



# BRIVIUM

Derek Rohlffs'  
Native American Heritage

As a young boy, I was given the name “Winter Hawk” by my family in honor of the Cherokee heritage from my mother’s side of the family. My grandfather was of Cherokee descent, but because he was a bit of a vagabond—family lore includes his stints as a professional poker player and alleged bank robber—we knew little about his lineage until my mother researched and confirmed a link to other relatives who appeared on the Dawes Rolls (the lists of those eligible for tribal membership in the "Five Civilized Tribes": Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles). Soon after I became a member of the Cherokee tribe.

Since I did not grow up on tribal land or with tribal traditions, I have taken it upon myself to learn from others: Cherokee tribal members in Oklahoma as well as chef Sean Sherman, who shared tribal food traditions with me and spurred me on to learn more and incorporate the teachings into my work.

It’s always interesting to see where people fall along the “nature vs. nurture” spectrum, and I think as far as influences on my winegrowing, I’m somewhere in the middle: I see both my Native American heritage and my background in Environmental Studies having an impact on how I think and work as a winegrower.

My ancestry serves as inspiration, and in many ways, confirms what I have come to learn through my studies. Each, in its own way, has guided me to cultivate my vineyards in an environmentally conscious manner to produce high-quality grapes. Native American cultures thoughtfully used and regenerated resources without depleting them, and my studies mirror that concept, so growing grapes that way makes sense to me, practically and philosophically. I understand that I am borrowing the land from future generations and farm in ways that regenerate it.

The importance of place to Native Americans has been a critical influence in how I approach my work as a winemaker, as I appreciate their reverence for the land in general but also the role of certain places as sacred sites. With Bravium, that primacy of place is what I seek to communicate through my wine—to find and make wines from distinctive sites that produce these unique terroir-driven snapshots of their vineyards and appellations.

Crafting wine is a uniquely human pursuit, but my goal is to illustrate the distinct, transparent sense of place in every wine, and to honor what the earth offers us.

Derek Rohlffs, Founder & Winegrower

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Bravium

Linguistic origin: Latin / Meaning: prize, reward, gift