Our Home Then and Now
Long ago when I was a boy, our people lived in tule mat huts. Some of the people were chosen to go to the marshy places along the river, to cut the tule reeds. I remember the fun we had playing along the river. We caught fish while the women cut the tule.

A frame of willow branches was set into the ground and a small trench was dug around it.

The tightly bound tule mats were then tied onto the willow frame. The mats were layered on top of each other for warmth. Animal hides were tightly tied over the tule mats to keep the wind out. I remember it was snug and warm in the tule mat hut.

During the winter nights, we listened to the story-teller. A fire for cooking and heat was built in the center of the hut on the dirt floor. A hole was left in the top of the hut for the smoke to go through.
Some families built a larger house to live in during the winter. This house was made of fir poles. Tule mats were fastened together in layers on top of the poles. The fires for cooking and heating were built in the center of the dirt floor.

Tule mats were spread on the floor to serve the food on or to sit on. Beds were made of fir boughs and wild rye grass. In the morning, the branches and grasses were just gathered up and set aside on the wall of the lodge. Everything had its place and there was a lot of room inside. Indian people used the tule mat for many things.
The tule was cut in the fall of the year and tied into bundles, keeping them as straight as possible while they dried.

The tule mat was made by cutting the tule all the same length. Then it was sewn together and tied at each side.

The mats were made to whatever length a person wished. The length depended on whatever they were being made for. They were very useful.

The tule mats were used in making the longhouse. The longhouse is a place where council talks, social dances, funerals, and other events are held, as well as religious ceremonies.

Tule mats were also used in the marriage ceremonies, the bride sat on the mat during the ceremony.

Before the coming of the coffin, our people used the tule mat to wrap around the dead person before putting the body into the ground.

When spring came, we would take our winter lodge down and bundle it up. We left the poles, branches, and mats tied together in a tree so they would be there to put up again next winter.

In the spring, the families moved to the mountains and the hills. Here they would dig the roots and pick berries to be prepared for winter food supply. When I was a boy, my family had a two room house made of boards up in the mountains. In the house was a wood stove to cook on. We spent our days picking berries and gathering reeds and grasses for making baskets.
Then as the times changed, our houses changed. We began to live in houses with two, maybe three rooms. We had tables to put our food on and chairs to sit on. Beds were made with feather mattresses and wood. Wool blankets replaced the animal skins. We had kerosene lamps to replace the fire. Automobiles replaced horses.
Today, we live in a big house, six or seven rooms. Running water! No more carrying water from the river! We even have lights and heat from wires called electricity. Most of our food is already cooked when we buy it from a store. There are microwave ovens that cook for us, washing machines that wash clothes for us, dishwashers that wash dishes for us.
No more do we hear the first morning call of the bird or listen for the call of the wild elk. No more do we listen to find water, and hear it as it gurgles merrily along its way to the great waters. Now, we hear the stereo, the cassette, or the radio.

Our time is spent watching television, movies and having parties. Rivers are suffering from the pollution. The sky is not bright anymore from too much smoke. The animals, birds, and fish are not plentiful any more.