

## **AL MORGAN : BRIEF BIOGRAPHY**

Al Morgan is Council Leader for the Western United Cherokee, a not-for-profit organization located in Southern Illinois. This group, made up of the descendants of immigrant Cherokee (those who left the old Cherokee Nation before the Trail of Tears to settle further north and west). Their goal is to keep the traditions of their families and the immigrant Cherokee alive and to educate others about the heritage, history, and contemporary issues of native peoples in North America today. The group's cultural meetings and genealogical assistance are open to all. Guest speakers from First Nations in Canada, the USA, and even South America frequent WUC events. Many of the elders of the group show their crafts at local fairs and share their stories and heritage.

Mr. Morgan is a native of Southern Illinois. His many family lines first began to arrive in this territory to find permanent homes in the 1820s, when much of the land was still unsettled by the advancing tide of American settlers. Among Al's native heritage are the Powhatan (a 15<sup>th</sup> great grandson of Opechancanough), the Cherokee (through the Lowry and Reese families among others) and the Lumbee (Morgan, Cumbo and Lowry).

Al grew up in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, the youngest of three siblings. As a child he learned many of the traditional family ways from his grandmothers and his father. He spent much time in the woods and lakes, fishing and learning about the plants and other native lore from his elders. Later he passed much of this knowledge on through 25 years of volunteer Boy Scout work. Graduating college with a teaching degree his plans were interrupted by the Viet Nam War.

After serving as an officer in the United States Air Force, he returned to civilian life, earned a Masters in Public Administration, and directed a number of governmental and not-for-profit programs serving veterans, the unemployed, youth, the elderly and other needy. Al finished his career by teaching adult and juvenile offenders in the Illinois prison system for more than 10 years. Mr. Morgan volunteers his time in serving both the Western United Cherokee and the Boy Scouts, teaching outdoor skills.

Al pursues an active interest in genealogy and a variety of crafts including jewelry design and carving of staffs.