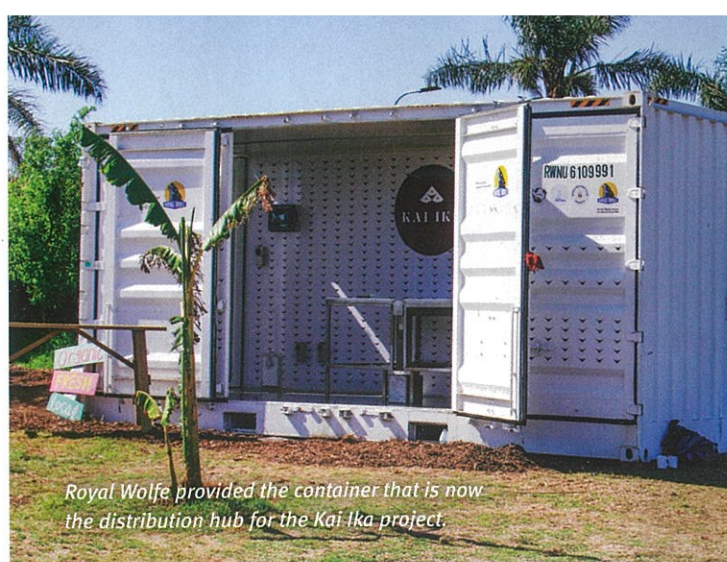
Located at Papatuanuku Kokiri Marae, the bespoke 20-foot container was created by leading shipping container provider Royal Wolf for the Kai Ika Project. The project redistributes delicious fish off cuts, which would normally go to waste, to the local community.

“The container is a practical solution and it’s also elevated the whole project. It’s allowed us to go from 250 kilos a week up to 1,000 kilos, and service three other marae,” says project lead Sam Woolford.

“The ability to scale up and have extra capacity has meant we have been able to meet the growing need in the Mangere community and beyond,” he says.

With good access from the front and sides, the container is lined internally to create a cooler temperature during summer and the specialist electrical fit-out enables the unit to be washed out daily.

Woolford says the benefit of the container and the increased capacity was highlighted during the COVID-19 Level 4 lockdown when queues for collecting fish were 400m long.



Royal Wolfe provided the container that is now the distribution hub for the Kai Ika project.

“Kai Ika is all about kaitiakitanga, or guardianship, but it’s also about manaakitanga – support and caring for others.

“The Papatuanuku Kokiri Marae model, now supported by The Ministry for the Environment, is the first step in taking it to a national level where it can help feed families around the country.”

Lionel Hotene from Papatuanuku Kokiri Marae says the food the marae produces, which also includes kumara and other vegetables fertilised by the fish offal, helps address some of the food insecurities that many people in the community face and encourages a move away from fast food.

LegaSea, a not-for-profit organisation raising awareness of issues affecting the marine environment, started Kai Ika in 2016 to help feed communities in need. Kai Ika has been operating in Auckland, pioneered by the Outboard Boating Club of Auckland on Tamaki Dr and is now at the Westhaven Marina at Z Pier.

Woolford says on average only one third of a fish is utilised, with most people only eating the fillets.

“Fish heads and the frames may be viewed as waste by many people but in te reo the head of the fish is called rangatira kai or ‘chiefly food’ and is considered a delicacy. It really is the tastiest part of the fish and the people we supply this delicious seafood to value the whole fish.”

He says Kai Ika has a mandate to ensure New Zealand’s fish resources are being used effectively and sustainably which means everything from reducing wastage to supporting communities in need.

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