

Cronkite grad returns to her ‘frontier’ home to tell stories of local communities

By Tracy Nicolle Lewis, ASU News
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Editor’s note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [spring 2026 graduates](#).

More than 3,600 miles separate Anchorage, Alaska, from Phoenix. That may seem daunting, but it’s a trip Madison Knutson was willing to make for an education at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

“I chose Cronkite because I knew the experiences would prepare me for my future career,” she said. “While working on my creative thesis for Barrett, The Honors College as an undergraduate, I created a podcast on missing and murdered Indigenous people. At that moment, I knew I wanted to focus on community and local journalism.”

Knutson said she has learned a lot since leaving the “frontier state.”

“The diversity of students at Cronkite changed my perspective,” she said. “We all come from different states and countries, and hearing different stories from students helped me become a better journalist because I can see different communities and stories that I hadn’t previously considered.”

Knutson will graduate this May with her second degree from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, having first crossed the stage with a bachelor’s degree one year ago. Now, as a master’s student, she is grateful for the immersive teaching and training.

“The opportunities that I’ve received at Cronkite made the move worthwhile,” she said. “I got to experience and learn more about a new state and city. It might be hard to leave your hometown, but you get unique chances to grow as a journalist.”

Knutson will be recognized as one of Cronkite’s outstanding graduate students before heading home to launch her career.

Question: What are your plans after graduation?

Answer: I will be moving back to Alaska, where I will be working as a broadcast producer. I am excited to have the opportunity to give back to my community and local journalism.

Q: What was your favorite spot on campus, whether for studying, meeting friends or just thinking about life?

A: My favorite spot on the Downtown Phoenix campus was the First Amendment Forum and the sixth-floor edit bays. I love the First Amendment Forum because it is so open and there are always a lot of people there. You can get work done in the edit bays because it is an enclosed space that can separate you from the business of the rest of the building.

Q: What's the best piece of advice you'd give to those still in school?

A: I would tell someone who is still in school to try not to compare themselves to someone else's career journey. It can be quite competitive at Cronkite because of the nature of journalism, but we're all on our own path. There are so many opportunities at Cronkite through classes, internships and study abroad. You might get an opportunity that leads you in a direction you didn't expect.

Q: What inspires you most about the future of journalism?

A: I am inspired most by the efforts of those in local journalism to cover underrepresented communities and issues. While some communities are losing local newsrooms, I am still extremely inspired by all efforts to cover local news, especially local governments. It can be very frustrating for people to keep up with everything going on in their city or town, so I'm grateful that there are still many journalists committed to serving their communities in that way.

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Main image



Madison Knutson in the Cronkite News studio. Courtesy photo