Coushatta, says William Read, signifies "white reed-brake;" it is derived from Choctaw kuska or kushak, "reed," "reed-brake," and hata, "white." The name was originally applied to a band of Indians whose settlement was near a white reed-brake. Technically the Coushatta are known as Koasati.

The Koasati tribe first appears in history in the DeSoto narratives. They were then living on an island in the Tennessee River, probably Pine Island, and the river was sometimes called after them the "river of the Cussetes." They later moved to Alabama and in 1784 established a town there called Cosada, which like Coushatta is another variation on their name.

Between 1793 and 1795 another group of Koasati went to Louisiana, occupying several different places—one of them being Coushatta. Some lived for a time in the Opelousas district and then went to the Sabine. Later some of the Koasati moved to Texas, but suffered so severely from pestilence that a portion of them returned to Louisiana. The group gathered in what was then Calcasieu Parish, but is now in Allen and Jefferson Davis Parishes between the present Elton and Kinder, where their descendants are still to be found.

There are still about 150 Koasati Indians living near Elton, according to Dr. Fred Kniffen, head of the LSU geography and anthropology department. These people, he says, still speak their native Greek language and the children do not learn English until they go to school. The women weave baskets. They make pine-straw coiled baskets and split-cane baskets, and both kinds are on sale at LSU Fieldhouse in the Acadian Handicraft room.

John Trumbull, the American Artist whose famous "Declaration of Independence" is in virtually every history book, made a sketch of a Koasati Indian named Stimafutchki (good humor) who was among the delegation of Indian visiting George Washington in 1790. Stimafutchki had a ring through his nose—a common practice among the Koasati. In order to wear rings in their noses the Indians, says Swanton, "after having pierced the septum, inserted a sharp iron, sometimes an awl, in the opening until the wound was healed when they replaced it with a silver ring. It is worthy of note that the nose was usually pierced in cold weather when it was somewhat numb, making the pain less intense."