Indian Chief Visits USL For Seminar

The chief of the Coushatta Indian tribe, Martin L. Abbey, Elton, visited the University of Southwestern Louisiana last week to participate in a seminar.

Martin has been "mika" (chief) of the Louisiana Coushatta, since the death of his father, Jeff Abbey, 1951. He was accompanied to USL by his nephew Langley, who served as interpreter and who also added many items about the tribe. Chief Abbey speaks in his native tongue, a Muskogean dialect.

The Coushatta are recent emigrants to Louisiana. They entered the state in the 18th century from their aboriginal homeland in Alabama and settled in the pine lands near Elton in Allen Parish. Today they number 350 and are predominately farmers and loggers.

The tribe maintains a trading post on their settlement, where many native handicrafts are sold. Skillfully woven baskets of many sizes and shapes, made entirely from pine needles and grass bindings, are the primary items of the tribe. Other objects include figurines of armadillos, crayfish, and frogs, and necklaces and pendants of brightly colored glass beads are also made. These items, Chief Abbey said, are made chiefly by the women of the tribe.

The visit of the Indians to USL was arranged by USL student Robin, Lafayette.