

Origin of the Alabama and Coushatta Tribes

The Alabamas and Coushattas were made from clay in a big cave under the earth. They lived in this cave a long time before some of them decided to go to the surface of the earth. After they started upward, they camped three times on the way. Finally, they reached the mouth of the cave.

Here they saw that a large tree stood in the cave entrance. The Alabamas and Coushattas went out of the cave on opposite sides of a root of this tree. This is why these two tribes differ somewhat in speech, though they always have lived near each other.

At first these people stayed outside only during the night, returning to the cave when day came. One night when they left the cave to play, they heard an owl hooting. Most of the people became so scared that they ran back into the cave and never returned to the surface of the earth. This is why the Alabamas and Coushattas are so few. Had the owl not hooted, all the people would have remained on the surface of the earth, and the Alabamas and Coushattas would be more numerous.

How Fire Came to the Alabama and Coushattas

There was a time, far back, when bears owned Fire. These animals guarded Fire very closely and even carried it about with them. They allowed no creature except a member of the bear clan to use Fire or even to approach it.

One day the bears put Fire on the ground and went away to eat acorns. Now, Fire needed much attention. Since the bears did not come back that day, Fire grew weaker and weaker, and finally began calling for help. But the bears had travelled so far into the woods that they couldn't hear Fire's cries.

Some Alabamas and Coushattas heard him, though, and hurried to his aid. They got a stick from the north and laid it on Fire. In the west they found another stick and fed it to Fire. The people found the third stick in the south. Then they went to the east for another stick. When the people put down all the sticks, Fire blazed up.

After the bears finished their meal of acorns, they returned to claim Fire. However, Fire said, "I don't know the bears any longer."

This is how Fire left the bears and went to live with the Alabamas and Coushattas.

Martin, Howard N. "How Fire Came to the Alabamas and Coushattas."
Myths and Folktales of the Alabama-Coushatta Indians of Texas. Austin:
Encino Press. 1977. Print.