



PEGGE ERKENEFF  
 Communications Liaison  
 907.714.8888  
 Fax 907.262.5867  
 148 N. Binkley Street  
 Soldotna, Alaska, 99669

e: [Pegge@KPBSD.org](mailto:Pegge@KPBSD.org)  
 Facebook: [KPBSD](https://www.facebook.com/KPBSD)  
 Twitter: [@KPBSD](https://twitter.com/KPBSD)  
[www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us](http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us)

**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**

# NEWS RELEASE

## ***KPBSD Inspiration: Homer High School Claire (Laukitis) Neaton (2008) & Emma Teal Laukitis (2009)***

***“Growing up in a small town in Alaska, it is sometimes difficult to know how different life can be outside the state. We both ended up going to college on the East Coast because people in our high school years encouraged us to try something different and helped us imagine what our lives could be like. We came back to Alaska because our time away helped us realize what a special, wild place it is and how lucky we were to grow up in a supportive community like Homer. We had amazing role models growing up here, and will always be grateful for the people who taught and inspired us.”*** –Claire and Emma Teal, aka the [Salmon Sisters](#)



Struggling to find jobs that could accommodate the lifestyle of commercial fishermen, after college Claire and Emma Teal knew they wanted to continue spending the summers on the water with family to harvest wild Alaska seafood. Emma Teal explains, “There were not many people who wanted to hire someone who disappeared at sea for many months at a time. We had to decide if we were going to stop fishing, or commit to the lifestyle we knew and loved and find odd jobs in the off-season. Around this time we had also started making our first Salmon Sisters designs—and though we were making t-shirts and hoodies mostly for our family and friends—we decided to start taking our work seriously.”

**KPBSD: ONE DISTRICT, FORTY-FOUR DIVERSE SCHOOLS**

**The mission of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is to empower all learners to positively shape their futures.**

ANCHOR POINT COOPER LANDING HOMER HOPE KACHEMAK SELO KENAI MOOSE PASS NANWALEK NIKISKI NIKOLAEVSK NINILCHIK PORT GRAHAM RAZDOLNA SELDOVIA SEWARD SOLDOTNA STERLING TUSTUMENA TYONEK VOZNESENKA

**FOR RELEASE DECEMBER 19, 2018**

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At the University of Vermont, Claire studied business, and Emma Teal studied art and design at Williams College and the University of Washington. Emma says, “We combined skills to start the Salmon Sisters business to complement our fishing schedule and be inspired by our work as fishermen. Years later, we are grateful that we made the choice to commit to the community that has always been inspiring to us, to invest in ourselves, and to use the ambiguity of our schedules to do something new and interesting.” Now, Salmon Sisters home base is in Homer, Alaska, Claire and Emma Teal fish for salmon in Prince William Sound, halibut in the Aleutians, and in the winter run Salmon Sisters.

### **KPBSD teacher and coach stories spawn vision**

“We were both really inspired by many of our coaches and teachers in high school who shared their personal experiences as young adults with us,” said Emma Teal. “Whether they ski raced or studied or traveled after high school, their stories helped us form a vision for what kind of work we wanted to do, where we wanted to go to college, and to know what was possible for our future.”

The possibilities continue to expand: in December 2019, Forbes named Emma and Claire in their 30 Under 30 annual list chronicling the *brash*est entrepreneurs across the United States and Canada.

***“[Salmon Sisters](#) is our way of protecting our community’s way of life and the wild places we love by creating more awareness for it. People outside Alaska are interested in the story of our industry, and we see this as an opportunity to engage and inform them.”*** –Emma Teal Laukitis

“Every day with our business, we celebrate Alaska’s responsibly managed fisheries and the hard work fishermen in our state do to put wild, nutrient-rich seafood on plates around the world,” explains Emma Teal. “Because we grew up with Alaska’s natural abundance, it is easy to take our thriving marine ecosystems for granted—but in truth, Alaska is the last of its kind as fish stocks have declined due to poor management and development. As fishermen, we know that if we want to continue fishing for many generations, we must also be stewards of the resources we depend on.”

### **Cans of salmon for Alaskans**

Growing up, “salmon helped power our bodies as athletes and brains as students,” so to share these benefits with as many young people as possible, Emma Teal and Claire created a program through Salmon Sisters to donate a can of wild salmon caught by Alaskan fishermen to the [Food Bank of Alaska](#) with every item the business sells. The donated salmon is distributed across the state and helps support the communities that have supported the business for many years.

Claire and Emma Teal attended Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Homer Middle School, and graduated from Homer High School. Claire attended the University of Vermont, and Emma went to Williams College, and the University of Washington for graduate school.

KPBSD celebrates 2019 *Forbes* 30 Under 30 Social Entrepreneurs Claire (Laukitis) Neaton (Class of 2008) and Emma Teal Laukitis (Class of 2009) who are proof positive of the KPBSD mission to empower all learners to positively shape their futures.

Website: <https://aksalmonsisters.com/>

“Salmon Sisters strives to make their garments the ones you dress up and dress down, get dirty and wear holes through, because they’re just too cool and comfy to take off. For every product sold, we donate one can of wild salmon to the Food Bank of Alaska.”

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