

# COMMON ALASKA TERMS

## **BLANKET TOSS**

As effective as a trampoline, the blanket toss features a walrus hide blanket held by a number of people in a circle. The blanket toss was originally used to allow Eskimo hunters to spot game such as walrus and seal in the distance.

## **BREAKUP**

Breakup occurs when melting snows rise the level of ice covered streams and rivers sufficiently to cause the ice to break apart and float downstream. Sometimes ice jams occur, causing the water to back up and flood. Breakup marks the end of winter and the arrival of spring.

## **BUSH**

Used originally to describe large expanses of wilderness beyond the fringes of civilization, the bush has come to mean any part of Alaska not accessible by road.

## **CACHE** (pronounced cash)

Its purpose is to protect what is stored inside from marauding animals. A cache traditionally is a miniature log cabin mounted on stilts. The cache is often used as a primitive food freezer for game and fish, but is also used to store furs from a trapline or extra fuel.

## **CHEECHAKO** (pronounced chée-CHA-ko)

Chinook word for tenderfoot, greenhorn, or newcomer, the opposite of a sourdough (see below).

## **ESKIMO ICE CREAM**

Traditionally made of whipped berries, seal oil, and freshly fallen snow.

## **INSIDE PASSAGE**

The meandering waterway that winds between the mainland and the coastal islands of Southeast Alaska and British Columbia.

## **THE LAST FRONTIER**

Because of its rugged splendor, Alaska is commonly referred to as The Last Frontier.

## **LOWER 48**

Reference to the continental US minus Hawaii, which is also typically excluded in special shipping rates.

## **MUKLUKS**

Lightweight boots designed for warmth in extreme cold, mukluks are typically made with bearded seal skin, moose, or caribou hide and trimmed with fur and beadwork.

## **NORTHERN LIGHTS**

Magnetic particles from the sun hitting the earth's atmosphere which are visible for more than half the year. Also called Aurora Borealis.

## **OUTSIDE**

Any place not in Alaska.

## COMMON ALASKA TERMS CONTINUED

### **PERMAFROST**

Ground that remains frozen for two or more years. Continuous permafrost underlies the entire Arctic region to depths of 2,000 feet.

### **SOURDOUGH**

In addition to being a starter used to make bread, sourdough has come to mean any person who has lived in Alaska for a significant period of time and has established themselves in the lifestyle which is typical of the frontier Alaskan and outdoors man.

### **SUBSISTENCE**

Defined by federal law as “the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewal resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools or transportation...” Rural residents may hunt and fish for subsistence on federal public lands in Alaska under federal regulations.

### **TERMINATION DUST**

The first snowfall of the season marking the beginning of winter.

### **TUNDRA**

A treeless plain consisting of moisture-retaining soils and permanently frozen subsoil.

### **ULU**

This traditional Eskimo woman’s knife is a fan shaped tool made for scraping and chopping.