

# Community Futures aid boosted singer's career

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Singer-songwriters aren't typically associated with entrepreneurship, yet Codie Prevost, a talented 23-year-old from Rose Valley, Sask., is as driven and innovative as he is musical.

A Community Futures loan in 2005 got Prevost into the recording booth for his first album, "The Road Ahead."

"It's the next step as an artist, but what's holding you back is the financing and it's tough," Prevost said.

Promoting a new release, "Spin 6-pack Vol. 1," Prevost signed on as front man in mid-January not with a record company, but with Community Futures.

A grass-root rural loans group, Community Futures gives second chances to business ideas that bankers didn't want to catch, but they threw Prevost a curve.

"They told me bring back the guitars next week at the board meeting," Prevost said of his first meeting with Community Futures. "I was shaking like crazy, but caught the moment, thinking this is it, I get my first record and get my start."

Prevost got a call a week later that Community Futures liked his business plan and would provide a loan for his first album.

"You have to get that plan in place, although it's the last thing musicians think about," Prevost said.

With a five-year business plan Prevost is on track with a goal of putting out a new six-pack of songs every year to keep his followers thirsty for more.

Everyone he asked gave encouraging advice and helped write songs as Prevost found acceptance in Nashville as a performing country artist.

"It's a feeling like no other, to walk out on stage and know that's where you're supposed to be."

Having opened for Charlie Major, Ronnie Prophet and The Good Brothers, Prevost toured last year with Emerson Drive, who are big in Canada and the States too.

"They're (Emerson Drive) great guys to hang out with on the bus and I could bring what I learned there to my own show."

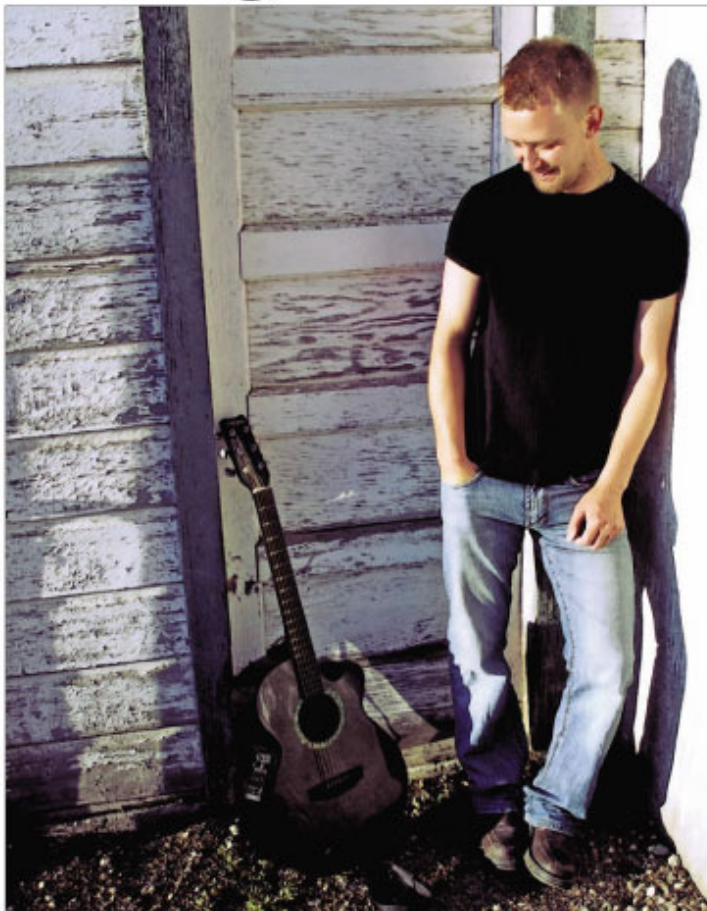


Photo by Karen Mackie

**Singer-songwriter Codie Prevost used a loan from Community Futures to boost his career.**

Taking to the open road with Community Futures, Prevost does school shows as well as his other gigs.

"The energy level that the kids have when I go in there, they just start screaming and love it, having a good time."

Prevost tells students Community Futures might be interested in all kinds of business ideas, from starting clothing stores to grain chemical supplier dealerships.

"I go out and talk to kids about following dreams."

Community Futures Southwest Manager Tony Walker was with the organization seven years in the north before coming to Pincher Creek six months ago.

Walker heard Prevost at a symposium last year.

"He's very genuine, an

honest down-home 'Sask' boy who loves his music and made it in Nashville," Walker said. "You could

tell he wasn't nervous, like being in a room with a bunch of people he knew."

Rebranding its image with Prevost, Community Futures operates as last resort loans analyst in 186 centres, using funding partnerships from Business Development Canada and federal and provincial governments to foster economic ideas outside urban centres.

Community Futures can provide loans up to \$150,000.

Business plans can range from 10 to 50 pages, whether in-depth or simple, but most are 10 to 20 pages of thoughtful consideration to solid ideas, including preparations for

unexpected complications.

"If you weren't expecting it or couldn't plan around it, it could sink a business," Walker said.

Some are profitable from day one, while others need six to nine months in building up business before paying back loans.

"Most businesses start off right away, and we have a very low failure rate," Walker said. "We estimate our failure rate is less than four per cent and with high risk-loans, that's not a bad default rate at all."

Community Futures sets out to improve life in small communities by supporting people like Prevost who have good ideas.

"It's a good feeling, one of the rewards of being in business, to be helping communities to be better places," Walker said.